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Administrative Barriers of Enabling Urban Gardening in Tampere, Finland

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Abstract

An ongoing academic debate shows that urban community gardening (CG) has diverse governance models with differing roles of city administration and citizens. This article uses an empirical case study conducted in the city of Tampere, Finland, to explore what I call the "operational space" of urban CG seen from the viewpoint of city officials. Two rounds of interviews were conducted with eight city officials, and a discourse analysis was applied for the data. As an analytic term developed in this article, the operational space emerges by administrative policies and practices that enable or constrain urban gardening under two general trends of urban governance: institutional ambiguity and neoliberal urban development. In this case, the operational space was rather rigid and narrow. The five main discourses on benefit, control of space, scarcity, unclarity, and newness referred to a clear aim to enable urban gardening. However, the discourses were restricted to strategic, limited, and instrumental levels, as the political-strategic aims of enabling urban gardening contradicted the administrative practices. The results show that cautiousness and unclarity in the administrative-political culture tend to lead to institutional ambiguity. In conclusion, operational space analysis is helpful to uncover the problems and possibilities between CG and city administration.

Keywords

Community gardening, city administration, institutional ambiguity, governance, neoliberal politics

Introduction

Maybe it is about growing communality. Growing as a word is quite suitable in this context [laughing], *and strengthening one's relationship with nature.… The concept* [urban community gardening] *in itself is not very old.… Allotment gardening, sure, is age-old, over a hundred years old here in Finnish cities as well. But this urban gardening tells something about new urban movement, new urban generation.* (CO1a)

In the European context, the current public policy aims to promote smaller-scale community gardens near where people live rather than extensive allotment gardening areas (Demailly and Darly 2017; Kumnig 2017). As the above quotation indicates, this paper explores how the urban community gardening phenomenon and its governance are experienced and reproduced among a city administration. Here, community gardening (CG) refers to novel modes of gardening, taking place in public or semi-public urban space, and managed collectively by local communities (see Guitart, Pickering, and Byrne 2012, 364; Fox-Kämper et al. 2018, 59; Bell 2016, 2–3). The case city used in the paper is Tampere, the thirdlargest and fastest growing city in Finland. For academic CG research, the paper offers a rarely studied perspective of city administration. Tampere offers a relevant case study because compared to CG trends in Central Europe, the phenomenon gained popularity in Finland and in Tampere at a relatively late point in the 2010s. Nonetheless, the city administration was unprepared for the popularity of CG. Gardening case studies from more peripheric locations, such as Tampere in Northern Europe, are vital, as every city or urban area has a unique geohistorical context that affects the formation and arrangements of gardening (Darly and McClintock 2017, 228; Ernwein 2017, 269–70).

This paper examines the meaningfulness of CG for a city administration when it faces it as a new phenomenon in the city and has to consider what it necessitates for collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash 2008). To highlight the administrative context for CG, I introduce the term *operational space*, which describes the local circumstances, governance models, and prospects of CG as part of urban public space. The term resonates with "fluid governance" (Certomà, Chelleri, and Notteboom 2020), which describes co-creative and informal gardening-related planning practices. The concept of operational space acknowledges both the bureaucratic and informal aspects and the material and non-material dimensions of gardening policy. Meaning making of the CG phenomenon, possibilities of co-creation, and framework conditions for gardening all play a central role. It is crucial not to overlook the non-governmental agents, particularly gardeners, and their role and possibilities in forming the operational space of urban gardening. However, this study focuses on the perspective of city

officials, who need to react to societal change. The Tampere case is about the city administration balancing the tensions between the local-level polity tradition, the guidelines coming from politics through the city strategy, the neoliberal development orientation of Western cities, and the pressures from global trends and civil society.

The paper studies the governance of CG as a policy process using the analytical approach of interpretive policy analysis (IPA) and discourse analysis as a methodic tool. By exploring the discourses of CG that are produced and reshaped in the speech of the municipal actors across the city organization, the paper describes the current operational space, setting the prospects for gardening action. The paper asks, first, what are the meanings of CG for city officers, and how do they reproduce these meanings in their speech? Second, in a situation when CG is taking steps but the policy process for its collaborative governance is only just beginning, what kind of operational space do the city officers produce for CG? Third, what are the means for enabling CG in city administration and the possible barriers to overcome?

There are several reasons for examining the viewpoint of city administration and exploring the operational space for CG. First, as the gardening boom in Finland is part of the global trend of bottom-up-oriented and community-based gardening projects, local administrators cannot avoid pondering whether to form their own gardening policy, and how to organize it. Second, CG relates to the essential questions of the usage of public space. It is about citizens' urge and right to be active members of society and their immediate living environment. This discussion is closely connected to Henri Lefebvre's (1996) and David Harvey's (2013) theorizing of "the right to the city." Third, gardening addresses the topical question of the simultaneous aims of greening and densifying the city infrastructure (Kumnig 2017). Both aims are framed as environmental issues and are essential parts of the meta-narrative of sustainable urban development (Tappert, Klöti, and Drilling 2018; Tornaghi 2014). On the other hand, the aims of greening and densifying are contradictory, as the pressure for compact cities puts urban green space in a vulnerable position as a valuable resource for construction-related urban development projects (Tappert, Klöti, and Drilling 2018; Demailly and Darly 2017).

The earlier development of CG research shows the need for an administrative perspective and exploration of operational space. According to the comprehensive review of CG literature worldwide by Follman and Viehoff (2015; 2019), urban gardens and gardening have been analyzed mainly from the perspectives of situated food production, social benefits, and community-building. In addition to inspections concentrating on CG as an overall beneficial and community-strengthening activity, CG is explored as an instrument or a problem in urban planning and political matters concerning the usage of public space (Purcell and Tyman 2015; Eizenberg and Fenster 2015; Follman and Viehoff 2015; 2019). In recent CG studies, in addition to bottom-up orientation, different governance models and cooperative forms of governance, as well as enabling factors for and possible barriers to gardening, have gained attention (Fox-Kämper et al. 2018; Wesener et al. 2020; Jacob and Rocha 2021). Despite the diversity of actors involved in the inspection of gardening governance, the main

emphasis is usually on the viewpoint of gardeners (Ernwein 2017). Or, as Wesener and colleagues (2020) stated, several enabling and impeding factors can be found in the existing literature; however, it often remains unclear from which perspective they were perceived. The authors also discovered that gardeners reported more enablers, whereas external experts, such as city officers, were "less enthusiastic about recognizing enabling factors" (Wesener et al. 2020, 18). To fill this research gap, this paper changes the perspective to focus on city administration, political processes, and the governance of public green space (see also Eizenberg and Fenster 2015).

