

Why do people choose to grow their own food?

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About this presentation

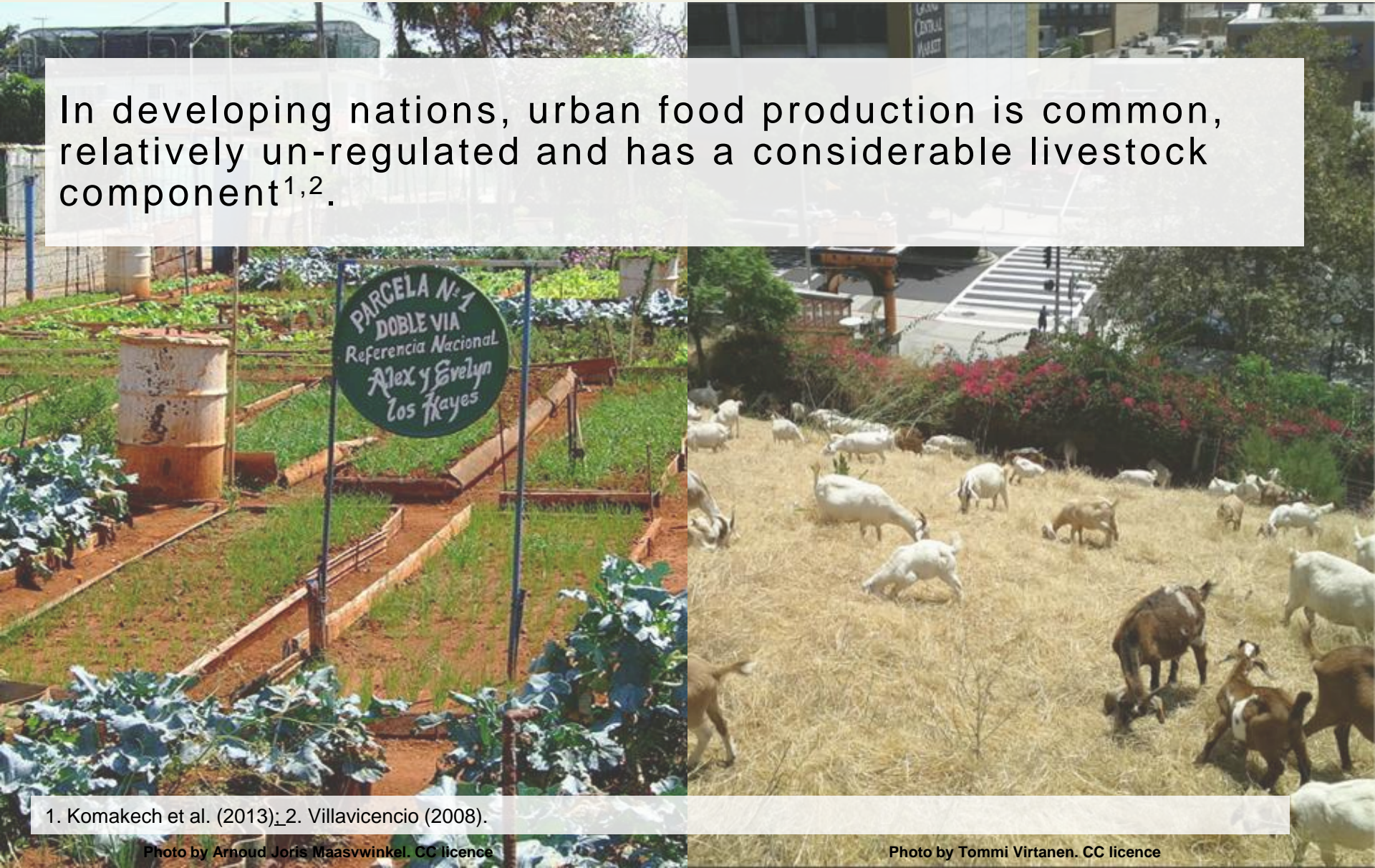
I've spent the past four years researching urban food production. I have always loved growing things. Today my talk is divided into five main parts.

