Université de Montréal

Citizens of the Garden:
The Meaning and Significance of Community Gardening

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Mémoire présenté à la Faculté des études supérieurs en vue de l'obtention du grade de

Maître ès sciences (M. SC.) en sociologie

Décembre, 2022

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Université de Montréal

Faculté des arts et des sciences : Département de sociologie

Ce mémoire intitulé

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Résumé

La recherche qui suit porte sur l'expérience du jardinage communautaire à Montréal à partir de l'exemple de l'un des arrondissements. Au cours des dernières années, à l'échelle globale, la popularité des jardins communautaires est allée en grandissant. Comment interpréter cela à partir du point de vue des participants? Quelle est l'expérience vécue par les jardiniers communautaires et quelle signification accordent-ils à ces pratiques sociales? Afin de répondre à ces questions, j'ai fait appel à une démarche qualitative, combinant l'observation et entretiens en profondeur avec des participants. Les résultats de l'étude découlent de 30 entretiens semi-directifs. Des participants avec des profils sociaux divers ont été recrutés. En faisant appel à la théorie ancrée, la recherche met en lumière des contextes spécifiques à partir desquels les jardiniers communautaires fournissent des significations à leur engagement dans ce type de jardinage.

Considérée à partir de trois dimensions – économique, sociale et culturelle – cette étude met en lumière le fait que les significations que les acteurs accordent à leurs pratiques dépendent du contexte, mais découlent aussi de leur subjectivité. Ressort aussi l'importance de la dimension émotionnelle. Le jardinage communautaire est décrit sous l'angle d'une pratique transformatrice – en convergence avec d'autres formes d'action collective – qui permet aux citoyens en tant que jardiniers de mieux faire face aux défis de la vie quotidienne, que ce soit sur le plan financier, social, culturel ou environnemental. Par le biais du jardinage, les participants soutiennent qu'ils approfondissent leur identité personnelle, tout en construisant de nouvelles relations avec les autres ainsi qu'avec la nature. La recherche confirme qu'en ce qui concerne l'expérience subjective de jardinage, les participants parlent de retombées positives.

Mots clés: jardins communautaires, lotissement(s), espace vert, jardinage communautaire, agriculture urbaine(UA), insécurité alimentaire, (in)justice sociale, (in)justice environnementale

Abstract

The present research addresses the subjectivity of the community gardening experience in the case of a Montreal borough. Community gardens have regained popularity worldwide. How to interpret this phenomenon from the perspective of participants? And how do they experience (community) gardening and make sense of their social practices? To answer these questions, this study takes a qualitative approach that combines observations and in-depth interviews. The findings drawn from this study are based mainly on 30 semi-structured interviews. Participants from diverse social strata were recruited. Guided by grounded theory, this research stresses the specific contexts under which community gardeners generate meanings from their community gardening experience.

Examined from three dimensions – economic, social, and cultural – this study reveals that meanings and significance are context-sensitive, personalized, and fluid. The emotional dimension emerges as of particular importance. Community gardening is viewed as a transformative practice – converging with diverse forms of collective action – that allows citizen gardeners to address everyday life challenges, whether financial, social, cultural, or environmental. Through gardening, participants claim that they are reconnecting with themselves, with other people, and with nature. This research confirms that with respect to the subjective experience of gardening, participants generally claim positive outcomes.

Keywords: allotment, community garden, community gardening, environmental (in)justice, food (in)security, green space, social (in)justice, urban agriculture

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List of Abbreviations

G.A: Gardener/Administrator

G.G.: Gardener/Gardener (Simple Gardener)

KIC Garden: Knowledge and Innovation Community Garden

NYC: New York City

UA: Urban Agriculture

To my son, Shida

Acknowledgments

My thanks first go to the participants of this research, who generously shared with me their precious time, knowledge, experience, and insightful reflections. With trust and confidence, they let me into their "realm" - the world of community gardening. I would like to extend my special thanks to the city's community garden coordinator for the borough, whose full support facilitated my research at the data-collection stage tremendously.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my advisor, professor Christopher McAll, who guided me throughout this project with dedication and patience. He gave me room to explore and learn while providing me unfailing support with his knowledge, insight, advice, and valuable feedback. And his close final reading has raised the quality of this thesis. I also extend my warmest thanks to the other two members of my jury, Sara Teitelbaum and Cécile Van de Velde, who made additional suggestions to improve my thesis.

I should also like to thank my father, who introduced me to gardening when I was a child. Last, I wish to show my appreciation to my husband, son, and friends, who supported me through this study with great patience, understanding, and indulgence.

Introduction

In the spring of 2020, when the global pandemic outbreak hit Canada, community gardens appeared more frequently than usual in local and international media. Faced with the new public-health crisis that disrupted the food-supply chain and resulted in concerns for food insecurity, community gardens emerge in the media and public discourse in terms of their potential to improve food security. Duchemin (2021), reminds us of the important role community gardens can play in the face of such increased food insecurity. According to Canada's Food Price report (2022), a typical grocery bill rose by 70% between 2000 and 2020. The report predicts that food/vegetable prices will continue to increase by 5-7% in 2022[1]. The report shows that rising food prices are also affected by and closely interrelated to climate change, climbing oil prices, the biodiversity crisis, and other environmental issues.

The city of Montreal recognizes increasingly the valuable role community gardens can play in realizing the more general goals of "enhancing urban resilience" and exploring "new ways of consuming, producing, working, and living together to meet major environmental and social challenges" (Ville de Montréal, 2022). In February 2022, the city announced an investment of 10 million dollars in community gardens over the next ten years. Over the last few decades, community gardens have been "coming back" in many cities. In London, for example, according to media reports, the estimated waiting time for access to a community garden in 2019 was up to 40 years, and in Berlin, over 12,000 would-be-gardeners have put their names on the waiting list (McKenna, 2019). How should this new popularity of community gardens be understood?

Community gardens can be distinguished from other types of public place. They are "green spaces" like parks, but instead of growing flowers and trees, individual citizen-gardeners plant edible plants, prune, water, harvest, and leave gardens with bunches of fresh vegetables in their baskets. Unlike private gardens, community gardens are shared by people of different origins, cultures, and social classes.

[1] Report was released at the end of 2021 to predict food prices in 2022. As we now know that the actual food price increase in 2022 is higher than the report's forecast.

To better understand their current popularity, we need to ask how community gardens came to exist in contemporary society. Community gardens have appeared and disappeared in urban landscapes for more than a century. In the late 19th century, there were allotments in Great Britain (Crouch 1989), “jardins d’ouvriers” in France (Dubost, 2018; Consalès, 2018), and the Canadian Pacific Railway company’s railway workers’ gardens in Canada (Bhatt and Farah, 2016). The emergence of the earliest community gardens coincided with two great social transformations: urbanization and industrialization. These early gardens addressed one of the most salient social problems of the time: feeding the urban poor and improving their health.

Following these early gardens, there were two waves of community-garden development during the world wars: the “liberty gardens” and “victory gardens”. Many citizens in countries including Great Britain, Canada, and the United States, were mobilized to grow food to support the war effort. Gardening was presented at the time as a “patriotic” action, transforming schoolyards, churches, parks, and private yards into garden plots (Birky & Strom, 2013; Bhatt and Farah, 2016). However, these gardens tended to disappear when the wars ended (Birky and Strom, 2013). Such community-gardens were intended to mobilize the population in order to maximize food-production in cities for a temporary period. Hence, community gardens waxed and waned as the social-political and economic environment evolved.

The most recent wave of community-garden development started in the 1970s, with many of the contemporary community gardens in Montreal and New York City, for example, seeing the light of day during this period (Bhatt and Farah, 2016). They are often considered to be the first *real* community gardens, being born of community initiatives with volunteer members setting out to address social and environmental issues in their own neighborhoods (Birky and Strom, 2013; Bhatt and Farah, 2016).

Community gardens from this period on can serve diverse populations and purposes. Apart from food-production itself, they can be intertwined with socio-political and environmental agendas such as calls for greater social equality, rights, community empowerment, and environmental justice. Authors from various disciplines have interpreted this social phenomenon from different perspectives, making the connection, for example with food insecurity, social inequality, isolation, community decline, environmental injustice, the heat-island effect, biodiversity, the “extinction of experience” (with nature), and gentrification.

Despite the quantity of publications available on community gardens, this text suggests a potential knowledge gap in the literature on community gardens, which may stem from a lack of attention to the subjective experiences of participants. While many studies focus on the objective functions, perceived benefits, and motivations of community gardeners, less attention has been paid to the deeper, more personal meanings that community gardening may hold for individuals. Researchers can sometimes approach the topic from a detached, rational perspective, using methods such as questionnaires and surveys, which may not fully capture the rich and complex experiences of gardeners in their "life-world." Thus, while there is a wealth of information available on community gardens, there may still be room for more nuanced exploration of the deeper meanings and personal experiences that this activity can hold for those who participate.

In this study, I emphasize such "subjective" or "lived" experience". How do gardeners make sense of community gardening? What role does this social practice play in their daily life? How do they describe this experience in their own words? I follow Blumer (1969:51), who maintains that "people act toward things on the basis of the meaning that these things have for them, not on the basis of the meaning that these things have for the outside scholar". Even though human beings can appear to act in "confused", "irrational", and "unsystematic" ways in the eyes of outsiders, they can assign well-reasoned meaning to their actions when they have the occasion to be heard. From Blumer's perspective, people constantly make sense of and evaluate their actions through social interaction and retrospection.

I thus try to bridge the apparent gap in the literature by plunging into the present and past of gardening experience, "get[ting] inside their world of meanings", as Blumer (1969:51) advocates. It is necessary to develop a comprehensive understanding of the meaning and significance that participants attribute to community gardens as "spaces" and "places" (Massey, 2005); 2) and to community gardening as an activity that is often just seen as a "leisure" activity by outsiders.

For this purpose, my study takes on a phenomenological theoretical approach that recognizes the value of subjective experience as lived and interpreted by individuals. Hence, my research relies principally on two qualitative methods to collect data: observation and semi-structured interviews. Inspired by the "grounded theory" of Glaser et al. (1967:37), I am attentive to the influence of any pre-existing ideas, images, and hypotheses that I may have, while staying close to the data in order to allow the "fullest possible generality and meaning" to emerge.

For “grounded theory” to work, it relies on “comparative analysis”, and for this reason, I take a comparative case-study approach making comparisons at various levels and scales, whether among individual gardeners, social actors involved in one way or another in the life of the gardeners, and community gardens as units. In addition, I give special attention to the context of each gardening unit, following Flyvbjerg (2001), who emphasizes the importance of “contextualization” for case studies. This approach evokes what Robinson (2016) describes as “the comparative imagination” and the need to “think through elsewhere”, such that “repeated instances” and “shared features” may appear, contributing to our understanding of the meanings generated by participants.

I thus attempt to strike an equilibrium between viewing the “object” of the study, while maintaining a focus on the subjective values of participants’ experience, relating the meanings individuals assign to gardens and gardening, with whom they think they are, want to become, and what their actual living conditions and life circumstances are. This is primarily an exploratory case study, relying on a descriptive account of the participants’ experiences and memories, and the emotional dimension of both. I attempt to immerse myself in their ‘life-world’ experiences to better understand the significance of having a garden and practicing gardening in cities. I identify three key dimensions to frame my analysis and illustrate the significance of gardening from respectively micro-individual and macro-social perspectives: the economic, the social, and the cultural, all three being woven as common threads through the different chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 1
Economic Dimensions

In Daniela Guitart et al.'s (2012) systematic, quantitative review of English academic literature on community gardens in 2011, they note that nearly all (99%) of the 87 evaluated papers have mentioned the economic status of the gardeners. Furthermore, on summarizing motivations, they note that among others, the most commonly mentioned ones for which people participate in gardening are: "to consume fresh foods…, to improve health among members and to make or save money by eating from the garden or selling the produce." (Guitart et al., 2012:367). Food is a widely recognized material dimension that can reflect – but also has an impact on – an individual's economic conditions (Armstrong, 2000; Draper & Freedman, 2010).

In an earlier review conducted by Draper and Freedman (2010), the authors included in their analysis 55 articles published in the U.S. from 1999 to 2010. Using also quantitative methods, they note that the economic material dimension (food provision) is important in community garden studies. They show that one-fourth of the reviewed articles mention food production as a perceived benefit or motivating force. Their review shows that many scholars have recognized that community gardens can promote food security and improve the economic conditions of low-income gardeners.

In this chapter, I will first conceptualize food (in)security and examine local food produce practices in the context of the industrial and global food systems. I then draw on historical examples to illustrate how community gardens contributed to food security in the past. I bring out the shift of accent on food security from quantity to quality and mention the ethnographic pattern that emerged concerning the population who are vulnerable to food injustice and their demographic characteristics. Finally, I illustrate the quantitative aspect of food security through gardening and its impact on health.

1.1 Conceptualization of food insecurity and "localization" of food

Food insecurity is a growing concern in many countries and cities. Scholars, non-profit organizations, and local governments often consider community gardens as important components

of the "community food security movement[2]" with the emphasis being placed on both localized food production and improved food accessibility (Corrigan, 2011; Barthel & Isendahl, 2015; Audate et al., 2021). As Barrett (2010) has pointed out in his article 'Measuring Food Insecurity', there exist various definitions of food insecurity[3]. For instance, the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture)'s definition stresses the "availability of nutritious adequate and safe foods", and the ability of the population to "acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies" (Corrigan, 2011, citing USDA, 2009). Referring to research conducted by Maxwell (2000), Corrigan (2011) shows that there were 32 different definitions in articles published between 1975 to 1991. At different times, the way people think about food insecurity can change. For example, Sen (1982) argues that food insecurity, especially famine, ought to be attributed to "a decline in entitlements, and not [to] a decline in food availability" (Corrigan, 2011, citing Sen, 1982). Relying on Rose (1999)'s study, the author contends "although income is the single greatest predictor of food security", certain groups (the elderly, single-parent, and large families) are more vulnerable than others at the household level (Corrigan, 2011).

Like Corrigan, Barret (2010) also insists that food insecurity is an elusive concept. A working definition is thus necessary, especially when it comes to what community gardens can do for food insecurity. I use the definition preferred by Barrett (2010) and used at the 1996 World Food Summit, according to which food security represents:

> a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. (Barret, 2010: 825)

This definition brings out three key elements concerning food security: access ("physical, social and economic"), quantity, ("sufficient"), and quality, ("nutritious"). Physical access to food refers to the localization of food production and consumption, which, according to Robbins (2015), "is a

[2] According to Anderson and Cook (1999), Community food security is a community-level concern. The term refers to a systematic understanding of food security that is to be achieved in an environmentally and socially sustainable way over the long term. Kortright and Wakefield (2010) borrowed Hamm and Bellows (2003)'s definition, they contend that "…all community members are able to access a safe, nutritious, and culturally acceptable diet, achieved sustainably and in a way which maximizes community self-reliance and social justice."

[3] For instance, the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture)'s definition stresses the "availability of nutritious adequate and safe foods", and the ability of the population to "acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies" (Corrigan, 2011, citing USDA, 2009).

key component of resistance to the current industrialized and globalized structure of the food system that is at the root of these trends" (Robbins, 2015: 450). Community gardens, like other forms of 'localizing' food production – as Corrigan's case study of the Duncan Street Miracle Garden (in Baltimore, Maryland) demonstrates – can contribute to household and community food security by providing, according to Barret's standard, "physical, social and economic access" to "nutritious food" (Barret, 2010). Corrigan stresses the availability, freshness, and tastiness of fruits and vegetables mentioned in her interviews with the gardeners. Similar to Baker (2004), she considers community gardens as part of local-food-based movements, like farmers' markets, and other forms of urban agriculture.

Barret maintains that there are three "pillars" in the conceptualization of food security: access, availability, and utilization. He argues that:

> Access is most closely related to social science concepts of individual or household well-being: What is the range of food choices open to the person(s), given their income, prevailing prices, and formal or informal safety net arrangements through which they can access food? (Barret, 2010:825)

Income, food prices, and available safety nets determine an individual's food access, with the socio-economic status of a person or a community constraining food choices. Similarly, Robbins (2015) questions whether local food systems can adequately challenge the existing industrial and global food systems. She asks whether local food systems can "adequately feed those living in poverty and low-income situations, those who cannot afford to pay premium prices for local, ecologically produced food products. Can and will the working classes in both rural and urban settings participate in local food systems while the industrial food system continues to provide cheap food?" (Robbins, 2015: 450). Even though she concentrates on the agribusiness and small-scale farming sector of the local food system, her arguments and questions reveal two things relevant to community gardens: (1) the importance of food access and, in particular, access to ecological, organic food and (2) the fact that food choices are constrained by economic conditions of life.

The question raised as to how working classes or people living in poverty can participate in local, ecological food produce and have access to ecologically grown healthy food? According to Corrigan (2011), community gardens seem to present a response. Being considered as part of an alternative food practice and an important component of the local food system, community gardens

can provide working-class and/or low-income gardeners free access to “local, ecologically produced food”. However, Corrigan distinguishes food insecurity in the “Global South” and the “Global North”. She suggests that food insecurity in the “Global North” is often related to access to healthy, quality, and nutritious food, especially for “low-income and minority populations”, whereas in the “Global South”, food insecurity is normally associated with hunger, starvation, and malnutrition. In the “Global North”, the food insecurity problem is less of a quantity issue and more of a matter of quality concern.

In the Global North, Corrigan insists that not only can community gardens improve food security by providing locally produced, fresh, nutritious food – fresh vegetables and fruits –, but also can substantially reduce the severe impact of the “food desert” in the disadvantaged African American neighborhood where her investigation took place. She stresses that “food deserts” are mainly concentrated in poor neighborhoods in many American cities. In her investigation, 42% of residents live below the poverty line. Also, she demonstrates to what extent the food produced from community gardens can reduce gardeners’ food expenses (one African American male gardener claimed that 99% of his vegetables come from the garden) (Corrigan, 2011). Based on her own case study and those of others, Corrigan illustrates that there is a clear socio-economic benefit from gardening. The economic-material dimension of community gardens can be seen in the light of two aspects: improved food security (in terms of availability, access, and quality) for individuals, households, and communities can substantially reduce food expenses, and at the same time, the excess production in some gardens can be a potential resource for economic gain when sales of produce are permitted. (Corrigan 2011; Audate et al., 2021).

Community gardens not only improve gardeners’ food security and economic conditions of life but also contribute to the improvement of community health and community food security (Wakefield et al. 2007; Kingsley et al. 2019; Corrigan, 2011). Corrigan emphasizes that community gardens, along with other “local food-based” movements, have become an important resource for the community food security movement. A study in Newark shows “that 44.4% of 189 respondents consider growing their own food a socio-economic benefit…”, and as Patel illustrates in his study, in 1989, 405 community gardens in Newark produced $450,000 worth of produce. (Corrigan, 2011, citing Patel, 1991). Similar results have been presented by authors like Armstrong (2000) in her investigation of Up State New York’s 63 community gardens.

1.2 "Localisation" of food in the industrial and global context

Like Corrigan's differentiation on the meaning and focus of food security between the "Global North" and "Global South", Robbins (2015) argues that it is necessary to recognize the differences in "food sovereignty" and "localization" of food movement discourse in the Global North and the Global South. She states that the Global North's food problems are often related to a large-scale industrial food system that fails to adequately address the upper-middle-class consumers' desire to consume ecologically produced organic food because the global food supply chain emphasizes productivity and competitive pricing. There is thus unequal access to nutritious food, whereas, in the global South, food sovereignty concerns often an inadequacy of food production, which is deeply rooted in the traditional mode of small-scale food production in rural areas.

Even though Robbins (2015) recognizes that local food of various forms can be viewed as an integral part of an alternative food system, that doesn't necessarily alter or challenge the prevalent industrial and global food system. She insists that "localization" of food does not and should not be equated with a "democratized food system". She considers that the tendency to idealize local food systems in food sovereignty discourse is dangerous and insists that each part of the local food system has unique characteristics and should be examined within the industrial and global food supply framework. In particular, the author identifies several critical voices on local food-system practices, including Guthman's critique of racial marginalization and exclusion in local food systems, and Allen and Wilson's seeing the risk of reinforcing existing inequalities of race and class because the focus falls more often on individual choices rather than on historically, systematically structured inequalities: "they posit that food sovereignty and other initiatives centered in the global South are more attuned to the importance of dealing with inequality." (Robbins, 2015). The same type of argument can be applied to community gardens because community gardens are often viewed by scholars as an integral part of local, alternative food resources that counter industrial and global food systems (Corrigan, 2011; Audate et al. 2021). In short, according to Corrigan (2011), and Audate, et al. (2021), local food provision of various forms can promote food justice and the "right to food" movement, and advocate for more space for marginalized communities to recreate their own food systems.

In short, local food systems, or community-based food insecurity solutions, are often examined within the framework of the global and industrial food system that operates according to the logic

of capitalist profit-seeking, urbanization, and a complex nature-society relation (Kingsley et al.2009; Corrigan, 2011). “Local food”, “food injustice”, “diet”, “nutrition”, and “public health”, are intersecting concepts that are prevalent in food insecurity studies at both the household and community levels. The roles they play in regard to food security, food justice, and social equality, especially concerning marginalized, low-income people and their access to food, are extensively documented (Armstrong, 2000; Kingsley et al., 2009).

1.3 Historic community gardening experience

Community gardens’ early developments are marked by an economic-material dimension, namely, the importance of food production. In the late nineteenth century, community gardens were established in Germany as “Kleingärten”, meaning “small gardens”, or “Schrebergärten”, named after the medical doctor Moritz Schreber, who promoted the benefits of gardening for urban youth and poor households, including reaping fresh vegetables and improved health (Cornaërt, 2016). At the same time in England, “allotment” gardens were created to improve working-class people’s food provision, living conditions, and health (Crouch, 1989). Meanwhile, in the French city Marseille in 1896, “les jardins d’ouvriers”, or ‘the workers’ gardens’, were created by a clergyman, Abbé Lemire, who was also the founder of the *Ligue française du coin de terre et du foyer* (LFCTF), with the purpose of reducing the misery of the working class and improving their family economic status and living conditions (Consalés, 2018).

In North America, according to Bhatt and Farah’s study (2016), institutional gardens in religious establishments like Hotel-Dieu and Montreal’s General Hospital were established to supplement diets. In the second half of the nineteenth country, the “Vacant Lot Garden” appeared in Detroit (Lawson, 2005). At a similar time, the Pacific Railway set up community gardens for their employees in the 1890s that lasted until the 1930s (Bhatt and Farah, 2016). According to the authors, who have conducted studies on community gardens’ historical accounts (Crouch, 1989; Lawson, 2005; Birky and Strom, 2013), though these gardens were labeled with various names, they seemed to have been created with common purposes – to feed the poor workers on meager industrial wages and to improve their own and their family’s health. The land was provided or leased either by the city, employers, or, on some occasions, by philanthropic religious institutions, with the common goal of keeping workers fit for work and their families free from starvation (Crouch, 1989; Burchardt, 2002a; Birky and Strom, 2013).

Later, during the two World Wars, “liberty gardens” and “victory gardens”[4] become popular and spread quickly nationwide. During World War I, for example, in the United States, millions of Americans practiced gardening on private property, in backyards, school yards, hospitals, and community gardens. Increased domestic food supply allowed more food to be sent overseas, so this practice was seen as “patriotic”. (Birky and Strom, 2013; Bhatt et Farah, 2016). In Western Europe, the situation was similar. In Britain, faced with mass starvation caused by severed food supply lines, the government permitted urban lots, parks, and sports fields to be converted to gardens. This was the famous “Every Man a Garden” campaign. During this period, allotment gardens more than doubled – increasing from 600,000 to 1,500,000 –, and they provide 2 million tons of fresh vegetables by the end of World War I (1918) (Barthel et al. 2015; citing Crouch and Ward, 1997). In Germany, community gardens also rose from a few hundred in the 19th century to 450,000 during the crisis in 1930. Barthel et al. (2015) note a ‘boom and bust’ cycle in community garden developments in the past century, but the spikes are always linked to social-economic crises and originate in food shortages.

Citizens of various social classes were mobilized to participate in gardening to supplement food shortages during the two World Wars. Even in the White House, the then first lady Eleanor Roosevelt established a garden for the people on the presidential premises. According to Birky (2009), the “victory gardens” during World War II were promoted in a campaign that had more than just local food sourcing in mind. The gardens were also created in the hope that – aside from food supply – gardening might boost the morale of people during wartime, and at the same time, serve as a recreational activity. However, as the author insists, this is not to say that food produced during World War II was unimportant. He notes that victory gardens accounted for 44% of fresh vegetable produce in the United States in 1942 (Birky, 2009).

In between the two World Wars, from 1929 to 1939, during the “Great Depression”, “Relief gardens,” or “Welfare gardens” were promoted by the American government. The purpose was to provide food subsistence and job-training programs to a large number of unemployed Americans. As Lawson (2005) documents in her book, in 1934, over 23 million Americans participated in the

[4] It needs to be noted that the category of “War gardens” or “Victory Gardens” encompass community gardens - other forms of gardening practice such as gardening on private properties, school yards, roadsides, and balconies (Lawson, 2005; Birky and Strom, 2013; Bhatt and Farah, 2016).

subsistence garden program. The total garden food produced was valued at $36 million that year (Lawson, 2005). Community gardens declined quickly after World War II due to many reasons, including economic recovery, increased job opportunities, and the government's withdrawal of funding and support (Kurtz, 2001; Lawson, 2005; Birky, 2009). Birky (2009) states that early community gardens played an important role in reducing hunger – especially among the vulnerable, marginalized urban population – during the periods prior to the establishment of food welfare systems such as food banks and food stamps when the national safety net had not yet been created.

In general, the earliest community gardens seem to have been created explicitly to compensate for the meager wages of workers with the goal of relieving hunger and improving their own and their family's health. As was demonstrated in the case of the "Jardins d'ouvriers" in France, the "Schrebergärten" in Germany, and the "Liberty" and "Victory gardens" in Britain and the United States, these gardens showed great food-produce potential to supplement food shortages at times of socio-political upheavals. (Lawson, 2005; Birky, 2009).

The food insecurity narratives of these early periods seem to place the accent rather on the quantity of food produced, or its economic value, than on quality. The population that took part in and benefited from the programs has not always been clearly identified. For example, the wartime gardens referred to gardeners as "citizens" but the populations that these gardening programs were aimed to help when mentioned, seem to fall into the category of the social-economically disadvantaged and marginalized. They are identified as "unemployed", or "workers" and their families living on meager wages and under poor conditions in densely populated, degraded neighborhoods (Crouch, 1989; Birky & Strom, 2013).

While these gardens are recognized as a food source that relieves the hunger of the working class and improves their economic conditions to some extent – or reduces national food-supply tension during a social-political crisis –, they are often marked by "temporariness" (Birky, 2009). He contrasts American community gardens with allotments in Great Britain and notes that American gardens seem to offer "temporary solutions" to social distress, while in Great Britain, allotments were created to last with leases of 25 years, and are therefore more permanent (Birky, 2009). While it is widely recognized that community gardens served to buffer food shortages and respond to food insecurity, the temporary character of the solution needs to be noted.

In the 1930s, the U.S. government promoted the "relief gardens" program to provide food, job training, and job opportunities to many unemployed Americans. According to Kurtz (2001), this well-intended program has been criticized. Aside from serving as a temporary "relief" to the impoverished or unemployed urban population, they also serve as a "relief" to the American government. Given the existence of such "relief gardens" relieve American governments from addressing the deeper social issues that are rooted in structural and institutional inequality and that go far beyond the food dimension (Kurtz 2001; Birky and Strom, 2013).

In short, according to many authors, the emergence of the earlier forms of community gardens as an alternative, local response to urban food problems (especially for marginalized populations in low-income neighborhoods) is viewed as closely associated with industrialization, urbanization, and globalization (Lawson, 2005; Birky and Strom, 2013; Robbins 2015). Barthel et al. (2015:1322 consider that cities are becoming more vulnerable as they depend increasingly on a "fragile global food system" and food supply is often remote due to the "double processes of space-time compression and capitalist urbanization"[5]. The "allotments", "workers' gardens", and "relief gardens, – were created primarily to resolve food insecurity problems faced by the urban poor working classes to relieve their hunger and improve their health, whereas "liberty gardens", and "victory gardens" both supplement local food supply and contribute to the realization of an end that is beyond gardening itself. Overall, historical community garden discourse seems to interpret food security as primarily an issue of quantity.

1.4 Contemporary Community Gardens and the shifted meaning of food security

The expression "community garden" itself appears in the 1970s (Lawson, 2005; Birky, 2009). Community gardens have various definitions. In the review conducted by Draper and Freedman (2010), they cite Ferris et al. (2001) who distinguish a "community garden" from a "private garden" by "the fact that it is in some sense a public garden in terms of ownership, access, and degree of democratic control" (Draper & Freedman 2010: page?).

[5] Barthel et al. (2015:1322) explain that by "space-time compression", they are referring to Harvey's (1990)'s notion of this concept, which describes technological innovations, cheap and efficient travel, and global economics that speed up the production cycle and reduce turnover time, briefly, all "those socioeconomic processes which serve to accelerate the pace of time and reduce the significance of distance".

Even though the name itself suggests an emphasis on "community", it is notable that in the 1970s, food insecurity (rather than community building) remains the primary driver behind collective or communal gardening (Birky & Strom, 2013; Bhatt & Farah, 2016). That is to say, the economic-material dimension of community gardening practice remains an important element. Authors have examined the appearance of community gardens during the world's global social-economic downturns in the 1970s. According to Bhatt and Farah (2016), the economic recession at the time had as serious an impact on the U.S. and Canada as elsewhere. Petrol prices rose, food bills increased, and unemployment rates surged, providing an impetus for the creation of community gardens in, for example, New York City and Montreal. Other issues, such as energy and environmental concerns, also constituted conditions that favored community garden development (Bhatt and Farah, 2016). In a word, parallel to the purpose of reviving community spirit, many authors hold that community gardens' renewed popularity is probably to be associated with the strenuous financial situations in many households, especially in low-income neighborhoods.

Most community gardens in Montreal and New York City were created during this period. According to Schmelzkopf (2002), and Smith and Kurtz (2003), in the decades that follow, due to New York city's financial crisis and the bursting of the real estate bubble, a number of vacant lots appeared and were transformed into community gardens. Furthermore, it is noted that these community gardens were started first in low-income neighborhoods in many cities (Lawson, 2009; Birky and Strom, 2013; Bhatt and Farah, 2016). These neighborhoods were often inhabited by visible minorities and ethnic groups.

The food dimension is the common thread woven into the various periods of community garden development (Crouch, 1989; Lawson, 2005; Bhatt and Farah, 2016). However, the promotion of food security through gardening seems to become a secondary concern in the recent period, with a clear shift in emphasis from quantity to quality. A variety of broader concerns come to be attached to the local food movement, of which community gardens are regarded as an important component. Environmental, climatic, ecological, sustainability and civic-society concerns seem to all be associated with community gardening practice. However, the economic-material dimensions persist in the framework of urban agriculture and food security studies over the years (Duchemin et al., 2010; Birky & Strom, 2013, Bhatt and Farah, 2016).