In the following sections, I first explore recent urban gardening research on governance models of CG and related barriers and enablers. Second, I introduce the case study and methodological approach of IPA and discourse analysis. Third, I analyze the administrative discourses of CG in Tampere. Finally, I discuss the results, highlighting the varying meanings of enabling and the unique aspects of the socio-political context and administrative culture in Tampere.

Operational Space of Urban CG

Top-down and Bottom-up Governance

Numerous studies across Northern America (Jacob and Rocha 2021), Europe (Mayrhofer 2017; Ernwein 2017), and Australia (Nettle 2014; van Holstein 2020) have explored the different governance models of CG. The gardening projects are typically classified as top-down or bottom-up governed; however, the two main models can overlap, and the category boundaries are blurred (Fox-Kämper et al. 2018, 60). In its pure form, a top-down governed project is planned, initiated, and run by professionals, such as a municipality or a private sector organization. Bottom-up projects, on the other hand, are created and managed entirely by local communities. In their health-related study on food projects, McGlone and colleagues (1999) added three middle categories and presented a five-step governance model: top-down, top-down with community help, bottom-up with professional help, bottom-up with informal help, and bottom-up. The middle categories reflect the different forms of citizens participating in planning or maintenance of an official project, or, on the other hand, paid or unpaid and unstructured professional support for bottom-up gardening initiatives.

Based on the broad literature review and case study work in Germany and New Zealand, Fox-Kämper and colleagues (2018) added in the model a sixth category of governing CG: bottom-up with political and/or administrator support (PAS). Here, the garden is managed by the community with government support. This category includes the diversity of collaborations with public authorities and NGOs that are not paid professional work, but, for example, provide guidance on land-use permissions or a free water supply for the garden. In Glasgow, CG forms a network of local, community-led projects that are strongly supported by local authorities and other agencies (Crossan et al. 2016). This works as an example of PAS, as the support consists of distinct forms of collaboration, such as advising on complex planning issues in a neoliberal setting or helping to navigate the funding landscape.

Further, Fox-Kämper and colleagues (2018) explored the changes in governance structures of CG by separating three different development phases of the gardening process: planning/design, implementation, and management. Top-down and bottom-up orientations may vary along this temporal scale of garden. They discovered that gardening projects that receive governmental or professional support in the planning and implementation phases, but after that, are managed and run mostly by the community in a bottom-up style are often the most successful and workable. Jacob and Rocha (2021) found similar results in their study on CG governance in Toronto.

Enablers of and Barriers to CG in Local Governance

Whether it be a matter of top-down or bottom-up orientation, recent studies on CG governance have recognized several enablers of and barriers to gardening projects (Follman and Viehof 2015; Fox-Kämper et al. 2018; Wesener et al. 2020). The strongest enablers of the planning and implementation phases are the high level of community interest and a shared vision (Fox-Kämper et al. 2018). From the administrative perspective, these require collaborative planning and citizen engagement. The most common barrier for establishing a garden is limited or insecure land tenure (Fox-Kämper et al. 2018). If finding an appropriate site for a garden, the uncertain endurance might still appear as a barrier. As Drake and Lawson (2014) argued, gardening should be recognized as "a replacement of vacancy" instead of the present view of "a solution to vacancy." The idea of replacement would give gardening a chance to be a meaningful and acknowledged place-related action and not just a subordinate to some more profitable future use (see also Kumnig 2017; Tappert, Klöti, and Drilling 2018). In addition to land security, Jacob and Rocha (2021) mentioned governmental bureaucracy and lack of appropriate funding as the main barriers to maintaining community gardens. When exploring enablers and barriers, the same factors, such as funding or suitable location, may appear as both, depending on the situation at hand and the perspective (e.g., gardeners or officials) (Wesener et al. 2020).

This paper analyzes the enablers of and barriers to gardening from the administrative perspective. To understand the current roles of city officials and possible barriers to CG as a part of operational space, I take into account two general trends of urban governance. First, *institutional ambiguity* (Hajer 2004) determines the policy process of CG. The concept of institutional ambiguity reflects the changing administrative culture and missing consensus about which rules to follow in policymaking (Hajer and Versteeg 2005a). Bäcklund and Mäntysalo (2010) studied citizen participation in the Finnish planning system among the five largest cities in Finland and found that the institutional practices are deep-rooted and thus difficult to overwrite. Constant pressure to renew the local governance and means of participation create a complex reality of planning, which results in institutional ambiguity. The lack of central guidance leads to differing ways of reacting to changes in cities.

Second, the growing number of gardening scholars have debated the role *of neoliberal urban development logics* as an essential factor, usually causing contradictions in CG policy. The linkages between CG and neoliberalization are shown by examples of gardens struggling

to find permanent locations as building projects are being favored over them (Demailly and Darly 2017); cities supporting gardening projects in certain areas, leading to gentrification (van Holstein 2020); or citizens being harnessed into volunteerism in maintaining the public green areas (Rosol 2010; 2012; Ghose and Pettygrove 2014). However, CG is not only subordinate to neoliberal development policies, as gardening "can be radical and neoliberal at once" (McClintock 2014, 157). Around this notion has risen a new scholarly approach that emphasizes the local contexts, multiple agencies, and the changing, conflicting, but sometimes conforming aims of city gardeners and local authorities (see McClintock 2014; Barron 2016; Crossan et al. 2016; Darly and McClintock 2017; Ernwein 2017; Demailly and Darly 2017).

Wesener and colleagues (2020) divided the enablers and barriers in CG into three different dimensions: biophysical and technical, socio-cultural and economical, and political and administrative. In this paper, I examine the third one more carefully. An analysis of the political and administrative enablers and barriers sheds light on the operational space formation process and takes into account the aspects of top-down/bottom-up governance and the reflections of institutional ambiguity and neoliberal urban development logics.