1. A little history of urban food production
2. Why do people grow food now?
3. Results from the Edible Gardens project
4. "Social value" vs. "Productivity"
5. Can these values come together?



Urban food production differs around the world

In developing nations, urban food production is common, relatively un-regulated and has a considerable livestock component^{1,2}.



1. Komakech et al. (2013); 2. Villavicencio (2008).

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By comparison, urban food production in the UK, Europe, the US and Australia has historically flourished during times of need: change, war, economic downturn or environmental concern^{3, 4, 5, 6}.



Why do people in modern urban areas choose to garden and grow food?

... **Intangible Benefits**

- Escapism^{7,8,9}
- Ownership & Identity^{8,9,10}
- Connection to nature^{8,9,10}
- Social relationships^{8,9,10,11,12}
- Relaxation^{13, 14}
- Education^{15,16}
- Happiness^{13, 14}

... **“Values” from my past research¹⁷**

- Knowledge & skills
- Kids & education
- Community / neighbourhood systems
- Connection to nature
- Enjoyment

Recent research into “motivations”

US Based

In 2008, Butterfield¹⁸ found the top reasons Americans were growing food was:

- Better tasting produce (58%)
- To save money (54%)
- Better quality produce (51%)
- Food safety (48%)

(n = 2,559)

AUS Based

In 2014, Wise¹⁹ found the top Australian motivations were:

- Healthier food (71%)
- To save money (62%)
- Better tasting produce (61%)
- Enjoyment (57%)
- For mind & soul (51%)

(n = 1,390)

Introducing the Edible Gardens project

Purpose: To learn more about the productive capacity and social value of urban agriculture in South Australia

Methods:

Phase 1 – Online social survey

Phase 2 – In-field garden data collection

Phase 3 – Focus groups



**Edible
Gardens**

**Discovery
circle**

Survey results

What are the top three reasons you grow food?

1. Produce related (mainly healthy, fresh and tasty)**
2. Enjoyment*
3. Natural connection
4. To save money**
5. Social connection
- ...
6. Environmental concern
7. Health promotion
8. Convenience

(n = 373)



Survey results

Recreation Experience Preference Scale (Likert-scale styled questions):

Our four main factors:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral		Agree	Strongly agree
o Tranquillity & time out new things	1	2	3		4	5
o Develop & learn skills						
o I produce food to be close to nature	1	2	3		4	5
o Social connection						
o I produce food to relax physically			3		4	5

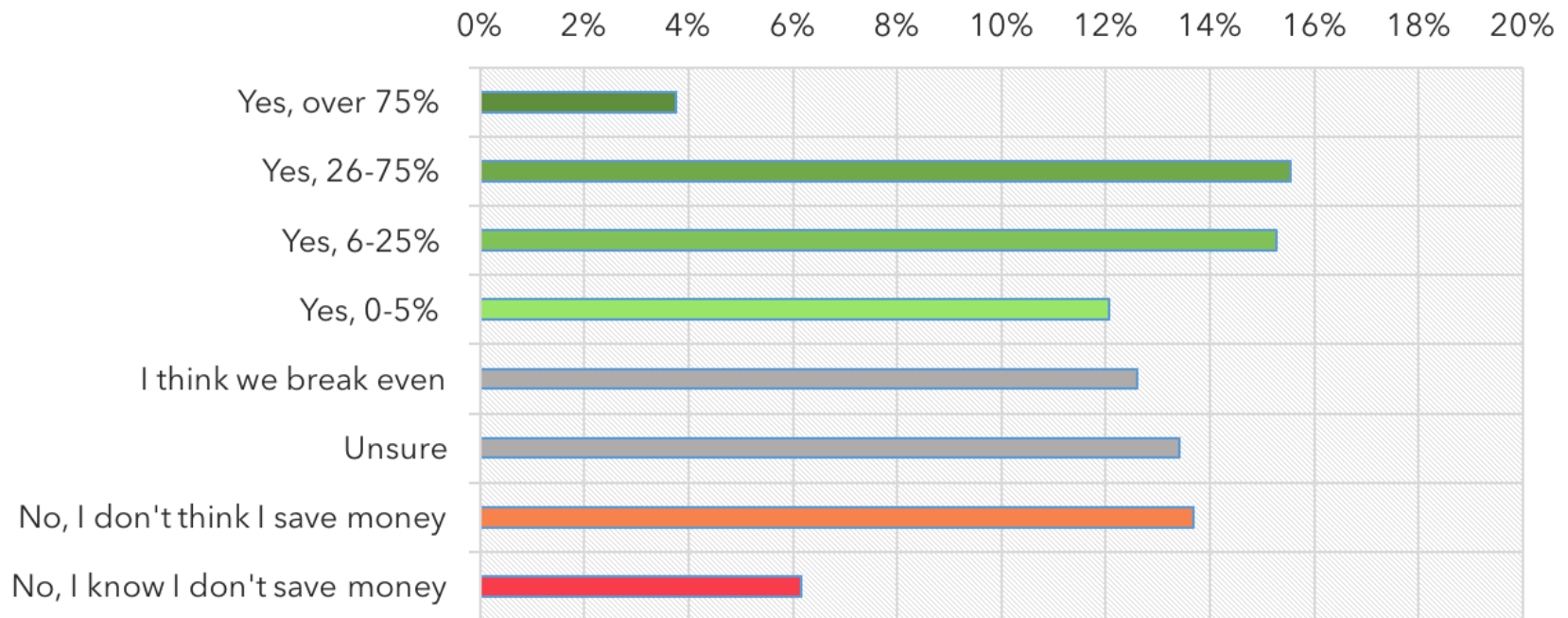
We analysed the results from these statements using factor analysis.

