Walking through the gardens: A case study of Iranian community gardeners in three urban community gardens, in Montreal, Canada

Atefeh Heydari

A Thesis

In

The Department

Of

Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts (Social and Cultural Anthropology) at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August, 2020

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Atefeh Heydari

Entitled: Walking through the gardens: A case study of Iranian community gardeners in three urban community gardens, in Montreal, Canada

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of arts (Social and cultural anthropology)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair
Professor Kregg Hetherington

_____ Examiner
Professor Satoshi Ikeda

_____ Examiner
Professor Julie Archambault

_____ Thesis Supervisor(s)
Professor Katja Neves

Approved by _____
Professor Amy Swiffen — Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

ANDRÉ G. ROY — Dean, of the faculty of Art and sciences

Date August 27, 2020

Abstract

Walking through the gardens: A case study of Iranian community gardeners in three urban community gardens, in Montreal, Canada

Atefeh Heydari

This thesis examines the place-making strategies employed by some Iranian immigrants in three urban community gardens in Montreal, Canada. I argue the practices of place-making within the garden is a complex and multilayered process in which heterogeneous actors (human and non-human) play central roles. Prosaic pleasures invoked through enchanting encounters and childhood memories of a beloved garden motivate some people to spend their time and energy within the garden in the hope of re-enchantment. In this theoretical synthesis, I examine how, through inhabiting the garden, these gardeners develop a sense of belonging and attachment to Canada as their new home. I demonstrate that place-making within a community garden goes beyond altering the physical landscape of the garden. Through the process of constructing an alternative home within the community garden, immigrants form family-like relationships, improve their health and well-being, and also cultivate a sense of stability and belonging. This thesis examines the entangled relationships between humans and non-humans within the community gardens. I propose that place-making within the community garden is not just a human achievement, but rather it is co-constructed by heterogeneous actors. It is notable that this thesis acknowledges that a human is the most powerful actant in the process of place-making. However, it also highlights the roles of non-humans as it would be a huge omission if we did not credit the active positions of non-humans in our lives.

Keywords: immigrants, place-making, community garden, hybrid landscape, alternative home

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to all my interlocutors who without them, this research would not have been possible. Special thanks to everyone for sharing their time, unique stories, experiences and wisdom with me.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to professor Katja Neves, my supervisor, and my mentor for her everlasting support, invaluable friendship, guidance, patience, and continuous encouragement throughout my MA journey. I will always be thankful for her acts of support, and for giving me the opportunity to grow and flourish. Dr. Neves's commitment to excellence has driven me to pursue a doctoral degree, and for that I will forever be grateful. She became my main role model for what I wish to become as a scholar.

I would also like to extend my thanks to my committee members, Dr. Julie Archambault and Dr. Satoshi Ikeda, for their time, and constructive comments.

Thank you to my friend Mozhdeh Babagoli: your friendship throughout these past years is something that I will always cherish with much love and kindness.

Very special thanks to my parents and my sisters for always caring for me and being by my side. Thank you for always supporting me through all of the ups and all of the downs, I could not have done it without you. Thank you for your unconditional love and everlasting support.

Contents

List of figures:

Introduction: The garden and everything else

Reza, one of my Iranian interlocutors, once told me: "I couldn't return home so, I brought Iran to Canada [through gardening]". Reza described his garden plot as a small part of Iran where he could have a sense of attachment, belonging, stability and community. Although this description may refer to a simple reconfiguration of the physical structure of an urban community garden in Montreal, Canada, it has deeper meanings and needs to be understood from an emic perspective.

Memories, life events, enchanting encounters and relationships that form within a quotidian landscape such as a garden transform peoples' relationships with their surroundings and turn that landscape into a meaningful place with the capacity to arouse emotions and generate a sense of stability, attachment and belonging (Fullilove, 1996; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017; Bhatti et al., 2009). Enchanting encounters and memories that are formed within a beloved garden turn it into an extraordinary landscape where people invest their time and energy in the hope of re-enchantment (Bhatti et al., 2009). Enchanting refers to the encounters that are experienced during mundane tasks and through sensuous embodied experiences when people are faced with something extraordinary (a germinating seed, changing seasons, pollinators at work, etc.) amid everyday life (Bhatti et al., 2009; Bennet, 2001). These encounters are sources of meaning and help some people to develop emotional attachments to the garden as their significant place.

When immigrants cross borders, they must leave behind their significant places and loved ones. Hence, a disruptive process (such as dislocation) that cuts off people's connections to their significant places (such a garden, neighborhood, etc.) and a lack of attachment to the new land can generate sorrow, depression and anxiety (Fullilove, 1996; Gans, 1962; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Although crossing a border and leaving behind familiar belongings and persons may lead some

immigrants to experience a sense of "place loss" (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012, p. 258) and homesickness, it is important to note that not all immigrants remain in a state of homesickness and that some work actively to develop a sense of belonging and emotional attachments to the new country. And one way they do so is by participating in urban community gardening.

Their memories of an enchanting landscape inspire them to come to the community garden as a potential site for place-making as well as in the hope of re-enchantment and developing an emotional attachment to the new land. The enchanting encounters and relationships that form within the garden (either with humans or non-humans) turn a piece of earth into a significant landscape that, through everyday practices (pruning, planting, composting, digging) produces meanings and generates emotional attachments. These encounters may trigger happiness, joy, pleasure, comfort and peace. A gestalt of these sensuous experiences and engagements transforms immigrants' connections with the urban community garden and turns it into an enchanting landscape.

A brief history of community gardens and urban agriculture

Historically, community gardens were popular tools in times of crisis. Community gardening was specially promoted as a response to food scarcity and patriotism in wartimes (Mok et al., 2014). The war garden movements led to the formation of Liberty Gardens during World War I and Victory Gardens during World War II (Henderson & Hartsfield, 2009). Continuing during the Great Depression, people turned to Relief Gardens as remedies for unemployment and food scarcity (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017). However, when the crisis faded and the economy of North America improved, food patriotism was no longer promoted, and this form of urban agriculture (UA) slowed.

Later in the 60s and 70s, urban agriculture re-emerged through urban activism as a response to economic inequalities and environmental degradation (Frøystad, 2019; Henderson & Hartsfield, 2009). During these decades, growing environmental awareness, concerns about urban food security, inflation and unemployment, and increasing food prices, "motivated people both ideologically and economically to grow their own food" (Frøystad, 2019, p. 4; Maloney, 2012; Mok et al., 2013). In this context, urban dwellers have gradually acquired awareness regarding climate change and sustainable development that motivated them to seek for "sustainable and/or locally-produced foods" (Frøystad, 2019, p. 5).

In Canada, urban agriculture exists in three various scales: community-supported agriculture, community gardens, and backyard gardens (Brown & Carter, 2003). Community gardens commonly refer to "…open spaces which are managed and operated by members of the local community in which food or flowers are cultivated" (Guitart et al., 2012, p. 364). These gardens constitute several divided small plots "for individual households and can be owned by a municipality, community group, land trust, or institution" (Mok et al., 2014, p. 24).

Diverse groups of people belonging to different socio-economic strata participate in these gardens (Draper & Freedman 2010). Although community gardens were historically promoted as a response to food insecurity and survival, in the current socio-economic context, these gardens are being used by community gardeners "as a positive force for economic, social, community, and individual development and well-being" (Frøystad, 2019, p. 5). These gardens in North America not only produce food, life satisfaction, environmental sustainability, and social development; they can also have other benefits, such as "community building, education, and promoting health" (Guitart et al., 2012, p.364).

Although the community garden provides a comprehensive context for the study of power relations, the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion, and environmental issues, in this thesis I I highlighted the harmonious and positive aspects of place-making strategies employed by Iranian immigrants. Admittedly, to show the full complexity of community gardening, one must concentrate on conflicts and power dynamics in these gardens. However, my goal was to investigate the extent to which these gardens can operate as spaces where immigrants develop coping mechanisms while learning to live away from their countries of origin. Moreover, time constraints and the inherently limited scope of an MA thesis were also a factor in this choice.

In this thesis, I address the complex and multilayered process of place-making among Iranian immigrants in three urban community gardens in Montreal, Canada. I mainly conducted my research on Iranian community gardeners and their employed place-making strategies, although I also interviewed some Bengali community gardeners who were a part of these three community garden. I show how immigrants, through their encounter with non-humans and other gardeners, construct an enchanting landscape that serves as an "alternative home" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 14) where, through sensuous experiences, immigrants can develop feelings of belonging and attachments to the garden and to their new home. The main argument of this thesis is that a garden is a hybrid landscape that is neither human-centered nor non-human-centered (Power, 2005), and the hybridity of the garden turns the process of place-making (within the garden) into a complex and multilayered one in which heterogeneous actors (human and non-human) play critical roles to create an alternative home for some immigrants.

This thesis investigates how heterogeneous actors (human and non-human) in a hybrid context such as a community garden actively play critical roles in the process of constructing an enchanting landscape that some immigrants come to consider as their home. It also examines how

a sense of home, well-being and community is perceived and experienced by immigrants within a small community garden. In the next section, I expand my research questions and the body of literature with which I engage.

Research Questions

This thesis falls within the scope of environmental anthropology, which traditionally studies humans' relationships and interactions with their surrounding environment. Relying on environmental anthropology allows the development of an understating of meaningful encounters between humans and non-humans and the ways in which humans form their knowledge of non-humans within a hybrid landscape such as an urban community garden (Neves, 2009; Ingold, 2004; Degnen, 2009; Bhatti et al., 2009; Hitchings, 2003). The overarching aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the multilayered, complex, and gradual processes of place-making that takes place within three community gardens in Montreal, Canada. Through the lens of post-humanism and by focusing on sensuous embodied practices and daily encounters, I highlight the importance of the garden in immigrants' lives. Also, I highlight the active presence and crucial roles of heterogeneous actors in the process of constructing an alternative home within the urban community garden. Post-humanism sheds light on the complexity of human and non-human interactions and examines the entangled paths which heterogeneous actors negotiate in order to meet their needs (Archambault, 2016; Power, 2005; Hartigan, 2017; Hartigan, 2015).

These bodies of literature (environmental anthropology and posthumanist literature) help me to demonstrate and analyze how place-making goes beyond a simple reshaping of the physical environment. I show that place-making is a complex process in which heterogeneous actors interact, collaborate, compete and negotiate actively to create a particular garden. As a hybrid arena, the community garden is a place with strong potential to examine the relationship between people,

places, and non-humans. It is an enchanting landscape where some immigrants attempt to develop their social relationships as well as their emotional attachments to a new country and to build a "homelike" space (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 13) that offers a sense of community and belonging. I investigate whether and how this happens through immigrants' engaging in quotidian practices in community gardens and by developing my perception and understanding of lived experiences of community gardening. The main aim of the research is addressed through the following questions.

1. To what extent and in what ways do immigrants work to create a new homelike space within urban community gardens in Montreal, Canada?

2. How do non-humans collaborate with, interrupt, and/or facilitate the process of place-making?

This thesis suggests that both humans and non-humans are critical actors in the process of constructing an alternative home. I argue that some immigrants who have a background in gardening and have experienced enchanting encounters within a beloved garden in the past employ community gardening to create an alternative home within the garden. And they do so in the hope of re-enchantments as well as cultivating a sense of belonging, connection and inclusion. Community gardening helps them to transform their connections with their surroundings and develop their emotional attachments to Canada. I also assert that some immigrants, through the daily practices within the community garden, learn about nature and their reciprocal relationship with non-humans, which in turn helps them to cope with and manage the conflicts and difficulties they face in new daily lives. Using theories and examples extracted from my interviews with Iranian immigrants, I show that migrants' plots, specifically, are not mute entities; rather, they narrate the stories of human and non-human interactions and play a critical role in re-creating

immigrants' homes in a new country. In the next section, I expand on my methodologies and challenges I faced during my fieldwork.

Methodological Considerations

This thesis is based on fieldwork conducted in three community gardens in Montreal, Canada, between May and October 2019. It employs a hybrid methodology (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997) that includes participant observation, walking through gardens, garden-mapping, unstructured interviews, and recording life stories. This multi-pronged approach aligned with my aim of collecting rich, in-depth data (Majeed, 2018). Participants were recruited by snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961) relying on personal contact and recruitment flyers distributed among gardeners in the community gardens. All interlocutors voluntarily participated in this research.

To understand and make sense of immigrants' lives in community gardens as place-making spaces, I actively engaged with quotidian practices at community gardens that I labelled with the pseudonyms "cherry," "grape" and "plum" community gardens located in three neighborhoods of Montreal (Côte-des-Neiges, Ville-Marie, and Parc-Extension). The majority of community gardeners in these three community gardens were immigrants. The groups that are the focus of this research consist of immigrants from Iran and Bangladesh. My primary aim was to gain a full grasp of the hybrid network (of humans and non-humans) of the gardens and gardeners' perceptions of non-humans, as well as an understanding of how the process of place-making was staged and performed by gardeners within these urban community gardens.