The Case, Data, and Methods

The (Non-)gardening Policy of Tampere

Tampere is the fastest growing Finnish city, with a population of 244,000 (in 2021) and approximately 3,000 new inhabitants per year (StatFin 2022). Population density in city proper is 1,370 inhabitants per km^2. The urban economy dynamics in Tampere have changed significantly along with the transition from industrial towards knowledge economy (Lönnqvist et al. 2014). The tendency of intercity competition and neoliberal ethos became more salient as the city adopted growth policy with significant urban construction projects and the aim of attracting new inhabitants as a basis of its land use (Jokinen et al. 2018). However, Tampere is also known as a green city due to its urban forests and parks. A fifth of the surface area is classified as green space (City of Tampere 2021).

Gardening as an activity is not new in Tampere. Private gardens have a long history, and allotment gardens became popular in the early part of the 20th century. The first Germany-originated allotment garden in Finland was found in Tampere in 1916 (Keshavarz and Bell 2016). Today, there are four allotment gardens with private cabins and 13 open field allotments around the city (6 perennial and 7 annual), all located on public land (see Figure 1). Allotment areas with cabins are about 8–14 hectares in size, and they include 125–315 plots with cabins. The plots are about 300 m^2 in size. Each of the open field allotment areas again covers about 0.5–6 hectares of land, and each plot is from 25 to 400 square metres. These plots have an annual rent ranging from 11 to 84 euros and thus are more accessible for low-income people than those with a private cabin. Open field allotments are in active use by a large variety of people, and there is a waiting list of several years to get a plot from the most popular perennial open field allotment areas.
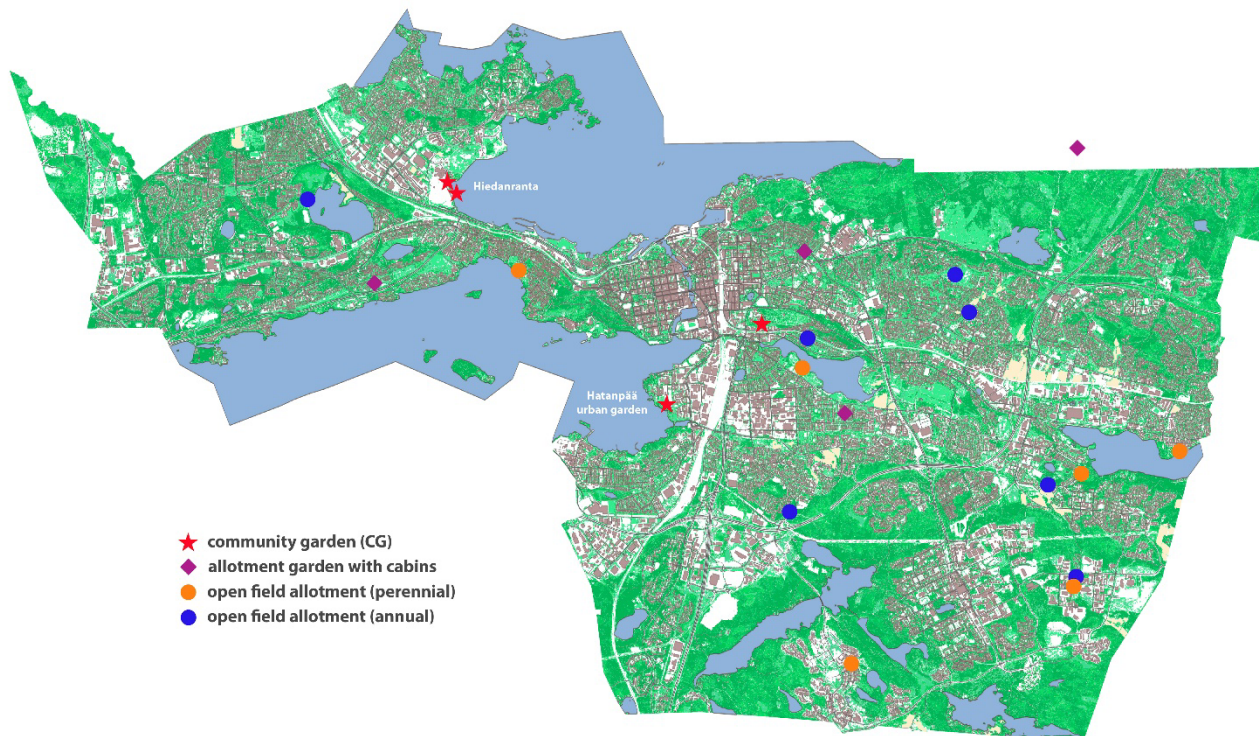
Figure 1. Tampere city proper with its lakes, green areas, buildings, and roads. Allotment gardens with cabins, perennial and annual open field allotments and the known community gardens are marked with symbols. Northern part of the city is countryside and mostly covered by forests and fields. This area is not shown on the map. Thus, one allotment gardening area is located just outside the map. Background map © City of Tampere, 2021.

Despite the long history and existing urban gardening opportunities, spontaneous citizen-driven gardening practiced near city centres and reclaiming urban parks and brownfields for gardening is new in Tampere (Jokinen, Asikainen, and Willman 2017). Following the CG boom in Central Europe and in Helsinki, the topic started to gain popularity and demand among citizens in Tampere during 2012–2013. Housing cooperatives are one solution to the question of CG when offering space for gardens and a ready-made governance structure for managing them. However, housing cooperatives are private actors, and gardening is likely only if the majority of the shareholders are willing to use the common yard area for gardening purposes.

The City of Tampere drew some enquiries by the citizens about the possibilities to practice gardening in publicly owned urban areas. In its city strategy (City of Tampere 2017, 4), the City of Tampere promotes itself as an "enabler for residents, businesses and communities." The strategy (City of Tampere 2017, 6) states: "by supporting community activity, the city will enable—hobbies and low-threshold urban culture as well as the sharing of skills, services and goods." According to this, it is easy to presume that the city of Tampere is actively providing low-threshold opportunities for citizens' hobbies, such as gardening. However, established polity and local governing practices do not always change as quickly as strategic aims, which complicates the situation further (see Bäcklund and Mäntysalo 2010). As

the city strategy provides only general principles for steering, different departments of the local government can take liberties with applying these principles in practice. The main data of this paper, city officer interviews, as well as the city strategy and related public documents on environmental policy show the lack of any political programme for urban gardening or local food production in the city.