For example, Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny's (2004) study of New York City's Latino community garden illustrates the economic gain of investing in community gardening – an investment of $5-$10 in plants for a plot can provide a profit of $500 to $700 worth of fruit and vegetables (Draper & Freedman, 2010). Hanna and Oh (2000) have invested in a community garden in a poor neighborhood in inner-city Philadelphia and their study suggests that community gardening or urban farming can be useful in addressing persistent urban poverty. The economic benefit of gardening is not limited to freshly produced food and protecting the grocery budget, but is also an alternative family income resource, through "hobby-farming" and selling off the excess produce to markets or restaurants (Hannah & Oh,2000).

At about the same time, Armstrong's survey on community gardens' contribution to health and community development in upstate New York shows that half of the investigated gardens (63) are in low-income neighborhoods. According to her, the common reasons reported by the program coordinators for participation in community gardens were "access to fresh/better-tasting food, to enjoy nature, and because of the health benefits, …" (Armstrong, 2000.P. 322) She underlines that access to quality ("fresh/better tasting") food remains a motivating factor for low-income households in urban areas. The same accentuation on the quality of food is observed consistently in a great number of recent studies, including Wakefield et al. (2007), Corrigan (2011), Audate et al. (2021).

1.5 Demographic characteristics of gardeners in low-income neighborhoods

As commonly acknowledged, health is an element closely correlated to an individual's economic situation, nutrition, and lifestyle. Studies also show that having access to sufficient freshly produced vegetables and fruit has positive impacts on diet habits and health (Armstrong, 2000; Kortright & Wakefield, 2011). Armstrong (2000) suggests in her study that community gardening, aside from improving local sustainable food systems, can promote a healthy diet and health, and address depression and other mental health issues, especially in low-income neighborhoods. Corrigan (2015) holds that both the "Global North" and "Global South" seem to suffer from food-originated public health issues - expressed respectively in obesity and malnutrition. Similarly, several authors confirm the same health benefits resulting from vegetable gardening (Wakefield et al., 2007; Kortright & Wakefield, 2011; Kingsley et al., 2019).

Armstrong (2000)'s study also reveals that community gardens in low-income neighborhoods were four times as likely to be cultivated by mainly African American and other minority gardeners, compared with community gardens located in middle-income neighborhoods. Armstrong's finding on the demographic characteristics of community gardeners in low-income neighborhoods suggests a double social injustice: food injustice and ethnically rooted socio-economic inequality. This association between the economic status (low-income) of neighborhoods and the cultural diversity of community-garden participants has been mentioned by several scholars in relation to New York City (Armstrong, 2000; Draper & Freedman, 2010; Paddeu, 2012; Chan et al. 2015; Graham et al. 2016), Barcelona (Anguelovski, 2013) and Montreal (Bhatt and Farah, 2016; Audate et al., 2021).

1.6 Conclusion

As suggested in this chapter, the meaning of food security has evolved over time. In the global North, food insecurity is often referred not so much to lack of sufficient food, but to lack of sufficient fresh, organic, nutritious food. According to the literature, gardeners seem to put an accent on the freshness and tastiness of food while nonetheless mentioning the abundance of produce as well. In disadvantaged neighborhoods, economic savings do come to the surface but not necessarily as the central theme, even though the socio-economic characteristics of such neighborhoods, with their concentration of low-income and ethnic groups, tend to be emphasized

In this chapter, the focus has been on the economic dimension of community gardens, with less emphasis placed on the social-political and cultural aspects of food production. Food-growing practices tend to be viewed increasingly, however, as a means to meet other ends than just food provision itself. In the next chapter, I look more closely at the social-political dimension.

Chapter 2
The Sociopolitical Dimension

Community gardening as a form of collective action challenges current understandings of relations between the social and the political in contemporary societies. The social practices involved in the design and/or development of community gardens have often been considered within the theoretical framework of social movements. They are labeled by Birky (2009) as a specific form of collective action, a "modern community movement". However, their specificity can also be apprehended as part of a wider form of mobilization, as in the case of urban agriculture or alternative food movement, in, for example, Cuba (Altieri et al., 1999), Montreal (Wegmuller & Duchemin, 2010), and New York (Paddeu, 2012). They can also be associated with the environmental movement (Barthel et al. 2015; Filkobski et al.,2016) and, at times, with lifestyle movements characterized by "internally focused, style-oriented groupings driven by consumption and popular culture" centered on daily life concerns (Haenfler et al., 2012: 1).

My intention here is less to assess the consequences for community gardeners of being part of – or associated with – a specific type of social movement than to make sense of their social practices and collective identity, particularly given that community gardens are organized in a sociopolitical space that is no longer defined exclusively by institutional forms of politics.

Following the "new social movements" of the 1960s onwards, contemporary collective actors – including community gardeners – are breaking with the traditional vision of the political based exclusively on the legitimacy of the State. Thus, the grassroots community-garden movement, starting in the 1970s, converged with non-institutional politics, strongly rejecting the exclusive legitimacy of institutional politics (Maheu, 1991). The definition of the political is enlarged in two ways: (1) by taking into account the importance and/or the role of civil society in consensus building (see Cohen and Arato, 1992) and (2) by including non-institutional forms of the political that are transforming its legitimacy. The new political space within which community gardeners are growing is a sociopolitical space that involves a revision of the relationships between the public and private dimensions of everyday life. Institutional and non-institutional politics are now

constituting the new political public space within which social actors are present and active, including those engaged in community-garden development and planning.

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, I revisit the concept of 'community', underlining what "community" represents for social actors and how they experience it. I then examine two related concepts that are often considered as either motivating factors or perceived as benefits of participation in gardening: 'social insertion' and 'social capital'. Community gardens are often viewed or defined as 'public spaces', involving questions of legitimacy and 'justice'. Like other public spaces, community gardens are not void of disputes, being often found in the nexus of tensions and conflicts, first with external forces, and second among gardeners themselves. It is useful in this respect to revisit analyses in which community gardeners are seen in terms of social movements, the community garden movement being connected to both agricultural and environmental movements.

2.1 A sense of community

Community gardens can improve the social value of local communities by providing multidimensional benefits, including community food security and health (Armstrong, 2000), social justice (Paddeu, 2012), and, as mentioned previously, social-economic gains (Armstrong, 2000; Lawson, 2005). In face of so-called "community decline" as a public concern (Scopelliti & Giuliani, 2004), community gardens can be seen as "revitalizing" the sense of community and contributing to community "empowerment" and "resilience") (Wegmuller & Duchemin, 2010; Francis et al., 2012).

Francis et al. (2012:401)) define a sense of community in general terms as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to being together" (citing McMillan & Chavis,1986:9). This definition highlights two elements that characterize the sense of community and differentiate it from other types of constructed places: affiliation and belonging. The authors evoke two important notions concerning space, or rather, 'place': 'place attachment' and 'place dependence'. They contend that "place attachment has been identified with emotional bonding and behavioral commitment", while "place dependence has been tied to the availability of activities and quality comparison with other communities." Both concepts are useful in understanding how community gardeners grow attached to their gardens and community. Consequently, these two notions can help to interpret how people experience a 'sense

of community'. Viewed from the perspective of "*place*" (Massey, 2005), the "sense of community" is place-oriented – with a focus on the building of people-place relationships (Franci et al., 2012).

The meaning associated with a sense of community is not necessarily geographically bounded. Nonetheless, the proximity of the neighborhood can provide "unique opportunities for social interaction and support …" (Francis et al., 2012:401). Although researchers tend to discuss the sense of community in general without reference to community gardens, their analysis of the role of 'public space' can be extended to community gardens. For example, public space, such as parks, may foster a sense of community by facilitating chance encounters between neighbors, and this finding is confirmed by studies on the way in which community gardens can serve as a place of encounter for socially isolated people seeking social interaction opportunities in urban milieus (Duchemin et al., 2008; Wegmuller & Duchemin, 2010; Pascoe & Howes, 2017).

The notion of a 'sense of community' has evolved over time. According to Talo et al., it was first introduced in 1974 by Sarson and further developed by McMillan and Chavis who have identified four crucial components in its formulation as (1) membership[6], (2) Influence[7], (3) Fulfilment of needs[8], (4) Shared emotional connection[9] (Talo et al., 2014). It is beyond the purpose of this study to explore in detail how the sense of community is constructed or how it has evolved. In a more limited way, the intention is to have a better insight into how the sense of community has been experienced by gardeners who participate in community gardening.

While a general sense of community can facilitate a global understanding of community, t 'community' can have a more specific meaning in the context of community gardens as perceived by community gardeners themselves. According to Draper & Freedman (2010: 459.), 'community' in 'community gardening' means "the convergence of multiple individuals, joining in diverse

[6] Membership corresponds to the feeling of being part of a community; this aspect embraces the perception of shared boundaries, common history, symbols, a sense of emotional safety, and personal investment in community life. (Talo et al. 2014:2)

[7] Influence encompasses the individual perception of mutual influence: which means individuals participate in community life and perceive their impacts on the collective decisions and actions of the community. Individuals are also highly aware that their personal choices and decisions are affected by the community. Ibid.

[8] Fulfillment of needs represents the benefits that people derive from their community members. It refers to the positive relationship between individuals and their communities to the extent that the community helps its members meet their personal and group needs. Ibid.

[9] Shared emotional connection unveils the sharing of common repertoires, such as history and significant events, and strengthens the quality of social ties. Ibid.

settings… to grow, among other things, food. Community gardens are used by, and beneficial for, individuals of any age, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status…". This notion of 'community' suggests that a community garden is an inclusive social space that facilitates social interaction and social insertion. However, the way members of community gardens experience community is a different story. Results are mixed with regard to the lived 'community' experience. According to some authors, not all gardeners assign the same value, meaning, and significance to their experiencing of a sense of community through community gardening (Kurtz, 2001 Wegmuller & Duchemin, 2010; Pascoe & Howes, 2017).

In her investigation of three community gardens in Minneapolis, Kexperienceurtz (2001: 662) shows there to be variations in gardeners' experience of 'community' and 'garden' in relation to "enclosure/non-enclosure and inclusion/exclusion". She suggests that the assigned meanings of 'community' and 'garden' are multiple, resulting from negotiations among different categories of social actors. For instance, she notes that in larger gardens where most of the gardeners are "white and owner-occupied middle-class", there is little sense of community perceived by gardeners. In this case, gardens are not enclosed due to their large size and to their being situated on school property: each individual garden "both reads and functions in the urban landscape as a large tract of individual allotments" (Kurtz, 2001). She attributes this to a lack of an experienced sense of community and to a strong feeling of individualism, in addition to both the physical feature of the gardens and the make-up of their membership – being open to all participants without requiring living in the immediate neighborhood. The size of tracts and the physical distance between plots make casual interactions difficult. Since long-term gardeners often cultivate intensively for food production and have a preference for gardening alone, they clearly do not seek a sense of community or "social connectedness". For that reason, newcomers often express dissatisfaction with the lack of 'community' in the garden.

This example suggests that community gardens as shared spaces do not necessarily foster a sense of community or serve as a strategy for revitalizing a neighborhood. Factors like internal culture and the organization of gardening plots, and the proximity of gardeners' homes to the garden can transform the perceived sense of community. However, Kurtz does not mention whether the socioeconomic status of the gardeners as predominately white and middle-class has any role to play in her findings. In other studies, researchers note that in low-income neighborhoods, there can

be an association between the gardeners according to their socio-economic status and their willingness to participate and invest in experiencing the ‘sense of community’ or ‘social interaction’ (Armstrong, 2000; Wegmuller & Duchemin, 2010).

This is best illustrated in the comparative case study conducted in Montreal by Wegmuller and Duchemin (2010). They argue that among the four gardens located in three different boroughs, the borough that has the lowest income and the richest cultural diversity has more gardeners interested in social interaction. All garden members in this disadvantaged neighborhood express a desire to socially interact among themselves, and this need is explicitly expressed and particularly valued by gardeners who are immigrants or elderly participants. The study suggests that elderly people, minorities, and low-income gardeners represent the social groups that are more prone to (vulnerable) social isolation compared to other age groups or gardeners from non-visible immigrant backgrounds.

Wegmuller and Duchemin (2010) distinguish between two kinds of social dynamics in "social interactions”: one is individual-oriented, and the other is community-oriented. The individual-oriented social interactions focus on the self and the personal need for friendship and for meeting others. On the opposite side, community “entraide”-oriented values can revitalize the community spirit.

Similarly, in Pascoe and Howes’ (2017) comparative study of community gardens in Australian and Danish cities, they see the motivation for participation in gardening as including the “desire to meet and spend time with people” and to build friendships, while the motivation linked to community belongingness places stresses more on the enacting of “a sense of civic duty to improve the resources or integration of the community”. The experience of community involvement includes a sense of duty and social cohesion, which goes with the expectation of improving the sense of community through civic actions.

It is important to underline that “meeting people” has been mentioned in Wegmuller and Duchiemin’s (2012:15) study as a “*dynamique de type personnelle, centrée sur soi, recherchant la compagnie, l’amitié, sans besoin de participation à une dynamique commuautaire* ”. In contrast, in the case of Pascoe and Howes (2017)’s research, this type of interaction is considered a way of experiencing the sense of community and as being, therefore, a community-oriented motivation, especially when newcomers in a neighborhood seek to better know their community. Meeting

people (neighbors) through gardening, from this perspective, becomes a positive component of social inclusion, and can be viewed as a means to serve both individual and community dynamics. The Montreal municipal administration has expressed that community gardens are intended to develop community 'entraide', because the garden is "a place for socializing with people" (Wegmuller & Duchemin, 2010). However, the latter's research results show that for most of their respondents (9 out of 11) their experienced social interactions are perceived above all as an *individual* desire to meet people and create a friendly place rather than experiencing the garden as a place to support community "entraide". They argue that in collective gardens (where plots are not divided and where all participants are gardening collectively), social interactions are preferred, and the sense of community, as well as social cohesion, can be experienced more strongly.

In her second case study, Kurtz (2001) argues that in a relatively enclosed garden, especially when the garden is initially built from a 'bottom-up' perspective and cultivated in a collective spirit, the sense of community is experienced in a stronger way. And this has been particularly observed in racially diverse and working-class neighborhoods. The garden can provide a safe place for children to play, and the involvement of children creates a strong sense of community that can be compared to the "tribal rearing of children" by a group of women, mostly grandmother gardeners. A high degree of inclusiveness has been perceived, regardless of differences in age, race, and ethnicity. Sense of community in this case, as the author illustrates, has not only been experienced through interactions among gardeners but also among gardeners and non-gardening neighbors (Kurtz, 2001).

Research also shows that grassroots activist efforts to reduce crime and beautify the neighborhood environment through increasing vigilance, cleaning up trash and urban greening can improve a sense of community (Armstrong, 2000; Kurtz, 2001), In particular, beautifying the neighborhood can contribute to "general community enjoyment" (Kurtz, 2001). Kurtz's study also reveals a correlation between how often the gardeners meet, how often the garden is used as a site for organizing community events, and the sense of community as experienced by the gardeners and non-gardening neighbors. Armstrong's (2000) study confirms the same correlation in community gardens in upstate New York.

The benefits of participating in community gardening can be associated with the quality of social networks, and members embracing values of trust and reciprocity. More generally, such an

assessment can be considered as converging with the issue of citizens' participation in public affairs. This has been raised in different analytical perspectives over recent decades, with social researchers being concerned by the crisis of the Welfare state and the increasing presence of neoliberal ideology and its reappraisal of solidarity values (Rosanvallon, 1981). In this context, some authors – for example, Putnam, 2000 – mobilize the notion of social capital, but the notion is far from generating consensus. Even though it underlines the importance of cooperation and solidarity for promoting community empowerment and social inclusion, it has also paved the way for neoliberal ideology, promoting the hegemony of market principles in the world of social relations. Mobilized by public institutions to overcome market failures, social capital has been instrumentalized by public sector managers to increase economic competitiveness. As underlined by Mayer, "the ambiguities and intrinsic contradictions of the social capital concept leads to a number of problems when it is applied to concrete empirical analysis and end up by actually obstructing our understanding of contemporary restructuring processes and the newly emerging relationships between civil society, social movements and the state" (2003: 117). For that reason, in my research, the notion is used with caution.

Community gardens should not be idealized as a place free of conflicts, challenges, and controversies. On the contrary, as I move now to examine community as a 'public space' by evoking the theoretical notion of 'space' and/or 'place' from a cultural standpoint, it is necessary to underline that often community gardens are situated in a nexus of conflicts. Internal conflicts take place inside the garden fences, while external conflicts result from the contradictions of capitalist development, especially when urban development is confronted with incompatible land use.

2.2 A nexus of conflicts and meanings

The majority of contemporary community gardens operate on city-owned land, often understood as being part of public land or public space (Francis et al., 2012). Depending on the specific physical features of a garden and its rules, and the viewpoints of different categories of actors, some authors argue that many gardens qualify as 'semi-public spaces' (Lawson, 2009). The accessibility to land and public space – and the lack of the latter –, has become a focal point that often engenders conflicts and tensions among representatives of diverse social groups (Schmelzkopf, 1995 & 2002 Staeheli et al., 2002; Eizenberg, 2012a & 2012b). Conflicts and

tensions can vary from one garden to another and from one period to another, but the nexus of disputes normally relates to land-use rights claims. For this reason, Lefebvre's perspective on 'right' and 'space', such as the "right to the city", "right to the land", "right to community space", and "three moments of space[10]" is often invoked (Staeheli et al. 2002; Schmelzkopf, 2002). It is widely recognized that conflicts and controversies can promote a deeper understanding of the different perspectives involved and that when they occur, they merit a closer examination.

Unlike community gardens promoted and supported by the government, contemporary community gardens have been politically labeled as grassroots-initiated "rights claims" to land and public space (Staeheli et al. 2002). According to Staeheli et al (2002:197), the conflict in New York City's community gardens from the mid-1990s should be framed as "a conflict between two sets of rights: the right to property" and "the right to spaces for the public and community". Their arguments capture the core of the conflict between private property rights and public rights. They situate the development of community gardens in relation to the fiscal crisis of the city in the 1970s to illustrate that the conflict is fundamentally a structural one. They contend that the conflicts between garden advocates and the city are not so much about how some of the city's vacant land lots should be used – as 'communal' or 'public space' in the form of community gardens or for house-building projects –, but are rather about a bottom-up request for 'communal right' against the predominately liberal economic system in which private property, operating through power relations and the possession of capital, define public space, land-use, and the urban landscape (Staeheli et al. 2002).

Various authors confirm and support their arguments (Kurtz, 2001; Eizenberg,2012a & 2012b; Aptekar, 2015). For instance, Eizenberg (2012) invokes the notion of "commons" to illustrate that in neoliberal cities, the conflict over land use is deeply rooted in two types of political ideologies: socialism and capitalism. She sees New York City community gardens as "another manifestation of actually existing urban commons", as autonomous, democratic public spaces that have been produced collectively and are self-managed by "the most neglected locals". Rogge and Theefeld's (2018) study on the Rhine-Ruhr region in Germany shares the same thread of thought. They view

[10] Three Lefebvrian moments of space: the material space, representation of space, and the lived space. In Efrat Eizenberg (2011)'s article, she explains "space envelops a triad of interlocking elements: material space -the actual space and its forms and objects; representations of space – the knowledge about space and its production; and lived space – the emotional experience of space and the subjective practices that are attached to space." I will return to the notion of "lived space" in next chapter, where I examine the cultural dimension of community gardens. For reading on Lefebvre's space theory is explained in his own word, *The production of Space*. 1991. Oxford: Blackwell.

urban gardening as "urban commons" and interpret the political context of this collective action – "a growing international movement" – as due to a lack of democratic use of and access to public spaces.

External conflicts and tensions over community gardening land-use thus generate public debates over 'rights claims', the notion of 'commons', the legitimacy of the space that community gardens occupy, and the perceived functionalities of 'public space'. Eizenberg (2011) views the city's attempts to enclose these gardens as revelatory of the paradigmatic capitalist development model. To some extent, she suggests that the meaning of the community gardens' existence is to challenge the "pervasive neoliberal ideology and practices". A cluster of political issues is emerging and entering public discourse, provoking clashes and public manifestations. In relation to these elements, new frameworks, new discourses, and new practices have emerged. For instance, more and more gardens are open to the public – with no more fences, locked gates, or restricted visiting hours, as is the case with most community gardens in New York and elsewhere.

Such new types of community gardens with increased accessibility are called 'Public Access Gardens' in Germany, and the same practice can be observed emerging in gardens in many countries and cities, in, for example, New York (Staeheli et al. 2002), Berlin (Rosol, 2010; Bendt et al, 2012), and Shanghai (Liu et al., 2017). These Public Access Gardens normally emphasize environmental benefits (green space creation and sharing) and social benefits (social inclusion, social insertion) and place lesser importance on material benefits such as food production and harvesting.

A pattern can be observed linking the performance of a city's economy and the municipality's attitude toward community gardens. A number of community gardens have been created by grassroots and activist-initiated collective action – through, for example, squatting, guerilla gardening, and appropriation of public land – and the claiming of a "right of use" to the land. Many such cases have been documented, including Prague (Spilková, 2017), Barcelona (Anguelovski, 2013) and Hangzhou (Zhu et al., 2020). The most investigated city in this respect is certainly New York (Schmelzkopf, 1995; Staeheli et al. 2002; Smith & Kurtz, 2003; Eizenberg, 2016). This is perhaps due to the high density of the city's population, the prevailing neoliberalism in land-space management, and the extreme social-environmental inequality experienced by many city residents

(Armstrong, 2000; Schmelzkopf, 2002; Paddeu, 2012). The tension and conflict arising over public land use, in this case, seems greater than elsewhere.

When associated with grassroots-initiated movements, gardens can gradually obtain various degrees of legitimacy. When the New York economy goes through a downturn, available and vacant land lots are more abundant (Schmelzkopf, 1995;2002 & 2011; Staeheli, 2002;). Civic engagement in transforming these public spaces (or vacant lots) can then either be neglected, tolerated, or recognized and encouraged. However, when the economy improves, and the real estate market recovers, community-garden land-use rights are often challenged and threatened. Enclosures and evictions are then frequent (Schmelzkopf, 2002; Anguelovski, 2013; Spilková, 2017). As mentioned previously, community gardens can be seen as spaces of autonomy – the gardens representing a communally (or collectively) created public (or semi-public) space that is created and maintained *by* and *for* the gardeners (Schmelzkopt, 2002; Lawson, 2005; Eizenberg 2012;). It is suggested that only then can a sense of belonging, emotional attachment, and self-identification to the place emerge (Schmelzkopf,2002; Smith & Kurtz, 2003; Eizenberg, 2012). Conflicts and tensions only intensify when gardeners feel their rights to occupy and manage the space autonomously are challenged or rebuked by external forces.

Eizenberg (2012) illustrates this type of conflict in the case of a divergence of value and vision between community gardeners and an NGO's management team. The grassroots gardeners' conventional practices were in tension with one of the two NGOs under investigation, because the organization insisted on the openness and "attractiveness" of the garden, – an elite or middle-class philosophy including aesthetic tastes and visions that are not necessarily shared by the Afro-American neighborhood. These Afro-gardeners feel excluded and estranged from the heavily invested, professionally inspired new garden design. The grassroots' bottom-up "autonomous community space" seems to have been lost in the "transformation", with vegetable plots being replaced by flower beds and lawns.

In this case, the author contends that the new design fails to address the needs of gardeners, including as food-production. Furthermore, she suggests that the new 'top-down' approach transfiguring the gardening space, especially given that the design is not produced collectively, does not reflect the gardeners' ideals of aesthetics, culture, and needs. The quality of interaction between residents and the garden space is thereby undermined, the NGOs' intervention

“dispossess[ing] gardeners of an experience of a sense of ownership and control over the space” (Eizenberg, 2012:116). She insists that if community gardens are to be perceived and experienced as an “autonomous community space”, this space must be socially produced (Eizenberg, 2012:107, citing Lefebvre, 1991) and that it is imperative to get a high level of gardeners’ participation in the creating and maintaining of such spaces. Only then are feelings of control, belonging, and attachment to the space engendered, along with feelings of responsibility and concern toward the space.

However, Eizenberg points out that it is difficult to develop a sense of ownership in the contemporary urban environment, where people, lifestyles, and businesses are all in constant flux. (Eizenberg 2012, citing Bauman, 2007). However, she holds that even in the face of a powerful mobile elite and a global lifestyle, most people still live “very localized existences’ (Eizenberg, 2012:107) echoing DeFilippis (2004). Eizenberg’s argument supports the idea that if the “global” is encompassing and more and more overwhelming, it nonetheless remains lived locally through “local experiences”, for instance, in relation to what Eric Swyngedouw (2004) describes as ‘glocalization’.

In short, community gardens can be viewed from various perspectives and experienced as either “green space” (Barthel et al., 2015), “social space” (Kingsley & Townsend, 2006), “commons” (McVey et al., 2018), “public space” (Francis et al. 2012), or “precarious semi-public space” (Lawson, 2009). Following Lefebvre (1991), space is socially constructed, but its meaning is defined and redefined through the people who use it in their everyday life practices. Regardless of the chosen perspective, Lawson (2009) suggests that a community garden will cease to exist without a certain number of gardeners maintaining it on a regular basis. First and foremost, community gardens have to be ‘everyday life’ spaces[11] (Lawson, 2009).

In addition to external conflicts that often threaten community gardens’ survival, internal conflicts and tensions can emerge around less fundamental issues. As Aptekar (2015) mentions, the nature of these conflicts can be caused by a clash of values and visions, because not all gardeners have the same ideal or vision of how their gardening space should look and be used. She distinguishes

[11] In reference to Lefebvre’s understanding of everyday life space prevails a critique of “everyday life” highjacked by capitalism, introducing a critique concerning the role of the state in reproducing the existing relationships of domination (see Gonewadena et al.)

four ways of seeing public space : (1) as private property with an emphasis on boundaries (a way of seeing that is shared by all types of gardeners, whether public-housing residents, immigrants, or affluent white gardeners); (2) as green space, with an emphasis on the aesthetic appeal of the garden that must be green, lush, neat, orderly, and beautiful (in conformity with the city's insistence on "attractiveness") (3) as "farm" space, with a focus on food produce, food justice, and the focus on gardening as an agricultural experiment; and (4) as community space, stressing the social values of the gardening space and promoting the benefits of social networks, education, and social interactions between gardeners.

Aptekar contends that behind these competing ways of seeing and the conflicts they engender, lie the social categories of race and class. Thus, social capital has a role to play in such conflictual or tenuous situations that can either reproduce or counteract social hierarchy. Social networks existing within community gardens can extend and spread beyond them. The prevailing ways of seeing are thus associated by the author with different socio-economic statuses. Nonetheless, investigations into internal conflicts and tensions are less documented compared to external ones. Internal tensions tend to arise among garden organizers, or the members of the different committees involved in the management and other garden members, as underlined by Aptekar (2015). Such conflicts often occur in culturally diverse areas and in gentrifying low-income neighborhoods, with gentrification often forcing low-income gardeners out of their old neighborhoods and generating pressure to justify the garden's land-use (Emmett, 2011; Maantay & Maroko, 2018).

Another type of conflict or tension that can occur is between the gardeners and other local residents. For instance, some community gardens are enclosed because their neighbors perceive those as untidy and ugly, such as in the case of Morckel's (2015) survey of eleven community gardens involving 182 adults in Columbus (Ohio), as well as in Jin Zhu et al. (2015)'s investigation in Hangzhou (China).

From illegal "guerilla gardening" to institutionalized gardening, from semi-public to public gardening, from vegetable plots with a focus on food security to flower-growing with an emphasis on beauty, from grassroots initiated 'rights claimed' land-use to officially legitimated or evicted community gardens, multiple possibilities are to be found. The space that community gardens occupy is a nexus of conflicts, where practices in constant transformation must constantly adjust and redefine themselves. As Tilly (2004) contends, collective action is never a given. It is always

challenged internally and externally, the identity of actors being submitted to an uncertain dynamic involving individuals and collectivity, experiencing the possibilities and limits of agency.

2.3 Social practices of community gardening from a social movement perspective

Within sociology, the study of social practices, social interactions, and/or social conflicts from an analytical perspective relying on the theory of collective action and social movements has become a widespread approach, with concepts being elaborated and refined for a better understanding of the external and internal difficulties and challenges that actors are coping with (Cefaï, 2007; Snow and Soule, 2010). In this section, I refer to some notions and concepts elaborated by the sociology of social movements in relation to community gardening. In order to specify in what ways, these elements can be useful for shedding light on the social practices of gardeners.

Barthel et al. (2015) evoke Manuel Castell's 'urban social movements' theory for understanding "the role of civil society in struggles for the more just distribution of collective resources such as green space" (Barthel et al., 2015:1329, citing Castells, 1983). Recent community-garden movements in North America were started in the 1970s in New York City by activists whose collective action is exemplified by 'guerilla gardening' and by throwing 'seed bombs' into vacant lots, all of which are interpreted as "challenging existing forms of urban reproduction and planning regimes" (Barthel et al., 2015:1329; Barthel citing Harvey; 1996; Diani, 2003).

This reading of community gardening as a specific social movement is not prevalent in the community-garden research literature. More often, community gardening practices are considered as part of two contemporary larger social movements: the urban agriculture movement (Wegmuller & Duchemin, 2010; Duchemin et al., 2010; Bhatt & Farah, 2016) and the environmental and/or ecological movement (Bendt et al., 2013; Barthel et al., 2015). From then on, they are captured as a subset of these movements. Those involved in the study of these two types of movements (agriculture and environmental) recognize community gardens' contribution to both fields. At the same time, this does not exclude other possibilities for understanding these practices from other theoretical perspectives.

In the urban agriculture approach, the focus tends to be on community gardens' conventional and current food produce functions – for instance, their capacity to respond to food insecurity and

address food injustice –, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods. A high percentage of lower-income participants in urban agriculture are often mentioned in the literature as being characteristic of the social foundations of this kind of approach. For instance, in Montreal, Duchemin et al. (2010) find that among the six investigated "collective gardens" – similar to community gardens, but with the parcels not individually divided –, in Montreal, between 20% and 60% of gardeners' family income was below 20,000$ in 2008. In New York City, Armstrong (2000) notes the same pattern. In the literature, it seems that a considerable proportion of community gardeners are from low-income households in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Similarly, the environmental framing of community gardening practices also underlines the fact that community gardens are frequently concentrated in low-income neighborhoods (Armstrong, 2000; Paddeu, 2012). In these urban contexts, residents often experience environmental injustices, given that certain groups among the population – for example, the low-income, the elderly, or ethnic groups – have more limited access to green space (Armstrong, 2000; Lawson, 2005). On other occasions, environmental injustice is a consequence of the fact that low-income populations are more vulnerable in the face of climate change, as in the case of New York City after "Superstorm Sandy" hit the Lower East Side and the Rockaways (Graham et al., 2016).

Community gardens are often appreciated as a distinct form of green public space because they are "publicly-shaped" and therefore 'bottom-up', in comparison to public parks – which fail to evoke "a feeling of affinity and attachment" because they are designed and maintained by professionals and are, therefore, 'top-down'. Filkobski et al. (2016), for example, state that parks are not spaces created by users' hands, and that residents tend to feel a lack of ownership and social involvement (Filkobski et al., 2016:148-157). Not only is green space important – including the cultivated relationship to green space –, but also the experience of green space, how people use and interact with it, and how environmental concerns are addressed. The lack of green space can result in health issues and social problems, such as isolation and the feeling of exclusion, with their negative impact in the face of the building of solidarity within communities (Armstrong, 2000; Twiss et al., 2003).