I began my fieldwork in the spring of 2019 by going to the "cherry" community garden on a daily basis at different times of day. Later, hoping to find more Iranian community gardeners, I developed my research sites to include two more gardens (the "grape" and "plum" community gardens). I also interviewed some Bengali community gardeners as they were the majority of

gardeners in these community gardens. Given my focus on Iranian immigrants however, it was not my goal to provide any comparison between different group of community gardeners and their place-making practices. I became engaged in the daily routines in the gardens and focused on gardening practices, encounters between gardeners and non-humans in daily rhythms, and social relationships that were formed in these urban landscapes. I participated in cleanup and barbeque events and in planting, watering, weeding, harvesting, and composting in order to acquire firsthand and lived experience during my presence in the gardens. Sitting on a bench, observing everyday gardening activities, having ordinary conversations, walking through the gardens listening to gardeners' descriptions of plants, their patches, and the stories of their successes and failures in the garden – all these were parts of my participant observation. I was an observer with my small notebook, digital sound recorder, and papers for sketching. In addition, I was a participant when I was on my knees pulling weeds and raking, spading and digging up the soil; holding a hose to water a patch carefully, and chopping and shredding decayed parts of plants for composting.

Observations

Detailed participant observations were conducted to explore the physical arrangement (plant preference, regulation, design, and composition) of the personal patches (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012). These observations also helped me examine the quotidian activities in the garden; the ways in which people staged, formed, and managed their relations with non-humans, other gardeners, and their surrounding worlds; and how they reshaped, appropriated, and reformed the urban landscape. These observations were recorded "through field notes, sketches, and photographs" (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012, p. 259). In the company of gardeners, I walked through the garden and helped with watering, weeding, cleaning, and harvesting while I was conducting formal and informal interviews, taking notes and sketching garden maps (except for

the plum community garden; formal interviews in this case were conducted in a cafe outside the garden, which will be explained later). This method facilitated the process of highlighting the non-humans' presence as their physical presence was always felt, mentioned and perceivable through gardeners' thoughts, memories, and activities (Power, 2005; Hitchings, 2003).

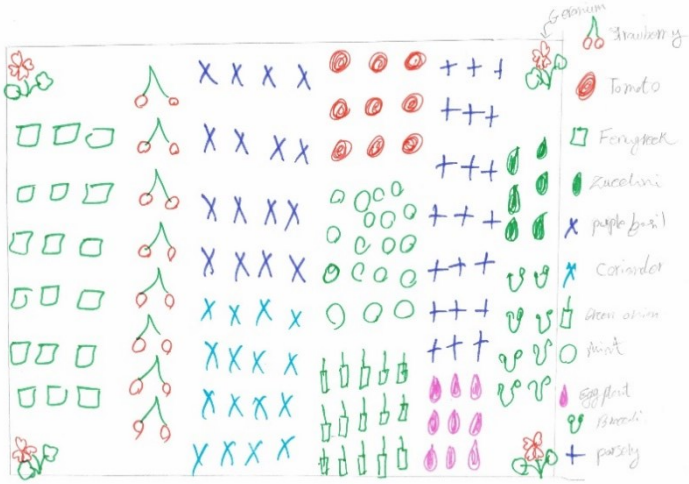

Figure 1: Garden map no.1. "Laleh"'s plot.

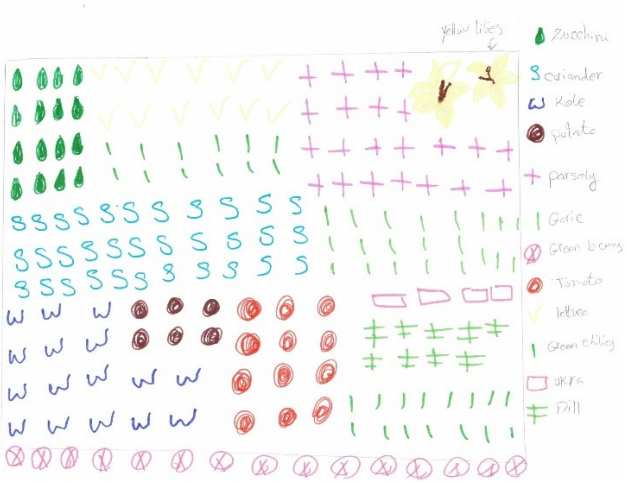

Figure 2: Garden map no.2. "Shamlia"'s plot.

Interviews

I conducted unstructured open-ended interviews in Farsi (with Iranian gardeners) and in English (with Bengali gardeners) to collect data. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and

three hours, averaging 90 minutes. Each interview had a theme (human and non-human relationships, immigrants' life histories, and memories of their significant places and life events, also, the place-making and gardening practices). This thematic approach enabled delving into the details of their memories of their childhood gardens, their social relationships in the garden, and their relations and connection with the community garden as an “alternative home” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 14). I held multiple sessions of meetings and interviews with some of the interviewees (I conducted 23 audio-recorded interviews in total). Through these interviews and questions, I attempted to learn about immigrants, and their lived experience “from an emic perspective” (Harris, 1964; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012, p. 260). The open-ended approach enabled interviewees to freely respond to the questions "in as much length as they wanted" (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012, p. 260). Interviews were conducted with a total of 15 persons; eight gardeners were from Iran (two men and six women), and seven were from Bangladesh (two men and five women). Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity and privacy of the research participants.

Concordia University Human Research Ethics Committee approved the research and human-subject protocol was followed. I presented a consent form to every potential interviewee and informed them about potential issues[1] before asking them to indicate their willingness to participate in this research by signing the informed consent form. They were given an opportunity to ask any questions they had about the study or anything related to it. Those who signed were given a copy of the form. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time

[1] There were minimal foreseeable harms to the participants for this research, and most of the topics did not deal with sensitive issues. However, there was a small degree of risk involved because the participants were asked to talk about their memories of their homeland, which would cause some emotional discomfort.

without providing a reason and with no repercussions. Also, I presented each with an information sheet about my research and its aims. None of the interviewees was willing to be included in a video-recording during my fieldwork; hence, I deleted that from my data-collection tools.

Conducting the fieldwork came with surprises, unexpected challenges, dilemmas and negotiations. Ethnography is perpetually in an emergent state (Lofland & Lofland, 1995); it is an investigation that never ends, whether the investigator is in the field or after that. Any event or encounter (such as the event I describe in the next section) can require the ethnographer to devise a new solution in regard to employed methodologies (as previously noted, interviews with the "plum" community gardeners had to be held elsewhere as I will explain later). In what follows, I show that, although there may be moments of failure when an ethnographer initiates the actual fieldwork, such surprises can help us develop a better idea of the methodologies that might best facilitate the collection of rich and meaningful data within the context of the specificities of each unique research project.

An outsider in the garden

On a pleasant summer day, I was outside the "plum" community garden waiting for a new friend who had the access key to the garden's gate to come and let me in. The summer breeze gently caressed the maple trees around the garden. As a waited for "Sam," a Bengali man in his late 60s, I started walking around the garden, which was separated from the outside world by metal fencing. I took a stealthy look into the garden and tried to guess how vast it might be. I could see gardeners inside working and talking, and I heard laughter here and there. After a while, I could inhale the rich smells of the watered garden and the familiar scent of wisteria. The garden was located next to a park where children were playing, shouting and running. It was a normal day in the Parc-extension neighborhood.

Sam arrived in a blue shorts and T-shirt with an inviting smile on his face. After I introduced myself and thanked him for agreeing to help me with my project, he invited me into the garden. Finally, I was inside the secret garden. At the right corner, a small office could be seen and in front of it under a sunshade were six benches for gardeners to take a rest and chat. In front of me were several small patches, growing plants from all over the world. Some looked familiar and others I had never seen before. Sam immediately started to ask me questions about my project, its aims and the institute I work with. While answering Sam's many questions, we walked our way through the garden as he explained that this was a very large community garden comprising 175 plots.

Sam generously offered me a garden tour to give me a sense of where I was. We walked toward some plots in the left corner of the garden where he owned a small plot. Here and there people were watering their small plots, and the scent of the watered plants saturated the air. Some had small baskets and were harvesting vegetables; others were busy weeding, cleaning up their plots, and collecting decaying leaves and roots to compost. I was in the middle of a mysterious landscape covered with Indian, Greek, Chinese, Persian and several vegetable plants unknown to me.

As we walked, we met an Indian man with his veiled wife in the middle of a plot. She weeded as he stood next to her, hands on his waist, supervising her. Sam introduced me to them and described about my project. They seemed to be interested. I was answering their questions when an attractive, gray-haired woman dressed all in white walked toward us. Sam stopped the conversation and said hi to "Françoise". I discerned immediately that she was unhappy about my presence. She had a cold smile and looked at me as though I had done something wrong. I felt a bit anxious without knowing why. She looked at me, her eyes hidden behind her sunglasses, and started asking questions about my identity, my research and its duration in this community garden.

I began to explain and, not wishing to raise her suspicion, to answer her questions in a simple but clear way. However, she seemed even more unhappy after hearing my answers. She gave me her telephone number and said I would need to call her and explain more about my project; I noted that she was no longer smiling. After conducting her brief investigation, she left us. We continued our walk through the garden, and Sam told me that Greek people were not easy to talk to and that I should not take the encounter personally. He added that they were the most powerful members of the community garden, and that, with their strong personalities, it had not been easy to build a relationship with them. Then, he revealed a secret. He explained that each family was allowed to have only one plot, but some of the Greek people in the community garden had more than one as they knew someone on the garden's board.

Ten minutes later when Sam was watering his plants and I was walking around the garden alone, Françoise showed up again. She told me that I was not allowed to walk around alone, and that I could not return to the plum community garden without Sam. Her tone became colder by the second, and just when I thought she was done, she added, ". . . and for interviews with gardeners, I must be there and listen to your conversations". As she said this, she started to direct me toward the garden's gate. I was a bit shocked as I was not even allowed to thank Sam for his help and say goodbye to him. Her next words were worrisome: "If I let you come here any time you wish, others will come here as well, and what if you steal something?" As she locked the gate behind me, she said that the next time I wanted to come, I needed to call her first and ask for permission. She dismissed me without replying to my "Goodbye". I left plum community garden wondering how I could conduct my research without interruption from a suspicious board member. As an outsider, it was up to me to prove that I had no intention other than conducting academic research. I knew the solution would be found by changing my methodologies, as explained later.

I returned to plum community garden with supportive letters from my supervisor and a detailed description of my project. These letters convinced Françoise to allow me to visit the garden without Françoise accompanying me. Although for the sake of my interlocutors and to maintain their privacy, I held interviews and meetings with them in a cafe outside the garden. I wanted the respondents to feel comfortable about talking freely and not to worry about Françoise overhearing our conversations.

Although I was initially unhappy about this change, I quickly recognized that it would allow me to spend more time observing daily life within the plum garden, participating in gardening practices, and sketching maps of the gardens (as I did not have to spend time conducting formal interviews in the garden, I had more time to participate in gardening activities). I asked gardeners to take photos of their plots prior to our meetings in the cafe. It is notable that a key aspect of the main argument of this thesis is that heterogeneous actors play critical roles in the process of constructing gardens (place-making), and I wanted to understand gardeners' perceptions of non-humans and the ways in which they were altered by plants' presence.

In other gardens, I conducted formal and informal interviews in the presence of non-humans. As Power (2005) argue "This approach meant that non-humans were always physically present" (Power, 2005, p. 43), but in the case of plum community garden, non-humans were not present during the interviews since these were conducted in a cafe. Therefore, I asked my interlocutors to take photos of their plots and favourite plants as, in this way, a non-human presence was still felt during the interviews even though we were not in a garden. Moreover, I asked all my research participants to take photos of their plots. Asking respondents to share photos was a practical method as I could see what they considered more important and interesting in the gardens rather than relying on my own interpretations and perceptions. This helped me to see gardeners'

plots through the lenses of their eyes and the ways in which they view and care for their plots. Typically, the first photos taken and shown to me by gardeners were a manifestation of their favorite and more important plants, i.e. those they were most proud of. Interesting, the challenging encounter with Françoise brought about this strategy.

Figure 3: Yellow lilies, summer 2019. Photo taken by "Shamila." (a 45-year-old Bengali woman).

For example, the photo of yellow lilies was Shamila's first photo of her plot. These were her favorite and only ornamental plant in the plot. She told me she planted it because her mother used to plant yellow lilies in their garden 'back home'. These flowers were a manifestation of her previous life and her background.

Figure 4: summer 2019. Photo taken by "Malika"

The two photos above were taken by “Malika” a Bengali woman in her late 50s to show me the methods she used to protect her plantings from marmots (using chicken wire). The photos manifest a competition between humans and non-humans for the resources available in the garden. It also reveals that the garden is a hybrid landscape that heterogeneous actors negotiate in different ways in order to meet their needs.

These photos helped me to further design my interviews in a more productive way to extract interesting data from my participants and their daily lives and interactions within the garden that I might have missed without these visual representations. This method facilitated highlighting the presence of non-humans in the interviews as I would ask why a specific angle was chosen for taking a photo and why specific plants were the main focus of a photo.