Facing a new phenomenon, the city organization met a need to create a cross-sectoral policy among the city organization concerning CG. In early spring 2013, the city arranged internal meetings between five different departments (park construction and maintenance, real estate, environmental protection, city democracy, and sustainable community) and chose a rather restrained policy of not systematically offering opportunities for gardening. Instead, the city decided to act as an enabler by reacting to gardening demand as it appeared. Due to strong economic aims for the productive usage of public space, CG is usually not among the first options of use, as the strategic aim of densifying is superior to the aim of greening (see Kumnig 2017; Tappert, Klöti, and Drilling 2018). The planning system in Tampere has conflicting strategic aims, as the planning narratives address environmental concerns while simultaneously boosting profit-making in global economic competition (Jokinen et al. 2018). Of course, compact and green cities are not mutually exclusive, and it is vital to elaborate ways of combining them (Artmann et al. 2019).

As a result of internal meetings, the city arranged three public multi-actor workshops in 2013–2014 to bring different stakeholders and city gardeners together to create an understanding of the current CG policy and the gardening opportunities in Tampere. The author participated in one of these workshops as a participating observer; the notes are utilized as background material in this paper. As a result of the last workshop, the city made an exception to the chosen policy by offering an unused storage site next to a public arboretum park area for citizens interested in CG (Hatanpää urban garden). Another exception is Hiedanranta, a former factory area that the city is developing into a new residential district with two gardening projects, in which the city is involved (Jokinen, Asikainen, and Willman 2017) (see Map 1).

Outside the abovementioned exceptions, Tampere has a divergent CG policy among Finnish cities, and thus it is a fruitful case study example. Helsinki, the capital of Finland, was pioneering in bottom-up pop-up gardening projects, and later, the city cooperated with community gardeners, for example, in mapping suitable gardening spots among urban fabric. A few other medium-sized and growing cities have gardening-box policy models, where individual citizens or groups are provided with gardening boxes on public land. The involvement of city administrations in the planning and implementation stages has been significant.

City Officer Interviews

The main data consist of 10 semi-structured qualitative interviews of senior city officers working in different departments of the city organization of Tampere (land use planning, real

estate, sustainable community, green space planning, park construction and maintenance, and environmental protection) (see Table 1). All the interviewees were familiar with the matter of CG through their tasks and are thus producing the operational space for CG. They were chosen to be interviewed because they had participated in internal meetings concerning gardening policy (2013) or were suggested by other interviewees. Seven of the interviews took place between May 2015 and January 2016. One was a pair interview and the others individual interviews. Pictures from four local CG projects of the time were presented during the interview as a stimulus for pondering the experiences and cooperation between the city and gardening communities. In May–June 2019, the data were supplemented by three follow-up interviews with the officers having the most central role concerning CG based on the analysis of the first-phase interviews in 2015–2016.

City officer interviewee code	Department	Interview date
CO1a and CO1b	Land use planning	June 6th 2015
CO2	Real estate	June 17th 2015 & May 14th 2019
CO3	Sustainable community	June 17th 2015 & May 14th 2019
CO4	Park construction and maintenance	June 30th 2015
CO5	Environmental protection	July 2nd 2015
CO6	Green space planning	July 7th 2015 & June 2nd 2019
CO7	Real estate	January 27th 2016

Table 1. Information on City officer interviews.

The interviews were carried out in an informal manner, and the interviewees could freely share their experiences and perspectives. The interviewer set follow-up questions at suitable points. However, all the interviews followed a certain structure to go through the predefined themes and sub-questions in each interview session. The first set of interviews (in 2015–2016) explored CG by using the following themes: experiences and images, the roles of the city, temporary uses, co-operation/collaborative governance, and future prospects. The second round of interviews (in 2019) had a more follow-up orientation and consisted of four themes:

overview of the CG situation in Tampere, citizen participation/bottom-up view for CG, responsibilities and CG strategy inside the organization, and future prospects/temporary and permanent nature of CG.

For background material of three public multi-actor gardening workshops, discussions were continued via e-mail in 2015 with one interviewed city officer from the administrative body of Sustainable Community. In addition, there are six interviews (two thematic interviews and four brief interviews via email) with the city officers in the cities of Turku, Helsinki, and Oulu (2017–2019), surveying the situation of urban gardening governance in other growing cities of Finland. These interviews are used as supplementary data and are not systematically analyzed in this paper. The author of the paper conducted all the interviews in this study. All the interviews were recorded with the interviewees' permission. The interviews were transcribed literally. Laughs and other changes of tone were included in the transcribed file. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, and the excerpts were translated into English by the author.

Policy Analysis and Discourse Analysis

By exploring the governance of CG among network society, I lean on interpretive (Wagenaar 2011) policy analysis. The essence of IPA lies in the understanding of how and why certain policy processes succeed or fail (Wagenaar 2011). It asks who the main actors are and how they feel about and act upon the processes. IPA is a suitable approach for case study exploration, as it is grounded in practical policy work and is thus "both contextual and situated" in nature (Wagenaar 2011, 10). The analysis is employed with qualitative research methods, such as discourse analysis. Discourse analysis can provide a detailed analysis for understanding policy deliberation among certain cases of governance and thus strengthen the much-needed connection between theory development and empirical research in policy analysis.

Consequently, I use discourse analysis as a method for analyzing the data to gain a deeper understanding of the meanings of the language and expressions used by the city officers. The first analysis round for the interview data offered a comprehensive overview of the topic areas the city officers talked about when discussing CG in Tampere (e.g., benefits, threats, and lack of resources). The second round of analysis was carried out by exploring how the officers spoke. Both analyses (*what* and *how*) were crucial in recognizing the administrative discourses of CG, leading into the operational space analysis.

According to Johnstone (2018), discourse analysis is about language, but it does not settle for analyzing language and text as an abstract system. Paltridge (2018, 12) described discourse analysis as considering "the relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used." Hajer and Versteeg (2005b, 176) emphasized the situational logic of analyzing discourses to include "the historical, cultural and political context in which a particular account of 'truth' arises." Basing on social constructionism, discourse analysis understands the social reality and meanings of things constructing and becoming

renewed in social encounters and interaction. Texts and discourses both shape and are shaped by the social and cultural practices in which they are embedded (Paltridge, 2018). According to Hajer and Versteeg (2005b, 176), the social constructionist approach and discourse analysis are suitable tools for exploring environmental policy processes that often are not clearly defined but "contested in a struggle about their meaning, interpretation and implementation."