When confronted with the threat of disappearance through closure or eviction, the accumulated conflicts and tensions that coalesce around community gardens' land use tend to intensify. In the case of New York City, when the mayor decided to put hundreds of community gardens on the market, Smith and Kurtz (2003) illustrate how a 'politics of scale' was implemented, provoking

resistance through multiple activities involving street manifestations, sit-ins, physical occupation, confrontations with law enforcement, active engagement in public discourse, and mobilization of human, energy, time and capital resources. At the time, community-garden movements became highly visible in the media and in public spaces more generally with the political agenda of saving community gardens and recognizing their values.

That being said, contemporary community gardens are generally perceived as quiet activities, with a steadily increasing number of participants wishing to get involved in gardening, and citizens and residents asking for more gardening space. Nonetheless, the sociology of collective action and social movements can help to better understand community-garden dynamics and the intersection of different perspectives. In this respect, where collective action is involved, three theoretical supports for the analysis of social practices of community gardening can be identified, based (1) on a critical definition of civil society, (2) on the perspective of framing, and (3) on the lifestyle framework.

Activities of community gardening and the social practices involved in it are influenced on the one hand, by the power and resources of the marketplace and, on the other, by the intervention of the state. Despite the strength of these two spheres and their constraining impact on social life, it is above all on the terrain of civil society that gardeners find and define their legitimacy. Cohen and Arato (1992) define a "framework [that] allows in principle for a third approach, one that does not seek to correct the economic or state penetration of society by shifting back and forth between these two steering mechanisms. Instead, the task is to guarantee the autonomy of the modern state and economy while simultaneously protecting civil society from destructive penetration and functionalization by the imperatives of these two spheres." (Cohen and Arato, 1992: 25). Thus, civil society creates a social and public space where social actors can assert their "personal and communal identity" (Cohen & Arato, 1992:510). This is what is expressed in several gardening practices. This is why, "an exclusive theoretical focus on the creation of identity would only parallel the tendency of some contemporary actors to construe their own ideological representation of social relations (direct, democratic, communal) as a utopian organizing principle for all of society and to equate their expressive development of identity with the cultural stakes of the struggle" (Cohen & Arato, 1992: 511).

A second theoretical support is found in the framing perspective (Benford and Snow, 2000). Promoting a sociological understanding of the group-identity formation, this approach contributes to highlighting the "social construction of the symbolic world of the individual actor, as well as social movement cultures and collective identities" (Morris and Mueller, 1992: 21). Even though the framing perspective has been criticized for paying too much attention to movement leaders' discourse as opposed to other categories of actors and for underestimating the weight of structural factors as constraints with regard to action (see Maheu, 2005), the analytical tools it has developed remain valid. While taking these criticisms into account, I believe that this approach can help to better circumscribe the role of social representations in reference to the identity of actors and to shed light on how master frames leading to action are constituted (Bedford and Snow, 2000).

The third type of theoretical support refers to the lifestyle and how the notion has been applied to better understand the new modalities of collective action given the current individualization of social relations. Haenfler et al. (2012) make a distinction between "lifestyle" and social movements. They contend that social movements are often "organized, change-oriented collective action aimed at the state or other authority structures" (Haenfler et al., 2012:2), while lifestyles "encompass people's everyday practices, tastes, consumption habits, leisure activities, modes of speech and dress – one's 'individuality, self-expression, and stylistic self-consciousness'" (Haenfler et al., 2012:2, quoting Featherstone, 1987:55).

The researchers maintain that while both put emphasis on the role of 'identity', lifestyle movements differ from traditional social movements in several ways, in that they "subjectively understand [...] individual, private actions as efforts toward social change", and they focus more on cultivating "a morally coherent, personally meaningful identity in the context of a collective identity". Because of this internalized value and coherency, they distinguish themselves from trends or fads, and in contrast to social movements that target formal political institutions, lifestyle movements challenge mainstream cultural practices and norms (Haenfler et al., 2012:5).

The question remains as to what extent, community gardening practice can be associated with social movements or lifestyle movements. Community gardening participants can act both collectively in an organized manner (to save their gardens, for example) and individually in a diffuse manner (in individual gardening practices) where the subjective dimension of collective action comes to the foreground, following Melucci (1989). For Melucci, above all, "action has

meaning for individuals". Therefore, "participation in collective action has no value for individuals unless it provides a direct response to personal needs". He holds that a deeper commitment is needed to recognize that "personal needs are the path to changing the world and to seek meaningful alternatives." (Melucci,1989:49). Cultural values and the resulting social goals cannot be separated from social conflicts, and he insists on the 'objectivity of "a common cultural field shared by opponents."

Chapter 3
The Cultural Dimensions

Community gardens are often seen as an expression of individuals' needs regarding personal, social, environmental, or economic concerns (Lawson, 2009). Melucci (1989) asserts that when one examines the collective action of social movements or lifestyle changes, attention should be given to individual needs. He argues that those "needs are inevitably the result of cultural perception, of a process of symbolic mediation that permits their definition and representation, on the basis of biological and environmental conditions. In complex societies, the perception of needs as a cultural product has grown out of all comparison with past societies." (Melucci, 1989:119)

When emphasizing the importance of the cultural dimension of collective action, Melucci underlines the importance of personal needs and how those needs are connected to the creation of values and meanings. In contrast to a Marxist political-economic framing of social relations and social conflicts, he stands against a "political reductionism" of collective action, stressing the importance of subjectivity in the involvement or mobilization of actors around issues that concern them.

The reading suggested by Melucci of the "new social movements" he surveyed during the 1970s in Milan reminds us of the "cultural turn" occurring within sociology a few years later as promoted by the postmodern shift (Susen, 2015)[12]. In that respect, cultural dimensions are no longer apprehended as a residue that accompanies class relations. On the contrary, they allow us to broaden our understanding of social inequalities[13]. The reappropriation of meanings by individuals in this context is convergent with the construction of their identity and that of the group or the

[12] As Frederic Jameson noted: The very sphere of culture itself has expanded, becoming coterminous with market society in such a way that the culture is no longer limited to its earlier, traditional or experimental forms, but it is consumed throughout daily life itself, in shopping, in professional activities, in the various often televisual forms of leisure, in production for the market and in the consumption of those market products, indeed in the most secret folds and corners of the quotidian. Social space is now completely saturated with the image of culture." (1998: 111)

[13] For that matter, Melucci recognizes that within modernity personal needs and identity cannot be simply dismissed in favor of group or class interests: "Today's social movements contain marginal counter-cultures and small sects whose goal is the development of the expressive solidarity of the group, but there is also a deeper commitment to the recognition that personal needs are the path to changing the world and to seeking meaningful alternatives." (1989: 49)

community to which they belong: “In fact, conflicts are always conflicts of identity: actors attempt to push others to recognize something which they themselves recognize; they struggle to affirm what others deny.” (Melucci, 1989: 46)

In this chapter, I look more closely at the cultural dimensions of community gardening. Above all, cultural dimensions are essential to understand what promotes social change, expressed in an individual’s everyday life practices that are shared with others. It is commonly acknowledged by historians that cultural factors can either accelerate or hinder social transformation.

Best (2008) defines culture as “the social process whereby people communicate meanings, make sense of their world, construct their identities, and define their beliefs and values. Far broader than the arts, culture is rather the entire field and process of symbol interaction, communication, and technologies through which people define and express themselves.” (Best, 2008:1). In many ways, this reading converges with Melucci’s perspective. But it is also in line with other analyses of collective action such as Manuel Castells’ analysis of urban social movements (1983) where he interprets above all in cultural terms the outcomes of collective action around urban issues. The role of cultural components is also underlined by Savitch and Kantor (2002) when considering collective action regarding urban development in western Europe and North America, implying the consideration of the role of civil society, as recalled by Cohen and Arato (1992). It is on this terrain that social actors are able to experiment and promote individual and social values.

In the light of these positions, cultural dimensions would seem to be vital for understanding how individuals attribute meaning to their gardens and make sense of their community gardening activity. I first examine community gardens from a sociocultural standpoint by looking more closely at the cultural diversity of gardeners and their cultural expression through gardening. I then evoke the notion “*lieu de mémoire*” to illustrate some of the significance of gardening practices discussed in the literature. Finally, I consider several correlating and sometimes overlapping cultural elements that are mentioned in the literature, namely around the themes of nature, leisure, and identity. These aspects constitute some of the critical factors involved in understanding the meaning practitioners give to their behavior.

3.1 Community Gardens: A Sociocultural Standpoint

The presence of ethnic groups and visible minorities constitute an important feature of many community gardens in different contexts. This is especially true where a tradition of immigration or the historical development of societies characterised by ethnic diversity prevails. In this respect, the strong presence of African Americans and Hispanic/ Latino Americans – especially immigrants coming from Puerto Rico – has been noticed in many of New York City's community gardens in Manhattan and other boroughs. This is especially the case in disadvantaged neighborhoods like Harlem and the Lower East Side or in the Bronx (Armstrong, 2000; Lawson, 2005; Kurtz, 2001; Eizenberg,2012). Similarly, immigrants and visible minorities (including African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans) have also been observed in some of California's community gardens (Twiss et al., 2003). In San Francisco, African American community gardeners are identified by Marche (2015) as the population that has been most negatively influenced by the gentrification occurring in their neighborhoods.

In France, Turkish gardens near Rouen, are the subject of an ethnobotanical study conducted by Calame and Texier (2018). They note that large numbers of Turkish masonry workers were recruited for construction sites in Rouen, and that when these immigrant workers discovered a strip of neglected land on the banks of the Seine in Canteleu in the 1950s, they decided to cultivate vegetable gardens in the area, growing varieties of plants originating from Turkey for use in their traditional cooking.

In Germany, in order to resist or modulate the assimilation pressure imposed on immigrants by the host society, "intercultural gardens" have been created and serve to counter the tendency towards the exclusion of immigrants of different cultural origins. According to Müller (2018), the intention is to allow the men and women who bring skills from their country of origin to put them to use in garden design and cultivation. Gardening practices enable them to acquire a certain degree of autonomy in terms of food, at the same time giving them the possibility to renegotiate their everyday reality with 'others' – gardeners of different cultural origins. Müller observes that through the practice of gardening in democratically run semi-public spaces, gardeners of diverse cultures learn to live together and become aware of each other's existence, while preserving their own cultural heritage and identity. Such cultural gardening practice was first initiated in Göttingen and has been successfully extended to the whole of Germany over the last twenty years, with

intercultural gardens now accounting for half of the 650 urban community gardens in Germany (Müller, 2018). In Israel, ethnic fragmentation and stratification are characteristic of the society – with some 53% of first-generation Israelis being immigrants from multiple origins, becoming part of the Arab minority or the Jewish majority. In this context, community gardens can be regarded as tools to integrate the members of the more marginalized immigrant communities, such as Ethiopian immigrants (Filkobski et al. 2016).

In these examples, community gardens can be seen as both responding to cultural needs and as embodying cultural expression, with the practice of gardening being often recognized as a vehicle to mediate, value, and celebrate cultural diversity. To what extent these practices do in fact serve to increase social inclusion, assimilation, or respect for cultural differences remains somewhat undetermined and requires further empirical investigation. However, cultural benefits are increasingly recognized in the literature. In one case, gardeners see their community garden as "enabl[ing] us to take control of our immediate environment and, in the process, to rediscover and reconnect with our cultural heritage" (Eizenberg, 2012:771).

The cultural diversity of community gardens is expressed not only by the presence of ethnic, immigrant, or minority gardeners, but also by the landscape they cultivate, create, and transform. In the shaping of such garden plots in public (or semi-public) spaces with their culturally exotic agricultural landscapes, great efforts are made to reproduce vegetable gardens in the light of cultural origin and responding to specific needs for food. The foreign plants cultivated are in themselves a form of cultural expression.

Plants and food are thus emblematic bearers of culture and identity. In the diverse pool of community gardens, the types of food the gardeners chose to grow, produce, and cook can oftentimes serve to reaffirm and bring back the gardeners' cultural identity, "habitus", and food rituals. In spite of the fact that culturally rooted needs for cultivation are not always expressed explicitly, the literature has captured and categorized them as cultural spatial expressions (Crouch, 1989; Eizenberg, 2012). Despite climate differences, immigrant gardeners can cultivate and reproduce plants of their cultural origins in the new host country, as in the case of cabbages in Turkish gardens, or the vine, not cultivated primarily for its grapes but for the leaves that are indispensable for the preparation of "dolmas" in Turkish cuisine (Calame and Texier, 2018). The richness and diversity of the vegetable plants include fruit trees, and notably the hazelnut tree, a

true marker of Turkish identity, that is present in many such gardens, underlining their cultural and patrimonial value.

3.2 Community Gardens: "*Un lieu de mémoire*"

Echoing these various observations, Eizenberg (2012) describes community gardens as “carriers of culture”. She argues that community gardens as lived spaces, have “emotional values and meanings which are immaterial but objective. It is the ‘realm of collective memories’[14], cultural symbols, and personal history”. (Eizenberg, 2012:771) Relying on Lefebvre’s notion of space, she maintains that such gardens are a space of “subjects”. In Lefebvre’s own words, “as a representational space, it has an origin, and that origin is childhood, with its hardships, its achievements, and its lacks” (Eizenberg, 2012:770, citing Lefebre 1991:362). Thus, the gardening space can be interpreted as a re-appropriated space celebrating “silenced culture”.

The notion of the “realm of collective memories” is considered by Eizenberg to be important in understanding the meaning of gardening space for culturally diversified participants in the United States. She identifies three types of gardens according to their cultural characteristics: the “casita gardens”, the “farm gardens”, and the “eclectic culture gardens”.

“Casita gardens” are predominantly Latino. In Spanish, this means “small house”, reproducing “traditional rural Puerto Rican homes, [the design of which] has been traced back to the indigenous Tainos…” (Eizenberg, 2012:771). In these gardens, a cozy seating place is available, and within the gardening site, musical festivals, cultural celebrations, and social gatherings are held. The Puerto Rican gardeners’ cultural heritage and identity have been revived, transmitted, and celebrated in this space. As a result, the fact that gardens can host various cultural activities has in turn contributed to enriching the ‘realm of collective memories” (Eizenberg, 2012:771). In addition, she mentions that various types of vegetables are recognized as representing different cultural origins. For instance, hot and sweet peppers are hallmarks of Latino culture, while collard, kale, corn, and tomato are emblematic plants for African Americans. As she notes, these

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[14] In Pierre Nora's words, "A lieu de mémoire” is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community". It may refer to any place, object or concept vested with historical significance in the popular collective, historical memory.

vegetables, essential to ethnic cuisine, are either unavailable or unaffordable in local supermarkets. Similar examples can also be found in community gardens in Montreal (Duchemin et al., 2010; Bhatt & Farah, 2016; Audate et al. 2021).

In "farm gardens", gardeners often trace back their interests and their appreciation of gardening practices to their childhood memories, or to early life experiences associated with farming or living in rural areas. For such gardeners, "farm gardens" stand as an emblematic space of self-sufficiency. Although she mentions African American gardeners from Harlem as examples of farm gardeners, the latter do not necessarily come from racialized minorities, ethnic groups or immigrants. In this respect, farm-oriented gardeners are often associated with deprived neighborhoods. This is recalled in Audate et al.'s comparative case study of Montreal and Quito (2021)[15]. They see gardening as a way to "connect with their past or their culture" because most of the gardeners have "learned agricultural practice from their parents" in their childhood. Furthermore, the gardeners observed are mostly immigrants in the case of Montreal, while in Quito, they find gardeners with previous experience of living in rural or peri-urban areas.

Ohmer et al.'s (2009) finding supports these results. In rural areas, the most cited reason for participating in community gardening is "the ability to practice traditional culture". Drawing from these examples we may conclude that community gardens in this category tend to serve as "*un lieu de mémoire*" of childhood, including early rural agricultural experiences. The garden is a site of memory that is both material and figurative, as Nora (1996) underlines.

The third type of garden, the "eclectic culture gardens" are mainly developed by "white gardeners" who live in areas that have either undergone or are undergoing gentrifying processes. In comparison to the "casita" and "farm" types, the gardeners in this case, tend to be younger. Socio-economically, this group often enjoys an affluent background and has more resources to invest in designing their garden and organizing diverse cultural events, such as the annual Earth Day festival, the bi-annual Solstice event, Yoga and Tai-chi classes, lectures on nature, and eclectic musical performances. Gardeners associated with this group, according to Eizenberg, are more connected with green and neighborhood organizational networks, and are more culturally sensitive to

[15] These authors identify four categories of gardeners' profiles according to their motivations, namely: a) the eco-engaged; b) the socio-engaged; c) the Econo-expert; d) the versatile-caretaker. In the case of the third category, the Econo-expert practitioners are identified as having had prior experience in agriculture or having grown up in rural areas (Audate et al., 2021:5)

environmentalism and “paganism”. Community gardens can serve not only as carriers of eclectic cultural activities but can also tend to be in line with certain middle-class or elite forms of cultural expression.

Echoing Eizenberg’s typology, the profile of “eco-engaged” practitioners with their specific vision of nature and culture suggested by Audate et al. (2021) can be associated with “eclectic culture gardens”. These gardeners are young adults with mostly university degrees and stable jobs. They are: “fervent critics of the contemporary food system, have a strong environmental awareness […]”, and believe that having good nutrition and chemical-free food will keep them healthy. Furthermore, they see gardening as an outdoor activity that “contributes to their mental health and healthy lifestyle” (Audate et al., 2021:5). In a nutshell, “eclectic gardens” or “eco-engaged” gardeners us the gardening site as a starting point to implement their values and alternate their lifestyles. Community gardens allow them to express their civic-ecological engagement towards broader goals that stretch beyond immediate economic or sociopolitical concerns. Instead of using gardening sites to reconnect with previous memories, they build new collective memories with a focus on the environment, alternative lifestyles, and ecological responsibility.

As mentioned, the cultural landscape associated with community gardens is not limited to ethnic, immigrant, or eclectic cultures alone. As Crouch (1989) has pointed out, English allotment gardens are cultural landscapes that stand as emblems of popular working-class culture – as opposed to middle-class elite culture –, because they are landscapes designed, created, and maintained by working-class people, instead of professionals (Crouch, 1989).

In the same perspective, the clashes of various ways of seeing mentioned previously in the cases analyzed by Kurtz (2001), Aptekar (2015), and Marche (2015) also reflect the fact that such clashes can originate in the viewpoints of different socio-economic classes, expressing varying cultural preferences in garden design. When it comes to the founders’ or the managing committee’s vision of maintaining the aesthetic appeal of the gardens, several authors hold that the differences are rooted in a culture that is not only racially and ethnically sensitive, but also subject to social class, gender, educational, and generational divisions (Lawson, 2005; Marche, 2015; Audate et al., 2012).

In relation to gender, for example, Armstrong (2000) notes that there are community gardens for particular populations, such as the residents of “battered woman’s” shelters, while Kurtz (2001) mentions that one notable community garden in Minneapolis was founded by a group of women,

most of whom were grandmothers. An example of class sociocultural differences is also illustrated by Marche (2015). She underlines that in a gentrifying neighborhood of San Francisco, it is part of the garden's project to preserve the memories of a waning African American working-class heritage and to honor their history through artifacts as well as traditional practices. Consequently, the mural of the new garden is dedicated to the project's African American founders and at the foot of the mural, benches are installed for regular meetings to discuss the garden's future.

Aside from a collective celebration of diverse ethnic cultures, the presence of women with children is also identified as an important feature of many community gardens. This is viewed as reflecting the traditional transmission of culture – as previously practiced in some tribal cultures – in which women raise children collectively while at the same time cultivating and providing food for the family (Kurtz, 2001). As Nora (1996) notes, a site of memories can signify cultural landmarks, places, and practices stemming from a shared past, allowing us to suggest that it is through specific practices in everyday life that collective memories are reinforced, revived, and recreated.

Barthel and Isendahl (2013) evoke the notion of "socio-ecological" resilience to illustrate the critical role social-ecological memory plays in highly urbanized societies, being sustained through urban farming and citizens' inter-generational participation in the practice of gardening. With rapid urbanization, agricultural knowledge and practice along with ecological knowledge, skills, and abilities related to agriculture are disappearing, which new generations losing the knowledge and skills that go with it. Community gardening practice can to some extent lead to the preservation, and transmission of such knowledge. Looking at gardening through a mnemonic framework, these authors insist that "individual memory processes derive from social interactions and are facilitated by supra-individual means, sharing with others through different ways of communicating (stories, songs, material culture, landscapes, rituals, etc.)" (Barthel & Isendahl, 2013:231). Furthermore, they see such collective memories as especially valuable in times of crisis, which then "can render more permanent memories, […]" (Barthel & Isendahl, 2013:231). Their insights on collective socio-ecological memory are shared by other authors who mention that gardeners regard their gardening practice as a learning opportunity, through which one can familiarize oneself with nature and ecology. Allotment gardens' openness offers a valuable place for city residents to "shape, cultivate and enjoy a relationship with nature on their own terms" (Kurtz, 2001: 663).

Like Kurtz, Eizenberg (2012:773) brings to the fore a new framework for community gardens as a space that "encompasses both learning and communicating ideas about the world". She stresses that the knowledge produced in community gardens is the "result of cognitive acts; schemes, ideas, and understandings…", and that therefore these are pieces of knowledge that are "imbued in formal (i.e., education) and informal (i.e., culture/media, common sense) ways". She highlights that community gardens are sites where local knowledge, the knowledge of multiple groups, is created. Such knowledge is unique to gardeners because it is produced, obtained, and practiced in the "everyday context of their lives", and therefore this knowledge is deep-rooted among its producers, the community gardeners (Eizenberg, 2012:773).

Similar examples are to be found elsewhere, as in Wegmuller & Duchemin's (2010) case study of the multi-functionality of community gardens in Montreal. These gardens are considered as sites of knowledge transmission, with knowledge interpreted in a broad sense as "*connaissances, que cela soit des savoirs à valoriser, des conseils à donner, des aides à fournir, des valeurs à diffuser. Pour que la jeunesse apprenne c'est quoi la terre…"(*Wegmuller & Duchemin, 2010 :11). Filkobski et al. (2016) also conclude in the case of Israel that "the transmission of knowledge" is to be found in all the community gardens observed.

To conclude on gardens as '*lieux de mémoire'*, I return to Barthel et al. who maintain that collective socio-ecological memories or gardening knowledge are shared and retained by members of the distinct social group of community gardeners. Allotment (or community) gardens are described as representing knowledge 'legacies' of traditional household gardening practices, whereas the users' gardening knowledge is passed on and socially incorporated over time. These gardens also serve as sites for conferring practical knowledge regarding urban agriculture, because "socio-ecological memory is the combined means by which knowledge, experience, and practices of ecosystem management are captured, stored, revived, and transmitted through time" (Barthel et al. 2010:1325).

3.3 Nature, Leisure, and Identity

From a collective standpoint, community gardens can be defined as a modern form of "commons", evoking the memories of the agricultural "commons" of the past. This was before the enclosure of agricultural land, and even before the industrialization and commoditization of agriculture. In that

era, land had not lost its relevance as "ecological capital[16]". (Trauger, 2017:53). According to Trauger (2017), urban gardens have given rise to an autonomous space for life. Defined as an alternative public space, they carry a new collective right to "commons" (mostly natural resources) and promote social change. As a tool for giving a say to marginalized individuals, they express resistance, becoming "the weapons of the weak". Under this experience, allegiances are formed between and among social groups in their demand for democratizing land (defined as a natural resource) and new local rights. The "commons" "operate simultaneously on nature, culture, and society" (Trauger, 2017:57).

After having examined community gardens from a sociocultural point of view and as a "*lieu de mémoire*", in this section, I focus on subjective dimensions and look more closely at how individuals perceive their gardens and make sense of their gardening practices. Most importantly, I raise the question about the meanings and significance related to gardening activities. What meaning do gardeners attribute to their gardens, and to gardening activities? And what does this have to do with their self-defined identity?

Perceptions of community gardens can vary from one individual to another, according to the analytical viewpoint, but also according to the values promoted by social actors. While authors often refer to community gardens and community gardening activities with reference to features such as – "green space", "environment", "urban ecology", "commons" as well as other forms of labeling –, gardeners can simply relate to them as "nature" and to their gardening activities as "leisure". They express their appreciation of having access to nature as "joy" and speak often of how much they "enjoy" "connection with nature" or "experience in nature" (Kurtz, 2001; Toomey et al., 2020). In their own words, being in "firsthand contact with nature" is a way to feel being part of "the great spirit" of the city and its "healing" (Kurtz, 2001:663).

This reveals that some gardeners find a sense of belonging through cultivating an intimate relationship with nature. Several studies contend that for gardeners "gardening is not only a joyful experience but also therapeutic" because it reduces fear and increases affection (Kingsley et al.2019: 208; Francis & Hester, 1990). In terms of benefits, some find that regular contact with

[16] As Amy Trauger (2017) mentions: Land, defined as commons, had historically been the resource base that made agricultural production possible and to which farmers contributed collectively as a resource and strategy for building ecological capital.

nature can positively impact and improve participants' overall well-being, including physical and mental health (Twiss et al., 2003; Wakefield et al., 2007; Litt et al. 2015), caring for nature being an intrinsic human need (Jax et al.2017). Despite the urbanized lifestyle, Kingsley et al. maintain that "the intrinsic connectedness to nature remains" (Kingsley et al., 2009:208). Similarly, other researchers argue that caring for nature is part of a series of practices that are deeply rooted in culture, religion, emotion, and education and refers to relational values that are constitutive of living a truly human life (Jax et al., 2017:22; Orr, 1993).

The appreciation and experienced "joy" of being connected to nature has to be read in the context of urbanization and the lack of access to nature that can go to the extent of the "extinction of experience" (Bendt et al., 2013; Toomey et al., 2020). The nostalgic view of a past of engaging deeply with nature lies in contrast to the highly urbanized lifestyle. In an opposite way – opposed to nostalgia –, the decline or extinction of experience with nature is embedded in a social, economic, and political context, taking into consideration social inequalities and environmental injustice. Therefore, the individualistic model of reading human-nature relationships, in terms, for example, of individual appreciation and joy, or the lack of it, should not evacuate institutional determinations and cultural and political factors that are embedded deeply in these interactions (Toomey et al., 2020; Clayton et al., 2017)

Nonetheless, in conjunction with previous considerations, Toomy et al. (2020) mention that the "sense of place" is unavoidable in interpreting gardeners' attachment to their garden and their reference to garden as 'nature'. According to them, the "sense of place" can be defined as "a collection of symbolic meanings, attachment, and satisfaction with a spatial setting held by an individual or group" (Toomy et al.,2020:2; citing Stedman, 2002: 563). "Sense of place" reveals itself as an important theoretical lens for understanding the meanings that individuals attribute to a place, including the process of "place-making" activity, in this case, gardening. Furthermore, they argue that place identity is associated with personal identity. In other words, it is not only gardens defined as a place that can give meaning and identity to individuals, but also the process of "performance" or "place-making" – gardening through recreational activities –, that contributes to reinforcing feelings, emotions, and identification, making sense for individuals, and giving meaning to their existence.

Regarding community gardening as a social practice, the literature indicates that this activity is perceived or interpreted above all, by a large number of gardeners, as a leisure or recreational activity (Bouvier-Daclon & Sénécal, 2001; Paquette, 2002; Wegmuller & Duchemin, 2010). According to Kelly (1987), the freedom of leisure is the freedom to become. The author holds that leisure activities can offer individuals some free space within the rigidities of life and can, to some extent, release individuals from social obligations, constraining life conditions, and structural and institutional limitations. However, the author underlines that individual will never be able to enjoy complete freedom through their leisure choices. Instead, leisure options are always influenced by multiple factors: time, space, and social context. Kelly (1987) insists that leisure is often a "meaning-laden experience" that requires ongoing interpretation. Nonetheless, "the perception of freedom, (…) is always relative to other evaluated perceptions of lack of constraints. The separateness or autotelic nature of any occurrence is always relative to its connectedness to other realms of meaning" (Kelly, 1987:37).

In addition, for Kelly, leisure has two dimensions related to identity issues: first, leisure can release individuals from obligation, allowing them to choose an activity that may have its own meaning or purpose; second, the activity itself may have a self-contained meaning. What is the purpose of participating in leisure activities? Is it to simply fill a void, or is it affective, relational, and cultural? Sebastian de Grazia maintains that leisure is a "state of being", a condition of existence that emphasizes the present moment, whose idea has been brought forward by Kelly who argues that leisure is not only a "state of being" but should be best understood as a "state of becoming". According to Kelly, leisure should be understood in a spiral model that evolves from the immediate experience of involvement and change, – taking into account existential choices that are subject to limitations –, to the experiment of authenticity: becoming (an identity), bonding, and interacting through role-playing, experiencing constraints and political freedom in the face of reaching out through a humanist model of creativity.

This hermeneutic-interpretive spiral framework of leisure constitutes the core of the author's analysis. In light of this theory, leisure activity is closely intertwined with one's personal identity and meaning of existence. Leisure allows individuals to redefine whom they are beyond the structurally defined social-professional self. It is as if leisure has offered a second chance, a new occasion for individuals to escape social norms – reframing individual expectations –, and

rediscover meanings in life. Throughout the life course, leisure plays different roles in life. Individuals in connection to their social identity might shift their roles: personal identities can converge with social identities through individual actions and social interactions. In relation to community gardening, personal identity can be recognized at times as social identity, as suggested by many studies on community gardens.

For instance, "a new sense of self identity" can be acquired through improved food security (Hung, 2004; Ohmer et al., 2009), or through transforming and beautifying one's neighborhood environment, from "ghetto pastoral" to "urban pastoral" (Emmette,2011), or from slums to self-made gardens (Anguelovski, 2013). This means that gardeners and activists can succeed in redefining their personal and neighborhood identities. Among the list of factors mentioned by Kelly (1987, quoting Crandal, 1980) that are identified as meaningful in terms of leisure engagement, many of them, directly or indirectly, can be associated with the benefits and motivations associated with community gardening[17].

Enjoyment of nature comes at the top of the list. Some of the factors identified can be more important than others, depending on the person's need, social context, age, and stage of life. This understanding can provide a complementary perspective in the analysis of meaning in relation to community gardening, which needs to be considered from the economic, sociopolitical, and socio-cultural dimensions. Within the sociocultural dimension, the perspective of "place meaning-making", leisure activity, and identity "meaning-making" bring into play critical elements that will support our understanding of the meaning and significance of community gardening as experienced by social actors.