The story I narrated made me realize that conducting fieldwork was not as simple as attending an outdoor event. Moreover, it helped me to explain my reasons for applying certain methods to my fieldwork. I learned that, in order to collect rich data and develop an understanding of the interactions in the community gardens, I needed to continually revise and adjust my methodologies based on events and encounters in the field. Although I had developed a plan for conducting participant observation as a key element of my methodology, my encounter with “Françoise” (a board member of plum community garden) enlightened me in regard to how I should actually do participant observation. Furthermore, it caused me to consider adding other means and methods (for example, asking respondents to take photos of their plots; sketching and garden-mapping while I was in the garden). I asked the research participants to become ‘assistants’ during the fieldwork and add to the research by sharing photos of their plots and narratives about what they liked about community gardening.

Analysis

My fieldwork enabled me to collect a set of data that includes notes, interview transcripts, photographs, maps, and sketches. During my fieldwork, I drafted notes, and after returning from the gardens, I added more details for thorough field notes that aimed to capture the nuances of my observations. I read these, in addition to interview transcripts, and familiarized myself with the content, later sorting, coding, and analyzing the material to identify "relevant and recurrent patterns" and emergent themes (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 18; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012). This approach helped me to develop a thematic approach and learn how to manage the interviews and my data-collecting approach.

A thematic analysis was applied based on the data collected during my fieldwork. This approach facilitates the identification of three main themes that emerge through reading, rereading, and becoming familiar with the interview transcripts (Bryman, 2012). These themes include the following:

– the garden as an enchanting landscape;

– the garden space as an alternative home in the new environment;

– the garden as a hybrid landscape.

In addition, through the process of reading and sorting the interview transcripts, I identified and coded the repetitive and relevant themes of each interview. This approach helped me to identify and categorize the data that were most relevant to the research questions.

Chapters Breakdown

Each chapter in this thesis advances my path forward into its main argument and helps me to form that argument. As noted previously, the main argument of this thesis is that place-making in a garden is a gradual, complex and multilayered process and one that is neither human-centered

nor non-human centered; both actors play critical roles through the process of constructing an alternative home within the garden. Chapter 1 is theoretical; using my data collection, I aim to illustrate that urban community gardens are experienced as enchanting landscapes by some immigrants. To do this, I employ the notions of haptic perception, reverberation, enchantment, affect, and enchanting landscapes to highlight the pleasures associated with quotidian landscapes and daily routines. By focusing on sensuous embodied experiences elicited by mundane tasks and gardeners' memories of a beloved childhood garden, I attempt to reveal how peoples' connection with their surroundings are transformed through the extraordinary encounters they experience. I will show that such transformative experiences help people to develop a sense of belonging to Canada as their new home. In this chapter, I will narrate immigrants' memories and descriptions of enchanting encounters through which they found peace, comfort and happiness in a garden. I will demonstrate how memories of a beloved childhood garden inspired several of the participants to invest their time and energy into the community garden in the hope of re-enchantment, which in turn has helped them to develop emotional attachments to the garden, a crucial process for immigrants in the process of place-making.

In chapter 2, I address the critical roles of community gardens in the lives of immigrants and explain how community gardening assists immigrants to re-create for themselves a homelike space, to form "family-like relationships" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 15), and to enhance their physical and mental health and well-being. I will focus on the strategies immigrants employ in the process of place-making in the community garden. This approach will enable me to reveal how place-making in a garden is a complex and gradual process beyond a simple reconfiguration of the physical structure of the urban landscape. I will show how community gardens can be understood as "alternative homes" in immigrants' lives (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 14). In this chapter, I also

focus on gardeners' roles in the process of place-making, although I will indirectly present non-humans' roles in the process of place-making by focusing on the ways in which immigrants express their personal preferences. Indirectly, I will demonstrate how plants provide a foundation for gardeners to build their social relationships with other gardeners and develop a sense of familiarity and community in the garden. Focusing on the physical appearance of the gardens and social relationships between gardeners will allow me to reveal "both the materiality and sociability of immigrant place-making" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 14). In this way, I am able to reveal the complex and multidimensional aspects of this place-making.

In chapter 3, through the lens of Actor Network Theory (by Latour), I will highlight the active presence of non-humans in the garden and explain how plants can facilitate or hinder the process of place-making. ANT does not offer a fixed theory or attitude through which we account for socio-environmental phenomena. Rather it is an approach that highlights the complexity of the world by pointing to the hybrid networks that constitute the world, and the ways in which their constituent elements affect "both each other and ourselves" (Hitching, 2003, p. 100). As Hitching (2003) asserts: "Under actor-network theory, people, objects, plants, animals and ideas all jostle against each other, and it is through these interactions that society takes shape and our understandings of this society find form" (Hitching, 2003, p. 100). Hence, actor-network theory (ANT) is an approach that helps us to perceive how heterogonous actors in plural worlds constantly alter each other through the networks of relationships. By highlighting moments of engagement, challenges and competition between human and non-human actors (Power, 2005), I will demonstrate that place-making in the garden is a hybrid, gradual and complex process that neither humans nor non-humans are central to and that both play critical roles in this process. I will focus on instances of competition between humans and weeds to show how non-humans can undo

gardeners' best efforts and compete with them "by refusing their enrolment into the gardeners' plans" (Power, 2005, p. 48). Weeds can hinder the process of place-making by challenging the gardeners. I will also illustrate that growing plants that are vigorous and healthy can facilitate the process of place-making. Hence, I will illustrate that place-making is a dynamic process in which heterogeneous actors are enrolled in constructing an enchanting landscape.

Chapter 1: A Place of Enchanting Encounters

Cooper states (2006):

> The thoughts of a man or woman sitting or strolling quietly in a garden alight now on this and now on that, fluidly following their own bent, not fixated on a particular issue or object . . . this nicely captures the fluid, passive, uninhibited character of reverie, and of its journey through thought, imagination, and memory. (Cooper, 2006, pp. 83–84)

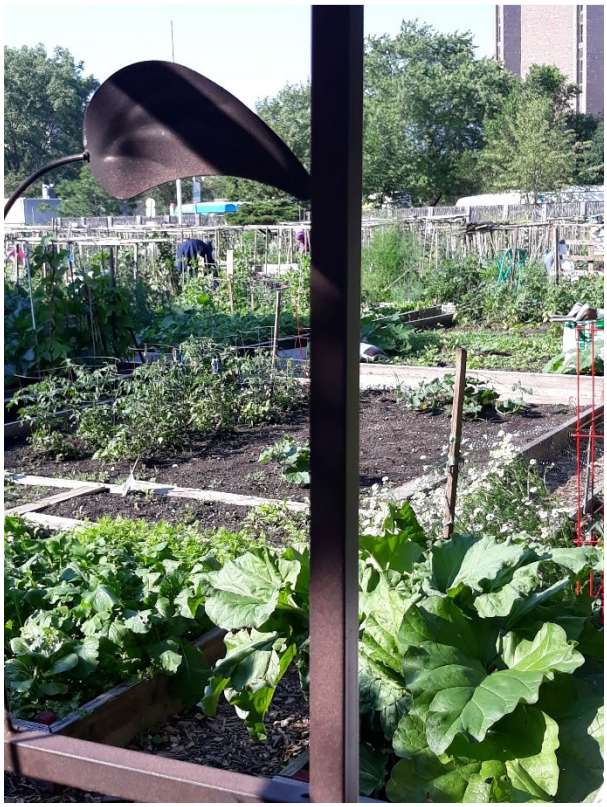

Figure 5: Grape community garden, summer, 2019. Photo taken by Atefeh Heydari

Introduction

This chapter seeks to illustrate the ways in which the urban community garden is experienced as an enchanting landscape in the everyday lives of Iranian immigrants in Montreal, Canada. In general, gardens offer an enchanting landscape for people, wherein enchanting encounters during sensuous embodied experiences transform people's connection with their surrounding worlds. By *enchanting encounters*, I mean those surprising moments and joyful

pleasures that people experience during their daily routines in quotidian landscapes, including gardens (Bhatti et al., 2009). As Bhatti et al. (2009) have suggested, "Enchantment in the garden occurs through a multi-sensorial psycho-geography of everyday life, whereby tactile, sensuous experiences are woven into the fabric of domestic space through 'tasks' (e.g. gardening)" (p. 62).

In gardens, such enchanting encounters, experienced through "multi-sensorial engagement and emotional attachment" with the place (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 61), move people, affect their minds and bodies, and help them to further develop emotional attachment to the spaces (Bachelard, 1994; Bhatti et al., 2009). In time, the sum of those experiences encourages people to consider gardens in ways other than according to their "material properties" (Davidson et al., 2011, p. 6) and recognize them as sources of enchantment. Thus, they continually return to gardens in the hope of re-enchantment (Bhatti et al., 2009). As Bhatti et al. (2009) have suggested:

> Hope of re-enchantment helps us to foreground the ordinary domestic garden as a creative place in/co-habited by people and 'nature' a place full of mystery, where simple pleasures can have profound meanings, and where ecology, e/motion, body and memory combine. (p. 64)

In this chapter, I employ the Bachelardian concept of *lived space*, which defines the connection between emotional attachment and space as well as helps to reveal "how embodied and psychosocial engagements with the social/natural world occur in everyday life" (Game & Metcalfe, 2010; Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 61). By extension, Bachelard defines *lived space*, or *inhabited space*, as a "space that lives and feels" (Game & Metcalfe, 2010, p. 42). According to Bachelard, a lived or inhabited space such as a garden "is known phenomenologically, through participation in or inhabitation of the world," which requires people to open themselves to the world and become involved in creative imagination (Game & Metcalfe, 2010, p. 43; Bachelard, 1971, p. 173).

Because we live in spaces through our imaginations, it is possible to perceive their full potential (Game & Metcalfe, 2010; Bachelard, 1969). Likewise, Bachelard's phenomenology "suggests that the 'lived image' of the garden 'reverberates'" and "through this reverberation the garden has the power to be enchanting" and to be "imagined and remembered through the body" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 71). In that context, reverberation is a concept that Bachelard (1969) refers to as a form of relational, non-causal logic. Beyond that, the *lived image* of gardens refers to the memories that people have "of a real or imagined 'secret garden'" that "often stay with them all their lives" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 70).

Herein, the concept of lived space helps me to illuminate the connection between "emotional attachments" and gardens as enchanting landscapes (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 61). In doing so, I first engage with the theories of enchantment, affect, and the enchanting landscape. Second, I employ the notion of *haptic perception*, which Bruno (2002) defines as the ability of sensing the world through "tools, tasks and our senses" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 68). That notion helps to reveal how gardeners experience, sense, and perceive gardens (Bhatti et al., 2009). Third, I focus on gardeners' childhood memories formed through "multi-sensorial engagement and emotional attachment" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 61) in their beloved childhood gardens.

After all, the memories of enchanting encounters in childhood gardens remain vivid in their minds and keep gardeners motivated to spend time in their present-day community gardens in the hope of re-experiencing enchanting childhood encounters there. Thus, embodied experiences and multi-sensorial engagement in community gardens trigger immigrants' childhood memories and take them back "through memory and imagination" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 63) to the childhood gardens that they left in their homelands. In community gardens as enchanting "alternative homes," (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 14) some immigrants experience a sense of belonging, stability,

security, peace, tranquility, community, and familiarity and as they develop emotional attachment to Canada.

The chief argument of this theoretical chapter is that some people's enchanting encounters experienced via multi-sensorial engagement in quotidian landscapes such as gardens transform their connection with their surroundings, give them a sense of stability and belonging, and help them to develop emotional attachment to their surroundings. Such transformative experiences, often marked by happiness, excitement, and joy, recast gardens as enchanting landscapes in which immigrants create alternative homes. As some of my interlocutors revealed, emotional attachment to the garden can be produced and reinforced by having had similarly enchanting encounters in beloved gardens during childhood. In that way, the happiness, pleasure, comfort, and peace that people experienced through multi-sensorial engagement in their childhood gardens encourages them to return to their community gardens in their new homes.

As captured in my research, after settling in another country, some immigrants whom I interviewed had experienced loneliness, depression, and isolation. For them, their community gardens were happy places where they could forget difficulties faced during their everyday lives. In that dynamic, gardening emerged as a transformative experience able to alter their sadness and depression, which allowed them to develop ties and emotional attachment to Canada and re-create a homey space in their gardens. In view of those results, I suggest that because the gardeners had beloved childhood gardens, their memories of those gardens inspired them to return to space of the garden and to invest their time and energy in re-creating an alternative home there instead of in another quotidian landscape. To make that argument, I use qualitative data drawn from my fieldwork.

The discussions, arguments, and narratives retold in this chapter help me to advance the chief argument of this thesis: that place-making in urban community gardens as hybrid landscapes that are neither human-centered nor non-human-centered (Power, 2005) is a gradual, complex, multilayered process in which heterogeneous actors play critical roles while constructing alternative homes. Through daily interactions with human and non-humans in urban community gardens, immigrants receive opportunities to develop their emotional attachment to Canada as their new home. Considering the garden as an enchanting, hybrid landscape helps to dismantle the nature–culture dichotomy, as I elaborate in Chapter 3.

