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Abstract Title: Co-creating a pollinator and community garden: Managing calculative silences

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Co-creating a Pollinator and Community Garden: Managing Calculative Silences

Building a pollinator and community garden supports bees, birds and butterflies to fulfil their vital role in pollinating the plants that provide our food and make up our ecosystem. Collaborating in such a creative project on a regional university campus involves interactions with volunteers and a wide range of stakeholder groups from inside and outside the institution. Our motivation to build a pollinator and community garden consisted of the desire to engage in sustainable ecology. Additionally, we were interested in better understanding stakeholders' shared gardening experiences. Hence, the research question of our project was *How do team members, volunteers and wider stakeholder groups experience co-creating a Pollinator and Community Garden?*

The project took place during the pandemic and amid significant organisational changes which led to uncertainty and impacted our interaction with stakeholders. While Yang (2019) linked uncertainty to decreased employee performance, Eldor (2017) posits that high uncertainty in organisational settings can stimulate employees to engage in additional efforts, better perform, adopt increased self-responsibility and showcase a greater level of creativity. Landells and Albrecht (2015) argued, based on their multi-case investigation in an Australian workplace context, that political environments can impact individuals and organisations both in positive (increased creativity and productivity) and negative (stressful workplace situations and high turnover) ways.

To better understand the gardening experiences, the *collaborative ethnography* methodology was selected (Lassiter, 2019). In particular, the team members engaged in a regular journaling process (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014), individually writing 'milestone journals', which documented their reflections and emotions about shared gardening activities and the project work. Thematic analysis using Saldaña's (2016) Emotion Coding was applied to examine team members' experiences of actions, decision-making and social relationships. The analysis resulted in more than 40 emotions as universal human experiences, which can be defined as "distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and a range of propensities to act" (Goleman, 1995, p. 289). Most emotions can be assigned to a positive or negative category, and, additionally, there is also an 'in between' category consisting of ambiguous (good and bad) emotions that depend on the context (Kahneman, 2011). In the case of our gardening project, we found positive emotions such as excitement, enthusiasm,

and happiness linked to the garden itself, the gardening events and the developing community. In contrast, examples of negative emotions emerged as frustrations with institutional decision-making processes around the location of the garden, the lockdown situation, and personal misfortunes happening during garden works. In terms of 'ambiguous emotions' the feeling of 'silence' occurred. In the context of the flourishing garden, feeling silent had a positive connotation. On the other hand, the silence was associated with negative emotions when requests for dialogues and decisions about the garden location were ignored.

Silence in terms of ignoring a person or a group can have damaging effects. In the first instance, people are looking for positive acknowledgements, and if not received, people prefer to deal with negative acknowledgements, such as punishments, than to be ignored (Cornell et al., 2016). Research shows that "[i]f people are not recognised, respected, or feel seen, they become depressed" (p. 42). In the case of the pollinator community garden, the silence was created by power positions, hence with higher levels of 'legitimate power' (Badham & Buchanan, 2020). The experienced situations of silence, including reduced dialogue, lack of commitment, and delayed decision making impacted team members differently. While some individuals responded with humour, others experienced frustration and stress. Transformative skills and strategies, such as a positive attitude, creativity and resilience, helped the research team to conclude the project successfully.

The project team responded to institutional silence, whilst being inspired by the literature on 'guerrilla gardening' (e.g., Adams et al., 2015; Crane et al., 2013), by creating a 'secret garden' area. Guerrilla gardening is an example of a "local, self-determined, critical and expressive act" (Crane et al., 2013, p. 76). Hence, hidden away on the balcony of our office building, we permitted ourselves to create an oasis for pollinators using worn-out metal filing cabinets as garden beds and a used hardwood pallet as a vertical garden. Considerate guerrilla gardening as a peaceful rebellious act is very powerful, because plants, once established, merely grow without help from anyone, and, normally, the plants are not removed once they are discovered and if not considered an obstacle. Adams et al. (2015) suggest that guerrilla gardens are predominantly perceived as welcome when created on a common-sense basis. Stimulated by the positive outcome of our balcony guerrilla garden and by thinking outside the box, the team realised that our pollinator and community garden does not have to be established in one large area but can be spread out across several locations. This approach allows bees, butterflies, birds and insects to circulate like on a highway and re-energise on the explicitly selected native plants they are looking for. As a result, we ended up having seven garden areas, including our secret garden.

With our rebellious expression as a form of transformation of silence, the team nurtured itself and increased its resilience and motivation to overcome hurdles and create the garden space that serves best for the pollinators and the community. Our conference presentation will visually illustrate some highlights of the journey and underpin the process and outcome with qualitative research approaches.

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