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[17] The list elaborated by Crandal is the following: 1) Enjoyment of nature, escape from civilization. 2)Escape from routine and responsibility. 3) Physical exercise. 4) Creativity. 5) Relaxation. 6) Social contact. 7) Opportunities to meet new people. 8) Heterosexual contact. 9) Family interaction. 10) Recognition and Status. 11) Social power. 12) Altruism. 13) Stimulus seeking. 14) Self-actualization, self-improvement, and feedback. 15) Achievement, challenge, and competition. 16) Way to kill time and avoid boredom. 17) Intellectual aestheticism. (Kelly, 1989:23; citing Crandal, 1980)

Chapter 4
Research Strategy

After having surveyed community garden literature from three dimensions, we can recall that initially community gardens were created to respond to food insecurity issues. Throughout the last century, community gardens have "come back" several times during waves of social crises, wars, or economic recessions. We know that aside from being defined as an immediate relief to food insecurity, as a public, green, or urban space, community gardens have also served multiple social-environmental functions yielding many benefits. Regarded oftentimes as a leisure activity, community gardening is a social practice that has been examined in the literature from a social, cultural, and/or political standpoint.

In recent decades as an increasing number of middle-class groups take an interest in gardening, the profile of participants has diversified. Their needs vis-a-vis gardening have evolved from food-oriented to multi-dimensional concerns.

Community gardens as an urban phenomenon can be observed in cities worldwide. There has been a surging demand from citizens for more gardening spaces, with growing waitlists for access to gardens. In the context of contemporary society, how should this phenomenon – the coming back of community gardening – be understood and interpreted? What has driven so many urban residents to do community gardening? What are the contemporary social contexts, conditions, and concerns behind this renewed interest that have attracted gardeners of different countries and cultures to be involved in community gardening? The answers to these questions remain unclear. There is a lack of an in-depth, more comprehensive understanding of the renewed popularity of community gardens.

Community gardening as a social practice is first and foremost an experience lived by individuals. However, few studies have addressed the subjectivity of the gardening experience. This chapter consists of three sections. First, I present the theoretical aspects of my research strategy as a comparative multiple case study in relation to grounded theory. Second, I show and justify the relevance of my methodological choices, invoking a qualitative perspective. Finally, I illustrate the steps taken in the process of data collection, coding, and analysis, including field site choices,

obtaining entrance to the terrains, interview site choices, and recruitment criteria. In the procedure of collecting and treating qualitative data through observation, interviews, and digging into archives, I make a distinction between the source of materials utilized in this study and their different contributions.

4.1 Theoretical approaches

4.1.1 Qualitative theory approach: grounded theory, context, and case study

This study uses a qualitative approach, guided by the research questions raised above. Participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and archives are used in combination. Throughout the research process, grounded theory has inspired and guided the study, including data collecting and analysis. Grounded theory, according to Glaser et al. (1967), emphasizes the importance of getting close to one's data and allowing new theories or concepts to 'emerge' from the data, instead of fitting data to a hypothesis or a theory. The authors underline that the goal is not to generate theory as a result, but to allow it to emerge as 'work-in-process' carried out in a systematized manner throughout data collection, analysis, and case presentation.

This theoretical approach relies largely – from their point of view – on comparative analysis, to be used for "social units of any size, large or small, ranging from men or their roles to nations or world regions", including social units of varying scale, organizations, and institutions. Following this strategy, this study compares case units of different scales considering relations between gardeners and gardens, to better understand and interpret what community gardening means for different social actors, and what structural conditions have an impact on the significance of gardening for individuals, communities, and societies.

Glaser et al. argue that grounded theory can improve the objectivity and validity of the research results because they are generated from systematically collected empirical data[18]. They maintain that grounded theory relies on comparing groups, and sociologists need to pay attention to the similarities and differences among these groups. Another benefit of grounded theory is that it can allow checks for relevance. The most relevant categories emerge on their own, and only then, "the

[18] They state, "Our approach, allowing substantive concepts and hypotheses to emerge first, on their own, enables the analyst to ascertain which, if any, existing formal theory may help him generate his substantive theories. He can then be more faithful to his data, rather than forcing it to fit a theory. He can then be more objective and less theoretically biased." (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:34)

fullest possible generality and meaning" can be developed and checked (for relevance) (Glaser et al., 1967:37). They suggest that concepts generated by this method have two essential features, analytic and sensitizing, which will yield a "meaningful picture" to the phenomenon under study. Grounded theory facilitates the formulation of concepts of this nature which in turn "helps the reader to see and hear vividly the people in the area under study" (Glaser et al., 1967:39). Achieving this goal requires considerable data collection from extensive data sources, including, in my case, field notes, saturated interviews, recordings, transcriptions, municipal official documents, garden assembling meetings, newspaper clips, and archives. Throughout the analytical process, guided by the rule of comparison, common factors and relevant differences are identified in the data-coding process to allow substantive concepts to emerge. Flyvbjerg also emphasizes the importance of contextualization in case-study research. He holds that "concrete, context-dependent knowledge" being more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals" (Flyvbjerg, 2001:73).

4.1.2 Comparative tactics

The ideological bias representing obstacles to knowledge – as mentioned by postcolonial critiques – needs to be overcome. I rely on what Jennifer Robinson calls the "comparative imagination" that is required if one wants to overcome "ethnocentric assumptions which arise from the inevitable locatedness of all theory" (Robinson 2016: 5, citing Pickvance, 1986). Multiple case studies can be useful to think "through elsewhere", engaging comparison differently:

> More generally, for a renovated comparative method the status of the case itself needs to be reimagined, most notably in terms of how the relationship between cases and the wider empirical processes shaping particular outcomes is conceived, and also in terms of the potential for cases to inform wider conceptualizations, which is an important ambition of comparative strategies. Recasting how we think about these relationships is essential to ground an adequate comparative method (…) which moves beyond quasi-scientific explanations and understanding of causality. (Robinson, 2016:6)

Robinson insists on the complementary of the two comparative strategies she has developed, the "genetic" and the "generative". While the 'genetic' strategy traces "the interconnected genesis of repeated, related but distinctive, urban outcomes as the basis for comparison" and searches for "repeated instances", the "generative" strategy "compares different connections to explore conceptualizations of mobility, localization, power." (Robinson, 2016:22).

Inspired by both ‘genetic’ and ‘generative’ comparative strategies, I compare community gardens in a Montreal borough with the aim not only to acknowledge each garden’s (case)’s singularities in community gardening practice, but also to discover commonalities.

My research question centers on the meaning gardeners give to community gardening, focussing on who gardens and why. Aside from the gardeners’ perspective, I look at the meaning and significance attributed by other social actors, organizations, and institutions to community gardening activities. The representatives of the municipality, the members of community garden management committees, and garden creators, have all been reached out to through formal interviews or informal talks to form a more holistic understanding.

We know from the literature that to some extent, the structural constraints, conditions, and regulations can have an impact on the participants’ experience of gardening, though it is recognized that community gardening as a social practice, is first and foremost, an individual experience. However, emphasis tends to be placed on the fact that this experience is lived under specific social contexts. Few studies appear to have examined community gardening with a holistic, both micro (emphasizing the value of individual’s subjectivity of experience, and sense-making processes) and macro perspective (emphasizing structural constraints and/or outcomes).

Since this study inquires about the meanings people make of their community gardening experience, a qualitative methodology is used to collect data because it offers greater insight into an individual’s understanding and lived experiences (Patton, 2002)

4.2 Methodological Choices

4.2.1 Observations

To get close to reality, as suggested by Flyvberg (2012), I visited community gardens intensively in Montreal on average two to four times per week from July to the end of October 2021. I visited two gardens each evening, for between one hour and one hour and a half in each garden, with the city employee overseeing community gardens.[19]

[19] During the data analysis process, my visits to community gardens remained regular (once or twice per week) but in a private manner because I have become a member and received a bac from another community garden.

Guided by Flyvbjerg's emphasis on observing "actual daily practices" (Flyvbjerg, 2012:40), I have closely observed such practices, taking field notes on each visit. Conversations and incidents were recorded in as detailed a manner as possible and were coded and compared with interview transcriptions. Much of the qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews that took place inside the Montreal community gardens. Interviews lasted on average from one hour to one hour and a half.

4.2.2 Interviews

The semi-structured interviews (See Annex 1) are inspired by the phenomenological perspective as described by Patton (2002), and that is focused on the "meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people" (Patton, 2002:104). The phenomenological approach aims to obtain a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday life experience, a meaning attainable – according to Van Manen (1990) – through retrospective reflections upon lived experience, not introspective reflections that focus more on the present moment. The questions in this study were thus designed in such a way as to encourage participants' retrospective reflections upon past gardening experiences. By inquiring and inviting them to recollect their past community gardening practice, it was hoped that their descriptions of their lived experiences would reveal how they interpret and make sense of them.

4.2.3 Archives

Archives are used in this study as a complementary data source. This includes individual and official administrative documents, photos, and newspaper articles.

4.2.4 Sampling

Different purposeful sampling methods were used sometimes separately and sometimes in combination, depending on the situation, location of the case under study, and the limitations of access to fieldwork. For instance, in Montreal, my key informants were recruited mostly through opportunistic sampling. These methods were combined with criterion sampling. Most participants were required to have at least one year's community gardening experience, while only a few first-year gardeners were recruited as a contrast or reference group to verify if there exist any differences between newcomers and seasoned gardeners in their attitude toward community gardening.

Through the qualitative data collected in Montreal (N=25), the effort has been made to include profiles of actors as diversified as possible regarding their roles played in the garden, their personal social-economic status, age, gender, and cultural affiliation or orientation, in order to reflect and be close to daily life social practices. Regarding purposeful sampling size, I relied on Patton's advice (2002): "the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than the sample size" (Patton, 2002:245).

4.3 Research in action

4.3.1 Data Collection Steps and Procedures

Participative observation and personal interviews in Montreal were facilitated through the help of a key informant who occupies an official position in the selected borough (Hereafter referred to as *the borough*). This borough has been selected among for two main reasons. First, according to preliminary inquiries and the literature, the first community gardens in Montreal were founded in *this borough* in 1970s. It is located in a low-income residential neighborhood where one can observe a strong presence of visible ethnic groups. These are mostly immigrants from South-Asian countries, such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, and other Asian countries. Among these, a large proportion of the ethnic group gardeners live in social housing within walking distance of the garden.

The borough was chosen since it was where community gardens started in Montreal, the choice of this site is not only as a "lieu de mémoire" and to honor the pioneer founders of the first garden, but mostly because this study aims to explore and understand how community gardening practice in Montreal has evolved over the last half century. *This borough* also has a high concentration of community gardens for a relatively small borough, and is characterised by economic, social, and cultural diversity.

My key informant in Montreal was recruited through one of my early observation tours to the original community garden. Observations were first made from outside the fence, as I had no access to the inside. Some gardeners then invited me while they were working on their plots, but I had to get out again when they had done their work and left. Until I made acquaintance with my key informant, who oversees a dozen community gardens in this quickly gentrifying neighborhood, my

access to community gardens remained insecure. My key informant holds his official job title of community garden animator and horticulture consultant, without whose assistance, my observations and the recruitment of participants would have remained difficult because all conventional community gardens in Montreal are fenced, gated, and locked. Access is only granted to members, or to visitors who are related to members, such as family, friends, or local community organizations. I learned from firsthand experience that community gardens are enclosed spaces with restricted access.

My key informant granted me access to all the gardens under his supervision. He visited the gardens during summer evenings – four times a week in the evening hours between 17h30 and 20h45 –, and I accompanied him such that my access to the gardens was authorized. My presence in the gardens was thus viewed as legal and official (as a research student) and was met either with indifference or a welcome by the gardeners encountered. From the first round of numerous visits to each of the twelve gardens that summer, I was presented to gardeners by my key informant as a university student who was conducting research on community gardens, so ethically the purpose of my presence in the gardens was made explicit from the outset.,

Following my visits to the various community gardens, I always kept my field notes with me, and I noted down events or incidents that occurred. Sometimes gardeners would ask me questions about my presence in the garden and about my research themes. Chats also occurred on the spot and were duly noted in my field notes. Interactions, greetings, and exchanges were often observed at a distance so as not to be a disturbance, especially when happening between gardeners. While being present during exchanges between the gardeners and the garden animator, I always declared and justified my presence as a researcher. Throughout the visits, an effort has been made to maintain distance from conflictual or tense events that have taken place in my presence. The purpose was to protect my neutrality in such situations and my 'objectivity' based on observations and note-taking. Bias has been avoided as much as possible in such situations. For instance, when quarrels or unpleasant exchanges happened between the animator and gardeners, and one or both sides sought my sympathy, I tried to offer an attentive ear without taking sides.

My letter of recruitment for participants was first sent to the animator, who received the letter and accepted my interview framework. After this, he helped distribute the letter to community garden participants in the borough. He introduced me, in a neutral way, as a student researcher and

mentioned to the presidents of the gardens that it was the decision of each president and garden committee to decide whether they wished to distribute my letter (of recruitment) to the other members of the garden. While some presidents did so, others didn't react right away. A few presidents never distributed my letter for various reasons, being either too busy, on vacation, or forgetting to check emails or to distribute it. This had little impact on my recruitment because I had several opportunities to recruit respondents on the spot during my visits. I tried to talk to different gardeners each time in an attempt to recruit as diverse a group of participants as I could. In all twelve gardens that I visited repeatedly and observed on different occasions, while conducting unofficial or in-depth interviews, often my first respondent would be either the president or a member of the garden committee.

There were often three to five garden members volunteering in each garden committee – among which, there had to be a president, a person in charge of finance, and a person in charge of administration or communication. Committee members come up for election (or re-election) at the annual general assembly. The animator ensures that the assembly is conducted in accordance with the municipality's election rules and procedures. I participated on several occasions in these assemblies and made observations of a different nature to those made in the gardens themselves. Being invited by the animator, I sat in these meetings and observed in the back row the dynamic of the assembly, and the ways participants were interacting with one another, and I noted down their discussions and interactions as much as possible. Sometimes tensions would rise while I remained in silence in the back row as an observer and avoided having attention directed toward me as much as possible.

Participation in these assemblies has given me a chance to observe the way gardeners communicate with each other outside the garden. These observations have been valuable for me to better understand the nature of internal tensions and conflicts, and the principal individual and collective concerns. Especially has provided me with an opportunity to get to know more about the groups of people that my previous on-site fieldwork (observations and interviews inside the garden) has failed to reach out to.

In-depth interviews have nearly all taken place inside the community gardens in Montreal – an arrangement proposed or suggested initially by me, for I believe that a familiar environment (their garden is a place they visit several times per week) might help my participants to feel secure and

relaxed. However, in my letter of recruitment, I also mentioned that I was open to going to a more convenient venue for them. Gardeners all received the consent form a few days before our scheduled interviews in order to have the time to read it through for understanding the purpose of the research and the scope of inquiry. In nearly all cases (with one exception), participants have chosen to accept the semi-structured interviews inside their community gardens. In all cases investigated in Montreal, interviews took place in the absence of the animator, so that participants would feel less pressure or influence from my key informant. Because he represents the city, he holds the power to expel someone from the garden who fails to respect the city's rules on community gardening.

It is necessary to mention an obstacle to communication, as repeatedly expressed by many of the presidents of the gardens. Throughout the data collection procedure, I could only reach and interview garden members who can communicate in one of the three languages: French, English, and Chinese. For instance, a strong presence of immigrants from South Asia was identified in my visits, but I had little if any access to some of them who speak only their own maternal language, with their English or French limited to a few words that render interviewing literally impossible without interpreters. In such cases, I relied largely on observation to understand their gardening practices and their manner of interacting with the other members of the garden who share the same culture and language.

I have included a considerable number of immigrants in my interviews, but I must acknowledge the groups of people I failed to reach out to due to the language barrier, and this can potentially become a bias regarding data collection. While recruiting my informants, guided by an emphasis on variety and diversity, I tried to include a balanced profile of various participants: women, men, age-, and cultural groups were all taken into consideration during the data-collecting process. I benefited from interviews in the morning, noon, and afternoon to observe the gardening practice of different people. I have not refused any respondents who answered my letter of recruitment, even when their gardening experience is short.

I ensured that the consent form was read, understood, and signed before each interview. While a few interviews have lasted about 45 minutes, most interviews have gone to the length of 75 to 90 minutes. In one or two exceptions, this maximum length of 90 minutes (as written in the consent

form) has been exceeded given that the informant explicitly expressed their wish and consent to continue.

While most interviews were done in one session, there are a few exceptions where interviews were been done in two sessions, due to the informant's lack of time in the first encounter. Among all 25 interviews that took place in Montreal, only one was done outside the community garden, in a public park. Community gardens are not always quiet places for interviews. Noises from the street, passing cars, traffic, and ambulance sirens can be heard in the background and it makes the transcription at times difficult, but at the same time, the chanting of birds, and casual conversations of other gardeners in the background have also been captured which makes the dynamic environment of the gardens rich and alive in recordings. Recordings were made with both written and oral consent through recording software on my cellphone. On some occasions, photos of the interviewed gardeners were taken at the end of the interview in their garden plot. They granted me their written consent to use and publish these photos in my research. In all cases, the interviews were taken in a one-on-one manner, except for one couple who demanded that they could be interviewed together.

Although a focus group was considered in the design of the research, it was never conducted given concerns raised over public health during the pandemic. It was in 2020, and even if the focus group was to be held outdoors, it required a separate ethnic certificate. The health concerns of my participants were prioritized, but several key informants granted their consent to be contacted later for group discussions.

In average, one to four participants from each of the gardens in *the borough* have been interviewed in person during the summer and autumn of 2020. The physical size of the gardens can vary greatly from 12 to 65 plots. Even though sometimes a garden plot may be under the responsibility of two names, often there is just one key person who is responsible for taking care of their plot. The smaller the community garden, the lesser the number of participants. This is different from collective gardening practice where a group of people takes care collectively of the garden. The size of the plot in this borough follows the Montreal municipality's original plan, mostly a 3x6 meters rectangle of land, with a total of 18 square meters for each garden. Each garden has an entrance gate on which the name of the Community Garden has been printed on a standard-sized panel provided by the city

Overall, controlled public access to the gardens has become a key feature for the community gardens in Montreal, as opposed to other cities such as New York, where more and more community gardens are purposely made public or semi-public. The recruitment of respondents was made initially difficult in Montreal due to this feature.

4.3.2 Modification of initial research strategy

The initial research strategy included a comparison of community gardens in New York City, Shanghai and Montreal. Due to the pandemic, this proved to be impossible, and the more limited research done in relation to New York and Shanghai does not have the depth of the Montreal results and has thus been excluded from the analysis. A description of the more limited research completed on the two other cities and the results obtained is included in the annex.

Chapter 5
Community gardening in Montreal: the perspective of Gardeners

This chapter is subdivided into three sections (1) the results of my observations, (2) the categories of gardens, and (3) the presentation of a profile of participants in the interviews, and the main themes emerging from the latter.

5.1 Observation

In Montreal, community gardens are enclosed spaces: They are fenced, gated, and locked, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, all year round. For this reason, my observation has gone through two periods. I started by observing from outside because at the beginning I didn't have access to the gardens. I noted that a feeling of rejection, if not exclusion, had risen in me while standing on the other side of the fence. I realized that having a key to gain access to the garden is a true privilege. While standing outside observing, I often wondered how the nearby residents (non-gardeners) felt toward the gardens. Living in the same area, would they perceive some level of rejection as I did? Fences and gates are symbols of boundaries, defining a selective space for "inclusion" if you are accepted as a community gardener.

In fact, most of the community gardens in *the borough* under study are blended into residential areas, their proximity makes them "fit in" naturally as if they were purposely planned to be part of the area, just like parks or children's playgrounds. The gardens seem to be in harmony with the surrounding landscape. During my first period of observation, I noticed how gardeners come: on foot, bikes, or cars? How are they dressed and what is their general appearance? With whom do they come and how long do they stay? Is their pace hurried or slow and leisurely? I paid attention to the external characteristics of gardeners through an ethnographical perspective.

Furthermore, the environment outside the fences has been taken into account: Are the gardens situated on a quiet street with little traffic, or on a busy main street? What types of buildings surround the garden? Residential or commercial? In some cases, the quality of the buildings

indicates occupants' level of revenue, social housing contrasting with deluxe or slick-looking high-rise buildings.

The location of the gardens and their surroundings have been documented in the field notes. Most gardens are situated in or near residential areas with two to five-storey condos, apartments, or social housing. The appearance of gardens is diversified from an aesthetic point of view, with some gardens attractive, orderly, and clean, while others are the opposite or fall somewhere in between. In a garden near Chinatown, I was taken aback by the amount of garbage – dirty plastic bags, bottles, wrapping foam, rotten wood, cut-off branches, and broken pots – all piled near one end of the garden. It looked more like a dump than a garden. Unlike most gardens, flowers were planted in the public areas of the garden, and weeds had grown high between the alleys. I later learned that this garden was going through a transitional period because the president has just resigned, and the garden has no committee to oversee the garden.

The first period of observation didn't last long[20]. As soon as I established contact with my key informant – the city's community garden coordinator and horticulture consultant[21] for the borough – I accompanied him on his regular visits to all the gardens. Once I was inside a garden the feeling of rejection and exclusion that I felt at first was replaced by a feeling of belonging, inclusion, and security. Based principally on data gathered from observations, I identify two different types of gardens that I will refer to in excerpts from interviews. Location and environment are important features to better contextualize gardening practices.

5.2 The gardens: locations and codes

This study investigated twelve community gardens in a chosen borough in Montreal. I identified two types of gardens according to their geographical location and surrounding environment, coding them according to the following categories:

[20] I started to make random observations at the end of June, occasionally I would be invited inside by some friendly gardeners who told me I could stay as long as they were there, but I always had to get outside while they were leaving. As soon as l learned there were rules against letting a stranger in and gardeners' risk of losing their plot if they let a stranger in unaccompanied, I stopped seeking such invitations and observed mostly from outside the fence. A few weeks later in mid-July, I established contact with the animator – my key informant, and since then I have obtained regular access to all gardens.

[21] Also referred to as "animator" or "horticulture consultant" in this text.

Gardens situated in a residential area	**Gardens situated in Downtown**
Surrounded by small quiet streets, little traffic circulation, and little noise. Residential, quiet.	Surrounded by main roads with heavy traffic flows, constant, invading noises from construction or passing cars can be heard. Downtown high-rising residential buildings or office buildings nearby.
Garden 1-10 (10 gardens)	**Gardens 11-12 (2 gardens)**
Coded as: Garden # 1 Garden # 2 … Garden # 10 *Total 10 gardens in residential areas	Coded as: Garden # 11 Garden # 12 *Total 2 gardens in Downtown Montreal

Table 1 Types of Gardens

Inside the gardens, the appearance of each individual garden plot stands out. Gardens are expressive. On a quiet morning or evening, if one strolls inside a community garden, one can easily observe the differences between one garden (plot) and another. Some plots are obviously in want of care and maintenance, with weeds growing wild and vegetable plants dying. These plots give the impression that they have been neglected or abandoned as nature reclaims the land. It’s hard to imagine that such gardens can provide much food.

In contrast, on other plots, plants are thriving and bearing fruit, colourful beans are plentiful from top to bottom while vegetables are cultivated in layers so that the garden’s produce may be optimized. From the top layer, under thick leaves, heavy gourds hang down, and under the supporting structures, a shady space has been created to grow other plants: Asian coriander, Shiso, and amaranths. Next to them, red tomatoes, green peppers, and purple eggplants glimmer under the sun. In one corner, Indian spinach abounds with their small purple flowers in full blossom. Such scenes are typical of garden-plots cultivated by immigrant gardeners from South Asia. Few weeds are visible, and little barren soil can be discerned in these gardens.

Immigrants' gardens are identifiable because of such abundance and density as well as the types of vegetables growing there. Immigrants' gardens seem more nourishing and productive for human beings as well as for other species – butterflies, insects, and bees are spotted more often in these gardens.

5.3 From the ground-up – the perspective of the gardeners

5.3.1 Context

Two groups of gardeners can be differentiated according to the relationships they have with their gardens. The first group I define as gardener/gardeners (GG), who relate to their community garden as 'pure' gardeners, whatever the motive might be, and do not participate in the garden's administration. The second group includes the gardener/ administrators (GA)[22] who play a double role in the garden, both as gardeners and as members of the garden's administrative committee. While many of my participants are gardener/gardeners, I have also recruited gardener/administrators.[23] In this chapter, I focus on the perspective of GG, as to the main issues of community gardens from the perspective of the GA, I will address them in chapter 7.

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[22] The administrators are divided into two categories, the gardeners who accept the administrative responsibility of managing their gardens on an operational level, and the city's representative – the "animator/horticulturist consultant" (the key informant referred to in chapter 5). This person supervises, coordinates, and oversees the smooth run of the community garden program in *the borough*. He has a double role to play in the garden: as an administrator acting on behalf of the city, and as a horticulture consultant. He assists the garden committees in their garden's daily operations, implements the garden's rules, and provides technical support to gardeners by offering advice or answering questions about gardening, composting, and horticulture.

[23] When an interviewee is a gardener who also fulfills an administrative role, when they are talking about their personal experiences of gardening, I put them in the category GG, and when they are talking about the management of garden affairs, I put them in the category GA. Consequently, the same participant's name can be found in both places: from a gardener's perspective and from an administrator's perspective. However, the latter belongs to the third section of this chapter – the administrators' perspective – and often converges with a *top-down* approach. The term 'top-down' used here encompasses a macro view of the garden and gardening practices from the administrators' standing point, while bottom-up focus more narrowly on a gardener's perception. Meanwhile, without overstressing it, these terms also hint at some sort of hierarchy that may be observed inside the gardens.

The table below indicates the number of participants interviewed and the number of plots in each garden.

	Garden 1	Garden 2	Garden 3	Garden 4	Garden 5	Garden 6	Garden 7	Garden 8	Garden 9	Garden 10	Garden 11	Garden 12	Total Gardens
N. of plots + raised beds	43+3	42	28	14	51+6	34	12	36	28	45+8	58	65	454+17 raised beds
N. of interview	3	3	1	0	3	1	1	0	2	4	3	4	25
Note*	Among 25 interviewed gardeners, 10 of them volunteered in the administration of committees, holding positions like the president (6), and other administrative positons (4).												

Table 2 Number of participants and plots in each garden

As the table shows, in total I conducted twenty-five formal interviews, all taking place in person – and mostly inside the gardens with one interview occurring in public parks. The interview data is complemented by five informal interviews with gardeners who are not included in the table. More interviews were realized with males (16) than female gardeners (9). One interview was conducted with a person who participates in gardening as a representative of a local charitable organization that has been allocated a plot in the garden. Often, in each garden, several plots are distributed to local community organizations[24]. My key informant is not included in this table because he is not as such a gardener.

In most gardens, I have encountered a number of South Asian gardeners, wearing the clothing of their country of origin, with men in long robes and women in saris and veils. Because many of the female immigrant gardeners do not speak French or English, as mentioned in chapter 5, my selection of research participants is gender-biased[25]. The difficulties of communication are also reflected in the excerpts from the interviews. How well and accurately immigrant gardeners can express themselves in English or French can vary substantially. Therefore, I distinguish between gardeners who are Canadian- or Quebec born and immigrant gardeners.

[24] My key informant, the representative of the city explained to me that the city wants to support the local charity organizations to improve the food security of vulnerable populations in the neighborhood. Priority is given to them to better assist the marginalized group's food security and food access while the waiting list has been several years long for citizen-gardeners. Normally the NGOs never had to wait for long. Their plots are maintained by the organizations, sometimes collectively by a group of volunteers recruited by the organization, and sometimes by their full-time and part-time staff.

[25] An official document (Ville de Montreal, 2000) mentions that male and female gardeners are almost equally represented.

Over than half of the gardeners I interviewed were born or grew up in Quebec or elsewhere in Canada (13), with about lesser than half (12) arriving in the country, mostly as adults. Among the twelve immigrant participants, three were from France, one from Portugal, one came from Caribbean Islands countries as a small child, so they all speak English and/or French fluently. The seven others are from South or East Asian countries. Participants in Montreal vary in age from the twenties to the eighties, with about half of them of over sixty-five. The level of education also varies, ranging from primary school to holders of doctoral degrees, with more than half having completed postsecondary education. With respect to employment, gardeners work in various professions, from janitor in a hospital and caretaker in a retirement center to interior design, fashion, and project management in a multinational company.

5.3.2 Economic dimension: community garden as a quality food resource

Focusing on the perspectives expressed by gardeners in Montreal, I highlight three key emerging themes that converge with those already identified in the literature review, namely the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of community gardening. Beginning in this section with the economic dimension, I look at gardeners' perception of the food/material dimension of their gardening experience.

For some gardeners, access to fresh vegetables is mentioned as the primary reason that motivated them to do community gardening. Shuma[26], a mother of four, and an immigrant from South Asia who has been gardening for twenty years told me that she likes gardening because "I like fresh vegetables, and sometimes, it's like an exercise"). Similarly, Raadi, in his early sixties, is semi-retired, has been living in Canada for more than two decades, and lives with his three children and his mother in two-storey social housing near the garden[27]. During the interview, Raadi seems to

[26] Fictitious name, as with all participants' name referred to in this document.

[27] After the interview, he invited me to see his backyard and front yard garden, a few minutes' walk from the community garden, where he also grew lots of vegetables. I asked him why he still wanted to come to a community garden since he has both a front and backyard already. He explained that the yard at home was not big enough. He grows different types of vegetables in his community garden. His backyard is about 3 by 4 meters, and his front yard of a similar size. When compared to the community garden which is a standard of 3 by 6 meters, they seem small.

take pride in being able to produce enough fresh vegetables and fruit[28] for his large family and yet still have a surplus to share with others:

> (…) tomatoes are our apple – we eat tomatoes fresh, directly from the branches. I take it, I wash it, and I eat it. The taste is different – it is tastier than tomatoes from the market. All summer, I am getting some fresh vegetables, fresh fruits, and a plus. I can eat myself and I can give it to somebody else. That I did. I sometimes gave to my neighbors, my people. Whom I knew, I offer them (Raadi GG).

The positive remarks on the quality of food harvested from the garden, especially with respect to taste, is an element that emerges frequently in interviews with gardeners from various social strata. It appears that low-income citizens[29], as well as gardeners with a professional background and well-paying jobs, seem to appreciate and value the taste of vegetables harvested fresh from their own garden, as mentioned by Patrick:

> One of my favorite vegetables is tomato. And I've got a fascination for tomatoes. (…) let's say - and just take a tomato from the plant, and just eat it! And I liked the taste – there is nothing comparable to it! It's the best tomato you can get! Even at the grocery (…) and you know, you can't get any fresher than that. – So, I think the thing is – to just get something from the soil, and just wash it a little bit, and eat it! Like carrots for example, just pass it roughly under water – there is still a little bit of earth on it, and there is still dust on it, but, whatever, (it tastes) just good like that! Even carrots, carrots from the gardens are not the same as the ones you get from a grocery. (Patrick/GG)

The quality of garden-grown food is regularly contrasted with that of food bought in grocery stores and supermarkets. The feeling can be multi-dimensional as described by Mathew with reference to buying tomatoes:

> Yeah, I can't eat regular tomatoes, my body is like just go [makes a sign of vomiting]– I just really can't eat them! But as soon as the first season starts, when the tomatoes start here, I'll have tomatoes for five to six months (…) Yeah, I don't need tomatoes out of the store, ever! I don't. I don't like the taste. I just [pretending to vomit again] – and something in my body is saying: This is good! Or that is not good for you! (…) I'll

[28] Raadi considers tomato as a fruit. This is the reason why he grows a lot of them in his garden. And he told me that in his country, tomatoes are often consumed as fruits, so he and his family take it from branches to eat like apples.