In the same vein, the principal goal of this chapter is to show that everyday life in quotidian landscapes such as community gardens is full of enchanting encounters that not only occur through multi-sensorial engagement with the landscapes but can also help immigrants to develop emotional attachment to their new homes. Thus, in the hope of re-enchantment, they return to the garden as a space in order to regain the sense of peace, pleasure, and happiness that they once experienced in their beloved gardens of the past. Those feelings help them to develop emotional attachment to the community gardens as alternative homes.

As enchanting, hybrid landscapes, gardens are special places of performance and engagement with humans and non-humans alike. They are landscapes with meaning, memories, and attachments such that people therein can "move beyond the illusion of stable forms" (Neves, 2009, p. 146) and perceive the critical roles of non-humans in their lives through "enchanting encounters" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 61). Thus, I focus on such encounters in community gardens, because that approach helps to reveal gardens not as human-centered arenas and helps to dismantle the nature–culture binary, as I detail in Chapter 3. In this chapter, relying upon Bachelardian phenomenology and my data, I illustrate how Iranian immigrants living in Montreal engage with

plural worlds in their everyday lives and develop emotional attachment to their community gardens, even to specific plants (Bhatti et al., 2009; Bachelard, 1994).

How people define their relationships with significant non-human companions and meaningful landscapes, as well as how parties in a reciprocal relationship alter each other, is a matter of enchanting encounters. Being enchanted and affected relates to encounters and interactions that can occur during daily routines, mundane pleasure, and "embodied experiences which for a moment 'reverberate'" within quotidian landscapes with regular non-humans "when time seems to stand still in a specific place" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 61). In that sense, *affect* is a dynamic power that "triggers reactions" and connects nature and culture, "body and mind, reason and emotion, and human and non-human" (Berberich et al., 2013, p. 314). Affect, as a shared (Berlant, 2011), autonomous (Massumi, 2002), moving force (Stewart, 2007), is the "power to 'affect and be affected'" (Massumi, 2015, p. ix).

Therefore, focusing on affect and enchanting encounters in gardens helps to clarify the complexity of plural worlds. It also helps to illustrate how non-humans alter humans and how humans are affected by non-humans via particular encounters in particular contexts, including in daily human–plant encounters in community gardens (Archambault, 2016). Paying attention to the immaterial and emotional aspects of human and non-human interactions may prompt reconsideration of the "long-established expectations" and beliefs about the worlds around us, including in terms of the nature–culture dichotomy (Berberich et al., 2013, p. 316). As Berberich et al. (2013) have argued, "Through our bodily, affective entanglements with the place and all its varied and complexly layered forces (actualities, representations, memories, absences, imaginings, etc.), we are impelled to think and rethink, to feel and to perceive in unexpected flows" (p. 317).

A landscape of enchantment, affection, and reverberation

I argue that gardens are enchanting landscapes where enchanting encounters occur through sensuous embodied experiences, which I illustrate with examples from interviews with Iranian immigrants living in Montreal. That approach has helped me to unravel and review the relationship between people, their gardens, and plants in general. Bhatti et al. (2009) have defined a *garden* "as an enchanting landscape of everyday life" and noted that "(re)enchantment in the garden involves a certain kind of sensibility: a 'doing' through haptic perception; a caring through cultivating; and emotionality through memory" (p. 73). By considering gardens as enchanting landscapes, I mean that the spaces have to be considered beyond their material properties and that their immaterial and emotional aspects in immigrants' lives have to be highlighted.

Affect sheds light on the mysterious coalescing of a material world such as a garden with the immateriality of humans' emotions, including their "hopes, dreams, moods, memories, longing, love, vulnerability, precarity, hauntings, and pain" (Berberich et al., 2013, p. 316). Being affected, enchanted, and fascinated by a landscape relates to joyful pleasures and "sensuous embodied experiences"—planting, watering, digging, potting, trimming, weeding, and walking, for instance—that occur during the routines of everyday life and may culminate in extraordinary moments of surprise (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 61).

The garden is a meaningful landscape that provides a foundation for humans to stage their relationships with non-humans, including plants, animals, and insects. Community gardens are home to ornamental plants, trees, fresh fruits and vegetables, birds, animals, insects, fungi, worms, and, of course, the gardeners who have each occupied a small plot there and sought to build a comforting space for themselves. Enchanting, affective encounters that reverberate during mundane routines of everyday life and domestic chores help to anchor people and develop

emotional engagements, as well as give them a sense of stability and belonging (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012; Bhatti et al., 2009).

Enchanting encounters occur when people find something uncanny, immaterial, surprising, and extraordinary in their daily activities (Schneider, 1993; Bennett, 2001). They are moments of mystery that move people and change their sense of having a "connection with the social/natural world" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 63). Through extraordinary, surprising encounters in community gardens "co-habited by humans and humans," mind and body, as well as nature and culture, may unite to create meaningful, sensuous experiences (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 64).

As mentioned, Bennett (2001) has posited that enchantment occurs through surprising encounters "with something that one did not expect" and that engender "an energizing feeling of fullness or . . . plenitude—a momentary return to childhood" (Bennett, 2001, pp. 4–5). That description of enchantment also emerged in some of my interlocutors' descriptions of their community gardens. For example, "Shamila," a 45-year-old woman from Bangladesh, said she visits her garden in the early mornings because she enjoys the cool breeze at that time of day. She explained: "Those moments are full of positive energy and peace. The air is saturated with flowers' magical scents. It's the moment that I love the most." That recurring pleasure that reverberates in the everyday life of the garden functions as an enchanting encounter that turns the garden into a magical place for Shamila where she can feel peace, the flow of life, and comfort.

In a similar experience, "Sepideh," a 62-year-old Iranian woman, described: "ordinary but satisfactory pleasures," including the pleasure of sitting on a bench and looking at the garden. She explained: "From time to time, I take a break and sit on the bench. It gives me a … a chance to enjoy the scene, scents, and sounds around me and to cherish nature." For Sepideh, that ordinary moment has profound meaning, changes her modes of connecting with the surrounding world, and

increases her satisfaction with being in the garden and performing mundane tasks. Gardeners such as Shamila and Sepideh visit their community gardens in the hope of re-enchantment (Bhatti et al., 2009), and that hope converts the ordinary landscape of the garden into an extraordinary landscape inhabited by humans and non-humans entities.

As described in those reflections, small encounters can create moments when people can enjoy ordinary but awe-inspiring pleasures amid their daily routines. Those ordinary pleasures and encounters can be anything. For instance, "Reza," an Iranian man in his mid-60s, views his garden as a magical place where he can see the colors of plants, hear the sounds of nature, and enjoy the earthy odor of a freshly watered garden. In our chat, he described recognizing a bird's tweeting from afar as an extraordinary moment, one that he would like to last forever.

Similar to Reza, "Sara," an Iranian woman in her late 50s, told me that when a sour orange started to germinate and sprout after months of effort, the moment was full of surprise and joy for her. Likewise, "Laleh," an Iranian woman in her late 60s, stated that days when the wind carries the clouds through the sky and allows her to see sun shining offer cheerful moments that bring her back to the community garden day after day. Such ordinary, familiar, but awesome moments work as transformative experiences in gardens and turn them into an affective place. In particular, those moments are transformative because they change gardeners' moods—for example, make them happy and/or excited—give them pleasure and enjoyment, and keep them longing for re-enchantment and repeat experiences with those prosaic pleasures. In that light, Bhatti et al. (2009) have described the garden "as a place full of mystery, where simple pleasures can have profound meanings, and where ecology, e/motion, body, and memory combine" (p. 64).

Planting, potting, watering, composting, weeding, and other tasks in the garden help gardeners to develop emotional attachments, as a "specific form of emotional response arising out

of caring for plants and others/self" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 62). As a sphere of everyday life, the garden maintains repetitive rhythms, and performing gardening is a sensuous, embodied experience, as well as a persistently pleasant activity "embedded in the rhythms of everyday life" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 62). As a sensuous, embodied experience repeated in the context of time and space, gardening anchors and affects people with "emotionality and comfort," which gives meaning to repetitive quotidian activities and landscapes (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 63). Just as being in the garden and gardening for some people means being united with nature, for others it recalls memories of beloved gardens from their childhood.

According to Myers (2019), we do not know what a garden exactly means or what it can do. As she explains:

> Gardens are performative and pedagogical: they dictate how people should stand in relation to nature; how plants ought to figure in people's lives; what plants are "for"; and how one should appreciate these forms of life as beautiful, healing, nourishing, exotic, dangerous, economically productive, or ecologically significant. (Myers, 2019, pp. 125–126)

In quoting Myers, I do not seek to depict solely harmonious, romanticized features of gardens and gardening, for moments of failure, disappointment, detachment, and even hostility are certainly possible in gardens. When gardeners do not have enough time to take care of their gardens, the complexity of daily life turns gardening into a duty or chore that bores them and makes their gardens an exhausting landscape (Bhatti et al., 2009). For some gardeners, regardless of the time and effort that they invest in their gardens, the spaces become utter disappointments when plants suddenly stop growing and die. For others, the "lack of time means it is a forgotten space," and remembering that abandoned space bothers them (Bhatti et al., 2009; Degnen, 2009). Physical limitations later in life can prevent older people from caring for their gardens, and that in ability spawns a sense of disappointment and disenchantment (Bhatti, 2006). Other negative aspects of gardening and unsatisfying moments in gardens can give gardeners a sense of frustration and

defeat (Bhatti & Church, 2001, 2004). Against that background, in this chapter I focus on the positive aspects of everyday routines in gardens, for I seek to elucidate how people develop a sense of connectedness and attachment to landscapes such as gardens and how they experience reverie.

Explaining the term *reverberation*, Bachelard (1969) has written that "in resonance, we hear the poem, in the reverberation, we speak it, it is our own" (xvi–xxvii). Bachelard (1969) uses the term to speak of "relational, non-causal logic" (Game & Metcalfe, 2011, p. 46) that can be used to analyze "prosaic pleasures"—that is, the everyday practices, activities, and tasks that "cannot be analyzed using rational science" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 65). That phenomenological approach facilitates moving beneath the surface and focusing on the roots, for, as Bachelard (1969) has also written, reverberations "invite us to give greater depth to our own existence" (p. xxii). They invite us to concentrate on the details of everyday life and embodied experiences that reverberate throughout our lives.

Following Bhatti et al. (2009), I view enchanting encounters in gardens as reverberations, which helps to clarify the complexity of humans' relationships with nature and reveals how humans are altered and moved by their surrounding worlds. Taking such an approach is a step toward the ultimate aim of this thesis: to transcend conceptualizations of gardens as human-centered arenas that separate nature from culture. As Bhatti et al. (2009) have suggested, "an encounter that moves us has depth of being; it has an effect in/on the body, which in turn affects its surroundings" (p. 65). I explain that such encounters can be anything—that is, any event in a garden—and that any encounter can be enchanting and reverberate in "time, place and memory (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 73). One such enchanting encounter was experienced by "Sara," who, working in the garden one day, felt an urgent need to touch the dirt with her bare hands. She described that encounter with nature as an incredible experience:

> I was working in my patch [when] all of a sudden I decided to take off my gardening gloves and touch the dirt. I don't know why, but I felt like the soil was calling me to do that. I touched the dirt, held it in my fist; it was warm and soft like Iran's dirt. Like what I used to play with back home when I was a child.

That enchanting encounter with nature represents a reverberation that Bachelard (1994) has asserted can be "found in natural surroundings" and that "becomes for a moment the center of the entire universe, the evidence of a cosmic situation" (pp. 94–95). That interpretation of cosmic situation was evident in Sara's words as she explained how "That day, when I touched the soil with my bare hand, my heart started beating faster. It may seem silly to you, but it felt like a rebirth to me and took me back to my childhood." That enchanting encounter in Sara's narration generates from a so-called "lived image" and experience that reverberate beyond time and space (Bachelard, 1969), changed Sara's mode of being, and returned her to her childhood, as an experience that "transverses the now and then, the here and there" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 66).

As an affective space, gardens can be meaningful places that provoke emotions (Bruno, 2002). Cultivation, plantation, potting, and weeding, along with any other tasks performed in gardens, help gardeners to develop emotional attachments to their surroundings. Similar to Sara's experience was one described by "Malika," a Bengali woman in her late 50s who recalled how seeing a white butterfly moved her emotionally:

> It was a hot summer day. I was pulling weeds very carefully to make sure that all the roots were removed from the soil, when I suddenly saw a rare white butterfly just like the ones that we had back home. When this butterfly flaps its wings, a blueish color can be seen. I hadn't seen any butterfly like that in Canada. So, when I saw that one, I got so excited and immediately called my husband to show him the butterfly. Seeing that butterfly took me right back to my childhood garden back home that has been full of those butterflies (August, 2019).