Findings

The analysis reveals five discourses describing the meanings of CG for city officers in Tampere: *benefit*, c*ontrol of space*, *scarcity*, *unclarity*, and *newness*. The boundaries between the distinct discourses are not always clear, as the discourses overlap and intermingle. In addition to the discourses, I found several tones or manners of speaking on the topic of gardening. Most evident in these tones are administrative talk and cautiousness. I preserve these tones when presenting the discourses in the following sections.

Benefits from Social Control and Image Building

All the city officers interviewed took a rather positive view on CG as a phenomenon, which forms the discourse of *benefit*. Many public benefits of gardening, regarding mental and physical well-being as well as environmental effects, are named in several studies (Tappert, Klöti, and Drilling 2018), and the city officers recognize these as well. From the city perspective, social control and maintenance benefits concerning otherwise empty or underused urban spots are the main advantages of CG. It provides value as such to get empty spaces utilized. Gardening activity also prevents some unwanted activities and possible vandalism of public property:

> It [CG] brings a positive buzz and social control to an area that is not monitored otherwise. I see the practical use from this angle, that then there is activity— maybe not around the clock, but from morning till night, different activity. It brings concrete benefits to the city as well. (CO6, 2015)

Another benefit of CG is the way it improves the city's image and causes positive "buzzing." Greener city space and gardening activities can be an attraction factor in a cross-city competition of residents and investments on the (trans)national level.

> This [CG] is a positive image factor, I would say. As I understand it, there is a certain group of people in a city who no longer have contact with the countryside and don't have their own allotment gardening plots but are interested in doing gardening in the city area. It is a positive factor, absolutely. (CO5, 2015)

In sum, active citizens launching gardening initiatives are seen in a rather positive light— or at least the interview text gives this first-glance impression. However, when speaking of CG in a positive tone, there is almost without an exception a "but" coming. Wetherell and Potter (1988, 176) write about this as a disclaimer typically found in texts under discourse analysis.

Individuals may express support for an issue and continue with a "but" statement that appears to negate the support almost entirely—in this case "not against urban gardening, but…."

Controlling Space by Temporary Permissions

The talk within the *control of space* discourse often handles the usage of public space and the possible places for gardening. The discourse consists of the topics of temporariness, risks of seizing, or, on the other hand, abandoning the site, an unaesthetic appearance, and vandalism. The argumentation often leans on juridical bases.

The interviewees are unanimous about the temporary nature of CG. The city officers tend to be cautious concerning long-term contracts or permission for CG, as they fear gardeners will demand the space for themselves. The officers worry that the gardening group would forget or neglect the temporary nature of permission after a while. Thus, it would make the future development of the site more difficult:

> In the future, at the time of a new city plan and building at the site, problems may occur, as the group has had a privilege to garden there for let's say ten years, and suddenly there are houses built there instead—Those who have joined the group recently don't have any historical information about the agreement of having the site for temporary use only, and that eviction might take place any time. And that again causes a wrong impression of the city oppressing citizens and always taking control of public spaces by building new residences. (CO4)

Another worry is the fear of the gardening site being left without care. This concern contrasts with the abovementioned worry of gardeners demanding the space for themselves. The city officers worry that the enthusiasm for gardening would wane too quickly, and the gardening group would just disappear, leaving the site a mess for the city to clear. This would cause aesthetic damage and extra trouble and costs: "Of course, there is a question of managing the [gardening] sites. If they are not taken care of, then the maintenance sector is afraid that they are left for them to clear away" (CO2, 2015).

In addition to negligence by the gardeners, the appearance of gardens in an open urban setting is threatened by vandalism by outsiders. The officers appear as gatekeepers by painting the scenario of other citizens doing harm to gardens and edible plants and thus putting the well-being of gardeners at risk: "If we bring them [gardening boxes] into the city centre, I'm afraid they won't be left alone, and the gardener won't get any decent crop from there ever" (CO6, 2015).

The tone of administrative talk is present in the discourse, as the city officers speak in a conventional manner from a professional position of strengthening current administrative policies. It is transformed into words when, for example, the city plan is mentioned as a binding definer of land use in a certain area, or the maintenance categories of green areas as a limitation for the possibilities for CG in public parks: "We have this maintenance

categorization, A1, A2, A3—A1 parks in the city center—so-called presentable parks—they are of course not the right places" (CO4, 2015).

The juridical tone of the speech forms a strict means for controlling the space. A shared view of the importance of written agreements and permissions for land use between the gardening group and the city as a landowner well reflects the operational space for CG. In addition, it is highly recommended for gardeners to form an association to be a legal entity to manage official agreements of land use: "They [Hatanpää city gardeners] have now formed a gardening club because we cannot sign a contract with anonymous group; it always requires an official party" (CO6, 2015).

Resource Scarcity

The discourse of *scarcity* is present in the interview text as utterances emphasizing the scarce resources and poor economic situation of the city. The decision that the city is not providing any financial backing or material resources, such as watering facilities for gardening, is performed as a mutual agreement between distinct sectors. However, a separate district development project in Hiedanranta with its own budget and targets was mentioned as a "test area," an exception to the chosen policy.

The scarcity of monetary and human resources in the city organization leads to the request for citizens to be active on CG. They should organize themselves and show initiative in suggesting suitable places for gardening:

> The city is not the stonewaller in this matter. I believe cooperation with us goes well. If there are good project proposals, there is no doubt we would enable them. Gardeners need to take the initiative and be in touch, in time. (CO6, 2015)

The city does not adopt the mapping of relevant gardening sites as its task but is ready to negotiate the permission concerning gardening sites suggested by citizens:

> Maybe the most natural way was that city gardeners contact us with their idea, and then we start to think about the feasibility of the project and location. If we had a clear demand for a broader mapping [for suitable gardening sites on public land] but then we come up with a question of wasted work—As the resources become scarcer, [we need] not just mapping for its own sake but for a real need. (CO5, 2015)

During the follow-up interviews in 2019, the discourse of scarcity became even more obvious, reflecting the administrative barriers and operational space for CG. The policy of not promoting CG is not a question of a lack of will but a lack of human, time, and monetary resources. Resource scarcity is closely connected to a question of supply and demand, as a chicken-and-egg situation. The official policy of the city is to respond to demand by arranging needed services for citizens. Now the officers repeat the mantra of faded interest in gardening among citizens and do not make the furthering of gardening a top priority in renewing and governing public space. On the other hand, when I as the interviewer brought up the citizens'

point of view concerning the non-existent public information about opportunities to garden on public land, the officers began to ponder whether an out-of-sight demand existed after all. They considered whether the city should better inform the dwellers about opportunities for gardening to create a possibility for the demand to appear: "Maybe information on website is something we should think about more carefully. That is probably the first place where people interested [in gardening] go and see how to proceed" (CO6, 2015).