[29] In this study, I identify participants as having a low income according to two pieces of evidence. The first, when participants themselves reveal during interviews that they live in social housing, and the second, information received from my key informant and garden administrators who know the gardeners well and have access to data from previous surveys regarding the socio-economic status of participants in their gardens.

> always grow my tomatoes here, so I put them in the fridge (to freeze them) – so I'll have tomatoes all winter to make tomato source (…) (Mathew/GG)

None of the gardeners voluntarily put a monetary value on their garden produce, whatever their social and economic status, nor do they seem to calculate their savings on grocery bills. While most were able to recall how much they spent roughly on the garden[30] – after I questioned them on the amount they invested" – few were able to tell me how much savings has been made on their grocery budget. In fact, most of them seemed reluctant to talk about economical "gains". One gardener, an interior designer who had invested three hundred dollars in his garden that year explained to me that there is a "return beyond money":

> The harvesting would surpass it. I don't think that I get a return on my investment in terms of money. The return is beyond money: We are eating tomatoes from the vine, you know that you grow it, so you have that energy, and all of that. (Rico/GG)

The absence of monetary values to apprehend the "returns" from gardens doesn't mean that the quantity of food produced was absent from the discussion. Instead, the quantity of produce is measured against individual needs instead of market values, as Raadi said to me:

> (…) During this season, we don't buy vegetables from the market. In June, July, and August, we don't buy. But most importantly, we are eating fresh vegetables. (Raadi/GG)

Similarly, a gardener in his twenties also commented on the financial repercussion he sees in growing his own food. When I asked him whether the productivity was an important factor for him, he answered "Ben oui, c'est super important mais je dirais qu'il n'y a pas assez de légumes ici pour me nourrir toute une année." (Elio/GG). While I pressed him to state his savings in monetary terms, he estimated that it was about twenty dollars of savings per week. I had expected more, but the productivity of gardens can vary from one to another.

While most gardeners express difficulty in putting a monetary value on their garden's produce, non-monetary values are frequently mentioned. For instance, gardeners often observe that their health has improved due to a healthier diet after starting to garden. Gabriel, in his forties, spoke of

[30] Investments vary greatly from $0-$300. I noticed that most gardeners invest between $100 to $200, while some ethnic gardeners who DIY from seedling to compost, usually spend significantly less money on their garden, and their gardens seem to "perform" just as well, but not better than those where gardeners invest a lot. Perhaps it is because they spend more time, care, and knowledge. They seem to come over to their garden more often. It is what I observed in my frequent and regular visits to gardens.

a food-oriented transformation that has extended to other aspects of life, stemming from gardening. The transformations are related to the fact his growing his own food, creating a new “balance”:

> Ça m’équilibre, aussi, au niveau de la santé. Financièrement, j’ai acheté moins de légumes – car souvent, je ne mangeais pas beaucoup de légumes. Mais maintenant, ce n’est que des légumes que je mange. Des fois, il y’a des haricots, des salades et des carottes. D’habitude, je ne mangeais pas autant de brocoli, mais maintenant, c’est un petit mélange de tout. Donc, au niveau de la santé, cela a un impact sur le corps – mais physiquement aussi – parce que je fais du compost et parfois dans un jardin, il faut soulever des trucs, donc le corps se sculpte aussi. Ça a transformé le corps. Oui, c’est un bienfait pour la santé, c’est un remède, des plantes, souvent c’est un remède, oui. Ça t’apporte de bonnes choses… Je suis en contact avec la nature. J’ai essayé de retrouver mon origine, c’est dans la nature et les bois – les origines des ancêtres, c’est la préhistoire – vie de chasse et de pêche, trouver mes vraies racines, puis, avec le changement climatique – pour moi, c’est d’une importance vitale – c’est de cultiver ses légumes, et de ne pas aller au magasin pour acheter. Là, on mange direct – il n’y pas de transport – on ne gaspille pas. (Gabriel/GG)

Some low-income gardeners seem to value more the social and health benefits from gardening than saving on food, in particular in the case of older people living alone, who tend to see gardening either as an outdoor activity that is good for their health or as a way to reinforce their social networks. For instance, Liu, an eighty-year-old Chinese woman living alone in social housing, told me that her garden producing vegetables or fruit was important primarily for sharing with others and having their appreciation:

> I didn’t garden to grow food, I wanted to do gardening mainly to get some exercise. Also, I enjoyed sharing them (the vegetables) with my friend. I was thrilled to hear that my friends were pleased and that they had enjoyed the vegetables that I grew here. And they praised me – by telling me how fresh and tasty these vegetables were, and how much better they were than grocery-bought food. They praised me a lot – that made me really happy. I am very much encouraged. It pleased me greatly to see that they were more jolly eating the vegetables from the garden than I myself had eaten them. You see, I live alone, and I am old – to be honest, I cannot eat much. (Liu/GG)

Only one gardener, a woman in her late sixties, revealed that her key motivation for gardening was economic:

> Ben, c’est parce que, en plantant nos propres légumes, ça coûte moins cher (…) puis tu plantes que des légumes que tu manges le plus souvent. (Annie/GG)

Some gardeners express surprise that such economic motivations are not more widespread. Rico, for example, told me of the false impression he had had about community gardens:

> I moved here more than 10 years ago, about 7 years ago I made the request – when I first passed by here. I was always under the impression that a community garden was made for people of lower income who want to make food for themselves. I was really under that impression! You know, I saw very many people from different cultures, and they dressed differently, with saris …so wherever I go (in the area), there are many foreigners, and they grow up with gardens. (Rico/GG)

Being a middle-class, fashion designer who lives in a spacious apartment with a large patio, for a long time he didn't think that community gardens were for him. For that reason, he did not apply for a garden right away until one day his partner told him that anyone can apply, regardless of their income level. His main motivation is to grow his own vegetables, adding "I didn't want it to be a flower garden. I wanted it to be a vegetable garden, you know." When asked whether the productivity aspect of the garden is important for him, he also stresses "sharing":

> What I have learned from this garden, is that a community garden, for me, has a very strong aspect of sharing. So now I have all this food, I knock on all my neighbors' doors, and I give them, I bring them kale. And it really developed – I am a community kind of person, in that sense. I live in a condo with eight different condos. I have been living there for ten years. We should be able to rely on each other, that for me, is a community. (Rico/GG)

5.3.3 The social dimension

Historically, community gardens in Montreal were initiated by local communities. Inhabitants who wanted to have a garden in their surroundings would search for a vacant plot of land and then make a request to the municipal administration. Twenty signatures were required from residents. The municipality would then survey, verify the property ownership, and assess the feasibility of the project. Once approved, the project would be passed to the hands of specialists or agents of Montreal's Botanical Garden to bring it to fruition.

The gardens were laid out in such a way as to accommodate residents' need for an autonomous space to garden, while at the same time allowing them to socialize. Initiated, used, and maintained by citizens who want to engage in gardening in a densely populated area, community gardens represent a special type of public space that differs from public parks and private gardens, being simultaneously individual and collaborative. They are often portrayed as ambiguous spaces by researchers, for this reason, their nature and function are defined by the founders and users.

Many gardeners acknowledge that they share a lot in terms of "commons" and social interactions – voluntarily or involuntarily – with other gardeners. They share with others the same address, the

upkeep of fences, keys, public spaces, and tools, among other things. At the outset, this was not necessarily their choice, but they have to accept what are, in essence, the preconditions of a community garden.

Liu and Rico, as mentioned above, are not alone in sharing their garden's produce. The exchange of various vegetables happens all the time and in all the gardens. As in Rico's case, sharing can involve residents in the same condo or apartment building, neighbors in the same area, family members, friends, and local organizations such as food banks, charitable organizations, and residential homes. As Rosa says, it's "part of the pleasure":

> C'est ça le plaisir d'avoir des légumes, c'est le plaisir de partager. Parce qu'en fait on en a toujours trop. Oui, parce que je demeure près de deux personnes très âgées, 89 ans et 85 ans, et le bonheur de leur rapporter des concombres, des tomates, des fraises, c'est vraiment – de partager – parce qu'il y en a toujours trop! Donc, ça aussi – ça fait partie du plaisir. (Rosa/GG)

Aside from sharing the food produced, the "passion for gardening" – as a common denominator – can bring people closer to each other and inspire a sense of community. According to André:

> (…) you meet people. So, this guy is from north Africa – very, very nice. So, we chat. Every time when he is around, we do chat. So, we meet people here. And, when you meet these people, you know that – at least you share one passion – which is gardening. Oh, two, actually! Gardening is one thing – also because they live around, so, we share the same community. (André/GG)

Sharing vegetables, hobbies, a passion, and a place that is called a "community garden" creates a 'common ground'– both literally and figuratively speaking – for a sense of community to be experienced by gardeners. They seem to appreciate it more when a new social link or friendship is engendered through community gardening with people they wouldn't have come across in life in a foreseeable way. Unlikely social encounters have influenced their gardening practices. Meeting people from diverse socio-cultural origins is gratifying and is generally viewed positively as a social benefit. For instance, Canadian-born retired gemologist Mathew describes how an emotional connection was made between him and a Muslim Imam:

> Listen, there are so many people in this garden here that I have nothing to do with, okay? There used to be an Imam – a Muslim Imam who was here. He was difficult because he didn't want to follow the rules, and he started to use all kinds of chemicals, sprays, and stuff. I got into a bit of shit about that with him, but I mean, I still see him – on the street. And he always says "Hello! Hello!" – and comes and gives me a hug. So, I won't deal with him. And I remember he was on the street talking to a bunch of – Muslim people

> one day, and I came up behind him like this (opening up his arms) – I went up and put my arms around him, and they were like "ha –", very shocked, and then he turned around and said "Hello! Mathew!" – and he gave me a big hug.
>
> Because I wouldn't have talked to him or have anything to do with him – because I don't have any social connection or religious connection – yah, it certainly got me – certainly you meet a lot of people. And this was a real benefit. (Mathew/GG)

Such improbable social connections appear to be even more valued, appreciated and recognized when gardeners sensed that these were successfully bridging multiple gaps and overcoming manifold cultural differences. This is the case, when Rico –a male gardener, ex-fashion designer, entrepreneur, gay, and passionate about motorbiking – suggests that it was unlikely for him ever to talk to a middle-aged, married, Muslim housewife. He explained how this improbable encounter occurred – thanks to community gardening – despite their social, cultural, gender, age, and religious differences:

> This woman who was here, she has three children, and I have met her husband. She does all the gardening, and there is – because of these cultural differences, there are things that you have a tendency to be a little more – shy –, so she is from Bangladesh, I don't know what the role of the man is, in the family and everything, so I was like – she doesn't wear masks, but she wears like – ah, a shawl kind of thing. So, I spoke to her, but – I am, I am gentle. And I don't go like "hey! How are you?!" (Rico imitated a greeting in a loud, exaggerated voice), so I go like very quiet. But it's, it's very great, because it's a learning process, it's what is amazing I found – is that without my experience in a community garden, I would have a very rare opportunity to speak to someone like this. This gives us a common ground – which we can share, you – she is giving me seeds for coriander that I put in my garden, you know, and I'd given her some kale – like: 'you know this? You want to try this?' So I'd given her kale. It's, it's nice to be able to get past the barriers of the visual – actually meet people culturally and learn different things from them. (Rico/GG)

The desire to communicate with different people was expressed by others such as Marie, in her seventies and originally from France:

> (…) il y a des interactions avec des gens, et ça, c'est important. Moi, je suis quelqu'une qui aime beaucoup parler, évidemment, puis, j'aime les contacts avec les gens. Pour moi, c'est important, mais il y a des gens, je vois, par contre, – il y a des personnes immigrantes, puis ils ne parlent pas aux gens – ils vont dire « bonjour' », mais c'est tout. Mais ça, je ne sais pas c'est la barrière de la langue ? Probablement la culture ? Peut-être. Ou je ne sais pas. (Marie/GG)

Overall, many gardeners mention that one of the main motivations or benefits for them to be involved in community gardening is to better know their neighborhood community. This seems true for the younger as well as the older gardeners. The desire to know their community – their neighborhood –, is shared by newly moved-in residents as well as by those who have lived in the same area for many years. Several gardeners talk of their efforts to break isolation, as if they have a lack of means to meet their neighbors otherwise than through gardening:

> So, I live on that street, called Lucien, so I walk on that street, right? But I don't know my neighbors. Ah, you see that plot over there? – that's my neighbor's. So, when he showed up, I asked, "where do you live?" And he said, "I live on Lucien". So, I said I live in this address […] and he said: "oh my God, so you live in a triplex?" And I said, "yes, on the second floor". See? – now I have met the guy. I didn't know he was living there before. So, it's just sort of interesting, because it sort of creates bonds – that otherwise you just wouldn't get (…) (André/GG)

Apart from sharing, establishing new social connections, and knowing one's neighbors better, – often mentioned as welcomed outcomes that are not always anticipated by gardeners – I noticed an emerging pattern that makes some gardeners stand out. While many just enjoy the activity for its personal benefits, a group of gardeners actively seek and promote community experience, with nostalgia for the lost community being a common feature. It is consistent with the fact that they have experienced a "village community" in their early lives in rural areas or in their home country and express the desire "to bring the village back to the cities", reflecting the lack of support, safety, mutual help, and trust they find in city life:

> If I see someone is doing something, I'd go and say: "Could I help you?" (…) Because back home in the island, we have something that we called "the village" – and everybody around knows each other and helps each other. It's natural: I might be going up the road – say up the road over there, and I know everybody in that road, and I would ask: "I am going up to the shop over there, do you need anything?" (…) Sometimes you go and you say: "Hi, I saw some mangos up on the tree"."Yah, you want to go up and pick some?" Everybody does the same thing with each other back home (laughing). (David/GG)

> To raise a child, you need a village here, I find it a bit like a 'village' here. I know that my son is safe, running around, and people (in the garden) knew him. Here it's closed. People know him, for better or for worse (laughing). What I like it here – I don't know everybody, but the people I do know, I feel comfortable with. And the management of the garden, they organize small gatherings, and a lot of people contribute to keeping it clean. And you feel like you are contributing to something – it's yours. I think it's good. At the end of the gardening season, we would have like kind of barbecue when we have cleaned up the alleys, we would have breakfast together. So, everybody is coming for

> doing something, but it's something that it's for the good of everybody together. And this creates cohesion. (Gemma/GG)

While David comes from a Caribbean Island and has been living in Canada for more than forty years, Gemma is a professional middle-class woman from Spain, who came to Montreal about ten years ago with her husband due to his work. She shared with me how lonely and isolated she felt then, as a new immigrant without a job and far away from her family and friends. She expressed her nostalgia for "village" life, and this is shared by an interviewee who grows up in the Québec countryside and expresses similar desires, not only to go back but also to recreate community in the city:

> There is another thing that I like about the garden is that we have people from all around the world, there is harmony, there is friendship, eh - 'l'entraide'. People help each other, we know that when somebody is going on vacation, other people (would) take care of their garden, and when somebody needs help, everybody comes and helps them. You know, where I have been raised, eh, when I was young, it was in the countryside – and people were poor over there. So, when somebody has something bad happening, like a fire, or something like that, all, or everybody around, came and help. You know, it was very "community". So, it always stayed in my mind, and when I came to live in the city, that is something that – I was missing, for me. And here I've found it – I found it back. You know, it really makes me think of when I was young, in my country – deep country – like you were never alone, like whatever happens to you, you can count on somebody around then, and it goes like - "ça va delà du Jardin". (Charles/GG)

Was it coincidental that the gardeners who wanted to "bring back the village" were all in the same community garden? This downtown garden is surrounded by high-rise tower blocks, but it also happens to be the most beautiful of the community gardens I've visited. Furthermore, the interactions I witnessed inside the community garden and during its annual assembly have left me with the impression that the sense of community was stronger than elsewhere. Like other gardens, this garden is very diversified, but due to its downtown location, also includes specific features regarding social composition. There are more professionals such as lawyers, executives in multi-national high-tech companies, and registered accountants who account for a significant percentage of gardeners, while there is a lesser proportion of low-income ethnic gardeners.

The initial sense of community seems to be established at the first contact with the garden. Positive feelings are often associated with the warmth of welcome a new gardener receives at the first encounter: "when I arrived here this first year, I am very surprised by the welcoming I got from

these people – it's so amazing!" (Charles/GG). As if a seed had been planted, Charles later accepted to be part of the garden committee.

Older gardeners with invalidities, people living alone, members of the LGBTQ community, and immigrants can be found in this garden as in other gardens. However, in this downtown garden, such gardeners express themselves more openly.

> I am gay, I try to include everybody. We have such a nice micro-society, that's really something that makes me happy. Different people get along together, we were three gays on the committee, and they were ok with it. They leave their religions behind at the door. When they enter here, we are all citizens of the garden. (Charles/GG)

As Gemma mentions, she feels instinctively that her garden is a safe place – even safer than the playground outside the garden: "When they give me the plot, I feel so blessed! Because I already knew that my son would run here – the garden is safe – safer than in a playground" (Gemma/GG). She explained that in playgrounds, you have to watch closely your child because it is public, but here in the garden, people know her son, and she knows them.

This downtown garden can be described as something of an exception. Many gardens have planted flowers in public areas, but this garden is striking because the flowers tend to be examples of rare species. It turns out that the garden committee did invest heavily in beautifying the public zone, with a variety of expensive flowers planted everywhere. Moreover, on an organizational level, various gatherings, celebrations, workshops, and activities are coordinated more frequently through the gardening season, compared to the other gardens. Gardeners mention that they come for family events, to celebrate birthdays, or simply to have a picnic in the evenings and at weekends.

Regardless of their differences in culture, religion, and social status, participants in most of the gardens express a sense of being part of what Raadi describes as the "garden community":

> Many people here, many Bangladeshis people are religious like me, but religion is an individual decision. I'm Muslim (…) it's part of my life, but my mind doesn't disturb anybody. […] Here, everybody does their own gardening, we're a garden community. And we're the community! Somebody (is) from my own community, somebody (is) from the other community, but we are the (same) garden community. (…) (Raadi/GG)

Overall ttensions are rarely expressed as the open conflict in day-to-day activities. But I have observed clashes in assemblies taking place outside the gardens, often in a rented conference room. For instance, once there was a Bangladesh woman who protested that the yearly Assembly had

always fallen on the month of Ramadan when many of her compatriots are fasting. Her complaint was not considered seriously by the committee. On another occasion, a non-French speaking gardener complained that the meeting language was always French, while they all knew he didn't understand a word of French. He said that he felt excluded and not respected for being the oldest gardener – reminding them that he has been with the garden for thirty-five years and has helped all newcomers with their gardens, and he comes to the assembly every year. He knows the committee members are bilingual – and it upset him that not a word of English was uttered during the whole assembly: "Not even a hello, not even once".

5.3.4 Cultural dimensions

Community gardens are more than a place to grow vegetables and/or socialize with others. Above all, for many gardeners, community gardens are cultural landscapes allowing them to express their cultural needs. Gardeners of various cultural origins practice gardening differently, and many immigrant gardeners grow crops that they would have grown in their countries of origin. While the exposure to multiculturalism is mutual, this is more often remarked on, valued, and celebrated by gardeners who were born in the host society. The following commentaries from two Quebecers are illustrative of how much they appreciate cultural differences:

> Ce que j'aime beaucoup de la communauté du Bangladesh, c'est ce qu'on apprend – je n'ai jamais vu certains de ces légumes. Je n'avais jamais vu ces légumes – pis, la quantité de coriandre qu'ils font pousser, la quantité de piments forts qu'ils font pousser, (..) ce contact est, c'est très, très intéressant. Parce que sinon le jardin québécois, c'est statique: carotte, fine herbes, tomates, c'est assez régulier... Donc ça nous sort - ça nous ouvre. Ça nous ouvre sur le monde. En tout cas, moi, je me sens extrêmement privilégiée d'avoir un jardin. (Rosa/GG)

> You know Chinese gardeners have plants that you have never seen before. It's all about exchanges – exchanges of knowledge, exchanges of plants. We exchange with people from all around the world. (Charles/GG)

Furthermore, the Quebec/Canadian gardeners often admire with envy their fellow ethnic gardeners' agricultural skills as well as their devotion to gardening:

> (…) one of the good parts about the Bengalis there is that they will put the whole thing (in use). You know, there is not an inch of earth that is not (used) (…): Like they come here every day, and they take care. You know like how there is no space (spared), everything has been … But they have years of experience, so that's how they do that. They are really good, they really are. (Patrick/GG)

On the side of ethnic gardeners, they tend to put their accent on the advantage of growing ethnic food that is consumed in their traditional cuisine, because it cannot be found in the local supermarkets. For example, in the case of David, an immigrant gardener from an island country in the Caribbean, he recalled how much he and his family loved their home-made chili sauce, which can only be made with a mixture of several special types of hot peppers that are not sold in the markets. David told me that he grows his own special chili peppers from seeds year after year, for he would save the seeds at the end of each season for the next year. David proudly said: "my chilly sauce is so good because of these special chili peppers that you cannot buy from any store." (David/GG)

While ethnic gardeners tend to grow their cultural food to preserve their traditional dishes and pass on their cultural heritage to the next generation, almost all gardeners – regardless of their origins –, also ostensibly acknowledge that they perceive gardening as a learning process. They enjoy gardening, among other things, because of the pleasure of learning:

> What I really love about gardening in general, is the learning aspects (…) Excuse me, let me learn. I don't mind weeding, it's very sensual for me, all of it, it's very sensual – smelling, and seeing the bees flying around, the visual, the smell, the textures of different leaves, all of that, it's the interaction. It's actually the interaction with nature – you know that, like, wow, this plant is taking over the place, I have got to take care of that, it's really all the interactions with nature, it's really amazing. And I look over at my garden, and I said to myself: it doesn't really need me, it can grow by itself, you know. So, me, I am here because I want to control. I would say, hey, this is my garden, so I am going to fix this and fix that. But the garden will continue to grow if I go away. It's going to get a little wild because, in our society, wild is not good. It's got to be kept – its got to be perfect. (Rico/GG)

Oftentimes, learning involves the exchange of knowledge and experience with others, the "others" including neighboring gardeners, the animator, and family members. Through learning processes, new social connections are created while the existing ones are reinforced. For instance, several new gardeners mentioned that they were followed at distance via video by their parents who have had more agricultural experiences than them.

> Well, it's a learning curve, my parents followed it (gardening) at a distance, because they have their own gardens, eh, my father lives in the middle of the vineyard (…) so, they were always telling me: "well, at least now you are using your degrees". But it's like – I don't know if I am using my degree, because I don't remember – like landscape designing is one thing, but like gardening, taking care of the plants, it's a completely different thing. So, it's a trial and error – but as well I have the support of neighbors. If

> I have a question, I have the help of the animator or some neighbors who have more experience, and I would go and ask. (Gemma/GG)

As it turned out, a number of participants emphasize that what they were able to learn from participating in this activity extended far beyond gardening. This led them to reflect on personal issues from an existential perspective:

> I learned a lot here. I was a very lonely person. Gardening changed my life and opened my eyes. And it's not because I know much about plants, you know. I don't recognize the names, I forgot the names, but it's just instinctive. You know when I don't know, I ask people, or I do research on the internet. But it's not that I have much knowledge, or I am that good at doing it, it's just because I love it, you know. And it's not always a success, sometimes plants just die in front of you, and you can do nothing – but it's a part of learning, it's about – for me, gardening is a reduction of real life, you know, you have success, and you have "les échecs", eh... But – it's a cycle of life. And you work – sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't work, and you have to try again. And when you succeed, you are very happy, and you get much (out) of it, when you don't – you change, and next year you do something else. It's a little "condensée" of real-life for me.

> Gardening, it goes so far – for me, it brings me peace. I was somebody who was really scared of death, and the gardening took off that fear from me. It's like, you know, nature dies every year, but it comes back every year, every spring – so, it's just a natural cycle – and when you see it that way, you are less scared about death. (Charles/GG)

> Faire le jardinage pour quelqu'un là, c'est – c'est la meilleure chose qui peut arriver à quelqu'un. Parce qu'on voit naître une petite plante – une pousse –, puis on voit la fin parce qu'on la récolte en l'automne.

> C'est une activité que … j'aime le jardinage. J'étais malade, moi, très malade. Puis, heureusement mon jardin, je l'ai conservé. Parce que j'étais malade, psychologiquement, j'étais très malade, pis là, je n'avais plus de goût de vivre. Le jardin, ça me sauvait la vie. (Emma/GG)

Through gardening, many participants seem to have deepened their understanding not only of agriculture, self, and life but also of environmental and climatic issues. These concerns are present among gardeners belonging to different generations. These considerations about human/nature relationships including the consequences of human activities on nature are of growing importance to many:

> The land is where life comes from. Without a healthy land, we don't have the rest. And I believe that we should respect it more. We should rejuvenate it more. Even rejuvenating farming (now we have situations in Alberta: drought, lack of water, for the cattle and everything) – because people are exploiting the land in a certain way –, that is probably not sustainable. (Gemma/GG)

> (…) I see like in Plateau-Mont-Royal , there are a lot of "îlots de chaleur" – and a lot of people were complaining that they lost their parking (space), but actually, I think it's really a good thing: when you arrive on the corner of the street, they enlarge the green area, and they put flowers around those places, and when you take the temperature, the degrees fall down – so, I really believe, it's really not just a thing about growing vegetables, it's about making the environment, the weather better – and keep the downtowns cooler.
>
> You know, there is a lot of advantage to bringing back the birds, bring back the bees. And sometimes it's against us, because it brings back the raccoons, you know all the animals, the marmot, the groundhog … these things, they come back … And if they come back, it is because nature is coming back, so they want to come here (the community garden). (Charles/GG)

Gabriel from France has experienced a new lifestyle while Gemma from Spain has made a more conscious choice about food:

> Je suis en contact avec la nature. J'ai essayé de retrouver mon origine – c'est dans la nature et les bois – les origines des ancêtres, c'est la préhistoire – vie de chasse et de pêche, de trouver mes vraies racines, puis, avec le changement climatique – pour moi, c'est d'une importance vitale – c'est de cultiver ses légumes, et de ne pas aller au magasin pour acheter. Là, on mange direct – il n'y pas de transport – on ne gaspille pas. (Gabriel/GG)
>
> I am not saying that we don't need to (exploit land) – because the population is growing – but are we eating correctly? Are we eating the correct amounts? Are we wasting a lot? And as well, the same thing with the land. The land is giving so much! And (it) needs to be taken care of. Personally, I would rather eat less – but eat well. (Gemma/GG)

Many gardeners express a passionate love for nature and the garden. They reveal various levels of emotional attachment and in some situations, this love has turned into a need, something that is requisite, and necessary for one's well-being. For instance, the following remarks from two senior gardeners illustrate to what extent, gardening and connecting with nature are matters of great importance for them:

> Moi, j'ai besoin d'être dehors – mais pas dehors dans les immeubles – ce n'est pas ça, mais dehors en pleine ville avec des arbres, avec de la verdure, avec des fleurs, avec des oiseux parce que c'est important aussi, moi, j'adore ça. Ça, j'en ai besoin.
>
> Mon jardin, c'est une partie de ma vie.
>
> Si on enlève mon jardin ? – Non, je ne peux pas. Moi – pas de jardin ? Non. Je vais être malheureuse si on enlève ça, si un jour on m'a dit que « non, on faisait plus le jardin ». Ça va être dramatique. (Marie/GG)

> Mais pour moi, je réalise que je ne peux plus m'en passer, parce que ça m'apporte beaucoup, et je me demandais comment j'étais – et je vois toujours mon père – un homme agriculteur, qui dois me dire : « ah, finalement j'ai gagné! ». Mais, ça me porte beaucoup, et je me demande comment je faisais pour passer tant d'années - sans le savoir. J'aurais dû faire du jardinage avant, parce que ça m'apporte beaucoup, beaucoup. (Brian/GG)

It seems that this deep emotional attachment to their garden, or their passionate love for nature, has been expressed more often by gardeners over fifty years old, retired or half-retired, mostly white, and mainly middle-class participants. Furthermore, they normally refer to their community garden as "mon jardin", or "mon petit coin" – as if it belongs to them. This sentimental connection illustrates that these gardeners have developed a "place attachment" to their garden, and have reappropriated the semi-public space through daily usage:

> Oui, j'ai l'impression, c'était ma petite nature en ville. J'ai habitude de sortir assez régulièrement de Montréal (…) mais l'an dernier, on ne peut pas vraiment sortir et tout. J'avais d'autres endroits, évidemment, mais celui-là, il est tout près. Et oui, c'est mon petit coin, c'est tout près et en plus, c'est quelque chose qui m'appartient, j'ai des choses dedans, j'ai des tomates (…). (Brian/GG)

I noted that many gardeners have also used metaphors to describe the meaning and significance of gardening for them. For instance, in the eyes of an immigrant from France in her seventies, Marie, "c'était la magie" and "c'est un bonheur pour des gens qui aiment la nature". For Karla, a middle-aged working mother and an immigrant from Spain who lives in a high-rise apartment, the garden is "a pearl in the city", "an oasis in the middle of the city". In comparison, Charles calls his garden "the Eden Garden", and Rico refers to his garden as "an extension of my love for nature".

It is interesting to note that for Rico, a designer in his sixties, 'nature' represents some level of disorder. According to him, his garden should promote the spirit of a 'guerilla gardener', which is challenging the city's rules of keeping order and obedience:

> It took me further, being grounded (…) I would always go to a certain extent, where I consider to be a guerilla gardener. I don't necessarily abide by the idea that okay; everything has to be okay … We'll are going to put a cider here, a there, and everything is going to be well coordinated, it is a bit more like an English garden, I like a little bit disorder, not a crazy disorder, but a little bit. (Rico/GG)

And it is important to note that these gardeners' love for nature and feelings towards their gardens have often been mentioned along with a complaint about the lack of gardening space in the city:

> J'étais toujours passionné par les fleurs et par les plantes, et à Montréal, je n'ai pas de terrain – mais j'ai deux grands balcons. J'habite au 3e étage, donc je n'ai pas accès au sol, mais j'ai deux grands balcons, et j'ai toujours eu plein de fleurs depuis très, très, longtemps, depuis toujours. Et ça, ça vient de ma mère. J'ai hérité d'une passion pour des fleurs. (Brian/GG)

Marie explains that in contrast to practicing gardening on her balcony, "le jardin – c'est la vraie nature." (Marie/GG)

While reflecting on the roles that gardening may have played in their life and whether they have considered stopping at some point, some senior gardeners emphasize continuity:

> Oh, I'll always be gardening. You can't stop a gardener from gardening. It's just, it's just, I mean, it's wonderful. You go, and you put some seeds in the ground, and then, every year, they give me something new to discover (…) it makes a real difference in my life. It really does. It is special time all along. And it just makes the world a little easier place to live for me. (Mathew/GG)

> Je me vois très bien arriver en chaise roulant – on wheelchair – open me the door, please! (…) Non, je tiens à continuer. Pour ne pas pouvoir continuer, il faut que je la (mort)… Je le ferai le plus longtemps que possible…oui, je me vois ici le plus longtemps que possible. (Brian/GG)

The attachment to their garden can go to the extent that, for some participants, they see their existence as depending on it:

> Someday if they want to close this place, I will chain myself to a tree – I won't give up, you can be sure of that. (Charles/GG)

> In your lifetime, you'll always have to have something to look forward to – because if you don't something to look forward to, there is no point – because if you don't have a future, there is no point to have a present, yah? Because the present – was the future - from yesterday. See you always – if you always have something to look forward to in your life, that adds greatly to your life. And with the garden, there is always something new to discover, something new to deal with, something new to whatever, yah? (…) It's an obsessive kind of passion, it's something that you just love to do, and you'd fight people who would want you to stop doing it. (Mathew/GG)

Not all gardeners have expressed the same degree of attachment to their garden, and for those who manifest the strongest attachment, it can be understood, perhaps, by the fact that they live in densely populated condo or apartment buildings with limited green space, or that they are part of a marginalized population, whether as immigrants, members of the LGBTQ community, or retirees living alone.