“Saving money?”

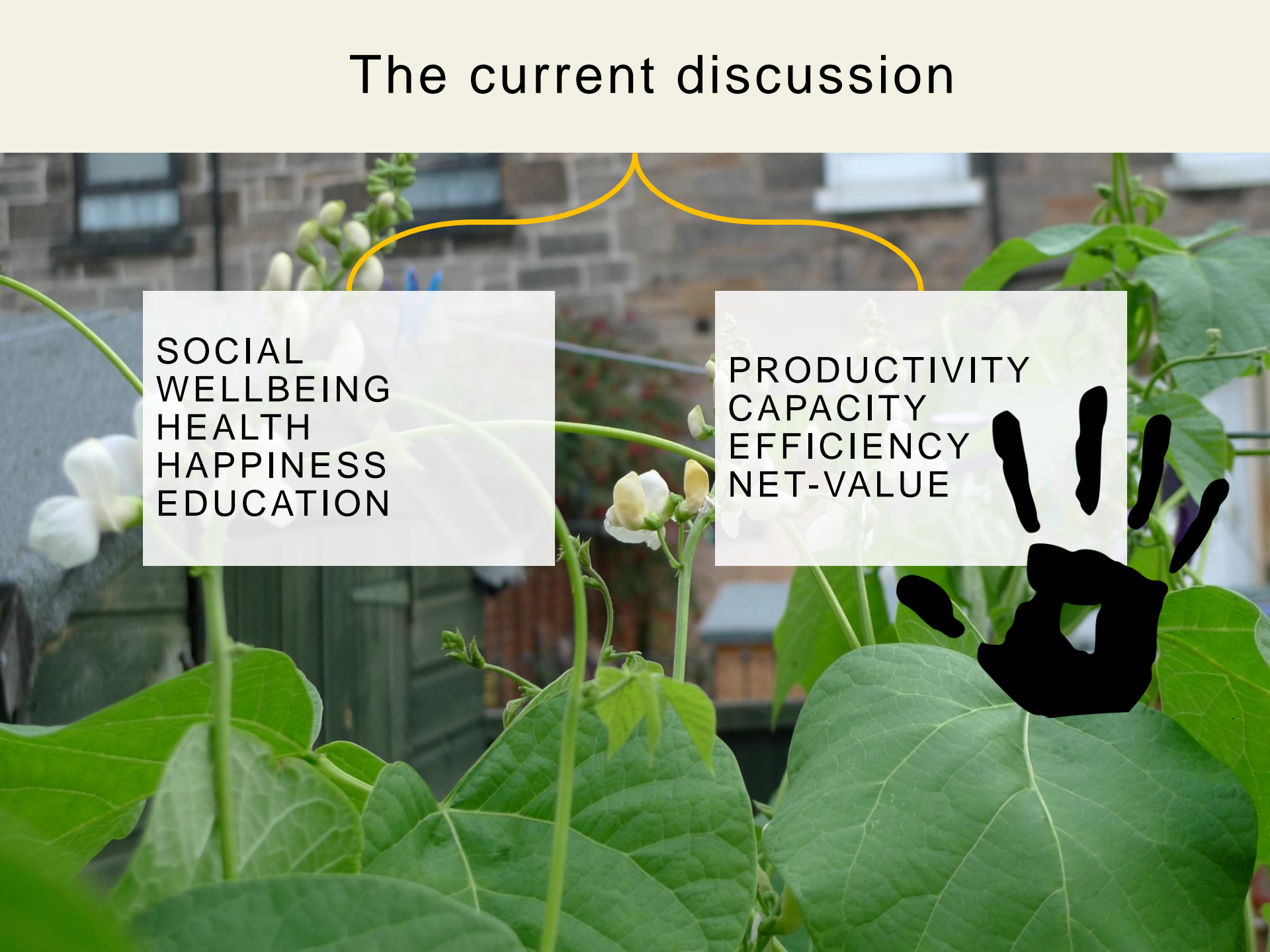
When presented with the Likert-style scale question:

