



# Reflections on creating a student garden: the mediation power of Transition

Dominyka Urbonaite, University of St Andrews



# Outline

- Introduction
- Reflection process
- Transition University of St Andrews
- Stakeholders
- Timeline
- Main Issues
- Future



# Introduction

## Why community garden?

- Gardening benefits for social and physical well being (McBey, 1985)
- Greater consumption of fresh and organic vegetables (Blair et al., 1991)
- Lack of access to land otherwise (Armstrong, 2000)
- Physical location to meet others and ideas sharing (Armstrong, 2000)




# Aims

- Share my experience of establishing a community garden in a halls of residences
- Explore the importance of Transition University of St Andrews (Transition) acting as a mediator between students and university operational departments



# Reflection Process

- Documentation of process
  - Informal discussions to deepen my reflections
  - Recommendation for potential future gardens
- 



# Transition University of St Andrews

- Student and staff initiative working at a grassroots level to lower the institution's impact on the planet by running practical carbon reduction projects
- Part of broader UK-based movement
- Established in 2009
- Funded by Climate Challenge Fund



# Transition Projects

- **Edible Campus**
- Carbon Conversations
- Carbon Calculator
- Saint Exchange
- Cook Smarter

# Albany Park

- Halls of Residence
- Population 360 students
- Mixture of undergraduates and postgraduates
- Hall Committee
- Environment Rep a part of Halls Committee