In tracing the roots of this passion for gardening, most participants go back to their earliest contact with nature in childhood and relate it to the influence of some elderly family members. Growing up on a farm or in an agricultural society, in a house with beautiful gardens or with a large green space or having had a gardening acquaintance has influenced many participants' choice to take up gardening later in life. They may have practiced gardening through all stages of life and circumstances or have "rediscovered" their love for gardening at a later stage. Nonetheless, by doing so, they reconnect with their past, especially with the memory of deceased family members:

> Depuis que je suis petite, ah, j'ai toujours eu un coin de jardin. Chez mes parents on avait un grand jardin. Et mon grand-père est agriculteur. Papa avait beaucoup de connaissances de jardinage. Et bon, probablement que, moi j'ai…, j'ai hérité de ça. (Marie/GG)

> Bon, sur les balcons, chez moi, j'ai encore plein, plein de fleurs, et j'ai augmenté ça ici (au jardin) …les souvenirs remontent à très loin, même enfant, je voyais ma mère qui se promenait sur la propriété et s'occupait des fleurs ; mon père travaillait à l'extérieur, ma mère était là. Je la voyais s'occupant de ses fleurs, et on avait plein, plein de fleurs différentes. Et je la suivais. Comme je la suivais dans le jardin, elle me parlait des fleurs. Elle me donnait les noms des fleurs, elle me racontait des choses. Ce que j'ai trouvé intéressant c'est que je n'avais pas connu ma grand-mère – sa mère – très, très peu. Ma mère me disait toujours, elle m'a raconté toujours, comment elle est devenue sa passion – c'était sa mère. C'était ma grand-mère maternelle qui lui avait donné la passion des fleurs très tôt. Je pense qu'on hérite de ça, de cet amour. Elle avait une grande passion pour les fleurs, elle les cultivait, et elle avait réussi merveilleusement bien. (Brian/GG)

While some of them believe that they have "inherited" their passion for gardening, others consider their love for nature as an innate feature, which in turn defines who they are:

> Oh, I always liked, I always liked gardening – or I always liked nature, and flowers – and I would try to do some arrangements. In the country house, with my grandmother at the time, she would plant a lot of things, so I would do that with her, and I've learned by watching. And I could understand, how the things grow. But a lot of other kids, they have no clue about it. Like they were not, they didn't like (nature) – I think it's very rare, to find people who like gardening. A lot of people like at my work, they hire people to fix their garden – they don't like to do. Like all the people that are here (in her community garden), they are like some kinds of – not rare, but they are not representative at all of the population. Yeah, and we are kind of - not crazy, but we are different from the other ones. (Nancy/GG)

> I think it's something you either have or you don't have. I mean, you either like to see things growing, and when you say having your hands in the soil, it is not so much having your hands in the soil – it is seeing things grow, you know, planting a seed, or planting a small plant and seeing it grow, and seeing it bloom, seeing it produce fruit or vegetables, and so on. (Thomas/ GG)

From a more utilitarian perspective, most of the participants have ascribed, at least partially, their zeal for gardening to the perceived health benefits. They mentioned that this activity was relaxing and beneficial to their physical, mental, and psychological health. It was noted by many to reduce pressure or stress that arises from daily life:

> To me, when you come to a garden, you are so, ha – it's good! It's so good – that sometimes you have – a little pressure, you know, something you are dealing with, and some people you try to talk to them, and then you go like 'I'll just come to my garden - it's so relaxing. And you know, sometimes I like to tell people: 'you see, look at this plant! And try to see it grow!' – and it's such a pleasure to see these things you know. It's so relaxing. I would come and I would stay here all – almost all day – if I want to. (David/GG)

> You put your hand in the ground, and your energy flows. It's like touching an animal – directly, you are relaxed. (…) because you focus on what you are doing – you need to be focused to achieve your goal – and then, you don't think about anything else. You empty your brain. (Gemma/GG)

A lot of gardeners affirm that gardening, putting their hands in the soil, is like a therapy that has a positive influence on their well-being:

> For me, it's therapeutic so much – I have a lot of bad things happened to me in the past, and I have a lot of health issues – and every time I come here, and I put my hand in the soil, I feel so much better (…) You know when you live in big cities, with all the stress, the noise, the bad smells, you know when you have a chance to arrive to a place like here – the butterflies, the birds – they were not here before, but now when you arrive early in the morning, and you have lots of birds singing, so that's something. I really believe in the power of nature and gardening and the power to heal, to feel better, and to have a nicer life, and reduce stress.

> (…) when I come to the garden, I get grounded. You know when I put my hand (in the soil) – I cannot even wear gloves. I need to touch the soil. It's something very organic to me (…) how does touching soil make me feel? Peace in my heart. I am in harmony with the rest. (Charles/GG)

A number of female gardeners mention that they often go to their garden straight from work before they go back home, or, in the case of Marie, did so when she was working:

> Moi, quand je viens au jardin, quand je suis dans un jardin, que je travaille dans mon jardin, ou quand je me promène pour regarder, je ne pense plus à rien autre. (…) J'oublie tout le reste – je suis dans un jardin. Là, je suis vraiment dans une immersion. Quand suis dans un jardin, je trouve que c'est très, très bon, très, très bon. Si je suis un peu stressée, je me souviens quand j'étais au travail, il y avait de journées ou j'étais fatiguée, j'étais stressée, puis au lieu de rentrer chez-moi, je venais au jardin, et faisais le tour, je regardais mon jardin et je rentrais chez-moi – et ça allait mieux. Ça allait mieux, parce

> que … je ne sais pas. J'ai oublié. J'ai oublié tout. Dans mon jardin, je me concentrais sur cela et j'oublie tout. (Marie/GG)

The gardeners associate their experience with touching, smelling, tasting, seeing, and hearing, and through these sensations, they seem to be "transported" elsewhere, into 'nature'- a third place, where they can temporally escape from the demands of daily reality:

> If you breathe, you can smell. It's a good smell. It's the smell of the trees, the flowers – and this transport you directly to another place. You travel – without being traveling. It takes you out of the city. Even if you can have noises (from the traffic) but for me – the smell – it transports me to other places. And definitely, (it) has an impact on my mental health. Because when I come here – when I get out of here, when it's time I got out of here, I am rejuvenated, I am not so tight as I have just finished work. Yeah, – I mean revigoured. Because I spent the day in front of a computer, in a very stressful position. Leading different projects in multiple places in the world. Eh, and you arrive at the end of the day exhausted. And I still have four hours with a child that is – full of energy. So, passing by the garden is a transition to go home. It's a transition to go home (...) So, I feel a little rejuvenated, adapted to go home (…) Because here, I can connect to myself, or I can connect back to earth. So, when I arrive home, though l am tired, I am not so tight as if I were just finished work. (Gemma/GG)

For gardeners who have had demanding jobs, especially a job that one doesn't like, gardening seems to be more than therapeutic, they get rejuvenated to keep going:

> (…) je travaillais encore dans ce temps-là. Je n'étais pas heureuse dans mon travail – c'était compliqué. (…) c'est parce que le genre de travail, c'était difficile – tu sais quand on travaille dans un bureau, c'est chacun pour soi, puis – on a des quantités de boulot à accomplir, on a des charges de travail – puis, ça, ce n'est pas toujours rigolo(…) Le travail était trop exigeant, puis à un moment donné, je pense que ça me – ça me tuait.
>
> Mais savez-vous qu'est-ce que je fais pour mon esprit ? Je venais dans mon jardin communautaire ! Et je ne soupais pas ! Je ne mangeais pas après le travail ! Pis, je m'amenais ici pour me poser la tête, et quand j'arrivais chez moi, il est dix heures. (Emma/GG)

In contrast to those primarily white, somewhat bourgeois Canadian gardeners who talk passionately about their gardens, and assign great meaning to them, most of the ethnic gardeners have a relation to their garden expressed in a moderate and reserved manner. Perhaps due to their culture, they appear to be calm, and almost dispassionate. They speak of their garden quietly and referred to gardening principally as a leisure activity, a hobby, and as physical exercise. This is how the following two immigrant gardeners from south Asian countries, the first male, half-retired, and the second, a housewife, and mother of four, express themselves:

> I do gardening. First, I like doing it, it's my hobby; Secondly, for me, I'd like to do some exercise, so this is part of my life exercise; and thirdly, I'd like to get some fresh vegetables to eat, so it helps my family to get fresh things, fresh vegetables, fresh fruits: some things like that. (Raadi/GG)

> I like fresh vegetables, and sometimes, it's like an exercise. (Shuma/GG)

However, this is by no means to suggest that gardening is less important for them. Physical exercise and hobbies are essential to one's well-being, and perhaps they are just shy to overtly express their feelings or are restricted to express themselves freely in a foreign language. For many gardeners, the community garden is a resourceful life space, where they can get fresh quality and cultural food, physical exercise, social interactions, practice a new lifestyle, as well as maintain balanced mental and psychological health. As Emma puts it, for her, gardening is "un milieu de vie", and this is shared by many gardeners:

> Avant, j'étais jeune - je ne pensais pas à ça. J'étais allée au magasin et j'achetais mes légumes. Aujourd'hui, c'est – c'est plus que ça, c'est un milieu de vie, le jardinage – *c'est un milieu de vie*, parce que les filles que je connais, ça fait – depuis que j'ai mon jardin– il y a une que je pense qu'elle a eu son jardin depuis 15 ans, et Alice – elle avait son jardin avant moi ! Donc, ça fait à peu après 30 ans qu'elle a un jardin, puis, on s'appelait, et on se disait : « T'en vas-tu au jardin là ? » « Oui, moi, j'ai des choses à faire. » « Okay ! » Juste le fait de – que je savais qu'elle était dans son jardin, et puis moi, j'étais dans le mien, c'était encourageant. (…) Et des abeilles là, ça, ce sont nos amis ! Nos amis ! (…) bien, si on n'avait pas ces amis-là, on n'aurait pas des fruits et des légumes ! (Emma/GG)

Gardeners who live alone and are retired seem more likely to see and experience their community garden as "*un milieu de vie*" – a place with its own life. The garden provides them with food, and a social-cultural environment where friendships with others may develop, and relationships with nature improve.

Chapter 6
A macro view of the community garden experiences: the perspective of administrator

6.1 Context

If we go back to the first initiatives and to the commitment by the municipality of Montreal to support community gardens, it has been specified by the municipality that community gardens should be managed by gardeners in an autonomous way, through elective committees – on which gardeners themselves would be appointed – for this purpose. The municipal administration would provide resources, technical support, and administrative coordination through its representatives. Among the participants I have recruited, my key informant Neil is one of such representatives. Having worked more than twenty-five years as an administrative representative from the city and as a horticulture consultant, he worked with many community gardens in different boroughs. Neil's perspective reflects often a top-down – a macro view – due to his politico-administrative position. Used to be an experienced gardener himself and a president of his old garden committee, he should have no difficulty in understanding the viewpoint of the gardener/gardeners[31] (GG) and gardener/administrators (GA). Although he maintains that his main role regarding the gardeners' committees is to 'coordinate' and 'assist' them, in the mind of gardeners he remains a pillar of the administrative hierarchy. Therefore, the hierarchy of 'power' – if the word 'power' is permitted here – exists and requires attention.

6.2 Operation of power

It is essential to understand how power relations operate inside a community garden, not only because they constitute an important part of the garden community, but also because they lay down the foundation, context, and structural constraints upon which and within which individual gardeners interact and experience gardening. The gardener/administrators (GA) – who make up slightly less than half of my total number of interviewees –. are, above all, gardeners themselves, despite the administrative role they play in their garden. Nonetheless, their administrative

[31] GG is also referred to as 'simple gardeners' in this text.

experience can influence how they perceive their garden and how they live their gardening experience. In the eyes of the simple gardeners (GG), the GA's of their garden have administrative power, because they 'manage' the daily affairs of the garden and oversee its smooth running. Furthermore, they communicate regularly with the municipal administration– whether directly or through its representative in the garden, the animator.

Each garden committee member is elected at the garden's annual assembly. They are gardeners who accept to volunteer on the management committee. Even though theoretically they can step down, in practice, once elected, they tend to remain in position for many years[32]. Even if the president wishes to resign, it is often difficult due to a lack of candidates. As one president jokingly said: "Il n'y a pas de remplaçant – il n'y a personne qui veut prendre la relève, donc je suis président à vie." (Léa/GA).

Among the GA's I interviewed, only two were elected the year before, the others having been on the administration council for more than five years. The gardeners seem to respect the committee members (GA) and their work in general and recognize their contribution. The administrators often communicate with gardeners via email or in person, so they seem to know 'everyone' and are often more available to listen to and solve problems. However, their role can sometimes turn against them, as a garden's president mentioned. He had been contacted when he was away on vacation, and that was after he had sent a written message to inform all garden members that he would be away on vacations for a few days. He complained that some gardeners tend to forget that being the president of a garden is not a full-time job and he has only accepted to assume it on a voluntary basis. He explained: "People think I am paid to do that – they'd call you for everything" (Charles/GA).

It seems there is an internal hierarchy of power inside committees as well. Normally, the president of a garden appears to have more say and therefore more 'power' than the other committee members. A few presidents have recalled that while they were secretaries of their garden, their proposals for improving the garden had been refused, and they were able to promote the changes they wanted only after they became the president of their garden. For instance, after having become

[32] Their re-election to the committee seems to be often anticipated, 'automatic', or 'naturalized' – judging from the way the procedure was carried out in the assemblies I attended.

president, Charles was able to introduce changes that he wasn't able to make before as a mere committee member.

He mentioned that the previous president of his garden "was conservative and didn't like changes". It seems that being the president of a garden is an important steppingstone to accomplishing changes and making a difference. As soon as he was elected as president, Charles was able to apply for funds from the Federal government and donations from regional politicians. With the success of these applications, he was able to install the auto-irrigation system in his garden (for the public zone), create a small garden with beautiful flowers, provide electricity to the garden, build raised garden beds for physically handicapped gardeners, and create gardening workshops for small children:

We developed lots of things since I was on the committee, we asked for grants from the Minister of Agriculture, they call it 'the project to make food more available to people'. (…) Nobody complains, they follow the movement that I installed. (Charles/GA)

But in the assembly that I attended, I witnessed a professional woman in her fifties question, if not criticize the donation received from an elected politician, because according to her it would be conditional and therefore can compromise the garden's neutrality from a political standpoint. In another garden, a committee member resigned in anger when her garden received a donation from a politician she disliked, and she disagreed strongly that that person's name should appear anywhere in her garden. Among all the gardens I visited, only one garden's president was a woman, and I wondered if gender issues have been reproduced in the gardens.

6.3 Twofold roles, double perspectives

Due to their twofold roles, a GA's reflection on the garden appears often to be made from a double perspective: sometimes top-down as an administrator – more macro and global, compared to simple GG's, and sometimes bottom-up. It appears that they can use their leadership position to question, resist, or negotiate with the municipality and its representatives in respect to major external issues, such as the existence of the garden itself, or adequate external services expected from the municipality. Also, GAs often mediate the implementation of community garden rules between gardeners and the animator. For instance, one garden was threatened by developers a few years ago. The president of the garden went to the town hall to protest, while at the same time mobilizing

gardeners and surrounding residents to resist and reverse the decision regarding the developers' project.

In another example, several years ago the mayor at the time wanted to turn a community garden into a dog park. The president and committee members were united with the other gardeners to challenge and resist this proposal. Thus, presidents of the gardens can assume leadership under such circumstances and play a critical role in defending their garden. External tension does not seem to occur often, but when it does, administrators provide the required leadership in organizing demonstrations as well as in mobilizing resources in order to fight in the name of the entire garden community's interest.

Most of the time, the administrators know their gardeners well and are familiar with the problems faced by their gardens. For instance, in some cases, GA's tried to defend some gardeners who were about to be expelled by the animator according to the municipal's community garden rules:

> I have another lady, Sofiya, she is 90 years old, she comes from Serbia, and for her, her garden is — she told me that every year, she hopes she will be able to come to the garden. So, three years ago, she had her back hurt, and she could not come to her garden. She had bad weeds growing in her garden, so during the city guy's inspections, she received three notes from the city, because she didn't clean her garden – because she was not able to. So, we were five or six people, we came along together, and we cleaned her garden, we took pictures and sent them to the city to save her, so that she doesn't lose her garden – and later we wrote to the city and said: "you can't throw her out, because her garden is clean now." And we took a few photos to prove that. So, then the city said: "okay, now she is okay, she can keep her garden". She was a nice lady, she passes hours in her little plot, in makes her – it's not exaggerated to say that it makes her go through life – in a nicer way – « pour elle, c'est primordial », -it is super important –« c'est comme une raison de vivre pour elle, le jardinage, et on ne peut pas lui enlever ça ». For someone getting older, it's so important. (Charles/GA)

Presidents often have a good understanding of the situation of their gardeners, and they could summon the spirit of "entraide" when the situation calls for it. In that respect, it relies much on each president's personality and style of management, as well as on the culture of a specific garden. In general, GA's tend to spend more time in their garden and talk to more people in comparison to simple gardeners. Interestingly, their observations are not always in line with the remarks made by other gardeners. Sometimes their comments complement what simple gardeners say, but more often their remarks contradict or nuance those of the GG's.

For instance, concerning the issue of food security, most participants deny that the economic reason is of great importance or determines their choice to be involved in community gardening. By contrast, according to the administrators, they often maintain that food security remains crucial for many ethnic gardeners. The following two remarks illustrate the conviction held by the two types of administrators, the municipal animator, and the president of a garden:

> What they don't have – is a garden. So, for them, growing flowers, it's no interest for them. Some communities, like the Bengalis, they want to grow food – you see, even the garden they have now, you cannot find a flower – unless it's a vegetable. (Neil/Animator)

> (…) and the vegetables are getting so… expensive, so for a lot of families, it's very important to have it – you know they are not all – we live in a wealthy area, but they are not all, well, that wealthy, you know, we have co-ops, and we have people who don't have that much revenue, so for them, it's really important (…) you know it's hard to eat well when you have welfare benefits, and it's very hard to eat vegetables and have an 'equilibrated' meals, so for them, it's really important. (Charles/GA)

6.4 Creating a sense of community: a common challenge

In general, the presidents of gardens are more devoted and enthusiastic in promoting a community spirit in comparison to other GA members. Nonetheless, most of them appear to be demoralized after a certain number of years, as one president reflected on the fact that an individualistic culture seems to persist despite his and the other GA's efforts to revitalize the community spirit:

> But they are called community gardens for a reason – they are not just supposed to be a group of individual gardens, you know. But people are – not interested, or they don't have time, I don't know. You know in the West, it's a very individualistic society.

> (…), it's very difficult to create a community – a community feeling. You know, a community – people come, they have their garden, and they don't really want to be bothered with…, with community activities.

> I think there are some gardens where there is a sort of more active committee, that actually keep, that actually manages to create a more community feeling. But it's not really our case. And maybe it doesn't help that I do not even live in the area (…) But still, you know, the idea of getting people to work together, and to see the garden as a community effort rather than 56 individual efforts, it's very difficult. And I think probably all community gardens have this problem. (Thomas/GA)

However, in contrast to Thomas, who has been a president for nine years in his garden, a recently elected president[33] appears to be positive and confident about reconstructing or rejuvenating a community spirit in his garden, even though his garden had faced similar problems before his election:

> To make gardeners to feel belonging to a community – it was very important for me, because when I arrived here, there was a committee, but people was like just doing their own things and leave. When I came to the committee, I wanted to make people more engaging in the projects[34]. They trust me, and we did a good job. (Charles/GA)

In his words, "I really want the garden to be a place where people help each other" (Charles/GA). Where Charles considered that he has succeeded, many presidents felt dispirited. The individualistic culture has been noticed as pervasive by many gardens' administrators. As mentioned by Rosa and Patrick – two administrators from two different gardens – there are too main problems and challenges faced by almost all committees: lack of respect for the garden rules (See Annex 5), and lack of participation in the sharing of chores:

> C'est pour ça que sur le CA[35] qu'on se rend compte qu'il y a peu de règlements, mais les gens ont de la difficulté à suivre les règlements…pourtant il y a des gens qui attendent (sur la liste d'attente) et qui sont motivés. On doit rappeler que c'est un jardin *communautaire*[36]. Il faut faire notre part, sinon, ça se désagrège, tu sais ? Pis on perd, ce n'est pas agréable – mais ça aussi, c'est quelque chose, c'est l'effort de – la communauté – comment puis-je dire ça ? – ce n'est pas une excuse, c'est vraiment une raison! Si on a un – si on a des jardins –, c'est parce que, c'est grâce à la communauté, grâce à la ville de Montréal (…). (Rosa/GA)

> You know we have a – a series of tasks here (…) you know, we are not like blind. We know that some people have their tasks, but they don't do it. We are not going to run after them unless it's really problematic. Normally, each year, twice a year, at the beginning and the end of season, we have like a big "clean up", that we are, well, we would hope, that everyone come, but realistically, it's like – a third or half of the gardeners coming, and participating …but of course for us, as a community garden … it is frustrating, because we know that people, a lot of persons are waiting on the list, to get their garden, and ah, you know, seeing these people can get it, and those people (who) have it, just do anything! We call them the "Bengalis" in French …because they

[33] This president took over from the ex-president who resigned due to the outbreak of the pandemic crisis in 2020 – that was the year before the interview took place.

[34] Community projects included: workshop for kids once a week, given to three to four years old, helping local communities that take care of indigenous women in shelters, among others.

[35] In French, *Comité d'administration du jardin*. In this text, in English it is often referred to as garden council or garden committee.

[36] Emphasized by participant.

> don’t do their task, they don’t, you know – they don’t do the community task as they have here. (Patrick/GA)

Charles acknowledges that he has been confronted with similar problems, but he seems to be able to tap into the resources to resolve part of these problems with the funds he succeeded in obtaining. For that matter, a hierarchy appears to be emerging between gardens. On the one hand, there is a top-notch garden with abundant resources and where it is possible to invest thousands of dollars in an automated irrigation system, and on the other, a garden with fewer resources, having only a few hundred dollars in its account which come mainly from the city and gardeners’ contributions. It is not all presidents are comfortable with, or capable of, filling out forms for federal funding or persuading politicians to donate to their gardens. These differences among the gardens as well as among the presidents reflect in part at least, the variable social capital each president possesses.

For a community garden to function as a community, the president must be willing and able to spend a lot of time and energy on the garden. A president with a full-time job would naturally have lesser time to offer than a president who is retired and has plenty of free time. In Charles’s opinion, his garden has also demonstrated a strong community spirit. This, he attributes only in part to the fact that he truly believes in and is devoted to the garden. He attaches weight to the talent, support, and generosity of many older, experienced gardeners – who share his vision, believe in him and contribute in their own ways. He considers himself “very lucky” in that respect. However, compared with others, his dedication and effort appear to be exceptional, and to my knowledge, he is the only president who has spent such an amount of personal money on a community garden:

> I pass a lot of time on the place. Others (other presidents, committees) write emails, but I try to talk to people. I go to talk to people. I welcome them. I ask them where they come from. I try to share their knowledge. (…) (it worked because) I believe it’s because I am very present. And I really believe in it. So, they feel it. And I spent my personal money to invest on it too, last year I spent about $1000 on it, and I put in a lot of work.
>
> Urban agriculture is something really important for me, something I really believe in to – to make the city more, more comfortable to live. I really believe in it, to make the city nice and comfortable to live in. (Charles/GA)

Charles appears positive and confident about the future, and his gardeners seem to share his vision. In many of the gardeners’ eyes, the new committee led by him has made progress by and large compared to the previous one and has won the recognition of the simple gardeners. During the interview, we were interrupted by a gardener from Iran, who learned that I was doing an interview

with Charles, so, he turned to me and said: “We have the most beautiful garden, because of Charles!”, and then to Charles, he remarked emotionally: “We are really proud of you! Nobody does this! That’s all because of you!”.

This is not to suggest that other presidents don’t invest as much time and energy or are less committed or appreciated by their gardeners. It seems that each garden has its unique culture, for they are composed of gardeners with different backgrounds and life trajectories. In addition, the neighborhoods are also different in nature. In most gardens, the membership fee has remained unchanged– 10$ per season – for several decades, while in garden #11 where Charles presides, the fee has increased to $25 – which is the ceiling that the municipal administration permits to charge gardeners. To increase the membership fee, gardeners must vote to approve it.

The area where garden #11 is situated seems to be rich – high-rise tower blocks, and fashionable apartments. It is the only garden where tools are left outside the cabin, the latter being unlocked because they have had fewer thefts in comparison to the other gardens. Beautiful and expensive-looking flowers are planted everywhere. So, I wondered how much of this “best garden” can be explained by these factors. When compared to garden #5 which is located in an area surrounded mostly by old social housing, the contrast is dramatic. The latter garden has to fight against vandalism, petty crimes, and the garbage left by uninvited visitors left the previous night. It is not presumably coincidental that the president of garden #5 seemed disheartened and complained about the lack of community spirit, while her garden happens also to be located in one of the most disadvantaged areas that are inhabited mainly by low-income families and “visible” minorities, with a greater presence of homeless people.

It is the gardeners themselves who define the culture of each garden. For instance, in Garden #5, a garden that is composed largely of ethnic gardeners and the female president, Léa, observes that her community garden is divided, and fragmented for different reasons, and not just for linguistic issues. Cultural and religious matters are also at stake. People are separated from each other on different levels, among different ethnic groups themselves, as well as between immigrants and Quebec/Canadian gardeners, as she illustrates in two examples:

> La friction, selon ce que j‘entends, c’est davantage entre les Pakistanais et les Bengalis, il me semble que ces deux nations sont conflictuelles dans ces situations là, mais ouvertement, il y a des personnes qui sont délinquantes et ils ne respectent pas les

> consignes… et ils déplaisent eux autres, mais, ouvertement, il n'y a pas des batailles. (…) en fait c'est assez calme.
>
> Puis ici, comme il y a une distinction là, ce sont les femmes qui font le travail, puis les hommes, qui sont comme les – qui vont gérer les risques, dit [pour la] prescription, [ils vont]payer, puis c'est la femme qui fait le travail pour la plupart. Les femmes sont très – elles ne se mêlent pas, entre elles, oui, il y a une communauté, mais ils ne se mêlent pas aux autres, sauf quelques exceptions. Entre elles, oui, elles se mêlent, mais pas avec les autres, il y a comme une scission entre les deux. (…) Ils s'unissent autour du jardin, Ils s'unissent autour d'une table, ils s'unissent, ils s'aident, ils sont ensemble, mais ils ne se mêlent pas aux autres. D'après moi, c'est leur culture. Les Bengalis, ils sont sympathiques, mais encore là, ce sont les hommes qui vont venus nous voir, pas les femmes, la séparation est assez claire. Quelques-uns vont nous parler de temps en temps-là, mais il y a la religion aussi. Ah, la plupart des femmes viennent ici avec leurs voiles. Il y a des raisons de culture que je ne discute pas, parce c'est hors de mon sujet et hors de mes compétences. (Léa/GA)

The biggest and the most common threat expressed by gardeners and administrators alike is the fear of losing their garden land to other types of use. In the case of garden#11, the garden is already surrounded on three sides by high-rising office buildings, and on the fourth side, a new tower was under construction at the time of the interview. Having been moved three times already since its foundation in the 1970s, most participants seem to be in fear of losing their garden. Due to this fear, the garden's committee and president convinced the members that they ought to be more inclusive and supportive of neighborhood communities – so "that they cannot close the garden because it is important for people in the community". Led by their president, this downtown garden supports several local community organisations. According to his estimation, the annual donations of fresh vegetables and fruit from his garden is worth $2000. While other community gardens support similar charitable organizations to a lesser degree, they do not put a nominal value to it, so I cannot judge the accuracy of the estimation.

Most of the gardens' committee members are white, Canadian/Quebec-born, well-educated petty bourgeois gardeners. I have only seen one or two ethnic faces on the committee, and it was in a small garden where the ethnic gardeners from the same country dominated. Eelsewhere, I saw ethnic gardeners from different cultural origins, but rarely they appear on the committee, possibly to do with language or cultural barriers.

The administrators' experience of gardening is thus different from that of the simple gardeners. Beyond the similar challenges most garden presidents face concerning the respect of municipal

garden rules and the lack of participation in common chores, their experience of gardening diverges since they are simultaneously gardeners and administrators.

There is no one-size-fits-all way to describe the perspectives of administrators. However, a pattern emerged after having listened to one after another GA recounting their administrative experiences, recalling problems, challenges, and aspirations concerning their garden's present and future. From the perspective of committee members, most of them mention the pressure or the burden of "playing the police" in overseeing the implementation of garden rules. Some gardeners as well as administrators consider the rules a little too strict and the punishment too severe, whereas others support the rules as basic and necessary to practice gardening in mutual respect and a civilized manner. As one president mentioned: "They (gardeners) come here to learn, there should be more education and less punishment". Another asserted that "there were little rules", and that the existing rules are necessary to ensure everyone's interest. Overall, it seems that what many presidents enjoy least about their 'job' is being forced to "play the police" with other gardeners.

Looking at the twelve gardens in *the borough*, we can see shared problems or common challenges, internal as well as external. Many long-term presidents seem to be exhausted by the 'job' and disappointed with the results. Most presidents have demonstrated different degrees of "burnout" and several were considering stepping down at the time of the interview. Charles' vision may seem overly optimistic, but it does illustrate an ideal type of community garden that many gardeners and administrators cling to, despite the common difficulties and challenges that they face:

> I really want the garden to be a place where people help each other, and a place that deserves the community around. I want to make the garden like something they cannot close – (because) it's, it's primordial (…) Because people need it.
>
> (…) but here, we have such a nice micro-society, that's really something that makes me happy. Different people get along together. We were three guys on the committee, and they were ok with it. They leave their religious beliefs and origins at the door – when they enter here, we are all citizens of the garden. (Charles/GA)

Chapter 7
Bringing community gardening practices into perspective

In this chapter, I bring out the processes through which participants make sense of community gardening while making the connection between the results presented here and the literature. In reviewing the latter, I identified the economic/material, social, and cultural dimensions. In this chapter, I return to these same categories, looking at the layers of significance attributed to community gardens as lived spaces and places and to gardening as an activity.

7.1. Means and ends

The first community gardens in Montreal were created in Ville-Marie in the 1970s, resulting from the municipality's response to the demands of citizens. One of the objectives mentioned in the city's handbook for the management of community gardens was that they should make nutritive food available to families at little cost (Pedneault and Grenier, 1999).