Unclear Roles and Responsibilities

The discourse of *unclarity* speaks about the unclear responsibilities, tasks, and focuses of distinct departments of the city concerning CG. In their internal meetings in 2013, the city officers agreed on the official procedure concerning the possible gardening enquiries coming from citizens. The officers often refer to these "commonly agreed-upon rules," which give their claims more authority compared to opinions or statements made by an individual city officer. Despite the mutual understanding, the individual officers tend to shift the responsibility in gardening matters to other departments that deal with "official permission," "green things," or "sustainable development issues":

> It is of course the Green Space Planning and Park Maintenance departments; they are responsible for parks. And then the real estate sector. Those are the official quarters here. Of course, I can reply to questions as well, and then direct people to the right persons. (CO3, 2015)

> People think it is one of my duties—but urban gardening as a whole is not only our business. I think the sustainable community and environment sectors have been involved quite a lot, as it relates to the city's environmental policy in general—And of course, we have the real estate department as a landowner there, that in the end releases the areas for this purpose. We have a kind of holder role there in between and consider the suitability of the areas for gardening purposes. I think it's not only our task. (CO6, 2015)

Most of the city officers interviewed could not name the person or department that has or could have the main responsibility for CG matters. Instead, they see it as fragmented around different sectors of the city's organization. The follow-up interviews (made in 2019) show how the temporal change has even strengthened the unclarity that was already tangible in 2015, when the CG phenomenon was just emerging. In this situation, where furthering or handling CG is not officially named as a work area or duty of any officer, the resources are missing and the effort for promoting or enhancing gardening facilities is negligible: "Gardening matter is not clearly delegated to anybody inside the organization—There is no 'one-stop shop' principle, which may create an impression that it is not well organized, and that's true" (CO6, 2019).

Providing facilities for CG is a new thing for the city to confront and is clearly outside the legally binding basic services of a municipality. Individual city officers tend to think they do not have the authority to make decisions concerning new services without a mandate from

politics. For furthering CG, they call for legitimacy from the representative democracy in the form of a city council initiative: "I think there has been no council initiative about urban gardening. I think without that it can't really be pushed forward. If the city council assigns a task for officers, it will be carried out at some point" (CO2, 2015). Notably, by accepting the city strategy, the city council is committed to the idea of the city as an enabler of citizen participation. Nevertheless, the strategic statements are not straightforward enough for city officers to take an active approach to CG.

New Phenomenon Requiring Renewed Attitudes

The discourse of *newness* handles temporal and often future-oriented aspects, painting the prospects for the operational space for CG. The idea of thinking of gardening facilities as a service leans on the predominant institutional order and employs CG under the conventional top-down way of arranging services. However, it calls for more attention to the gardening matter itself and the ways it could be managed and arranged: "It [gardening facilities] is one form of offering leisure activities, just like sports fields and services—The city as a landowner is the enabler for these kinds of activities" (CO6, 2015).

Some of the officers connect gardening with urban culture and change in urban life, and it is evident that the officers start to adopt some out-of-the-box thinking concerning the matter. They refer to successful and creative examples of CG in the field of experimentative and participatory planning or city development in other Finnish cities and abroad. They see the potential of "activist citizens" in creating the city space as a contrast to consumer citizens just consuming ready-made services: "Urban gardening—is a good signal of what new citizenship could be—kind of making the city instead of just spending time and shopping. I think I have understood it [CG] as a signal of a bigger phenomenon" (CO1b, 2015).

In the pair interview, the significance of interaction in shaping the discourses was tangible, as the two officers inspired each other to look back on certain cases and picture possible future developments of gardening in an urban setting: "The topical issues in society—bring aims for the planning—This [city planning] is like a big ship that turns very slowly, but if necessary, it will turn, where the public opinion is directing" (CO1b, 2015).

During the follow-up interviews, the tone in talking about CG had shifted from listing the opportunities and risks or barriers related to bottom-up gardening into new ways of gardening being present in a future city. The officers saw gardening as part of current developments and structures, for example, by the "green-factor instrument," piloted in city planning in 2019. The instrument has certain demands for the total green mass, which the planner can meet by, for example, including rooftop or yard gardens in the town plan. Another new development instrument that was mentioned is participatory budgeting, an instrument invented in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and adopted in Europe in the 2000s (Sintomer, Herzberg, and Röcke, 2008). The idea of the instrument is to involve citizens in planning processes, as the dwellers of certain districts can suggest and vote for new facilities and functions for their area within the limits of a certain budget: "Now they are pondering this model of participatory

budgeting—urban gardening as well could be there as an initiative. So, it [CG project] would get started through these city district actors" (CO6). These developments assure that CG is a topical and relevant function in a contemporary city that is trying simultaneously to engage citizens, be sustainable, and achieve carbon neutrality.

Discussion

Three Different Types of Enabling

The five discourses presented in the previous chapter well describe the meanings of CG for city administration. CG is seen as a beneficial activity and promising prospect for urban development that, however, needs to obey certain rules. Experience of scarce resources and unclear tasks and responsibilities among different sectors in the organization concerning CG dominate the discursive space and affect the current restrained gardening policy.

Along the analysis, I found the prevailing aim of *enabling* as a main feature forming the operational space of CG. The character of enabling among the distinct discourses is not one-dimensional. Instead, enabling has several meanings and manifestations that resonate with socio-political context characterized by institutional ambiguity, as I later explain. I have categorized the enablement talk into three different types:

1. Strategic enabling

2. Limited enabling

3. Instrumental enabling

Strategic enabling is most evidently present in the officers' speech. The officers are familiar with the city strategy (City of Tampere 2017) confirmed by the city council. The officers have adopted the city's political-strategic aims of enabling activities related to urban culture for its residents and communities. This type of enabling is deliberative and even has a tone of deregulation and experimentation at times. Elements of this are apparent in the speech of the officers in the discourses of *benefit* and *newness*, as the officers ponder the advantages and future of CG. Enabling could be understood as an unregulated and somewhat informal way of governing (see Haid 2017; Bénit-Gbaffou 2018). However, the idea of gardening as a beneficial and favourable activity is not synonymous with enabling (Wesener et al. 2020, 4). When moving from speech to practice, the nature of enabling changes.