A simple encounter with an ordinary non-human had moved Malika, invoked reverie, and, in returning her to her childhood garden through memory and imagination, made her excited and stirred her emotions.

Enchanting encounters similar to Sara's and Malika's were shared by other interlocutors as they described how the sound of crickets from faraway trees, the smell of jasmine and gardenia, and the sound of children's laughter playing in the garden often transported them to their childhoods and to the homes that they had left at the border. As a sphere of everyday life, a garden involves repetitive rhythms, and doing gardening as a sensuous experience "is embedded in the rhythms of everyday life," one which strengthens connections between the self and others and is rooted in a tendency to care for others (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 62).

Humans' relationships with and affections for landscapes can be described in terms of so-called "worlding" (Stewart, 2010). As Anderson and Harrison have explained, worlds are formed, experienced, and sensed when they are inhabited (2010, p. 9). In that sense, a world is understood and felt by "becoming attuned to its differences, positions, and juxtapositions, from a training of our senses, dispositions, and expectations and from being able to initiate, imitate and elaborate skilled lines of action" (Anderson and Harrison, 2010, p. 9). For Hardt (2007), relations between affect indicate a capability "to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers" (p. ix).

Taking the sensuous aspects of enchantment into account helps to elucidate how people live in the world and how the dynamic forces and powers surrounding them control, shape, and reform their ways of being and living in the world (Berberich et al., 2013, p. 316). Thus, paying attention to a garden as an enchanting landscape and the relationships formed therein may help to

clarify how the social and natural worlds in the garden are sensed, represented, used, and defined (Berberich et al., 2013).

Planting a paradise

In this section, following Bhatti et al. (2009), I apply the notion of haptic perception to analyze how my interlocutors perceived their community gardens and developed emotional attachment to their plots during daily practices there. According to Bhatti et al. (2009), working in a garden can be enchanting because "it has a certain physical dimension" sensed by haptic perception or, more simply, the "sense of touch" (p. 68). As Bruno (2002) has stated, haptic perception is "related to kinesthesis, the ability of our bodies to sense their own movement in space" (p. 6). Because people perceive and understand the world through "tasks and tools" and by relying on their senses (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 68; Bruno, 2002; Ingold, 2000), living and moving in the world "involves the whole body and all of the senses" to experience and understand the world (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 68).

As reported by some of my interlocutors, everyday interaction in nature can arouse joyful pleasure and attachment to one's garden. For some people, embodied experiences in their gardens—for instance, weeding, potting, planting, watering, digging, and composting—may be energizing or exhausting but also comforting at the same time. For them, maintaining a garden involves hard work at core, as well as being attentive and keeping everything healthy. In that light, gardening—that is, shaping a garden—is not merely a leisure activity but a mission in a place completed by investing time, energy, sacrifice, and effort. Focusing on haptic perception matters in relation to this thesis's chief argument, for the gardeners in its sample, through their senses and haptic perception, have experienced the re-enchantment that returns them to their childhood

gardens and helps them to experience prosaic pleasures in their community gardens as their alternative homes.

For some gardeners such as "Somiya," a Bengali woman in her mid-60s, weeding is a refreshing, rewarding activity. As she explained, nothing is more promising in a garden than seeing a clean patch occupied by her lovely plants: "I can spend all day long weeding. It helps me to concentrate. Yes, it's hard, and it takes time, but it's satisfying as well." For Somiya, a garden is a so-called "taskscape" (Ingold, 2000) in which she pursues the goal of "having a clean patch." Ultimately, through tasks, tools, and her senses, she has developed an emotional attachment to the garden as an enchanting alternative home. At the same time, the garden can become more than a taskscape. For "Sepideh," an Iranian woman in her early 60s, the acts of seeding, planting, digging, and weeding generate joy. She told me that physical activities in the garden had turned the place into one of meditation and relaxation that had helped her to cope with her anxiety. To her, a garden is not merely a taskscape where she has to complete tasks such as planting, watering, and weeding but a so-called 'escape space' where, through quotidian practices, she releases stress and creates the garden that she envisions.

Sepideh is not the only gardener who reported enjoying peaceful moments in the garden. Similar to her, "Reza," who has battled depression since leaving Iran, stated me that physical activities and hard work in the garden have been ways by which he has reduced his depression. As he explained, "Gardening saved me (*nejatam dad in Farsi*) from drowning in grief. Gardening helped me to survive and … to cope with my endless pain. I couldn't return home, so I brought Iran to Canada." Shaping his garden, cultivating familiar plants, and practicing weed control without using any chemicals have helped Reza to feel connected to the garden and to combat stress as well as depression.

As shown in all of the foregoing examples, via everyday routines and embodied experiences, the gardeners have developed emotional attachment to their gardens that has made the physical labor performed in the space a joyful activity. For them, gardening is not merely hard work, laboring, and sweating but also a source of peace and pleasure through sensuous experiences in the garden. Smelling fresh vegetables or the marvelous fragrance of flowers, looking at plants, and feeling the soil on one's hands and the sun's rays on one's skin, as well as listening to the sounds of birds, together create joy and satisfaction for gardeners. Such experiences provoke emotions, memories, and keep make time stand "still in a specific place" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 61).

One such experience was reported by "Shabnam," an Iranian woman in her late 50s who described her garden as her safe zone where she could feel comforted and at peace. In her words: "Since I was a little girl, my garden has been a safe, peaceful space where I could take refuge. Being in nature and watching plants arouse a joyful happiness in me." The simple pleasure of watching a plant grow has turned the garden into an enchanting landscape for Shabnam, one where nothing can bother her. Shabnam was not the only interlocutor who has found peace in a garden. "Rita," a Bengali woman in her early 40s, shared Shabnam's perspective about the garden as a peaceful environment. A single mother who has to work extremely hard to feed her family, Rita lacks the time to cannot properly care for her garden; however, whenever she has available and feels the need to escape from her stressful life, she visits her garden. As she told me:

> In the garden, time seems to stop, and I can forget my life outside the garden. I do the weeding and collect vegetables, and it helps me to not think about anything but gardening. In the end, when my plot looks a bit better, then I feel relieved and comforted (September, 2019).

For Rita, gardening is also an escape space where she can forget everything about her daily life, reduce her stress, and simply enjoy the physical activities in the garden that satisfy her.

Similar sensuous, embodied experiences keep "Sam," a Bengali man in his late 60s, enchanted and affected by his community garden. He explained that walking in the garden and looking at the flowers and vegetables that grow there are what he loves most about the space:

> In the spring, when I start gardening and there's not much there, I work hard because I know that good things are coming. And as the months and seasons change, nature changes as well. I can sit on a bench or walk in the garden and listen to the birds tweeting, watch the plants grow, and feel the wind, sun, and rain on my skin. Those are rewards for my hard work (August, 2019).

For gardeners such as Sam, those sensuous experiences are ways in which they understand and perceive the worlds around them and develop emotional bonds to their gardens. Such experiences and emotional attachment convert gardens into places of peace and comfort.

That experience is what Gibson (1982) has described as the "looking, listening, touching, and sniffing that goes on when the perceptual system is at work" (p. 397). According to that definition, movement "in time and through space" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 68) is a communicational tool that unites our senses, and through it, we connect and make understanding of our surrounding worlds. As Ingold (2000) has written, such movements provide understanding and knowledge "about what an environment offers for the pursuance of the action in which the perceiver is currently engaged to perceive . . . an object or an event is to perceive what it 'affords.'" (p. 166)

The sensuous, embodied experiences and enchantments that reverberate, in people's daily lives can be acquired in natural environments such as gardens (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 68). As people circulate in gardens and perceive their materiality through their senses, they find themselves enchanted by and united with nature. Through those "bodily multi-sensorial encounters," they perceive, acquire, and remember the knowledge of "doing gardening" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 69). Following Bruno (2002), I suggest that walking, working, and living in gardens helps people to develop their sensibilities, which turns each of their gardens into "a sensuous space of emotion"

(p. 203). In that light, a garden becomes an enchanting landscape where "a touching experience of feeling through the eye" is "a means of activating the senses in a cumulative sequence of emotional responses" (Bruno, 2002, p. 219). Thus, doing gardening invokes haptic perception, and the garden is the enchanting landscape where "sensuous embodied practices can be fully memorialized, apprehended and appreciated" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 69). What makes the garden a memorable landscape for some people is what they experienced in gardens as children and how that reverberates with their present selves, as I explain in the following section.

The garden I remember

While conducting my research, I realized that I could not understand gardens' meaningful roles in immigrants' lives if I concentrated only on their current daily practices in community gardens in Montreal. Thus, following Francis (1995) and Bhatti et al. (2009), I expanded the scope of my research to examine immigrants' memories of their childhood gardens. The investigation helped me to identify a link between immigrants' childhood memories of gardens and how they sustain their present relationships with their community gardens and the plant therein (Francis, 1995; Bhatti et al., 2009).

Sensuous experiences, memories, and sociocultural backgrounds form and develop people's knowledge and perceptions of their surroundings (Bartlett, 1932). According to Francis (1995), "Children carry with them into adolescence and adulthood strong memories and images of favorite childhood gardens. Those memories directly shape adult images and attitudes of landscapes, both private and public" (p. 183). Thus, people's memories, stimulated by past knowledge and experiences, form their expectations for the world. Memories are collective sensory experiences; hence, memory "as a communicative channel" shapes people's interactions with others and the environments in which they work, move, and live (Korsmeyer & Sutton, 2011,

p. 471). I suggest that memory, as a channel, unifies and coordinates the perceptions of people's senses and delivers those perceptions as a whole in ways that help to clarify the world to a certain depth. Most of my interlocutors reported that their parents or grandparents' gardens had been meaningful places for them where they formed many remarkable childhood memories. I asked them to describe their childhood gardens and significant memories of those spaces in the hope of understanding the importance of the community gardens in their current daily lives.

One of the gardeners who had an enchanting encounter in her garden was "Mahoor". A Bengali woman in her late 50s, Mahoor described how the simple act of planting beans had worked a miracle during her childhood and turned gardens into special places where she could become a magician and give birth to plants. She explained:

> My favorite childhood garden was the garden at my parents' house. It was small but beautiful. My mother planted almost everything we needed. We had beans, chilies, amaranth, cabbage, okra, and so on. In the back row of the garden, we had beautiful lily bushes, golden champa, and colorful coleus flowers. One day, my mom gave me some beans and asked me to plant them. The moment I saw that those beans had germinated and started to grow was like a miracle to me. I've been in love with gardening ever since (October, 2019).

Mahoor's story of her first enchanting encounter in a garden confirms that applying the notions of affect and reverberation can not only reveal the depth of quotidian activities but also help to elucidate why the garden has an important place in Mahoor's adulthood life and why gardening matters to her. In that process, when an enchanting encounter starts to reverberate in one's mind, it keeps him or her enchanted by the landscape first experienced in that awesome moment.

In the descriptions that follow, I elaborate upon how gardens have been important components in the immigrants' lives because their childhoods were associated with certain vegetables, flowers, trees, animals, and even events in gardens. Drawing from Francis (1995), who

argued, “For children, plants are the building blocks of play and experience” (p. 190), I suggest that the presence of non-human actors can turn gardens from the past into enchanting landscapes that keep adult gardeners searching for and working to rebuild those significant landscapes.

For example, Sara detailed the garden where she spent most of her childhood and the special place that orange trees and their blossoms have in her life as a result:

> During spring afternoons, my sisters and I used to sit under a pergola that my father had installed for us. The pergola was covered by wisteria (*glisin in Farsi*). Its violet flowers fell into the shape of a cascade, and sitting there felt like we were three princesses in a palace. While my sisters used needles, yarn, flowers, and orange blossoms to make bracelets and necklaces, I used to dig in the soil for buried treasures. I miss those days and that garden every day of my life. Coming here [to the community garden] feels like a reunification with my childhood garden (August, 2019).

The violet flowers of wisteria and white blossoms of the orange trees and their sweet scents turned Sara’s childhood garden to a special place that she now longs for. However, that longing has not made her passive. Her attachment to her childhood garden and memories explains her motivation in spending her time in her community garden.

In her recollections of home, Shabnam often flashbacked to her garden at home that used to be her safe space. In her words:

> Our garden did not have many flowers, just some pencil pines, and two pomegranate trees in the left and right corners of the garden. In the fall, their red blossoms would add a lively color to the garden, but there weren’t any flowers. A year before *Nowruz (Persian new year)*, my grandmother brought us some cuttings of … honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine. She knew that I had a hard time at home, and it was her way to helping me to get out of the house by going to the garden and keeping myself busy. The flowers turned the garden into a … happy place for me. She taught me everything that I know about plants and gardening. At that age, I didn’t know anything about meditation or gardening’s therapeutic powers, but my grandmother, an illiterate woman, did. She tried to help me by giving those cuttings to me (September, 2019).