As I noted earlier, several recent studies (Corrigan, 2011; Wegmuller & Duchemin, 2012; Audate et al., 2021) have expressed a renewed interest in community gardens' economic function in relation to the improvement of food security. In this context, researchers such as Armstrong (2002), Twiss et al., (2003), and Wakefield et al. (2007) highlight the fact that food insecurity problems in the Global North are intertwined with complex social issues embedded in long-lasting racial, ethnic, and immigrant social integration challenges. Studies suggest that community gardens have a significant role to play in reducing food deserts and food injustice, especially in urban ghettos or poor neighborhoods (Simatele et al. 2008; Audate et al., 2021).

Overall, these studies confirm that community gardens can improve the food security and economic conditions of households in disadvantaged neighborhoods in terms of "sufficiency", "accessibility", and availability". (Duchemin et al., 2008, Corrigan 2011, Guitart et al. 2012). Attention has shifted, however, from emphasizing quantity to a focus on the quality of produce, including taste, freshness, and the biological aspects of food (Robbins, 2015). Studies conducted in Montreal have revealed similar results. Gardeners seem more interested in the quality, taste, and

freshness of the food that is produced in ecological ways rather than in measuring garden yields in economic terms (Paquette, 2002, Wegmuller & Duchemin 2010).

Twiss et al., (2003) and Pascoe & Howes (2018) suggest that community gardens seem to allow low-income populations to participate in the quality-oriented local food/urban agriculture movement. At the same time, these gardens provide an arena for middle or upper-middle-class gardeners to take charge of the situation, implement their values, and experiment with controls over the food they grow and consume, with attention given to ecological and environmental concerns. The cultural dimension of food is also taken into account in several studies (Paquette, 2002; Duchemin et al., 2010; Filkobski et al., 2016), researchers concluding that community gardens not only improve food security for vulnerable, marginalized populations but also give the opportunity to immigrant gardeners to grow the food they are used to eating, thereby contributing to the maintenance of their cultural identities (Kortright & Wakefield, 2009).

The results presented here tend to confirm these overall conclusions, but nonetheless suggest the need for nuance. Food production remains an important motivation for gardening among most of the participants interviewed, especially among low-income and ethnic participants who stress the productivity of their gardens. Nearly all participants attach more importance, however, to the quality aspects of their food, relating to taste, freshness, and nutritious effects. What differentiates low-income immigrant gardeners from middle-class gardeners, is that while both put the accent on taste and freshness, middle-class gardeners often explicitly emphasize that they do not do gardening for economic reasons. Even though they do not mention such economic savings explicitly, however, the pride they show in their voices, facial expressions, and gardening behaviour seem to tell something else. Through intensively caring for their garden, and investing time and energy, they can express satisfaction in being seasonally self-sufficient in vegetable production.

During the global pandemic with its impact on food prices, economic gains or benefits cannot be neglected, especially for the most disadvantaged households. More and more families are struggling to make ends meet by joining in urban agricultural practice through community gardening or gardening in private spaces and growing one's own food helps economically in a concrete way. Unavoidably, community gardens provide only seasonable vegetables to participants, but several participants mentioned that they practice vegetable conservation through canning and freezing.

It seems paradoxical that the economic dimension of food insecurity tends to be downplayed by the low-income immigrant gardeners interviewed. However, they share the fact that they spend "not much", or next to "zero", aside from the mandatory 10 to 20 dollars membership fee. They are less willing to "throw away" things, and often practice "zero waste" and permaculture voluntarily. Some of them confess that they spend next to nothing on their gardens because they always try to recycle and re-use gardening materials.

In contrast, affluent or middle-class gardeners can spend several hundred dollars in a gardening season, their investment in terms of money exceeding the market value of their harvest. But they have other "returns" that are "beyond money" (in the words of one middle-class gardener). Such "returns" can nonetheless have an economic aspect.

Middle or upper-middle-class gardeners seem convinced, however, that many of their fellow ethnic and immigrant gardeners are gardening primarily on the grounds of food security and economic concerns. When challenged about their convictions, they can provide the "proof" that "not even one inch of the soil" is wasted by the ethnic gardeners and that "they" grow their vegetables "in vertical layers" to maximize productivity. The density of vegetables grown is indeed remarkable on these plots, with little or no flowers visible, unlike middle-class plots where vegetables and flowers are sparsely planted, and patches of land are wastefully barren. It is difficult to deny that food security and productivity are not at stake here. One low-income gardener did admit that her main motivation for gardening is to save money on grocery bills, and speaks of her pride as a mother who was capable of raising six children by bringing sufficient fresh, high-quality food to the table in the summer. She began gardening as soon as the garden was created in her neighborhood in the late 1970s with the purpose of helping "poor families" such as hers.

The increasing number of more affluent gardeners in the community gardens investigated confirms the ongoing gentrification that is noted by some of the older gardeners. Middle-class participants and garden committee members often make a visible effort to distinguish themselves from those who garden primarily for presumed economic reasons, as mentioned by a professional designer participant: "I was always under the impression that a community garden was made for people of lower income who want to make food for themselves." Socio-economical class gaps are alluded to in this expression, although there is no suggestion of discrimination or prejudice. It does, however, illustrate the diversified socio-economic status of the gardeners.

There is thus a lack of empirical evidence in these results to support the notion that most low-income, immigrants and members of ethnic communities get involved in community gardening above all for strictly economic reasons, although these are not excluded. Apart from being able to respond to their own needs, participants can share their garden's produce as "gifts" with neighbors and friends, thereby contributing to alternative local relationships of reciprocity and exchange. They also share the more general tendency, however, to put the accent on quality, including concerns for taste, freshness, and culturally valued food.

Such a relationship can be seen to be in contrast to the distrust and alienated feelings expressed in relation to industrialized and globalized food, as one participant insists, "I don't need tomatoes out of the store, ever! I don't. I don't like the taste.". Marginal as it is, community gardening may be considered as part of the middle-class-led local food movement. Nonetheless, low-income participants have equal access to this food practice. In doing so, some participants express implicitly or explicitly their criticism of the current capitalist food system, putting emphasis on the ecological way of growing food, the freshness and taste of chemical-free biological food, and the reduced food miles, as well as other environmentally positive outcomes.

In general, an alternative, intimate and affective relationship seems to be established between the participants and the food they produce and consume, putting a value on aspects that cannot be measured in money such as quality of life, well-being, and health. Several studies confirm that there is an association between community gardening and health benefits as perceived by participants. Gardening is known to improve physical and mental health (Twiss et al., 2002; Litt et al., 2015; Kou et al., 2019). While the physical health benefits are often identified in the literature as primarily affecting low-income, racial, and ethnic immigrant gardeners (as in the case of Armstrong, 2000), the mental health benefits tend to be mentioned broadly, without identifying specific beneficiary groups.

The results presented here suggest that participants of different socio-economic statuses do enjoy the health benefit of community gardening in different ways. Low-income immigrants tend to talk about physical health benefits – echoing the literature – while middle-class gardeners insist more on mental health. For example, one low-income immigrant gardener sees gardening as "part of my life exercise," while another offers similar reasons: "I like fresh vegetables, and sometimes, it is like an exercise".

In contrast, middle-class gardeners tend to comment on the mental health benefits, seeing themselves as being “grounded” by gardening or “rejuvenated, I am not so tight as I have just finished work, […], so when I arrive home, though I am tired, I am not so tight as if I were just finished work”, Others see it as “therapeutic” or as removing “dark thoughts” (“chasser les idées noires”). As explained by Gemma, it can “empty your brain”:

> You put your hand in the ground, and your energy flows. It’s like touching an animal – directly, you are relaxed. (…) because you focus on what you are doing – you need to be focused to achieve your goal – and then, you don’t think about anything else. You empty your brain.

Rarely do participants on social welfare, or who are unemployed, retired or housewives comment on such mental health benefits.

7.2. “Citizens of the garden”

Many participants appreciate community gardens as a service that the city provides to its citizens, while at the same time remembering that the gardens result from the community’s own demands and engagement. The community gardens observed are spaces where individual practices and collective action coincide, members being responsible for their own garden plots, but also collectively maintaining the public zones and shared facilities. Many participants are aware of the importance of collectivity in maintaining the garden, especially the gardeners who volunteer to sit on the garden committee. At the same time, all garden members must adapt to the imposed rules and limitations while experiencing the *community* or social aspect of gardening in different ways.

There is a widespread belief in the literature that community gardens facilitate social interactions, promote socio-cultural insertion, revitalize the sense of community in a neighborhood, and enhance social cohesion and social or community sustainability (Francis et al., 2012; Rogge et al., 2018). Aptekar (2015) maintains that such spaces facilitate interactions among people of different classes, “races”, ethnicities, and immigrant status. Our study confirms these generally positive social outcomes resulting from participating in community gardening, and this holds true for participants of various socio-economic statuses.

The pleasure of sharing, mutual help, (*entraide)*, friendship, and meeting people from all walks of life and various cultures are repeatedly mentioned by participants as benefits. Regarding meeting people and making new friends, some studies suggest that although people generally appreciate

such social outcomes, this does not seem to be the primary motivation for them to get involved in community gardening (Daclon-Bouvier, 2001; Paquette, 2002). Although many participants in our case do not mention that they began gardening to socialize with people, they often recognize and appreciate these unexpected social benefits. This result echoes that of Duchemin et al. (2008) who find that "interactions involved in this type of activity eventually foster a social environment" that enhances the gardening activity for participants by providing them with a social network that becomes important, more especially when they feel lonely or isolated.

At every step in the community gardening process, participants share things, from seeds to baby plants and from fruit and vegetables to agricultural knowledge. Sharing is not limited to sharing benefits but extends to the sharing of responsibilities that enhance a sense of community among participants. Mutual help is commonly practiced in the gardens and has a social cohesion effect. For instance, a gardener mentions that "when somebody needs help, everybody comes and helps them", and he maintains that it is "very *community*". Our study confirms that gardening helps people get out of their isolation, as mentioned by a participant: "I was a lonely person. Gardening changed my life and opened my eyes".

Sharing and exchanging with close family members about gardening matters are also part of the experience, as are the regular sharing practices that take place between veteran gardeners and newcomers. When newcomers are greeted and helped by experienced gardeners, they feel "welcomed" and these types of social interaction are particularly important for lonely people and help build trust and facilitate social cohesion. Participants often mention that they get to know their neighbors better through gardening and sharing: "now I have all this food, I knock on all my neighbors' doors, and I give them, I bring them kale." It is often the more the middle-class or affluent gardeners who emphasize the meeting opportunities that occur in the gardens. They show appreciation for the creation of otherwise unlikely social connections with ethnically and culturally diversified garden members, creating, in some cases, long-term friendships.

Overall, the *community* aspect of the gardening experience is positive for most of the gardeners as gardeners, but those on the committee can see things differently. The presidents of the gardens often manifest a desire to "develop a community dynamic" but speak of their disappointment with the individualism they encounter. While simple gardeners (GG's) are invested mostly in their own plots, and occasionally participate in the gardens' organized events, presidents of gardens can be

more committed to the common good of the garden. They, therefore, tend to have raised expectations and can be disappointed when they see that a number of gardeners refuse to engage in garden development as a whole. They note that the gardeners who participate less in the common good of the garden, are often low-income ethnic/immigrant gardeners from South Asian countries.

These findings echo those of Wegmuller and Duchemin (2010) who suggest that the self-interested search for friendship, and the creating and building of new social connections in community gardens often prevail over having the garden community's best interests at heart. In this respect, the administrator-gardeners are the exception. The present study suggests, however, that some presidents of these gardens seem to take it more to heart than others. Such differences in "vision" and perception can result in tensions between them and other gardeners, which can impede the development of a sense of community. Aptekar (2015) makes a similar point, underlining the potential clash of values in community gardening between those who put the community first and those who pursue above all their own interests.

Among the participants, various orientations in relation to the idea of community can be discerned. There are, for example, the "village" seekers who have in common a nostalgia for the rural experience of their childhood. The will to recreate, revitalize, and relive the "village" experience has led to such gardeners being more open, inclusive, and welcoming. They tend to help other gardeners, introduce newcomers to good gardening practices when needed, and assist older gardeners by weeding their plots and watering their plants. Perhaps because of their willingness to go out of their way to help others in the hope of recreating the "village" experience, some eventually end up being elected as committee members.

There are also retirees living alone, some of whom have health problems. This group is constituted primarily of women, often advanced in age and mostly widowed. They have often begun gardening decades ago and show a strong attachment to the garden. One such participant says that her garden is "*un milieu de vie*" for her and saved her life when she was in depression. Another example is an Italian lady in her eighties who speaks neither French nor English and tends to sit on the bench facing the garden entrance. Her desire to socialize is expressed through a friendly smile and engaging in limited conversation. A Chinese gardener in her eighties also values most of all making friends by sharing fresh vegetables from her garden.

Aside from seniors living alone with fragile health, gay participants also appreciate their garden as an "inclusive" social space where people accept differences without judging each other. As a gay gardener said: "we were three gays on the committee, and they were ok with it. They leave their religion behind the door. When they enter here, we are all citizens of the garden". On the other hand, ethnic minority and «visible» immigrants, who make up the bulk of the members in some gardens, can tend to separate themselves from the rest of the garden community, given language and cultural barriers, since most of them are Muslim women from South Asia, and many are not able to communicate in either English or French. However, male immigrant gardeners seem slightly more open to socializing with gardeners from different cultures.

It is mostly middle-class Caucasian participants who express curiosity to interact with socio-cultural differentiated gardeners (especially in reference to immigrant gardeners of various origins) and a desire to know their neighbours. Visible minority gardeners are under-represented on garden committees, and few come to garden gatherings, such as the "*fête des récoltes*" or the "*corvées*". Caucasian gardeners seem to appreciate the cultural diversity in their *community* garden, but nonetheless, cultural boundaries can seem to be in the process of being consolidated on both sides, with occasional remarks bordering on prejudice or bias and with a division between "us" and "them" emerging during interviews.

Other factors such as a sense of security, and proximity to the garden can also facilitate social interactions and social connections. This element is especially important for gardeners with small children, as mentioned by several young parents. Among others, Gemma highlights how the feeling of security is critical for her, thanks to the garden enclosures and the acceptance of children by other gardeners. She lets her five-year-old son run freely in the garden.

7.3. Culture and nature

"Getting in touch with nature" emerges as a central concern in the interviews. These findings agree with the literature that "to enjoy nature" is an important motivation for participants (Kingsley et al., 2009, Guitart et al., 2012). The need and the joy of "getting in touch with nature" are connected with the lack of green spaces in the investigated area. Compared to Montreal's West Island, this local borough suffers a shortage of such green spaces, as a historically disadvantaged neighborhood. Nonetheless, researchers have yet to explain why some participants in community gardens in such areas feel the 'need' to connect with nature, while others do not mention it at all.

Reading community gardens as cultural landscapes provides us with the opportunity to see them as a venue where idealized representations of nature can be expressed. However, while the well-educated, middle-class gardeners tend to see their garden as “nature”, most of the low-income, immigrant gardeners rarely use the expression. Emotional bonds and affective attachments are most notably expressed by middle-class gardeners. For Example, for one woman “Mon jardin, c’est une partie de ma vie […] si on enlève mon jardin ? – Non, je ne peux pas”,

For Bendt et al (2013) the desire to get in touch with nature is indissociable from the “extinction of experience” in cities. Apparicio et al., (2016) also point out that on the Island of Montreal, low-income, unemployed, and visible minorities habitually live in areas where vegetation is less abundant, and that environmental injustice is repeatedly coupled with socioeconomic injustice, creating a “double inequality” for the populations concerned. While in some studies, social actors define their gardens in terms of an “oasis” or a “haven”, the emotional attachment and relational values unveiled in these expressions need to be seen, according to Bendt et al. (2013) and Toomey et al. (2021) in the context of the stigma and stereotypes associated with the speakers’ condition.

A better understanding is required as to how gardeners as subjects perceive and experience nature through participating in community gardens. Several researchers attempt to understand the origin of this need and desire to be connected to nature by mentioning early childhood contact with nature, but little is said about how the relational human/nature dimension is initiated or experienced (Lohr & Pearson-Mims, 2005).

Participants in the study presented here from different socioeconomic classes seem to refer to their garden in distinct vocabularies. Some middle-class participants prize their garden as an “oasis”, a “pearl” or an “Eden”. In comparison to sporadic visits to chalets or national parks, the immediate accessibility of “nature” seems to make them appreciate it more, although some are able to get out of the city on a regular basis; “j’ai l’impression que c’était ma petite nature en ville. J’ai l’habitude de sortir assez régulièrement de Montréal.” In contrast, low-income immigrant gardeners tend to talk about their garden in plain, down-to-earth language, referring to their plot as “my garden”, and speaking of the benefits in a rather disenchanted way. Their pragmatic way of describing their garden suggests a relationship with “nature” (the garden) that is more utilitarian than symbolic. The “services” provided by their garden are above all material and practical.

In general, the more middle-class-affluent gardeners tend to see the gardens as a place to produce aesthetically appealing artwork or as an instrument to address environmental and ecological concerns. The low-income immigrant gardeners rarely describe their gardens in either aesthetic or environmental terms. However, this is not to say that they are indifferent to environmental and ecological issues. On the contrary, they practise gardening with great attention and caution. Most of them do gardening in ecological ways as much as anyone else, if not more. The difference lies in the fact that they tend not to talk about environmental impact as much, perhaps because in the traditional agriculture of their country of origin such values go without saying. Eizenberg (2012) recognizes that community gardens are spaces for ethnic gardeners to celebrate their "silent cultures" and intercultural gardens in Germany can be examples of how community gardens help celebrate such cultural diversity and contribute to feelings of respect for marginalized immigrant populations whose values are often under-rated or under-represented in the host society (Muller, 2018).

There is nonetheless a difference of emphasis among different groups. In our study, middle-class participants tend to see their ecological convictions as being part of a citizen's responsibility, with enriched biodiversity, ecological benefits, and the reduced heat-island effects among the environmental issues most mentioned. These results echo those of Audate et al. (2021) who see well-educated younger gardeners as actively seeking ways to address the ecological impasse by taking up alternative lifestyles in accordance with their values and beliefs (Audate et al., 2021).

7.4. Gardening and memory

Audate et al's comparative case study of Montreal and Quito also reveals that many of their participants see gardening as a way to "reconnect with their past and their culture" (Audate et al., 2021: 5), a position that echoes the notion of the "realm of collective memories[37]", as evoked by Eizenberg (2012). Our research also suggests that community gardens are spaces filled with memories and symbols. This "*lieu de mémoire*" allows participants to be connected, not only with nature, but to their own past, culture, tradition, and family heritage while allowing them to reconstruct or affirm a desired identity. For instance, a woman tells of her childhood experience of growing up on a farm and her revived interest in gardening after several decades, "because here

[37] Originally, this was coined by Nora (1996) in French as "lieu de mémoire".

[…] I can connect back to earth." Gardening, through "connecting to earth" is a way to reconnect with her past. This study confirms a positive association between childhood experience with gardens or on farms and the decision to take up gardening later in life. Some regret that they hadn't returned to gardening earlier.

There is also an association between early childhood experience of gardening, and the role played by close family members, a factor that seems to be seldom mentioned in the literature. In this study, many participants trace their childhood gardening memories back to close family members, such as mothers, fathers, and grandparents. The act of gardening becomes a place of encounter, where memories melt into and merge with experiences of the present.

Different kinds of memory are evoked by the gardeners. Some ethnic immigrant gardeners feel closer to their cultural origin and ethnic identity by growing vegetables in the same way as they were grown in their home country, whereas non-immigrant gardeners tend to remember their childhood and revive memories of close family members. Brian, for example, grows the same flowers as his mother used to grow and Rosa sees her father in her mind's eye when she plants seedlings in February. Through their gardening practices, they seem to be knotting together – whether consciously or subconsciously – their past and present, reiterating and reaffirming who they used to be and who they want to become: a gardener, an outdoor self-sufficient person, an ecological citizen.

Some authors, such as (Barthel et al., 2012), focus primarily on "collective social-ecological memories", and how this "ecological knowledge" may improve cities' resilience in times of crisis or when urban residents are faced with natural disasters that interrupt normal food supply and socio-economic life course. Several middle-class participants in our study express such anxieties. They underline the urgency of transmitting fading ecological/agricultural knowledge to future generations through urban gardening practices, with one participant seeing this as an existential issue for future generations in order to survive current extreme climate change and the ecological crisis. Most participants recognize and emphasize the satisfaction and pleasure they get from the transmission of such knowledge about gardening. They mention the pleasure of learning from – and exchanging knowledge with – other gardeners, especially with older and ethnic or immigrant gardeners, inter-generational and intercultural sharing of gardening knowledge being valued by all participants.

Barthel et al. (2012) maintain that such knowledge is disappearing among urban residents, especially given that most of the world's population now lives in urban environments. Several authors note that community gardens can retain and disseminate such ecological knowledge, keeping alive "collective socio-ecological memories" (Barthel et al., 2010; Filkobski et al., 2016). In this respect, as underlined by Barthel et al. (2010 &2011), learning ecological and agricultural knowledge is particularly meaningful for future generations. In the face of climate change and ecological crisis, cities of the future need to improve their resilience through urban gardening and relying on such knowledge. For this reason, children are often welcomed in community gardens. Several parent gardeners in this study mention that the primary reason that they garden includes introducing their small children to gardening and educating them about food, biodiversity, and nature.

7.5 Community gardening as leisure

Community gardening is often considered primarily as a recreational or leisure activity, but the significance of leisure is rarely discussed, although Kelly (1987) maintains that leisure (such as gardening in this case) is "meaning-laden". Wegmuller and Duchemin (2010) also emphasize the importance of community grading as a "*bon passe-temps*", "*une forme de loisir ludique*", or "*une activité de plaisir*". My research confirms that most participants refer to gardening as a "passe-temps" or leisure activity, but the meaning of leisure is different for different participants. The notion of "leisure" should be read more attentively in relation to gardeners' needs which are often rooted in and derived from their specific living conditions, especially, socioeconomic ones.

In our study, participants tend to mention their gardening practice's impact on lifestyle changes. Some place emphasis on physical exercise, since gardening requires many and constant body movements: bending over, standing up, and walking around, while seeding, weeding, watering, trimming, composting, and harvesting, all activities carried out in the open air. Others place emphasis on environmental issues.

The municipality of Montreal has depicted community gardening as, above all, a leisure activity. Kelly (1987) evokes Crandal's analysis to show the meanings that 'leisure' conveys. According to Crandal, leisure encompasses various aspects of human life, including enjoyment of nature, escape from routine and responsibility, physical exercise, creativity, relaxation, social contact, opportunity

to meet new people, family interaction, improving social recognition and status, social power, altruism, stimulus-seeking, self-actualization, self-improvement, achievement, and others.

In this sense, community gardening is indeed a leisure activity, through which individuals take the initiative to seek and experiment with alternative solutions in response to multi-dimensional challenges and problems that may be rooted in their economic, social, and cultural living conditions. These solutions may be partial, unsatisfying, and to some extent transitory because these are bounded by circumstances that are continuously changing. However, in an overall view, community gardens are places that are full of resources, from which participants can obtain what they need, should it be economic/material, social, or cultural.

7.6. Conclusion

In terms of group dynamics, Wegmuller et al. (2010) distinguish two types of dynamics prevailing in community gardens, the personal dynamic and the community dynamic. However, in the experience of the participants in this study, these two dynamics seem closely related. Seeking friendship can reinforce the sense of community and the sense of community can in turn facilitate the making of friends.

How participants make sense of gardening and experience is not only social but also cultural, with the cultural dimension bringing to light the diversity and multidimensional scope of the human/nature relationship. City dwellers seek to reconnect with nature through urban gardening, and this is frequently expressed as a 'need' by middle-class participants. This need has often been interpreted in connection with health benefits and the improvement of living conditions, but this reading seems partial with nature being seen primarily from an instrumental point of view. Jax et al. (2018) see the need to relate to nature as intrinsically human (Jax et al., 2018), and several participants in our study share this conviction.

Many participants have childhood memories relating not only to gardening and close family members but also to nostalgia for a lost pastoral lifestyle. A sociological reading of this relationship is offered by Dickson (1992:190), who interprets the sought-after human/nature relationship as being associated with 'self-identity' recovery: "It is an attempt to overcome the sense of alienation or estrangement …The objective is to develop the sense of self and identity through association not only with other human beings but with nature".

Bringing out the personal and emotional components of the human/nature relationship deserves more attention. Participants do not just garden to harvest food, or build new social ties, but also are cultivating "a space of memory". Through cultivating a garden, gardeners are reconnecting not only with nature but also with their self (identity), (re)discovering who they are, and who they want to become. Kelly (1987) also refers to leisure (in this context, gardening) as a meaningful activity that provides people not only "the freedom to be", but also, the "freedom to become".

During the interviews, some participants refer to their gardens as a "haven": a place of safety and refuge. The question raised is a "refuge" from what? Several participants highlight that the community garden is "a transitional place", and "a third place" between work and home. The gardens can serve as a "haven" to allow participants to escape the pressures of daily life, the responsibilities, and the challenges that go together with the post-industrial urban lifestyle.

Conclusion

The social environment has changed dramatically since the first community gardens were created in Montreal and New York City (NYC). We know through the literature that many of the present-day community gardens in both cities were introduced at a turbulent time. The energy crisis of the 1970s severely affected the economic performance of many countries, with rising unemployment rates, inflation, increased food prices, urban decline, and environmental issues driving the urban poor and vulnerable groups into deeper crisis, with multi-dimensional inequality and economic, social, and environmental. injustice, During the same period, many governments reduced their investment in welfare and shifted their orientation towards neoliberalism. The "laisser-faire" spirit made its comeback and regained popularity leading to cuts in financial and social support for vulnerable populations.

Neo-liberal policies have pushed vulnerable individuals, struggling households, and the disadvantaged population at large to seek individual solutions in order to respond to their immediate needs. For instance, feeding oneself and one's family has been a driving force behind collective action that was to take place and gain momentum. According to each individual and household's specific geographic location, social-economic conditions, and living environment, the urgency to address the most pressing issues varys from one group and one neighborhood to another. At the same time, community gardens as a response in different countries have much in common, as is apparent from the literature.

The spread of community gardens is often considered as part of broader "social movements". These movements are situated at the intersection of multiple other social movements, including greening and environmental movements, local food movements, urban agriculture movements, community empowerment or community revitalization movements, sustainable "ecological city" movements, lifestyle movements, new materialism, and "new everyday life environmentalism". Hence, the meaning of community gardens as spaces and places, and the significance of this social practice as an individualized activity, has to be understood in relation to these social-political, cultural, and environmental contexts.

Community gardeners take part in these movements with varying motivations. Through individual everyday life practices, they are collectively transforming individual lifestyles, relations to food, nature, economic-material conditions of life, perceptions of self, identity, cultural preferences, and social relations. With more and more individuals involved, they can be seen as transforming the neighborhood's urban environment one patch of land at a time. Community gardens reduce heat-island effects and food waste and are forms of resistance to the existing capitalist-oriented food system, materialism, and consumerism.

Understanding meaning

When I undertook this research project, my main objective was to understand how participants experience community gardening and the meanings they attribute to it in relation to their "lifeworld". Such "meaning" can be seen as twofold, relating to community gardens as places and to gardening practice as activity. Sometimes I examine these two ways of understanding gardens together and sometimes separately. For instance, when I refer to "places of memory" (*lieux de mémoire*), "green spaces", and "social spaces", I see community gardens as spaces or places that have physical dimensions, and when I refer to leisure, I see gardening as an activity. With regard to the perceived economic, social, environmental, and health benefits, the two sets of meanings blend together. Without the secure spaces provided by community gardens, one cannot carry out gardening. Conversely, a place without maintenance and usage would be meaningless.

The different socio-economic classes encountered in the Montreal community gardens express different attitudes to food-security, as might be expected. What distinguishes the middle class's participation in gardening from that of low-income immigrant gardeners is the values they put forward and attach to this social practice. While the former care less about the quantity of their garden's produce, the latter try to maximize productivity through intensive gardening. Thus, low-income immigrant gardeners attach more importance to the economic-material aspect, with the middle-class attempting to address environmental, ecological, and sustainable lifestyle issues through gardening.

Middle-class participants' presence in community gardens reflects the ongoing "local-food movement". The experience of growing their own food in community gardens has brought them closer to a healthy diet, to family, and to cultural heritage. Aside from having fresh, tasty, and quality vegetables, they also claim to enjoy a transformed lifestyle resulting in improved health

benefits. This new relationship with food is true for low-income ethnic groups as well, but for middle-class participants, the emotional, cultural, and moral values represented by community gardening are beyond the measurement of money. As a result, both groups take part in the urban agriculture movement but with somewhat different intentions.

Both middle-class and low-income immigrant gardeners mention the new social connections they develop through gardening, in and out of their community gardens. Hence, the gardens are "meeting places" where citizen-gardeners socialize and learn while gardening in – and with – a community. However, the social aspects of gardening are not appreciated in the same way by all participants. Community gardens mirror society, hence, tensions and conflicts may arise occasionally, and in the eyes of some administrators, the development of a sense of community can be impeded by individualistic behavior resulting in internal divisions in some gardens, and scissions among gardeners of different cultures and ethnic groups.

The insufficient number of immigrant ethnic gardeners taking part in the "corvées", or collective chores, can negatively affect the sense of community in culturally diversified gardens. Overall, it seems the two kinds of social dynamics (individual-oriented and community-oriented) operate in all the community gardens studied. Participants often mention social benefits as a plus, as a social-culturally enriching experience resulting from community gardening. However, I note that this social space may be essential for some participants, and less so for others.

From a cultural perspective, the Montreal community gardens observed serve as semi-autonomous green spaces where participants can reconnect with nature, self, and their cultural heritage through "leisure" gardening. However, the low-income immigrants rarely refer to their gardens as "nature". While the affluent or middle-income gardeners show a strong emotional attachment to their garden/nature, the low-income immigrant participants do not express their emotional bonding to their garden explicitly. These emotional attachments can be traced to childhood experiences and attributed to cultural needs.

In the eyes of many participants, their gardens are not only "nature" but also "places of memory" "*lieux de mémoire*". In this sense, community gardens can be carriers of personal, familial, and cultural memories. This is notably true for middle-class and affluent gardeners, who can emphasize the aesthetic appeal of taming "nature". In contrast, low-income immigrant participants can reaffirm their cultural identity and seek to preserve some traditional cultural-food practices through

gardening. Through shared learning and passing on agricultural knowledge and experience, “the collective social-ecological memory” is reactivated and preserved.

Both social-economic groups perceive their gardens as an extension of their “everyday life” space. Through this space, they live an enriched social-cultural life. As for the participants who have full-time jobs, they can see community gardens as a key “transitional place” between work and home, reflecting the difficulty for some individuals to cope with the stresses of the current urban lifestyle. Overall, this group’s appreciation of “nature” is embedded in the “extinction of experience” in cities, where urban green spaces are unequally distributed. In this sense, community gardens can be grassroots instruments to combat structural social and environmental injustice.