Do you save some of your weekly household fruit and vegetable budget by growing some of your own food?

Reponses (=353)



The current discussion

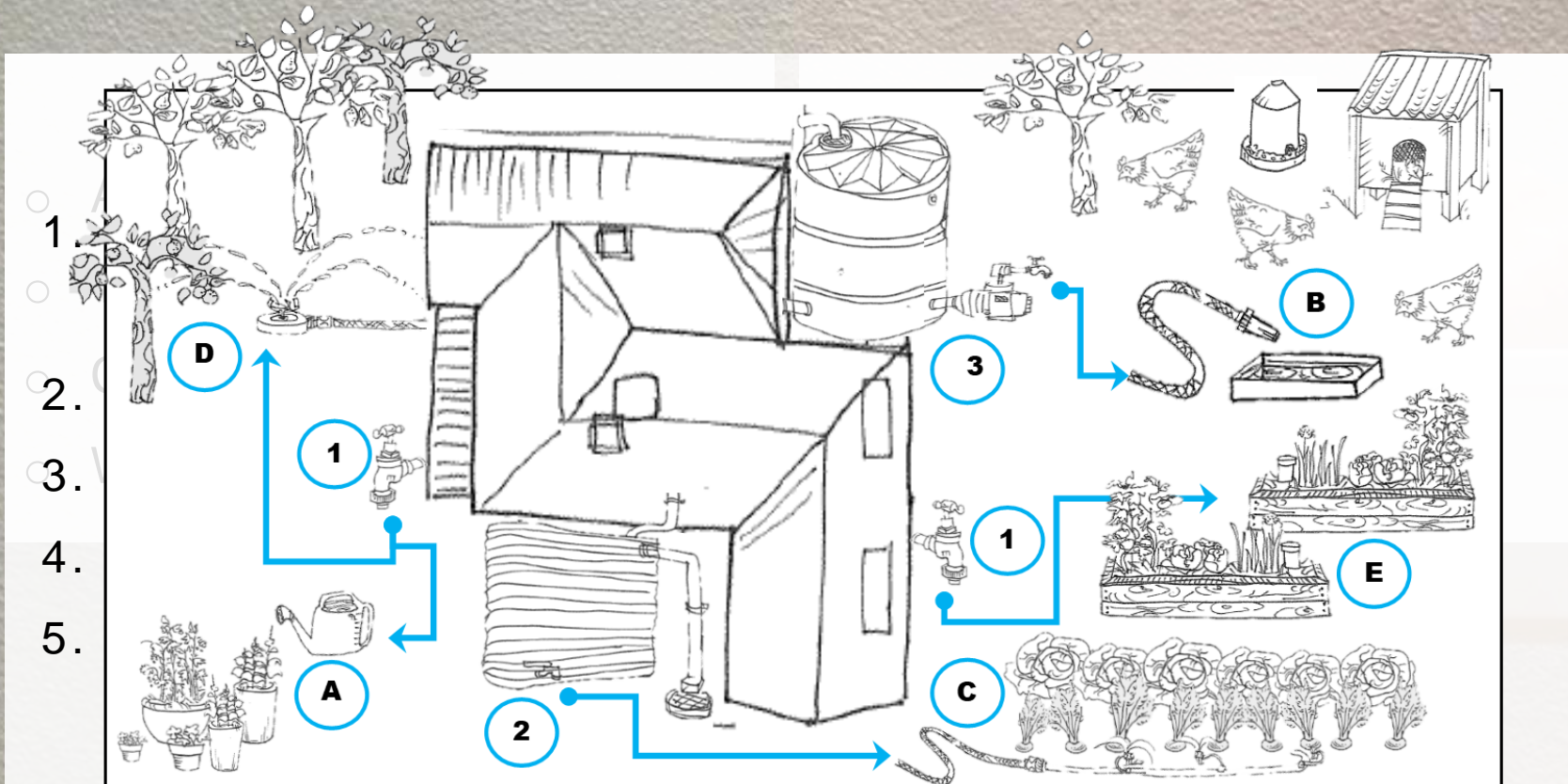


SOCIAL
WELLBEING
HEALTH
HAPPINESS
EDUCATION

PRODUCTIVITY
CAPACITY
EFFICIENCY
NET-VALUE



The “productive” values



Water sources:

1. Reticulated mains water tap