Limited enabling becomes activated in institutional practices. Even though the city officers speak for (strategic) enabling, practical gardening politics are pervaded by cautiousness. The city leans on established procedures by, for example, demanding official written agreements for CG on public land. Obeying the official rules of the game is important both inside the organization and between the city and city dwellers. Besides the institutional procedures, limited enabling often follows the logic of neoliberal urban development. The logic of demand and supply is strong, as the city responds to residents' demand for gardening case by case after cautious consideration. In general, gardening is subordinate to more profitable land-use purposes. New approaches and experimentation have no room within

limited enabling. By its conventional governing practices, the city is strengthening the role of the classical-modernist political institution (Hajer 2003) and forcing CG into certain frames, where its potential for urban renewal is weak.

Instrumental enabling represents the most recent prospect in the field of CG in Tampere. It has features of both strategic and limited enabling and becomes visible among new planning/development instruments, such as participatory budgeting and the "green-factor instrument," that the city is piloting in planning new residential quarters and building sites. Thus, CG has the potential to be part of a planned and regulated, sustainable urban environment through novel governance instruments. However, the opportunities for gardening by these instruments are still bureaucratic, slow, and often top-down oriented. Their temporal scale differs significantly from a spontaneous idea to create a pop-up garden for the following summer. The instruments may fail in empowering city dwellers and giving them real opportunities to create the city space. On the other hand, instrumental enabling requires further research, as these pilots might get new forms in time, offering citizens an active role in deciding neighborhood budgets or realizing and adopting the block gardens that already exist in the town plan.

From the perspective of enabling, the operational space for CG in Tampere is formed among certain societal and temporal circumstances. As allotment gardening developed one hundred years ago under the discourses of welfare and food production, the new wave of CG is temporally matched with the current discussions of citizen participation and activism, underuse/changing use of public buildings and plots, and sustainable urban development. The city strategy (City of Tampere 2017) emphasizes the role of enabling and "participation and active engagement" as well as "diverse and high-quality green spaces." However, as CG is not mentioned by name in the strategy, there is no common understanding of it as a concrete means of fulfilling these strategic aims. Here, strategic enabling gets buried under the practices of limited enabling. The nature of governance is changing, but the assessment of new practices is not clear for the city (Hajer 2003, 189).

Institutional Ambiguity Defining the Barriers and Operational Space

Wesener and colleagues (2020) divided the political and administrative enablers and barriers of GC into three different categories: *land use and land tenure*; *spatial politics, policies, and practices*; and *local governments and administrations*. I use these categories in reflecting the operational space and the barriers in enabling CG in Tampere (see Table 2). Land use and tenure include two factors: *availability and access to land* and *long-term land tenure* (Wesener et al. 2020). In Tampere, the city administration decided not to map or to offer suitable CG sites for citizens, thus forming a barrier to CG activity. The discussion of long-term land tenure is, again, coloured by the idea of temporariness. Drake and Lawson's study (2014) showed how temporariness is not just a story of Tampere but a historical and dominant way of framing CG across North America, Australia, and Europe (see also Demailly and Darly 2017; Ernwein 2017).

Critical theme (Category of Political and administrative barriers and enablers, Wesener et al. 2020)	Reasons for political and administrative barriers (Enabling and obstructing factors, Wesener et al. 2020)	Factors defining the operational space for CG in Tampere
Land use and land tenure	Availability and access to land	City not offering suitable sites and locations
	Long -term land tenure	Temporary permissions
Spatial politics, policies, and practices	Socio-political context	Institutional ambiguity, Neoliberal development approach
	Planning systems, regulations, policies	Governmental bureaucracy: written agreements on land-use permissions
Local governments and administrations	Actors' relations	Weak contact to citizens/gardeners
	Mindsets, attitudes, interests	Belief that not enough demand for gardening

Table 2. Political and administrative barriers for urban community gardening (CG). Modified from Wesener et al. 2020.

The category of spatial politics, policies, and practices consists of the factors of *socio-political context* and *planning systems, regulations and policies* (Wesener et al. 2020). The former describes the operational space of CG quite comprehensively, which in Tampere is characterized by institutional ambiguity (Hajer 2004) and neoliberal development orientation. CG is experienced in city administration as an ambivalent and multifaceted matter, which leads to institutional ambiguity. CG does not easily find its place among the sectoral governance of the city organization. Instead, the issue of gardening is fragmented among land use permissions, land use planning, environmental politics, sustainable community, green space maintenance, and cultural and social services. When the steering of CG is not clearly obligated as a task of any specific department or any single officer, decisions concerning gardening policy are juggled between the sectors. As the discourses of *unclarity* and *scarcity* well define, the leadership, inner strategy, and clear mandate and resources for taking main responsibility of CG are missing. The types of enabling presented in the previous section demonstrate the

emergence of institutional ambiguity. For example, although the aim of enabling is highlighted in the city strategy, the means of enabling CG remain ambiguous in practice. While the limited enabling gives an impression of strictly regulated top-down governance, it may be difficult for the city administration to control the development of CG in the urban space.

Several recent studies have stated that CG is constantly struggling within the urban politics defined by neoliberality (e.g., Rosol 2010; Demailly and Darly 2017; van Holstein 2020; Crossan et al. 2016). Similarly, neoliberal logic has a consolidated position in the structures of urban planning and the governing of public space in Tampere (see also Wallin et al. 2018; Jokinen et al. 2018) and may appear as a barrier for CG. For example, the city maintains strong control of the spaces involved in citizen-based activities, such as gardening, to reserve vacant lots for future construction projects. In addition, austerity politics (Kumnig 2017, 234) and volunteerism (Ghose and Pettygrove 2014) as neoliberal features are clearly present among the discourses of CG. However, as a smaller and more peripheric city on the edge of Europe, Tampere differs from the abovementioned gardening cases of Berlin, Paris, Sydney, and Glasgow. Despite the prevailing neoliberal development approach, ambiguity, uncertainty, and cautiousness are the main factors forming the operational space of CG in Tampere. Gardening is struggling more with classical-modernist governing institutions (Hajer 2003) and institutional ambiguity than neoliberal politics per se.