For Shabnam, the garden was a homey space, a place to take refuge, a secure space for having a good time with her grandmother, and a familiar space where she could meet and play with her non-human friends: flowers, trees, and a dog. She added, “The garden has been and still

is the only place where I feel like nothing can hurt me." Memories of a past garden associated with specific persons and plants and a hope for re-enchantment prompt gardeners such as Shabnam and Sara to join community gardens and try to rebuild those safe, homey spaces. In turn, that process has helped them to sustain their bonds to nature and develop their attachment to Canada.

According to Bhatti (1999), gardening can be regarded as "a very personal act steeped in emotion, family history and self-identity" (p. 184). As suggested in the preceding sections, gardens are meaningful landscapes associated with memories and haptic experiences that are imbued with meaning. Many of my interlocutors recalled significant memories of their childhood gardens that converted those spaces into lovely places where they first learned about the outside world through bodily sensuous practices (Bhatti et al., 2009) such as planting, potting, weeding, and digging.

Enchanting encounters in significant landscapes determine how people define themselves and their relationships with the worlds around them and the multiple affects, meanings, emotions, and moods associated with meaningful landscapes (Highmore, 2013). Affects and emotions have uncanny natures, and their entanglements with significant non-humans frame different modes of sensation (Berberich et al., 2013). For immigrants who have left behind their homes, gardens, and families, gardening is a way of longing for home, a way of rebuilding a new home, a new garden, and new memories. Gardeners negotiate their feelings toward a better, more stable life in a new country or simply grieve for what has been lost without looking for a utopian future (Highmore, 2013).

Specific enchanting encounters provoke specific senses that led my interlocutors to recall and remember their childhood memories. As Bhatti et al. (2009) have stated, "These 'pre-loved' gardens solicit some very vivid responses" (p. 70) that reverberate in those gardeners' present moments. For example, Reza told me that gardens have always been his happy place. Some of his

childhood memories were formed in a vast garden where he used to climb trees, run around, and try to catch dragonflies and butterflies. For Reza, the sense of olfaction triggers childhood memories of his childhood garden: "Everything here [in the community garden] reminds me of my childhood garden the scent of watered garden and plants, the smell of jasmine and gardenia in the air, and the laughter of those kids playing hide-and-seek." As Reza explained, his senses in close collaboration with his memories influence how he remembers his childhood. That experience was shared by many of my interlocutors, whose sensuous, embodied experiences in their community gardens transport them back to the gardens of their childhood.

"Hamideh," an Iranian woman in her early 60s, has associated the community garden with rose bushes that she planted in the memory of her mother. She explained:

> There's a kind of rose that always reminds me of my childhood and my mother. My mother planted gorgeous rose bushes in the garden, and she used to give their cuttings to my aunts. So, whenever I was at a relative's house and playing in the garden, I could see those rose bushes. For me, those roses were our family's sign. I also have the same rose bushes here. So, no matter where, every time I see a rose bush, it reminds me of my mother and good times in my childhood garden (September, 2019).

Other gardeners such as Hamideh have associated their community gardens with beloved individuals in their lives, with "specific flowers and plants" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 71). A simple rose bush changed Hamideh's mood while being in the garden, returned her to her childhood garden, and helped her to feel at home in Canada.

Memories are stimulated by "socio-material milieus" such that when people encounter a familiar scene, the sounds, tastes, and smells that reverberate in their minds and what comes out through the process of recalling belong to "past moments, layered or sedimented onto the present" (Korsmeyer & Sutton, 2011, p. 472). What individuals recall is not merely simple images from the past but a combination of moments, both past and present. Thus, if people regard memory as a sense, then they can accredit its role as a 'communicational channel' (Korsmeyer & Sutton, 2011)

that links previous perceptions, knowledge, and experiences, acquired through other senses, to the present. Such linkages enhance people's abilities to perceive the complexity of the worlds in which they live and move.

Figure 6: Tomato 's bush, summer 2019. Photo taken by "Marjan."

As the interlocutors emphasized, specific vegetables, flowers, and trees often triggered their memories and transported them to their childhoods. For example, "Marjan," an Iranian woman in her early 30s, told me how the taste and scent of fresh tomatoes keep her longing for her grandfather's garden. She explained:

> The taste of fresh tomatoes takes me back to my grandfather's garden. When I was a child, my grandfather had a magnificent garden; it was like a piece of paradise for me, full of apple trees, apricots, peaches, and red and green tomatoes. While playing in the garden, my sisters and cousins and I used to pick fresh tomatoes and eat them unwashed. I still can remember the delicious taste of those tomatoes. Ever since, the sharp smell and unique taste of tomatoes that I planted in my plot take me back to that time and that garden (September, 2019).

Thus, sensuously engaging with the landscape of the community garden has incited Marjan's reverie and excited her imagination, through which she has been able to revisit her childhood garden. A garden staple such as a tomato plant can actively work to simulate memories

of the past and motivate Marjan to garden in a community space in Montreal that resembles her happy place from childhood.

The gardeners' memories of their childhood gardens illustrate the concepts of reverberation and enchanting encounters, or when unexpected encounters happen and time stands still. Such encounters captivate those people's minds and keep them longing for their past home gardens and childhoods, as well as can help their longing to feel less painful or even vanish as the garden becomes a kind of comforting new home. In that way, the narratives and childhood memories of past gardens (lived images) reverberate (Bhatti et al., 2009). Through those reverberations, a quotidian landscape such as a garden turns into an enchanting place.

Relying on the notion of haptic perception, I conceive gardens as restorative sites with great potential for enchanting encounters. Bhatti et al. (2009) have characterized the garden as an enchanting landscape that triggers emotion and imagination and "where memory becomes embodied" (p. 71). Thus, people learn about and remember their worlds and surrounding environments through their bodies and senses as they move in the world. That interpretation aligns with Casey's (2000) argument that "body memory is, in turn, the natural center of any sensitive account of remembering. It is the privileged point of view from which other memorial points of view can be illuminated" (p. 148). I build upon that argument and suggest that through sensuous, embodied experiences that reverberate through daily practices in gardens, people learn about their surroundings and remember through their bodies (Bhatti et al., 2009). To be sure, Bhatti et al. (2009) have asserted that "if our memories are a form of knowledge about ourselves, then they are sourced by the past through our bodies in the form of interactions between haptic perception, the senses, tactile experiences, and movement" (pp. 71–72).

Developing that argument and drawing from my data, I suggest that memories of childhood gardens and enchanting encounters in that landscape influence and inspire people to decorate and shape their present gardens in particular ways. For example, the scent of jasmine and honeysuckles, the taste of fresh tomato, and the aroma and delightful taste of mint and basil associated with gardeners' childhood memories have inspired them to grow plants that remind them of enchanting moments from their childhoods. I suggest that adult gardeners in the community gardens seek to re-experience the enchanting encounters in their childhood gardens. I also suggest that childhood memories do not work as passive images in the mind but instead as lived images and the sources of those gardeners' current knowledge. Those memories have established human and non-human relationships and help to clarify that gardens are not only sites for childhood plans and games but where enchanting encounters take place and reverberate in people's minds. They are hybrid landscapes where daily routines teach people about their entangled relationships with non-humans.

According to Francis (1995), "The garden can be one of the most accessible and resourceful places where children can have unstructured interaction with nature and come to participate in the wonders of natural process" (p. 189). Childhood gardens are remembered as sacred sites of freedom and happiness where adults can explore, learn about, and come to understand nature through their bodily sensuous experiences. Such gardeners, in trying to re-experience enchanting encounters in gardens from their childhood, plant familiar, emotionally meaningful plants and flowers that have significant roles in the formation of their most cherished memories. Therefore, I suggest that recreating childhood gardens is a form of grieving for childhood gardens now gone and manifests gardeners' desire for rebuilding a new home in Canada and developing their emotional ties and attachment to the new country.

Conclusion

Through a discussion of gardeners' narratives and notions of haptic perception, reverberation, enchantment, affect, and enchanting landscape, I have highlighted the "prosaic pleasures" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 72) associated with community gardens, plants, and childhood gardens. I have argued that what those gardeners seek in their relationships with plants is a sense of stability and belonging and that some of them practice gardening as a means of grieving for what they have lost in the process of displacement.

This chapter has shown that gardens are sites of enchanting encounters, where people experience joyful pleasure during mundane routines when "for a moment time stands still" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 64). Gardens also offer the "re-enchantment of everyday life" (Moore, 1996). For some of my interlocutors, community gardens work as a taskscape where via embodied routines in the garden (e.g., working in harsh sun and rain, weeding, planting, watering, digging in the soil, and cleaning the garden beds) they find peace, joy, and comfort. For others, simply being in the garden, sitting on a bench, and chatting with other gardeners or even doing nothing and enjoying the scene, smells, and sounds generate a state of comfort, relaxation, and pleasure and help them to feel united with nature and their surrounding worlds as part of "a material imagination" (Bhatti et al., 2009). This chapter thus characterizes the garden as an "unforgettable house" (Bachelard, 1994, p. 15): a site for repetitive daily practices and routines that reverberates with enchanting encounters.

Community gardens constitute a homey space for some immigrants where they develop their relationships with humans and non-humans and learn about nature. They are landscapes tied up with meaning, emotions, social relationships, and memories, all of which "speaks of, and to, longing and belonging, domestication, family, work and play, love and death—in short, the range

that characterizes everyday life" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 72). It is through those enchanting landscapes that surprising encounters happen or, according to Bachelard (1971), "reverie emerges." Indeed, I follow Bachelard (1971) and Bhatti et al. (2009) to propose that it is through reverie that people recall their childhood memories of lost gardens that are sacred and valued as affective encounters in the past. Thus, I contend that, to a great extent, the immigrants whom I interviewed returned to their community gardens as a "dwelling place for memories" (Bachelard, 1971) to re-experience their enchanting encounters, take part in prosaic pleasures, and get a taste of their childhood in their adulthood.

Many of my interlocutors stated that they simply enjoy being in the garden, no matter whether they are working hard to clean up the garden beds, planting their favorite vegetables or flowers, collecting and chopping off the rotten parts of plants, digging in the soil to uproot weeds, or simply sitting and looking around the garden. Any activities in the garden help them to enjoy their surrounding worlds. At the same time, through those embodied processes, they also experience reverie, "a certain kind of space that is neither here nor there, but in-between, a mode of 'being' always in sensual emotion, a 'reverberation' in Bachelard's phenomenology" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 73).

Garden and gardening invoke remarkable memories and thus connect gardeners' present lives to the past. Drawing upon the close collaboration of five recognized senses and memory as a container and unifier of past and present moments, some gardeners vividly remembered their past gardens. The sense of soil on their hands and the smell of fresh vegetables, flowers, and a watered garden, as well as the scene of an escaping butterfly, the sounds of nature, and the tastes of fresh fruit, provoked emotions that are tied up to the gardeners' memories and remind them of their happy place and happy moments from their youth. As Bhatti et al. (2009) have argued, "Memories

of gardens relate not only to what is remembered, but the senses greatly influence how the past can be revisited; the garden mediates memories of childhood, escape and innocence, as well as recollections of family members and key events" (p. 70).

Although immigrants cannot transfer their homelands to other countries, plants as important social entities are transferrable (Archambault, 2016). On the one hand, plants can remind immigrants of the joy and pleasure of memories, social interaction, and relationships formed in gardens that they have left behind. On the other, they can conjure the sadness associated with the countries that immigrants have left behind (Giraud, 1990, p. 170). From that perspective, gardens are no longer merely docile landscapes that provide picturesque scenes. Indeed, community gardens serve as enchanting landscapes that display humans' deep emotional attachment and engagement with nature and land. Thus, community gardening centers on emotional experiences that people process and manage through those attachments.

Considering the emotions, history, and memories that gardens invoke, it is important to understand that, for some gardeners, gardening is a means to try to reproduce and remember what they knew intimately and what is now lost and gone (Berberich et al., 2013). Gardens as enchanting landscapes are popular sites for everyone; however, as "spectral" places (Waites, 2012), they are "haunted by layers of time past, present, and future" (Berberich et al., 2013, p. 319). It reminds some people of their childhood or past homes that they can no longer access and prompts them to experience pleasure, sadness, happiness, and, of course, nostalgia. By way of their trained senses, they understand that they are living socially "in multiple entangled networks of connections and interconnections" (Berberich et al., 2013, p. 320) and, in turn, that "one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other" (Butler, 2010, p. 14).

In the next chapter, I focus on place-making strategies employed by Iranian gardeners in their community gardens in Montreal to show how some immigrants construct enchanting spaces in those gardens. As explained in this chapter, due to emotional attachment to a beloved past garden, which is itself due to enchanting encounters in those gardens, the gardeners have chosen community gardens to re-create a homey space for themselves, largely in the hope of becoming re-enchanted, sustaining their ties to their homelands, and developing their emotional attachment to Canada as their new home. In what follows, I illustrate why and how community gardens play a critical role as alternative homes in some Iranian immigrants' lives as a means to showcase the crucial influence of non-humans in the process of place-making. That approach helped with taking another step forward in the chief argument of this thesis: that the complex process of place-making that occurs in a hybrid landscape such as a garden is neither human-centered nor not human-centered (Power, 2005), and both actors play active, critical roles in that process.