2. Rain water tank without a pump
3. Rainwater tank with a pump

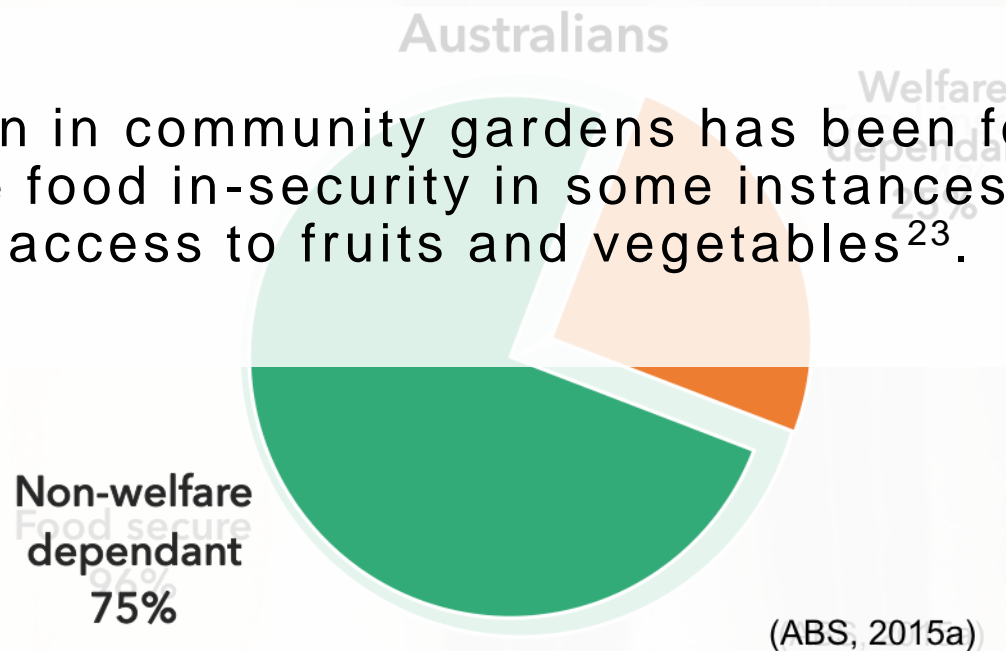
Irrigation methods:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| A) Hand watering (watering can) | D) Non-automatic moveable sprinkler |
| B) Hand watering (hose) | E) Wicking bed irrigation |
| C) Non-automatic dripper line | |

What about the others?