Garden



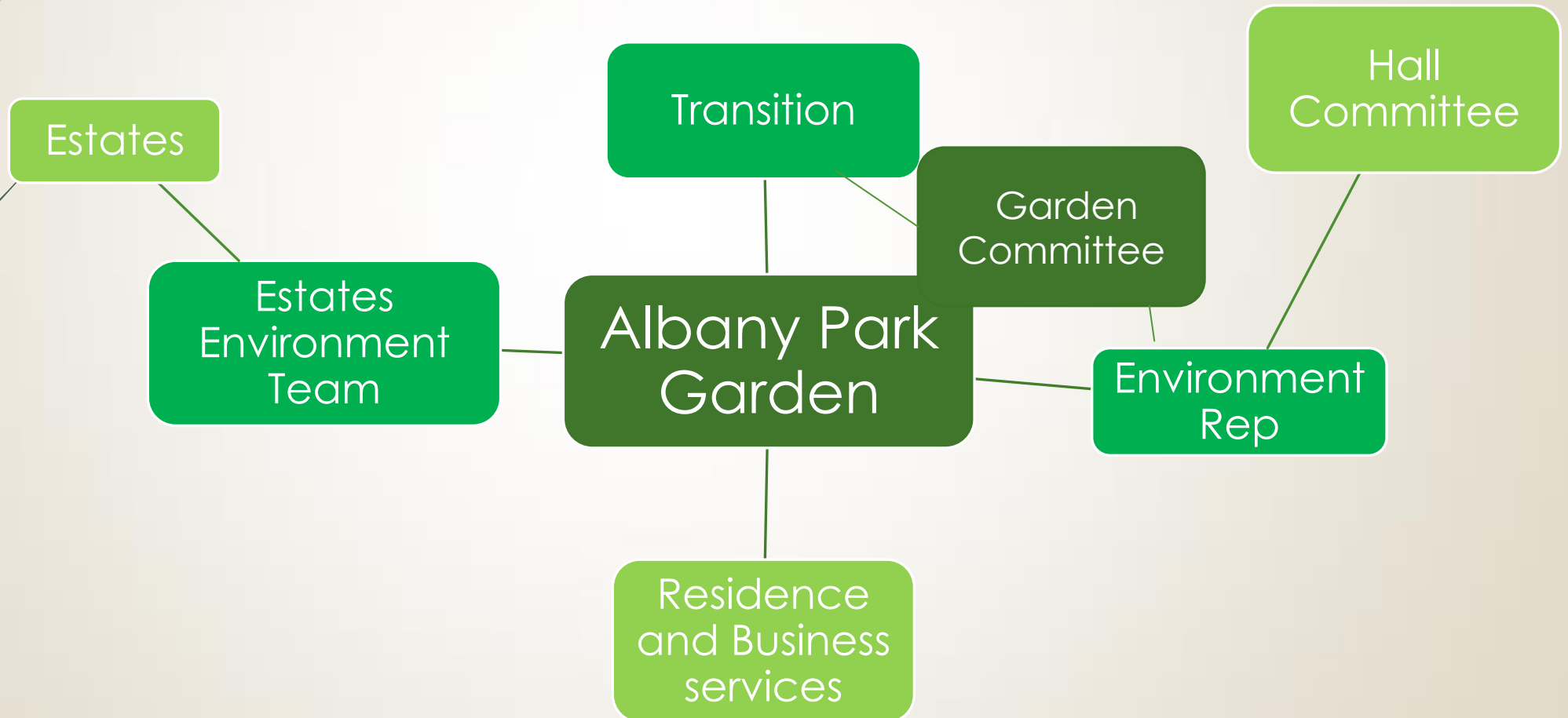


# Albany Park garden

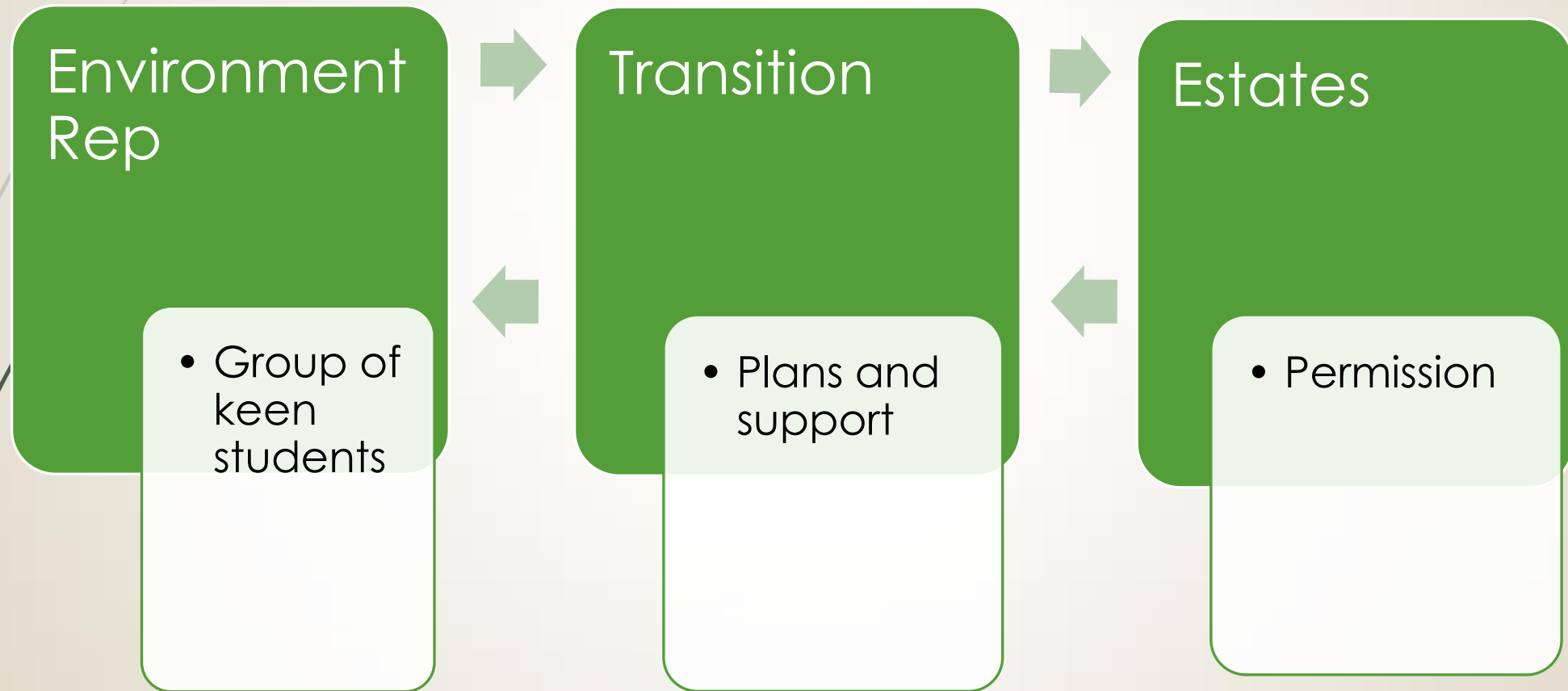




# Stakeholders Structure



# Process



# Timeline

May 2012

- Idea about garden
- Replanting of apple trees and herbs to the garden area

July 2012

- A new Transition Coordinator starts
- First meeting with Transition

September 2012

- Students back from summer holiday
- First visioning meeting with new residents

# Timeline

October  
2012

- First talks with Estates for permission use the space for a garden
- Proposal draft
- Transition Edible Campus part time worker employed

November  
2012

- Communication with Estates continue
- Estates rising concerns

January  
2013

- Completed appraisal form submitted to Estates
- Comments from Estates on commitment



