

**MA Defence: “Cultivating Resistance? Urban Sustainability, Neoliberalism, and Community Gardens”**  
**By Gonen Steinberg**

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Our dear colleague, Gonen Steinberg, will defend his MA Thesis on March 25th, 2015 at Harbour Centre, Room 1530. Here is the abstract of his thesis “Cultivating Resistance? Urban Sustainability, Neoliberalism, and Community Gardens”:

**Abstract**

In the past two decades sustainability has emerged as an important agenda in urban planning, with increasing international interest in urban compactness, smart growth, and healthy and sustainable communities. Drawing upon policies and practices implemented in major North American cities, particularly Vancouver, this thesis explores the various ends to which urban sustainability is being appropriated in practice. In particular, this study identifies an economistic and entrepreneurial ethos underlying municipal policy-making that reinforces a narrow, neo-liberal form of sustainability. It then explores the application of this ethos to community gardens, identifying a significant tension between grassroots practices of community gardening (which tend to pull sustainability in a more radical direction which fosters principles of social and environmental justice) and a developer/municipal government led appropriation of such practices (which are often built around maximizing profit and the privatization of urban space). This contextual exploration of sustainability policies, practices and politics adds to our understanding of neo-liberal urban responses to social and ecological crises, and the civic strategies that resist them.

**Keywords:** Urban Sustainability; Urban Neoliberalism; Everyday Life; Community Gardens; Urban Social Movements; Vancouver