Chapter 2: Home is loading

Introduction

In this chapter, I address the critical role of community gardens in the process of place-making for some Iranian immigrants. I do so by concentrating on the quotidian activities that are a part of gardening practices, the social relationships that form within the community gardens, and the ways in which some Iranian immigrants reshape the appearance of urban community gardens in Montreal, Canada. A focus on these aspects reveals how a community garden, as a hybrid landscape, works as an 'alternative home' in immigrants' lives, as place-making in these gardens goes beyond changing the physical structure of the garden. In fact, these gardens provide a ground for immigrants to form new friendships and social relationships and to enhance their life satisfaction—which they do through the process of preparing food and exchanging knowledge, seeds, plants, and life stories. Through these daily routines, they build a community and an alternative "home-like" space (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 13).

This approach reveals "both the materiality and sociability of immigrant place-making" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 14) and allows me to examine the complex and multidimensional aspects of this process. I introduce three main themes as to how community gardens serve immigrants in the process of place-making; to illustrate these themes, I use garden narratives drawn from my fieldwork. These themes include:

1- the garden as a place for recreating homeland and expressing personal and cultural background;

2- the garden as a place for enhancing physical and mental health, well-being, and restoration;

3- the garden as a place for forming and developing new social relationships.

I follow the approach of Hondagneu-Sotelo (2015), who suggests considering "urban community gardens as domestic places encompassing critical home-making practices" (p. 14). This approach allows me to highlight the importance of daily practices and interactions in hybrid landscapes, such as gardens. I center my focus on immigrants' daily performances in the community gardens as a "third space that is neither the home nor the workplace" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 14). Although community gardens are neither in solely the private or the public sphere, Hondagneu-Sotelo (2015) argues that these landscapes serve immigrants "as hybrid-domestic places, as alternative homes" (p. 14). International displacement can lead people to search for a homely space where they can sustain themselves and develop a sense of community, security, and comfort. For some people, community gardens can be perceived as such a space (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017).

Additionally, I draw from the perspective of Schmelzkopf (1995), who emphasizes that community gardens are beyond the public and private spheres. He argues that "community gardens are part of the public domain and are the sites of many functions conventionally equated with the private sphere. Domestic activities, nurturing, and a sense of home are explicitly brought outside into the garden" (Schmelzkopf, 1995, p. 379). For most of my interviewees—who have a background in gardening along with significant childhood memories formed in a beloved garden—community gardens, as enchanting landscapes, symbolize a homely space and heighten the sense of comfort, security, familiarity, and community. This plays a crucial role in the processes of integration and developing emotional attachment to a new country (Schmalzbauer, 2014).

I also build my approach on the notion of home conceptualized by Boccagni (2016). Boccagni (2016) suggests that the "home is primarily a folk or vernacular notion to which a variety of meanings and emotional connotations is attached, across groups" (Boccagni, 2016, p. 3). As

Boccagni (2016) states, 'home' does not necessarily represent the general idea of dwelling or house, but "as a special kind of relationship with the place" (Boccagni, 2016, p. 4), making 'home' a fluid concept that strengthens the sense of "collective belonging" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 15). I build on this perspective to suggest that urban community gardens, as hybrid landscapes, serve as alternative homes for some immigrants who experienced depression, stress, anxiety, and isolation due to displacement and relocation. In the current context of mass international immigration, "the urban community gardens become sites of palliative sanctuary" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2014; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Ruiz, 2014) as well as "hybrid-domestic spheres" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 15).

Feminist cultural geographers like Blunt (2005) highlight the geographies of home (Massey, 2013; McDowell, 1999). Blunt emphasizes that "the home is a material and an affective space, shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories and emotions" (Blunt, 2005, p. 506). Homes are "profound centers of human existence" (Relph, 1976, p. 43), and home-making is a continuous and complex process that "may include transnational elements and imaginaries" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 15). The home is considered "as a place, a set of intimate relationships, and a central node in broader networks of relationships" (Boccagni, 2014, p. 278). Thus, the home does not hold the same meanings for different individuals from different backgrounds; it is a fluid notion, with changing nature, settings, and properties. It creates different meanings and feelings for those who seek their tranquility in different environments.

I draw from Hondagneu-Sotelo (2015), who argues that a home is "a place of belonging, one where people seek to transform the physical surroundings in ways that they find agreeable, and that will support daily utilitarian purposes of social reproduction and restoration" (p. 15). Building on this argument, I suggest that a community garden is an alternative home and can be

perceived as a 'hybrid-domestic space' where people re-form its physical appearance; form family-like relationships; and develop a sense of familiarity, security, community, belonging, and attachment (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017).

In this chapter, I illustrate the ways in which Iranian immigrants from varying socioeconomic backgrounds create a new home in urban community gardens in Montreal. They may do so partly by reconfiguring and reshaping the appearance of the community garden so that it looks like their enchanting childhood gardens. In this work, I use examples from interviews with Iranian immigrants to illustrate how, by changing the visual appearance of the garden, they form new webs of social relationships "that support sustenance and life in these places" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 16). By reviewing the literature and illustrating it with data I collected during my fieldwork in community gardens, I suggest that by cultivating familiar plants and forming new friendships, immigrants create an "alternative home" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 15) that helps them cope with the depression, anxiety, and stress they experience due to poverty, unemployment, low mastery of the host country's official language, and "racial discrimination, and economic marginalization" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 16).

In three sections, I illustrate my argument using examples taken from the interviews I conducted with Iranian immigrants. This approach allows me to explain how community gardens serve immigrants as "alternative homes" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017) that enable immigrants to sustain themselves, improve their well-being, develop a sense of belonging and attachment to the new country, and form family-like relationships. In these sections, I describe and analyze how mundane activities turn these urban community gardens into a "domestic sphere" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017). To do so, I first illustrate how community gardens help immigrants express their personal preferences and recreate their homes by reshaping their surrounding environment through

gardening style and plants preferences. Second, I engage with the concepts of health and well-being to reveal how through this process of recreating home, immigrants improve their well-being in terms of both physical and mental health. Third, I engage with the notion of "conviviality"—which Nowicka and Vertovec (2013) explain as having "long been associated with sociable, friendly and festive traits" (p. 341)—to illustrate the social relationships that form among community gardeners.

My garden, my paradise

In her study "Tracing immigrant identity through the plate and the palate", Mares (2012) focuses on links between food and identity among Latino/a immigrants living in Seattle, WA. Mares indicates that food is a vital part of culture that links immigrants to their homeland while also helping them build new homes in the United States. Particular plants and foods remind immigrants of their memories and past. In their new homes, Latino/a immigrants use urban community gardens to grow plants that are key ingredients in their dishes (Mares, 2012).

This cultural value is shared by the Iranian community gardeners in Montreal. My interviewees grew familiar plants (food) and flowers that reminded them of their homelands. These plants include parsley, green onion, coriander, fenugreek, radish, tarragon, thyme, chicory, dill, borage, many varieties of chilies, green beans, squash, zucchini, okra, tomato, chamomile, potato, eggplant, beetroot, and kale. In Iranians' plots, they grow edible herbs and vegetables such parsley, fenugreek, basil, tarragon, thyme, mint, and borage—key ingredients in cultural cuisines, traditional medicine, and herbal tea. They also plant ornamental flowers such as jasmine, roses, geraniums, gardenias, lavender, and honeysuckle in the communal area of the garden. Bengali immigrants also had the specific plants of okra, beans, chilies, coriander, dill, and zucchini—raw

material for their cultural foods. Whether for edible or ornamental reasons, all these plants were familiar reminders of the homes immigrants had left.

Community gardens especially provide a venue for immigrants to express their personal preferences and characteristics (Bhatti & Church 2004; Clayton 2007; Mazumdar & Mazumdar 2012). At the personal level, people's gardening styles—the ways in which they regulate and craft their plots, choose particular plants, and take care of their plants—can reflect their "creativity, originality" (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012, p. 259), and even personal characteristics, such as being a neat and attentive gardener or careful about sustainable development (Clayton, 2007; Gross & Lane, 2007). According to Francis (1990):

> We use our gardens to communicate to others, to show the public world how we feel about ourselves and the larger world that surrounds us. Through our gardens, we reveal to ourselves and others . . . our personality, aesthetics, environmental values . . .. (p. 206)

Clearly, gardening is a communication tool that reflects who we are and what we like, a manifestation of gardeners' personal taste, characteristics, goals, and values.

For instance, "Mahoor," one of the participants in my research, was a Bengali woman in her late 50s who had a plot full of green mint, purple basil, and green chilies. Her plot was a reflection of her personal taste in terms of her planting preference. She liked the specific color composition on display in her plot, and green chilies were her favorite plants, as she believed that *kancha lonka murgi* (chili chicken) tasted better when she used her own garden's products. The combination of purple and various shades of green was a manifestation of Mahoor's personal preferences in terms of chosen plants and favorite colors.

Another participant was "Laleh," an Iranian woman in her late 60s who planted red geranium flowers in the four corners of her plot. The way she planted those red geraniums in her plot made it obvious to everyone that this was her favorite flower, and she was proud to show it to

everyone. She also dedicated a significant area of her plot to Persian mint and fenugreek. She explained:

> I could not find fresh fenugreek (shanbalileh in Farsi) here in Montreal, and the dried fenugreek I used to buy from the Persian supermarkets … emmmm… you know…was not high quality. So I decided to plant the seeds and have it fresh (October, 2019).

Fenugreek is a fragrant vegetable that Iranians use for one their most famous stews, *ghormeh-sabzi*; without this plant, the stew does not have its unique taste. Persian mint also has a delicate flavor and an aromatic fragrance; it is used in many Persian drinks and foods and holds a special place in Iranian food culture. As can be seen, these gardeners' plots manifest their personal preferences and cultural backgrounds through gardening and plant preferences.

This expression of personal preference was also manifested in Sara's plot. For "Sara" (a northern Iranian woman in her late 50s), sour orange saplings in a small green pot reflected her personal background. In chapter 1, I explained how the germination of sour orange seeds worked as an enchanting moment for Sara. She told me that on the day of her birth, her father planted a sour orange tree to celebrate her birth; later, two other trees were planted to celebrate the births of her sisters. Thus, sour orange trees play a significant role in Sara's personal background. Consequently, these saplings are very important to Sara, as they reminded her of Iran and her family: "if these saplings survive, I can have a taste of home, a taste of the old, golden days of my childhood." By cultivating familiar plants and personalizing the visual appearance of the garden, gardeners such as Sara reflect on their personal preferences (albeit not deliberately) and cultivate a sense of 'home' where they can have good moments. Thus, the ways in which individuals "compartmentalize and carve out" their plots within the community garden reveal "their unique gardening interests and passions" (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012, p. 259).

At the social level, a plot's composition, decoration, and regulation "can facilitate social interaction" (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012, p. 259) among community gardeners while reflecting gardeners' origins, ethnicities, and cultural background (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012; Bhatti & Church, 2001; Clayton, 2007). Indeed, some of my interviewees reported how their gardening style and weeding techniques helped them develop friendships with other gardeners. For example, the clean, weedless plot of Somiya (a Bengali woman in her late 50s) prompted Sara (the Iranian woman mentioned above) to ask her about her weeding techniques. This simple encounter generated a friendship between these two women.

Similar to this story, "Reza" (an Iranian man in his early 60s) and "Sepideh" (an Iranian woman in her early 60s) also started their friendship in the "cherry" community garden as a result of Sepideh's plot's composition. Reza explained that when he started coming to the garden, he did not know that he might meet other Iranians there. He told me:

> I saw Persian mint in a plot … and beautiful jasmine and honeysuckle flowers in the communal area, and…I emm… I knew that plot belonged to… you know… to an Iranian. She [Sepideh] gave me some Persian mint seeds and two cuttings of jasmine and honeysuckle. Since then, Sepideh has become one of my dearest friends in the garden (August, 2019).

In this story, their (Reza & Sepideh) shared origins, and interest in plants helped them form a friendship. Since their gardening and plant preferences manifested their origins, their cultural background helped them integrate into the garden's community and develop a sense of familiarity and belonging. Still, these gardeners' plant preferences and gardening styles are not just communicative tools to indicate their personal identities: their preferences were for particular plants that would remind them of their homeland and could generate a feeling of being at 'home'.

The ways in which some of my interviewees reshaped their plots were a manifestation of their desire to recreate aspects of their homelands. This is confirmed by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2015),

who asserts that "the materiality of the community gardens also manifests the recreated domestic homeland" (p. 24). At the community gardens, Iranian immigrants populated the garden with meaningful and familiar plants from their homelands to recreate a part of what they left behind when they came to Canada.