Ultimately no one answer emerges from this study as far as the meaning of community gardening is concerned. The meaning varies for different social, economic, and cultural groups, and is plural and context-specific. It would be unrealistic to draw out an overarching meaning for such a diversified, and in some cases, marginalized population. But these small patches of land – cultivated and maintained by individuals within the framework of collective identity –improve life satisfaction and make city life easier, and cities more inhabitable.

In Montreal, apart from income and class as such, I have identified three types of social actors involved in community gardening: the gardener/gardeners (GGs) (or simple gardeners), the gardener/administrators (GAs), and the municipal agents. These different groups fabricate and interpret the meaning of community gardens differently. For *simple gardeners*, the significance they attribute to gardening varies according to revenue, social status, and cultural background, whereas gardeners/administrators often place emphasis on the value of community and can experience disappointment given the perceived individualism of others. Similarly, the city’s representative, one of the municipal agents who serves as a horticulturist and as an “animator” in the gardens, stresses that community gardens are primarily places “where we first cultivate the people, and second, the vegetables”. “Cultivating people”, in this context, means cultivating civic behavior, engagement in “shared chores” and respect for the other members and the rules of the gardens.

Looking forward

At the time of the creation of the first community garden, following a fire that burned down residential buildings in one of Montreal's poor neighborhoods, the immigrant residents living in the area demanded that the city turn the newly available vacant lot into a community garden. These residents wanted a place to grow vegetables and the municipal government of the time responded positively to their claim. The subsequent spread of community gardens in Montreal means that some low-income households have enjoyed improved food security and a better daily life environment. We must credit some of this to the institutionalized support from the city of Montreal, for facilitating and materializing the creation of these gardens.

Montreal's existing community gardens were not born from guerilla gardens, for they were part of an administrative program from the beginning. In the contemporary context, however, faced with global warming and climate change, the State can find it harder to pull together resources to react to these environmental issues of common concern, and this may explain why more and more environmentally conscious young and middle-aged participants are joining community gardens. Because of institutional limitations, community gardens in Montreal slipped into stagnation a few decades ago. In this context, collective gardens have been created in the private sector to compensate for the lack of public response in the face of increased demand. This illustrates the extent to which institutions can facilitate or constrain the development of community gardens.

This study is based on the observed community gardens in one Montreal borough. Given that the size of this borough is relatively small, so are the community gardens observed, whereas in some other boroughs where gardens consist of more than one hundred members, the ambiance of the garden, the garden's management style, internal culture, demographic composition and social dynamics may all differ from those in the borough under study. My study suggests that the meaning placed on community gardens varies according to standpoint, and it would be worth exploring if the patterns emerging in this research also apply to the larger gardens in other boroughs. The emotional attachment to nature expressed by many participants in this study needs also to be explored in greater depth than was possible here.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Echoes from Shanghai and New York City[38]

Research sites were initially chosen in three different cities and countries: Montreal in Canada, Shanghai in China, and New York City in the United States. The pandemic prevented the completion of the Shanghai and New York studies, and the more limited material gathered is thus confined to this appendix.

Montreal and Shanghai were tied as sister cities since 1985. Exchanges between the two cities have remained active for more than four decades, and cooperation between the two municipal administrations has been testified through gardening. For instance, inside the botanical garden of Montreal, the garden – the Chinese Garden – was constructed by the city of Shanghai to honor the beginning of a long friendship between the two cities. Botanical gardens in both cities have maintained close contact and frequent exchanges since then, despite the political tensions between the two countries.

Montreal's community gardens were created shortly after New York City's earliest community gardens. In both cities, community gardens mushroomed and spread throughout the metropolis from the 1970s to the 1990s. Both Montreal and New York are northern American cities that bear many common structural features, with, for instance, a political model of liberal democracy and a long-standing civil society culture.

The cities were chosen with consideration of similarities and differences in current community garden practices. Investigations into these examples can be complementary and meaningful to one another despite of their differences. The community gardens in each of the cities are at different

[38] As mentioned in the methodology chapter, pandemic rules, shutdowns, and border closures prevented the anticipated fieldwork from being completed in Shanghai and New York City. The information provided in this brief annex, for comparative purposes, relates to Shanghai and is based on online interviews and following community-garden chatrooms over a period of one year.

stages of development, at the stage of initial development in Shanghai, in a state of mature development in Montreal, and the object of new kinds of experimentation in New York City, given unexpected challenges in its community garden development.

Observations in both New York City and Shanghai did not present the same difficulties of access as Montreal despite the distance. My investigation of community gardening in Shanghai includes three gardens and five participants. I purposely recruited diversified participant profiles. In addition to the five interviews (by Zoom due to pandemic restrictions on travelling), I have also made online observations by following communications in chatrooms. Each of these gardens has formed its own chatting group. I followed each of these groups for about a year (starting in 2021 October). Through the Chinese social media WeChat, the group chat functions well. I traced these gardeners' group chatting threads and noted the themes they discussed, their complaints, and the concerns expressed by participants.

Visual tours were also made live in Shanghai and New York with the help of friends. I have also attended several community garden visual conferences in both cities. It must be noted that gardening is a seasonable practice in North America, stretching from the end of May to late October, whereas in Shanghai, the climate is different, and community gardening activity can be carried out all year round.

Shanghai

While "guerilla gardening" – the unauthorized exploitation of spaces of vacant land to produce food – has always existed in Shanghai and elsewhere in China, it tends to be perceived negatively by the public as well as by local government. Guerrilla gardeners typically take over vacant land in blind corners inside compounds near their apartments, and plant small patches of vegetables. Such illegal gardening practice are often labeled as 'uncivilized' by some residents and can be initiated by those who have previous farming experience or who lived in rural areas before they lost their farms through forced "urbanization" (Zhu et al., 2020). They may not be responding to economic needs – although many guerrilla gardeners are unemployed – but can be motivated by the desire to grow fresh, quality and, above all, chemical-free vegetables. Guerilla gardeners demonstrate a notable capacity for perseverance in face of opposition and criticism, with local

government officials regularly uprooting their plants and erasing their gardens to restore them as public space.

There is another type of more bourgeois (and more “acceptable”) guerrilla gardening where flower gardens are planted on vacant plots for aesthetic purposes. In one such case, an upper-middle-class woman living in a well-off residential compound explained in an interview that she started as a guerilla gardener by planting flowers in the public space in front of her private garden in order to “beautify” her neighbourhood. Her illegal“ European bourgeois garden” eventually won approval from the other residents as well as from the public, and she succeeded in obtaining official approval.

The first officially recognized community garden in Shanghai, the *Knowledge and Innovation Community Garde*n (KIC Garden) was created in the Yangpu district in 2014 (Liu et al., 2017). This first community garden came into being in a specific social context with the Shanghai municipal government wanting to promote “community revitalization” (Liu et al., 2017; Liu et al. 2018; Kou et al., 2019). While green infrastructures in many older residential areas were deteriorating, there were few available vacant land lots, hence “pocket-gardens” and “micro-scale revitalization”, especially on a local community-based level, were encouraged by the city and its local representatives.

The first community garden came into being as a result of cooperation among the local government, a real-estate developer, an NGO - Clover Nature School (co-founded by Liu), and local residents themselves who expressed their needs and their vision of the garden. The garden consists of a long strip of vacant land situated between two densely inhabited residential compounds, – land that was used by residents to dump garbage before it was turned into a garden. The compounds are separated by a brick wall, and the garden’s designer has created a door in the wall to bring together residents from both compounds. One of the residential compounds is older than the other and a number of the residents are retired, whether living with their grown-up children or living alone.

In the compound on the other side of the wall, the apartment buildings are relatively new, and many residents are families consisting of young or middle-aged working parents with small children. The garden, which is open to the public and collectively maintained by volunteers, contains several sections, each with its own unique theme, whether it be teaching composting techniques to children, or helping people learn about Chinese traditional herbs. The volunteers are recruited by the NGO that is contracted to take responsibility for the maintenance of the garden.

This first community garden in Shanghai stresses cleanness, order, aesthetic design, biodiversity, education, interaction with nature, and diversity. As its name suggests, the emphasis is on "knowledge" and "innovation" through design and maintenance. As opposed to the conventional "top-down" way of creating and maintaining urban green spaces, residents were invited to participate in the design process and subsequently in the everyday maintenance of the garden after completion. Giving residents the opportunity to express their needs and concerns and to get involved through participation make this garden more "democratic", and local residents can feel a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to the garden.

The KIC garden has focused on providing a platform for children growing up in cities to learn about biodiversity, human/nature relationships, Chinese medical herbs, and the ancient grains that are described in classical Chinese literature. While part of the garden is maintained by volunteers who are often retired residents and who are interested in gardening, or who have experienced a previous rural life or have farming experience, a "One-Square-Meter" garden has also been created by dividing a small patch of land inside the garden into one-square-meter plots. These plots have been mainly adopted by young parents with small children, some of whom do not live in the neighboring compound but have to travel from some distance to work on their plots.

Both the operating committee of the garden (NGO) and participating parents see the garden as a site for "nature education". The NGO sees its central mission as teaching children to learn about nature, biodiversity, and composting methods, while at the same time promoting learning through doing. Aside from educational activities for children, one part of the garden – the "Shi King" Garden – is dedicated to the growing of plants referred to in two-thousand-year-old classic poetry.

Community-garden participants interviewed (via telephone and video calls) and observed (through social media) tend to differ according to the two main types of officially recognized community gardens that are found in Shanghai, represented by the KIC garden and WA Garden[39], with the first being a garden in which part of lots are distributed among individuals (such as the One-Square-Meter Gardens), the second being a collectively maintained open-access garden.

In the One-Square-Meter Gardens, by contrast (as in the KIC case) are to be found well-educated young parents who hope to teach their children about nature and biodiversity through gardening,

[39] This community garden is anonymized as WA Garden, it is located inside an old compound. Like KIC Garden, it was also created also with the help of the NGO – Clover Nature School.

but who often live far from the garden itself. There are also more environmentally oriented younger gardeners who have plots in the One-Square-Meter Gardens. Such participants are part of an emerging trend among the younger generation with ecological concerns who are trying to take matters into their own hands and to address common environmental problems in different ways.

In the second case (WA Garden), open-access community garden participants tend to include older retired residents who see gardening as a way of reducing their social isolation and who tend to be open to volunteering for that reason. They generally work in teams and in shifts and can visit their garden several times a week, viewing gardening as a hobby or a "leisure" activity to "kill" time.

Harvesting the vegetables and herbs in the collective gardens observed is done collectively, with half of the harvested vegetables donated to older people in poor health and living alone in the neighbourhood, and the other half distributed among the volunteer gardeners who maintain the garden. The food produced from the gardens, despite its small quantity, is appreciated for its quality being ecologically grown and chemical-free. In all these gardens, however, participants report stealing, vandalism, and littering, even though surveillance cameras are installed everywhere.

The KIC community garden has served as a pilot project leading to the creation of hundreds of community gardens across Shanghai, and in other cities in China in less than a decade, with the movement becoming increasingly bottom-up and "grassroots" initiated.

New York City

After my planned trip to New York City was canceled due to the closure of the borders in 2021, I discovered that a considerable amount of secondary data is available online about New York City's community gardening practices. Websites, Facebook accounts, google reviews, personal blogs, and articles in newspapers are all readily available. The voices of the gardeners and the features of the gardens have been captured – to some extent –, by interviews conducted by journalists and commentaries left directly by residents, gardeners, and the public. However, the difficulty lies in evaluating and selecting the features that make the case of New York City singular, inspiring, and significant.

Since the following account is based on secondary data, some of which comes from organisational websites and newspaper articles, it does not have the same status as the material gathered on

Shanghai, whence its being placed in a separate annex. It has to be said, however, that this secondary source of information on New York City is largely in accordance with the academic literature on community gardening in the city that has been covered in the literature review and can be seen as complementing the latter. It cannot be claimed though to have the same "scientific" validity and needs to be treated with some caution.

1. Context

The city of New York was going through a serious financial crisis in the 1970s, and during this period the city experienced strong processes of "urban decay". Externally, the global economic recession and the oil industry crisis had an impact on food prices. Due to disinvestment and negligence, many middle-class households left the city. As a result of "urban blight", lots of vacant lots appeared in the city. Debris from crumbled buildings, used drug needles, and residential rubbish accumulated on many of these vacant lots, and crimes were on the rise in these neighborhoods. This hit poor neighborhoods particularly hard. For instance, in Manhattan's Lower East Side, Hell's Kitchen, and East Harlem, several large rubble-strewn lots appeared and were turned into community gardens by residents in these areas (New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, n.d.).

According to the same source, another aspect of the sociopolitical context worth noting was the end of the era of the top-down management style of the city's parks with the arrival of a new head of the Parks Department who introduced an all "inclusive style" and promoted the "vest-pocket" park campaign that aimed to "transform vacant lots into usable open spaces by soliciting help and advice from residents. On a grassroots level, environmentalism was gaining momentum. Hattie Carthan, an environmentalist, has underlined the extreme environmental injustice in her neighborhood. She remarked that there were fewer trees in her poverty-stricken residential area and decided to initiate a project inviting her neighbors to plant trees. This bottom-up citizen initiative in taking urban environmental matters into hand took place in 1971, and it is believed to have inspired the Green Guerilla's community-gardening movements in 1973 (Green Guerillas, n.d.).

During a similar period, the civil rights movement, the 'community movement', and the 'right to the city movement' created an ideal climate for promoting the community garden movement in the

city. In conjunction with these movements, the first community garden was born. Situated in Lower East at the corner of Bowery and Houston Street, the city's very first community garden was created in 1973 by Liz Christy, a local artist, and environmentalist. The story goes that Liz Christy and her band of guerilla gardeners one day turned their attention to a newly appeared large vacant lot of about one acre, but filled with debris. They decided to take matters into their hands, threw "seed bombs" over the fences and flowers came back in the spring. This type of guerilla gardening practice quickly spread throughout the city. By 1986, in less than ten years, community gardens had spread over New York's five boroughs and the Green Guerilla movement had expanded to up to 250 volunteers (Teltsch,1986)

Green guerillas saw community gardening "as a tool to reclaim urban land, stabilize city blocks, and get people working together to solve problems". This strong citizen initiative was interpreted by an early guerilla gardener, Amos Taylor. She defines this initial gardening practice as a form of "civil disobedience": "we were basically saying to the government, if you won't do it, we will" (Green Guerillas, n.d.). That first garden was only one of the 10,000 acres of vacant land that were eventually transformed into community gardens. By then, "dozens of community gardens bloomed throughout New York City, and vital grassroots groups" were set up in the neighborhoods (Green Guerillas, n.d.).

The first guerilla gardening inspired more than 600 community gardens that are flourishing across New York City today. The mission of the organization has evolved over the decades, from originally focusing on environmental justice, food access, and community-building to the promotion of youth leadership development, education, and a citizen-stewardship model of environmental activism. However, food and environmental justice remain on the agenda. As stated in their official website, "Green Guerillas uses a unique mix of education, organizing and advocacy to help people cultivate community gardens, sustain grassroots groups, grow food, engage youth, and address issues critical to the future of food justice and urban agriculture." (Green Guerillas, n.d.).

2. NGOs' and their contribution

Throwing "seed bombs" over the fences and hanging flower boxes on abandoned buildings' windowsills are practices marked as temporary. The Green Guerillas knew from the start that their

gardening practices were crossing the line of legitimacy, and that's why they called themselves "guerilla" gardeners. In seeking to obtain legal status, the guerilla gardeners negotiated with the City and obtained the city's official recognition in 1974, paying the city a renewable lease of $1 per year for their garden's legitimate land-use right.

Despite the renewable lease, over the years, gardeners feared that the garden would be closed, and the land used for other purposes. Seeing the community gardens as being in line with the city's 'revitalization' program, *Green Thumb*[40] was created as a third-party organization in 1978 to coordinate and maintain the community gardens' smooth operation. However, in the late 1990s, the City's Parks department retransferred some garden lands to the Housing department, which auctioned off more than a hundred community gardens to developers, which resulted in large-scale resistance from gardeners and garden supporters.

The nonprofit *New York Restoration Project* (NYRP) has also been instrumental in preserving many community gardens, while promoting the creation of many more. Founded in 1995 with the help of entertainer Bette Midler, it set out to protect gardens across the city. The organization bought 55 parcels of land on the eve of the auction of the community gardens in 1999 and preserved them in perpetuity. The organization advocates that "access to nature is a fundamental human right" and its mission is "to ensure that all New Yorkers have equitable access to green space" (New York Restoration Project, n.d.).

Similarly, another nonprofit group – the *Trust for Public Land* – a national organization founded in 1972, was also devoted to preserving open spaces and has saved 58 community gardens that were to be auctioned off. Another well-known organization, *New York City Community Garden Coalition* (NYCCGC) was founded in 1996 and has declared its mission as "to promote the preservation, creation, and empowerment of community gardens through education, advocacy, and grassroots organizing." (New York City Community Garden Coalition, n.d.). *Grow New York* (Grow NYC) is another NGO that advocates for improving quality of life "through environmental programs" that "transform communities block by block" and aim to empower New Yorkers with a "clean and healthy environment" (GrowNYC, n.d.). Born out of the spirit of the first Earth Day, it

[40] Originally sponsored by the City Department of General Services and funded by federal Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grants (GreenThumb is still funded largely by community block grants from the federal Housing and Urban Development Program)

was originally created in 1970 as the *Council on the Environment of New York City* (CENYC). Being the largest and the most established environmental organization in the city, it has played a pivotal role in supporting residents to create more community gardens each year. The organization (GrowNYC) claims to have built more than 135 community gardens and urban farms throughout the five boroughs. And in 2021 alone, it has helped to add 13 more communities to NYC.

In general, the various NGOs focus on four pillars: food access (agriculture) and food justice, conservation of green spaces, community empowerment, and nature education.

3. The diversity of gardening practices

Aside from growing vegetables, flowers, and fruit bushes, how is this space being used? Many gardens are collectively maintained, with more flowers planted than edible plants. In these gardens, often highly diversified social activities are organized for participants. Common activities include festivals, healthy, food-oriented cooking practices, educational workshops for kids, and cultural events that can be found in most community gardens in the United States (I have participated in the *American Community Garden Association's* online conferences and workshops). A good example to illustrate this aspect can be found in the 9th Street Community Garden Plaza.

In summer this garden hosts a movable feast of cultural activities, including movie screenings, plays, exhibitions, talks, music, and barbecues that reflect the rich diversity of the artistic culture of the neighborhood (Shearman, 2015). Furthermore, highly diversified educational programs and leisure social activities are hosted in many NYC community gardens to maximize the usage of these community spaces. The residents use the garden as a neighborhood gathering spot, a real center for community activities[41]. Also, plots are allocated for the children and youth of the neighborhoods (New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, n.d.).

Many of the gardens are open-access gardens or have visiting hours for the public. Several examples show that these spaces are havens for social encounters and cultural events. *Clinton Community Garden* is one such garden. Founded in 1978, gardeners grow vegetables and flowers

[41] Garden members have organized voter registration drives, census outreach programs, workshops on agriculture and soil testing, and even supplied the City Farms program that provides food for soup kitchens and emergency food shelters

in individual garden plots. Once a haven for illegal activity, and an eyesore for area residents, the garden has been transformed into an open-access garden for residents. The activities include the annual summer Solstice event, potluck dinners, art shows, gardening seminars, chamber music, and dance recitals. The garden has also been used for weddings, picnics, and even photo shoots. With its more than a hundred individual plots managed by the steering committee, the Garden has become a “haven” that is used by five to six hundred people during the summer with more than a hundred children attending each week (New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, n.d.). Open access is a distinctive characteristic that hallmarks NYC’s community gardens. This is not always a voluntary choice, but also an obligation. For instance, *Green Thumb* requires all its gardens (more than 550) to be open to the public for a minimum of 20 hours per week during the season (Green Thumb, n.d.). Regarding the social characteristics of participants, they are socio-economically, culturally, and ethnically diversified (Schmelzkopf, 1995; Eizenberg, 2012a).

How do NYC gardeners experience gardening? And how has the pandemic COVID-19 impacted their gardening practices? Predominantly, according to various sources, voices from the gardens seem generally positive. Participants appreciate gardening more than ever during the pandemic. For instance, one participant said: “It really is a paradise, it’s an escape”. Especially for ethnic groups, it’s a place where they feel being transported culturally: “When you come here, you swear you are in Puerto Rico.” This was mentioned in an interview with Sarah, reported by Marta Montañez who has lived in the neighborhood for 62 years after immigrating to the US (Shearman, 2015). Participants claim feeling a sense of community through gardening: “It’s random people who end up here; you may not have anything in common with them, but you come together to share a space,” said a woman gardener in an interview. In sum, Shearman notes in her interview that “there was a need for a community, social space, and political interaction.” She writes: “We have to make the gardens more attractive, more active, and more valuable within the community, expanding the gardens in such a way that they are looked on as a resource, not an eyesore, not a potential development but green space for the city – and we are hurting for green space”.

Echoing the voices captured by Sherman in 2015, *Green Guerillas* has posted several youth gardeners’ testaments on their first community gardening experience. I have selected a few common themes from these extracts to illustrate several key benefits mentioned by participants.

First, in connecting with nature, food is crucial and reflects one's own culture through gardening:

> I felt more at peace. I'm not usually outside, let alone interacting so closely with nature since the pandemic started and I feel like it's helped me slow down. To learn about the uses, names and other miscellaneous facts about the food I was planting, and even things I didn't consider food (such as different flowers and wild vegetables). It's helped me think and reflect about my time in the Dominican Republic and what my food means to me. It's important that people of color have access to community gardens. There is a significant connection to food and one's identity. Community gardens in urban areas allow people to connect with their cultural identity. (Karilyn D.'s comment on Morning Glory (Green Guerillas, n.d.)

Second, Merary M's testament touches on several important elements when evoking the human/nature relationship, the rhythm of life, the relation with food, and cultural identity:

> My experience at the garden has been the best experience ever. Planting seeds, learning about the irrigation system, and planting mushrooms have taught me a lot. I've also seen a lot of volunteers and other people just come in and sit down around the park and help plant or give suggestions and preferences as to what we should grow. People bring in food for the volunteers in the garden and I've seen people bring leftover food and scraps for the compost. It's a big family and I've learned that by being in the garden and being a part of them too. Community gardens affect the community in various positive ways. They help unite everyone by bringing people of different backgrounds and ages together. The garden also increases access to healthy and affordable food. We need gardens because they help the community be a community. (Green Guerillas, n.d.)

Third, mental and physical health, and overall well-being are also brought to the fore by Perla A.:

> Being a part of this community garden for nearly 9 weeks, I can proudly say that gardening has positively impacted me mentally and physically. I was introduced to a new environment where I had no prior experience, so I was nervous at first. Now, I am more comfortable and still learning new information as well as practicing garden techniques. I learned how to plant, care for the plants, build a compost system, pull weeds, and more. Participating in a garden together is what makes it a community space, and we need this after a long and stressful year. (Green Guerillas, n.d.)

On social media such as Facebook or Google Reviews, commentaries are left by visitors of gardens, residents, and tourists. What is common to these reviews is the praise for the aesthetic appeal of these gardens. They comment on how green spaces are well-maintained, recognising volunteer gardeners' hard work to keep the gardens clean and safe. Many assert that these gardens bring joy to them as an escape from busy, noisy, and hustling NYC.

Visitors and participants often mention that they feel “transported” into “nature”, despite the gardens’ small size. Most of the gardens are only a fraction of an acre, and yet they are perceived as being important in terms of “nature”, “community”, and as a “food resource”. Community gardens continue to grow and spread over NYC, with a large number of NGOs involved in the promotion and creating of more community garden programmes to meet residents’ needs. The ground-up environmental movement also sustains guerilla gardening, which continues to be evoked and developed side-by-side with institutionalized gardens, many of which were once guerilla gardens themselves. To get a glimpse of the actual global guerilla gardening movement, Agnieszka Gralińska-Toborek’s article sums up well the grassroots guerilla gardening movements (Gralińska-Toborek, 2021).

To conclude, community gardens in NYC are implemented by diverse volunteers, who are often residents of the area. These residents have different concerns depending on their neighborhood and personal living conditions. If the environmental agenda marked the earliest gardens, many of the later gardeners emphasize a diversity of agendas: community empowerment, resilience, health benefits, ecological learning, education, nature, food security, and social justice.

Conclusion

Montreal and New York City saw community gardens emerge during a similar period, even though their goals were dissimilar. In Montreal, community-garden founders primarily aimed to improve food insecurity for low-income residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods, whereas for activists in lower-east Manhattan, they established the first NYC community garden in response to the deteriorating neighborhood environment and increased crime. Here we can see that – even though grassroots initiatives were taken in both cities to promote social change, and their actions yielded similar results (the first community garden was born) —, their focus is different according to their respective urban social-political environment and residents’ life circumstances.

Four decades later, in Shanghai, the first community garden sees the light of day. Residents of the neighborhood concerned did not exactly start the project, but neither was it a conventional “top-down” approach to address environmental and social concerns. The project was, in fact, proposed by a real-estate developer and subcontracted to an NGO (co-founded by a university researcher

specializing in landscape gardening). The aim was to “beautify” the neighborhood and to “revitalize” the community. The project received local governmental funds because the “reinvention” of the urban environment by creating “pocket gardens” corresponded to the city’s “greening” guidelines and to the central government’s call to “reactivate” communities. These community gardens – in Montreal, Shanghai, and New York City –, despite their different orientations and goals, were created on vacant lots or poorly maintained public spaces. By transforming these patches of “brown” land into citizen-participatory public-space use and green space, residents and local communities perceive multiple benefits in all three cities.

The three cities share a diversity of community gardening participants, although the diversity is manifested differently in each case. In the Montreal gardens studied, ethnicity, social-economic status, age-group, and culture of origin are all part of that diversity. In the Shanghai examples observed, diversity is most apparent in terms of age-group and educational background, with ethnicity and cultural diversity being less relevant, while the evidence from New York City, in spite of the city’s reputation as a “melting pot”, suggests that many community gardens are made up exclusively of participants from the same ethnic group. NYC gardens are like diverse cultural mosaics with individual gardens not as mixed as in the case of the Montreal gardens studied, with Afro-American and Puerto Rican gardens, among others.

Environmental concerns are manifest in all three cities’ community gardens that I either observed or about which information was obtained. The groups who express strong environmental concerns tend to be the well-educated young, middle-class population. Connecting with nature is expressed by most Montreal middle-class participants as an individual “need”, while in Shanghai and NYC, connecting with nature is an equally important motivation, the emphasis being often put on creating a shared, beautiful neighborhood environment, with participants using the space to educate youth and small children about nature, biodiversity, and ecological ways of living. The economic dimension remains salient in Montreal but seems less present in the Shanghai community gardens. However, participants in all three cities claim to have developed a healthier and more intimate relationship with food despite the significant difference in their gardens’ size and productivity.

APPENDIX B: Guide d'entretien[42]

Le sens et la signification du Jardin Communautaires au regard de trois villes, Montréal, Shanghai et New York

Guide d'entretien auprès des jardiniers et jardinières

J'aimerais tout d'abord vous remercier d'avoir pris une partie de votre temps et d'avoir accepté de participer à cette recherche. Il n'y a pas de mauvaise réponse à mes questions. Vos réponses vont certainement être différente de celles d'autres personnes. C'est ce qui contribue à enrichir les connaissances provenant de cette recherche.

Section 1 (25 minutes)

Situation actuelle et parcours de votre vie de jardinier

1.1. Pour commencer, merci de me donner quelques informations sur vous : votre âge, statut civil (marié.e ou en couple, célibataire), enfants à charge, lieu de naissance, lieu de naissance des parents.

1.2. J'aimerais maintenant que vous me parliez de votre situation actuelle et passée par rapport au jardinage

Thèmes à aborder dans cette sous-section : en quoi consiste pour vous le fait de jardiner ? Est-ce relié aux activités : de loisir, d'alimentation, de santé/bien-être, de socialisation, de satisfaction personnelle ? Quelles sont les perspectives à cet égard ?

1.3. Maintenant, merci de me raconter votre expérience de jardinier dans son ensemble ?

> Thèmes à aborder dans cette sous-section : orientations et choix, motivations, apprentissage du jardinage, niveau de connaissance en ce qui a trait au jardinage, à vos activités professionnelles, familiales; événements vous ayant conduit au jardin communautaire ; facteurs facilitateurs et facteurs contraignant; participation et engagements dans la communauté; temps d'arrêt et de reprise et facteurs de motivation; chemins menant à votre situation actuelle; rôle des réseaux de relations (famille, amis) dans les choix effectués; influence de vos connaissances/entourage .

Section 2 (45 minutes)

Retour sur son expérience de participation au jardin communautaire

2.1 Nous allons maintenant faire un retour sur votre expérience au sein du jardin communautaire. Parlez-moi de vos principaux souvenirs de cette expérience. Quelles connaissances avez-vous du fonctionnement du jardin communautaire

[42] Based on the French version, I have translated interview questions into English and Chinese orally during interviews according to the preferred language spoken by participants.

Thèmes à aborder dans cette sous-section : facteurs sous-tendant le choix de participer au jardinage; attitude/approche différente face aux autres jardiniers, animateurs, directeur, bénévoles; Quelle évaluation faites-vous de l'infrastructure et de la logistique du jardin; moments marquants; les aspects les plus aimés et les moins aimés; rapports aux autres (interactions avec les autres, relations intergroupes, événements de discrimination, discussions autour des choix de plantes, du matériel, de la répartition de l'espace de jardinage)

2.2 Nous allons maintenant parler de votre routine au jardin. Racontez-moi une journée type.

Horaires, déroulement, fréquentation, avec la famille ou tout seul.e., coûts et gains

Section 3 (20 minutes)

L'impact perçu de cette expérience sur votre parcours de vie

3.1. Nous allons maintenant parler des répercussions de votre participation au jardinage communautaire. Qu'est-ce que cette expérience de participation vous apporte ? Y a-t-il des aspects de cette expérience qui vous ont servi dans votre parcours de vie et qui vous servent toujours dans votre vie quotidienne?

Thèmes à aborder dans cette sous-section : confiance en soi, capacité d'entreprendre, participation sociale, facilité dans la prise de parole et dans les délibérations collectives, volonté d'engagement social ; ouverture d'esprit, persévérance.

3.2. Pensez-vous continuer votre engagement dans les années à venir? Sinon, y a-t-il autre chose dont vous aimeriez me faire part en ce qui a trait à votre participation et à ses répercussions sur vous ?

3.3. La COVID, a-t-elle eu une incidence sur votre participation au jardin communautaire?

Thèmes à aborder dans cette sous-section : Impact psychologique, social, ou financier, et/ou organisationnel,

Conclusion

Encore une fois, je tiens à vous remercier de votre participation. Ce que vous m'avez mentionné est très pertinent.

Que pensez-vous de cet entretien ?

De la façon dont celui-ci s'est déroulé ?

Si vous le souhaitez, je vous tiendrai au courant des suites de ma recherche.

Connaissez-vous d'autres jardiniers s qui aimeraient participer à cette recherche ?

Auriez-vous d'autres commentaires ou d'autres remarques que vous aimeriez ajouter ?

Bien entendu, comme je vous l'ai dit, vous pouvez à tout moment ajouter ou retirer vos commentaires de cet entretien. Merci de votre précieuse et patiente contribution.