There is a practical need to establish “if” and “how” urban food production can help households to save money in modern urbanised areas²⁰.

Participation in community gardens has been found to help reduce food in-security in some instances^{21,22}, and to increase access to fruits and vegetables²³.



The “social” values

Photo by Michael Hartford. CC Licence

Food to bring people together (13/18 interviews)

“...food is one of those things people connect over.” KI#15

- “... people talking to each other and sharing, swapping stories and becoming friends.” KI#12

Enjoyable experience (13/18 interviews)

- “The garden is an enjoyable pastime and I really enjoy seeing it grow and harvesting and saying, oh wow – my Jerusalem Artichokes really are tasty”. KI#6

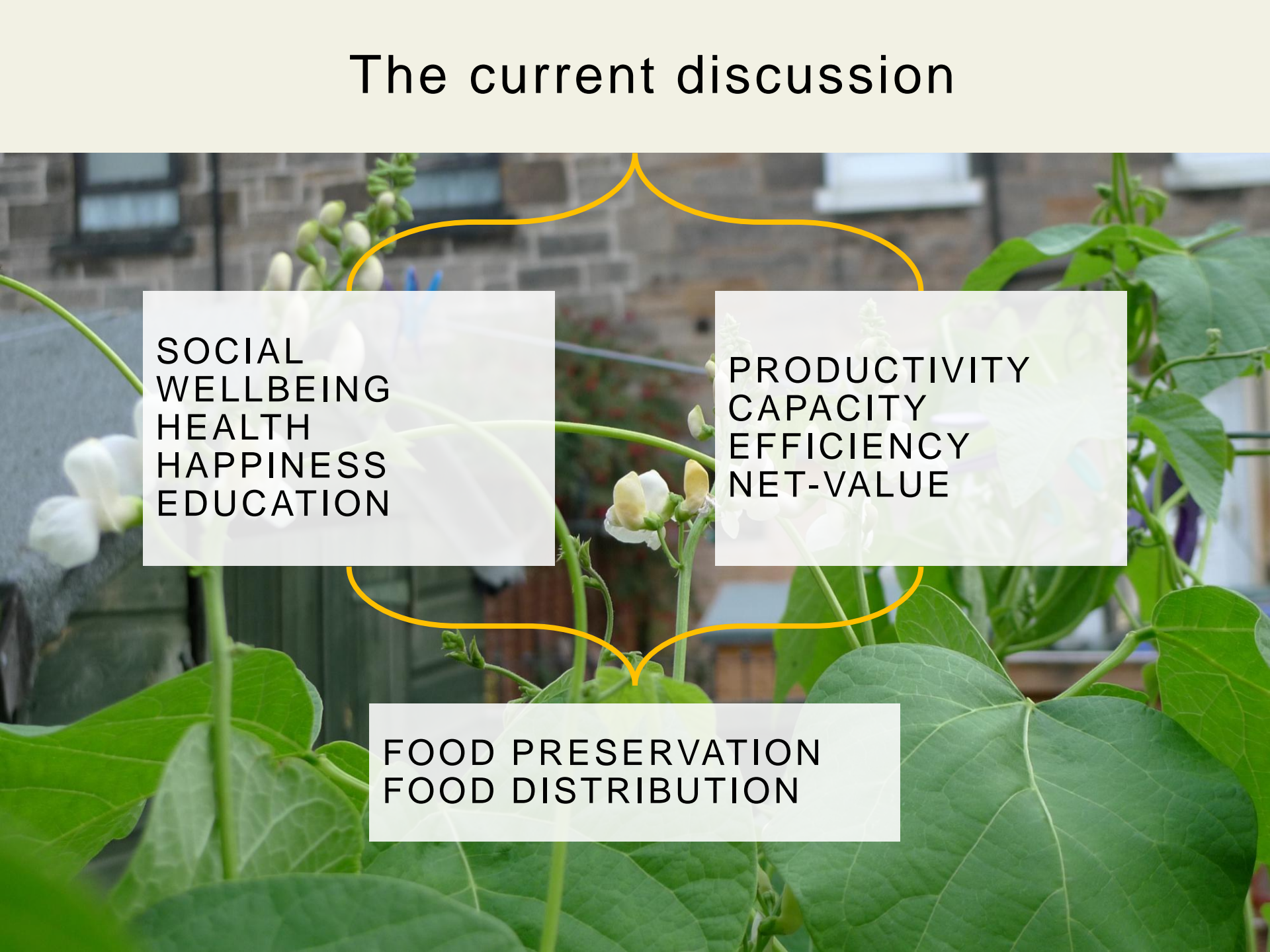
Connection to nature

Emotional value of food (12/18 interviews)

- “Food is that thing that we all share. It’s generosity of spirit. About giving, nurturing and feeding people and making them happy.” KI#1

“The understanding that food has nothing to do with money.” K.FG#1

The current discussion

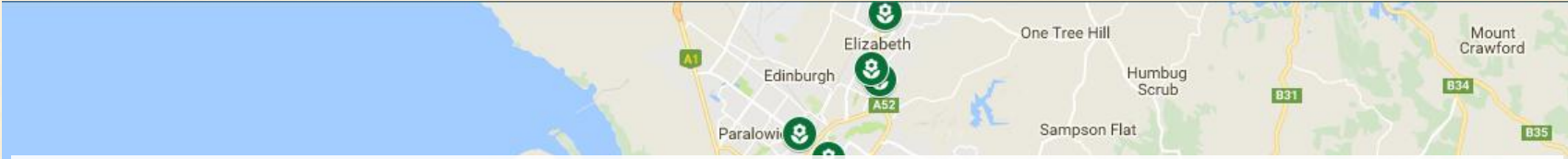


SOCIAL
WELLBEING
HEALTH
HAPPINESS
EDUCATION

PRODUCTIVITY
CAPACITY