Barriers related to planning systems, regulations, and policies (Wesener et al. 2020) are visible in Tampere, as the city administration requires gardeners to have a readymade plan for CG projects and suitable site to suggest. High levels of community interest and a shared vision are recognized as a main enabler for CG (Fox-Kämper et al. 2018). However, bottom-up governed projects are not in favour of the officers in Tampere, as they want to be aware of the projects in the early phase and require official contracts concerning CG and land use. The institutional culture and highly formalized policy concerning land-use permissions persist. They are not easy to depart from and shift toward informal state practices (Bénit-Gbaffou 2018; Bäcklund and Mäntysalo 2010), thus forming another problem or barrier for CG, a deadlock with a claim of citizens to be active with their CG plans and, on the other hand, bureaucratic requirements to overcome. Thus, governmental bureaucracy recognized as a barrier for CG (Jacob and Rocha 2021) is clearly visible in the gardening landscape of Tampere.

Barriers to enhancing CG in Tampere are often connected to a lack of communication channels between the city and citizens interested in urban CG, which brings us to the third category of political and administrative barriers (Wesener et al. 2020): *local governments and administrations*. The category includes barriers related to *actors' relations* and *mindsets, attitudes, and interests*. There is a need for cooperation and collaborative planning (see Healey 1997; Wesener et al. 2020) in CG governance; however, in Tampere, the relations between gardeners and city administration are weak. Earlier studies emphasize the role of official organization and top-down governance in the planning and implementation phases of CG, whereas the role of gardeners and bottom-up governance is highlighted in the maintenance of gardens (Fox-Kämper et al. 2018; Jacob and Rocha 2021). There was a good start for

collaborative CG governance process in Tampere in multi-actor gardening workshops arranged in 2013–2014. However, this cooperation phase of the policy process had a short history because it had its closure when the city addressed one site (Hatanpää) for citizens interested in CG. A long-term policy and a platform for enabling gardening and encouraging and involving citizens in planning CG is poorly constructed. The situation would therefore benefit from the governance model of bottom-up with political and/or administrative support (Fox-Kämper et al. 2018), where the gardeners' interest in CG would obtain information and guidance from the local government.

In this paper, the chosen perspective of city administration in analyzing operational space and possible barriers to CG gave new information compared to earlier studies highlighting the experience and perspective of gardeners (Fox-Kämper et al. 2018; Wesener et al. 2020; Jacob and Rocha 2021). It is not clear for the officers whether there is demand and need for CG among citizens. They assume CG is unpopular in Tampere, which presents certain mindsets and attitudes of the officers (see Wesener et al. 2020). The chicken-and-egg problem concerning demand and supply is tangible, as the city does not supply opportunities for CG as it waits for the demand, which again falls mainly upon open field alloments and housing cooperatives, as there is no information available about other possibilities for CG on public land.

The paper has a few limitations concerning data gathering. First, recording the interviews may affect how openly city officers speak. If speaking about informal governance or bottom-up oriented gardening in a positive tone, the officers often emphasized that they are speaking as private persons instead of offering the official position. As Hajer and Wagenaar (2003, 18–19) pointed out, policymakers and public administrators have an organizational obligation to act and speak under a certain mandate. Second, the interviews from the city democracy department might have brought differing perspectives on CG. However, representatives from this department were not highlighted when gathering the central interviewees for the study.

Conclusion

The paper turns the perspective from gardeners to city administration in exploring the meanings of CG, the means for enabling it, and the possible barriers to overcome. The paper introduced an analytic term of operational space that describes the local circumstances, features of gardening policy, and prospects for CG to appear in urban public space. The term proved to be significant in opening the administrative perspective and the barriers to enabling CG. In Tampere, the administrative-political setting is the main element defining the operational space for CG. The essential feature of the prevailing administrative-political culture of CG is that the field is not united but consists of several departments with their own focuses and aims. CG as a new phenomenon is causing cautiousness and uncertainty in tasks and responsibilities. The city strategy, accepted by the council, should define the current policies of the city administration. However, strategic aims are not realized on a practical level when

the existing institutional culture and values are too deeply rooted. Strategy as an instrument is slow in changing prevailing practices.

The enablement model of CG meets several limitations and obstacles when brought into practice. Concerning the aim of enablement and current debate on governing models of CG, bottom-up model or bottom-up with political and/or administrative support need more attention among the operational space of CG. Open dialogue between policy makers, city administration and gardening parties is urgently needed to fulfill the strategic aims of enablement.

To conclude, I present three ideas arising from this case study to better fulfill the strategic aims of enablement. First, the responsibilities and resources around the gardening phenomenon need to be rearranged within the city organization. Clear leadership in CG issues should be nominated for one department and certain city officers, and enough time resource for fulfilling the task. Rearranging the responsibilities is not crucial only inside the organization, but concerning the shortage of resources, cooperation with third-sector actors in planning and providing gardening facilities for residents would be worthwhile. On this, Tampere could consult those Finnish cities that are actively and systematically furthering CG in public spaces through cooperative processes.

Second, the interplay and dialogue between the city and other stakeholders, especially community gardeners and citizens interested in gardening, needs to be stronger. One successful example of this is how the skateboarders in Tampere are taken as a relevant negotiation party in planning new sports areas due to their proactive attitude and strong DIY culture (Kyrönviita & Wallin 2022). Gardeners could take a similar approach. However, the city should make the policy process more open and inclusive for reaching the weak and silenced signals from citizen-gardeners before stating the demand for CG as non-existent, for example, by creating open face-to-face or digital collaborative planning platforms for gardening.

Third, the continuity around gardening projects needs to be guaranteed. If temporariness is the starting point for the activity, it fails to engage the citizens. Continuity does not necessitate sealing certain sites and locations for CG only but securing space for gardening activity among urban fabric. It is important to think of new mechanisms that would allow gardening as part of urban development, not as an unquestioned opposite of it.

Gardening can be an asset for the city, as proven by numerous earlier studies. Negotiation and open policy and development processes could lead to mutually beneficial results. Through continuity of space, open dialogue with city officials, and proper delegation of responsibility within local government, CG can be a feature of city life that both enriches the citizens and improves the city's appearance and image. For further research, there is a call to study the potential of instrumental enabling among the operational space of CG. Changes in urban development structures and new planning instruments could enable urban CG among different cities and planning contexts.

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