Febru  
2013

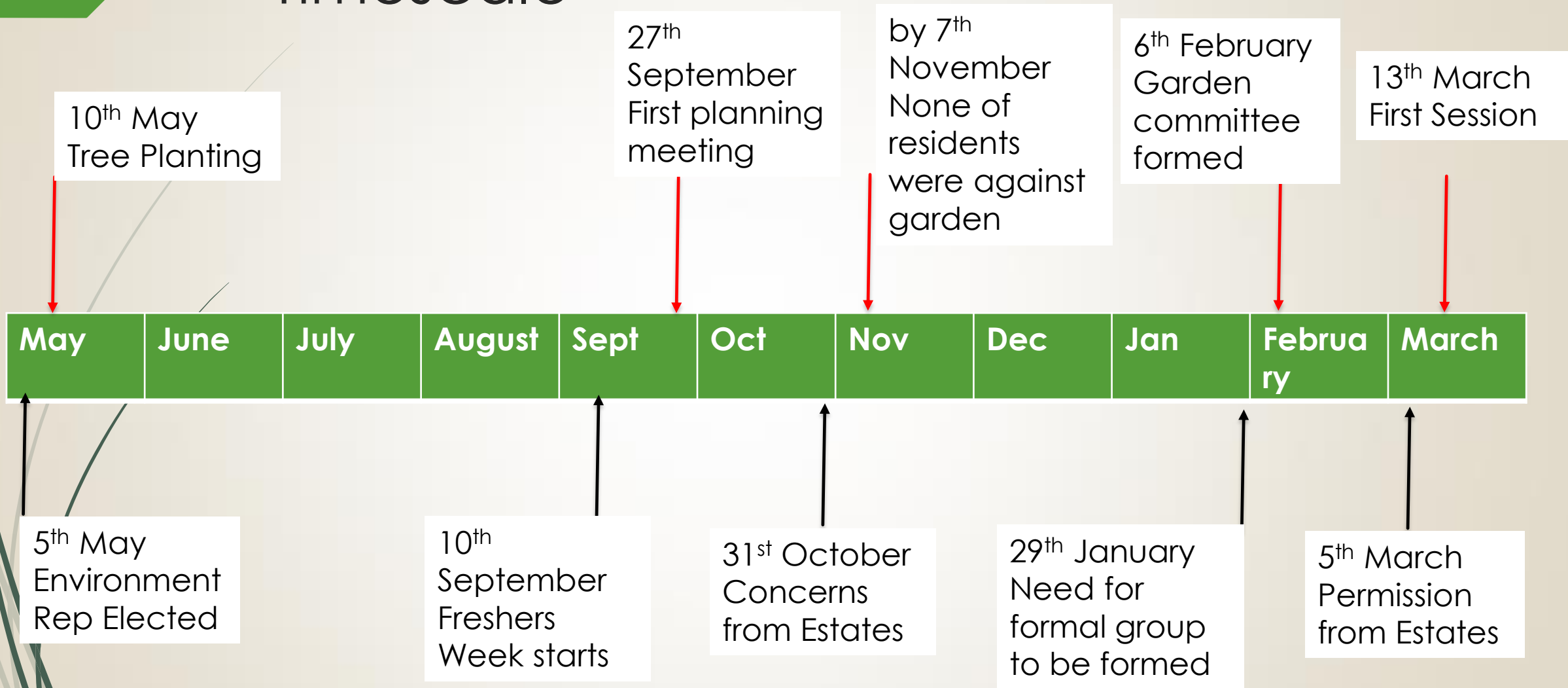


ing

n




# Timescale








# Transition role

- Mediating between students and staff
  - Planning support
  - Funding and expertise
  - Gardening training
  - Providing facilities for meetings
- 



# Main issues

- Teething Problems
  - Consistency
  - Continuity
  - Overall appearance
- 



# Teething Problems

- New Environment Rep
  - New Transition Coordinator
  - New Edible Campus project worker
- 



# Seasonal Cycles

Seasonal:

- Undergraduate students

All year round:

- Postgraduates living in Albany Park
- Staff from neighbouring Scottish Oceans Institute involvement during summer holidays period
- Members of community
- Students staying in St Andrews through the summer





# Continuity

- Garden committee
- Environment Rep for Albany Park sit on garden committee
- Garden included in Albany Park Halls Committee Constitution




# Visions of appearance

- Keeping garden area tidy and aesthetically pleasant for estates
  - Constantly picking up any rubbish
  - How community garden should look like? Potatoes or edible flowers
- 




# Community Engagement

- Neighbouring elderly day care centre
- St Andrews in Bloom group
- Zero waste Scotland
- Members of Estates




# Gardening student perception on Transition

- Without Transition there would be no garden
  - It would be hard for student group alone to approach University on the possibility to have a garden
  - Transition role was (is) to provide financial and administrative support, training
  - Feeling the need to be supervised (lack of gardening experience)
- 






# Transition staff view on the project

- Albany Park seen as established project
  - Functional student group having ownership on the garden
  - Ready to be fully independent
- 



# Discussion

- Students and University operate on different time scales
  - Importance of Transition as a mediator
  - Social capital building and example for future garden projects
- 



# Future of the project

- Could Albany Park garden function without Transition?
- Funding from Hall committee budget
- Ownership



# Questions ?