EFFICIENCY
NET-VALUE

FOOD PRESERVATION
FOOD DISTRIBUTION

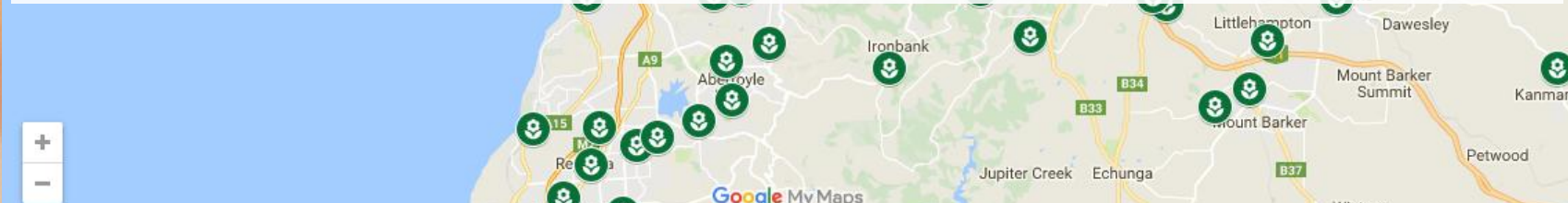
Where the values currently come together



Some studies have found giving away food to be a low motivator for urban gardeners^{18,19,26}. It can also be a source of empowerment²⁴.

E.g. Kortright & Wakefield (2011)²⁶ found the majority of their gardeners chose not to grow more food than their own household would consume.

Vitiello (2010) were surprised when most of their community gardeners reported sharing produce with anyone who was hungry – via a range of formal and informal networks.



Take-home message

Why do people choose to grow some of their own food?

...

For many reasons

1. The produce
2. Enjoyment
3. Natural connection
4. To save money
5. Social connection

Yet there is still
so much we don't
know.

Thank you for listening, are there any questions?

Interested in having a chat?

Email: georgia.pollard@mymail.unisa.edu

You can visit the Edible Gardens website:

[www.discoverycircle.org.au/projects/
edible-gardens/](http://www.discoverycircle.org.au/projects/edible-gardens/)

And my science communication blog:

www.urbanagscientist.com



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