As an illustration of the above concept, jasmine, honeysuckles, and gardenia were planted in the communal area of "cherry" community garden by Iranian community gardeners. These flowers were gifted to all the Iranian gardeners by Sepideh. She often mentioned how she enjoyed looking around and seeing familiar plants that reminded her of her garden back in Iran:

> I feel a sense of comfort and … assurance. You know … when I see these plants, as you know they all remind me of Iran, like the fragile stems of basils, the Persian mints, and the bountiful blossoms of honeysuckles and jasmine (September, 2019).

Persian mint is an especially celebrated plant in Iranian cultural dishes—such as *ab-dough-khiar, ash-e-reshteh (Persian noodle soup)*, mint tea, and more—but is also used as a medicinal plant for stomachaches. Thus, cultivating familiar plants that are important as raw ingredients for cultural food and that also have emotional importance is a form of expressing personal and cultural background as well as recreating one's homeland.

Some of the gardeners shared that having familiar plants to the ones in their gardens back in Iran or Bangladesh makes them feel at home. As Reza explained, "having a combination of these plants feels like we are building some of Iran in Canada." Similarly, "Hamideh" (an Iranian woman in her early 60s) told me:

> The smell of jasmine making the neighborhood fragrant is what I really like about this garden. We are a small group in this garden, but the ways in which we arranged and decorated our plots and the communal area help us feel like we are back at home (September, 2019).

Like Iranian gardeners, "Sam" (a Bengali man in his late 60s) told me he plants okra, coriander, zucchini, beans, and chilies, as these were the plants his late father planted in their home

garden back in Bangladesh. Moreover, these plants were important ingredients in his cultural foods. He explained: "growing these plants, and preparing my food with them, helps me have a taste of my mother's cooking." To these gardeners, these plants are meaningful symbols of a lost home; they inspire pleasure and evoke a sense of comfort, safety, and home from a home that is far away.

As I discussed in this section, community gardens are important and meaningful sites: "they are powerful settings for human life, transcending time, place and culture" (Francis & Hester 1990, p. 2). Migrants' gardens are not mute entities; rather, they narrate the stories of the people who cultivate them, and they play a critical role in recreating and sustaining personal and cultural identities (Wen Li et al., 2010). Some of my interviewees talked about their experiences of depression, stress, and anxiety after immigration, and they explained how gardening and being a part of a community helped them cope with their life challenges. Coming to the urban community gardens provided the opportunity to relieve their stress and anxiety, cope with their depression, and enhance their well-being, physical and mental health. I explain in greater detail in the section below.

Feeling the breeze

International immigration, increased pace of life, and urbanization in Western countries affects people's well-being and health, both physically and mentally (Arai & Pedlar, 2003). Health incorporates a "state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 1946). I employed the concepts of health and well-being to analyze how community gardening enhanced my participants' quality of life and satisfaction. Although the concept of well-being has no specific definition, I draw from Furnass (1996), who suggests that the components of well-being include: satisfactory human relationships; meaningful

occupation; and opportunities for contact with nature, for creative expression, and for making a positive contribution to human society (Kingsley et al., 2009). In the context of my thesis, and according to my interviewees, well-being involves feeling happier, healthier, more energized, more positive, and more satisfied with life. Like Trewin (2001) states:

> From birth to death, life enmeshes us within a dynamic culture consisting of the natural environment…the human-made environment…social arrangements…and human consciousness …Wellbeing [*sic*] depends on all the factors that interact within this culture and can be seen as a state of health or sufficiency in all aspects of life. (p. 6)

As stated, enchanting encounters with humans and non-humans in natural environments, such as community gardens, can alter humans' modes of being in the world and can enhance their health. Gardens are identified as places of restoration, recreation, and well-being, and it has been proven that engaging in physical activities in gardens has significant health benefits (Nieman, 2010). Gardening is a "restorative experience facilitates recovery from everyday stress, anxiety, and fatigue" (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012). Ulrich (1986) indicates that daily interaction with plants and nature reduces fear and increases affection and elation.

This section focuses on the ways in which community gardens serve immigrants by improving their well-being and dealing with their life challenges. As Francis and Hester (1990) contend, gardening is not only a leisure activity that allows one to have a good time in nature, but it can also be a therapeutic and soothing practice. For instance, involvement with gardens has been shown to "help overcome social isolation among people with disabilities through embracement" (Burls & Caan, 2005, p. 1222). Gardens are identified as affective landscapes that increase human satisfaction with life "by enhancing feelings such as subsistence, protection, affection, identity, self-expression, self-enhancement, pleasure and freedom" (Kingsley et al., 2009, p. 208; Hitchings, 2006; Lawrence, 1997; Lee, 2000). Community gardens allow immigrants "to become physically and socially active and to feel part of a community" (Kingsley et al., 2009, p. 209).

They do so by providing opportunities "for culturally diverse groups and people of different ages to come together and develop a sense of community and belonging" (Kingsley et al., 2009, p. 209).

The gardeners involved in this study acknowledged that being in nature has a significant role in enhancing their well-being. Some of my interviewees described the community gardens as an asset that improved their health and well-being. These gardens were described as an escape space where gardeners could enjoy a supportive, familiar, and safe environment and forget the difficulties of their daily lives. Community gardening allows them to become members of their community, to become connected with nature, to gain a sense of achievement by contributing to sustainable development, and to produce their own food (Kingsley et al., 2009).

My interviewees described the community garden as a peaceful environment where they could take refuge and escape from everyday life's stresses and pressures. "Marjan" (an Iranian woman in her early 30s) described the garden as a community where she could spend time with friends and enjoy the collective spirit of the garden; this, in turn, helped her to not feel isolated and alienated. Marjan stated:

> The process of planting and watching plants grow has always been fascinating for me, since… since I was a little girl. After moving to Canada, … I was drowning in depression and … could not see any positive aspects in my life. Gardening, caring for plants, and making new friends has saved me from those dark days (September, 2019).

Coming to the garden and being among people with the same interest as Marjan helped her come out of her depression and integrate into the community. Reza, mentioned above, also referred to the community garden as place that saved him from depression and enabled him to make new friends. The community garden was a 'sanctuary' where fellow gardeners could come to be with 'like-minded' friends and participate in a joyful activity they were all passionate about. Additionally, building and developing social relationships with other community members helps them to not feel isolated (Kingsley et al., 2009).

Besides its collective spirit, the community garden also helps immigrants like "Rita" (a Bengali woman in her early forties) by offering them a relaxing and soothing environment to cope with their problems. Rita explained that although she could not come to the garden regularly, she comes to the garden whenever she is overwhelmed by anxiety and stress. She shared:

> My life is very stressful. You know, with kids at home … who need my attention and my job, that's double the pressure on me. So when I have time and want to get away from stresses, I come to the garden. Gardening distracts me from thinking about my problems (September, 2019).

The community garden provides a relaxing and "de-stressing environment" (Kingsley et al., 2009, p. 211) for gardeners like Rita, where they could feel better about themselves and forget about their stress.

The community gardens generate a sense of unity among gardeners. To gardeners such as Somiya who have a role in the community, being a part of something bigger by contributing to urban agriculture motivates her to invest time in the garden. Somiya explained:

> I like it here, especially … on the weekends. A lot of people come to the garden, and we chat and work together. I really enjoy pottering around. It energizes me that … all of us come together to do something big (August, 2019).

For Somiya, getting out of the house and being out in nature with others is beneficial, because it allows her to enjoy a friendly and supportive environment. In addition, the community gardening was described by Sepideh as a beneficial activity. She explained that doing something pleasant and having access to an invigorating environment helps her forget her stresses. She explained: "the garden is an escape space for me to release my feelings, to cope with my fears, stress, and anxiety, and to enjoy my time." Sepideh described the community garden as a relaxing space where she could enjoy the fresh air and refresh her mind by engaging in outdoor activities.

Some gardeners—including Marjan, Sara, "Shabnam" (an Iranian woman in her late 50s), "Behnam" (an Iranian man in his late 50s), and Sam described community gardening as a way of

reconnecting with the earth and being in touch with nature. These gardeners acknowledged that watching a plant grow to maturity is an amazing process for them. Shabnam stated: "for me, gardening feels like meditation; watching a plant grow to maturity feels like a miracle. Nothing can disturb my peace here." To these gardeners, community gardening feels like therapy, and it is a way they can release tension and deal with sorrow, stress, and anxiety, thus improving their mental health.

Another positive health-related aspect of community gardening is how it benefits physical health. Some of my interviewees reported that community gardening improves their physical wellness: activities such as pruning, sweeping, raking, cleaning the garden, pulling weeds out of the soil, digging in the soil, and composting are all part of physical exercise. These activities allow people to use their muscles and stay active. For some people, such as Kevin (a Bengali man in his early 30s), gardening was about staying active. Kevin was not an attentive gardener, but the garden was a site where he could engage in physical activities and improve his health. "Malika" (a Bengali woman in her late 50s) explained that tasks such as composting, weeding, and planting enhance her fitness. She explained:

> I had a heart attack ten years ago, and my doctor advised me to exercise. Instead of going to a gym, I decided to come to the garden. All the physical activities and hard work here make me feel great and healthy (August, 2019).

Clearly, for some gardeners such as Malika, community gardening was not just beneficial in improving their mental health; it also enhanced their physical health and fitness.

As seen above, the community garden provides an opportunity for immigrants to improve their health and well-being as an escape space. It provides them with a relaxing and peaceful environment to enjoy a sense of community, to get connected to nature, to socialize, and to stay

physically active. Coming to community gardens helps immigrants to not feel isolated and to develop family-like relationships with like-minded people, as detailed in the section below.

A family, a community

In a multicultural context such as a community garden—where diverse groups of people with different ethnicities, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds gather—the concept of conviviality helps to illustrate "how productive living-in-difference is accomplished" (Harris, 2016, p. 501). In this section, I employ the concept of conviviality as an analytical tool to explore community gardeners' "modes of togetherness" (Nowicka & Vertovec, 2013, p. 34) and how their friendships and encounters function in the garden. Through the lens of conviviality, I portray how immigrants from different backgrounds and cultures develop and manage social relations, 'live together', and form relationships (Nowicka & Vertovec, 2013).

I draw from Harris (2016), who argues that "friendship is often theorized as an optimal kind of conviviality; a relationship that can best enable forms of hope, reciprocity and cosmopolitan openness that are urgently required in highly diverse environments" (p. 501). Boisvert (2010) argues that conviviality provides a lens through which to perceive the meanings of individuals' interrelatedness. Building on this literature, I suggest that these immigrants in community gardens are looking for a sense of community, and through daily interactions along with webs of relationships and support, they cultivate meaningful relationships that help them feel at 'home', although their interactions are not always harmonious. Chevalier (1998) asserts that gardens may also be spaces for the sharing of advice, knowledge, and values. The social interactions and friendships that form within community gardens contain "possibilities for new and spontaneous ways to engage with other" (Harris, 2016, p. 501).

Along with recreating homelands, expressing personal characteristics, and enhancing well-being within these "alternative homes", immigrants form friendships through gardening (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 15). This approach facilitates the process of home-making and adjusting to a new country (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017). Community gardens provide a space for immigrants to socialize and relate through their recreated homes. All this creates a sense of community, hope, security, and being at home to immigrants, as well as reminds them of those friends and relatives whom they left behind (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017).

Gardening helps immigrants develop their social relations through exchanges of plants, seeds, and knowledge (Wen Li et al., 2010). People from different countries gather in urban community gardens to cultivate plants familiar to them, and as they grow their plants, "they are also creating hybrid-domestic spheres, cultivating bonds of care and connection" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 17). In the gardens, they nurture a sense of belonging, security, community, and inclusion. In this section, I focus my attention on activities that are limited to the domestic sphere in Iranian culture, including growing plants; exchanging assets and knowledge; helping others with their problems; and sharing life experiences, stories, and advice.

Although these gardeners grew certain plants for personal use, they also joined a community garden for other reasons: they seek to form family-like relations by growing plants; sharing cuttings, seeds, and gardening knowledge; and helping each other with challenges they face in their daily lives and in the garden. I met Iranian immigrants at the cherry and plum gardens and Bengali immigrants at the cherry, plum, and grape gardens. Although both groups of immigrants interact with other ethnicities, their intra-ethnic relationships are more intimate and profound. At the garden, they barbeque and share foods, drinks, and stories, gradually forging familial relationships that turned the community garden into an alternative home.

For example, Sepideh recalled how she gradually and piecemeal changed the appearance of the cherry community garden by gifting plants, seeds, and cuttings to other gardeners. She was the first Iranian gardener at that garden; four other Iranian gardeners (Reza, Sara, Marjan, and Hamideh) joined after her. Sepideh described how she generated a sense of community among Iranian gardeners by sharing her experiences as an established/old immigrant with others and by exchanging gardening knowledge, plants, and fresh vegetables. She told me:

> Here we share what we have—whether plants or gardening knowledge or life experiences; this kind of interaction helps us to get to know each other. We are a small community, and as its members, we try to help each other. This collective spirit brings us peace (September, 2019).

For gardeners like Sepideh, the collective aspect of a community garden turns this place to a homely space where she can spend peaceful time. Consequently, the community garden provides a supportive environment for its members to develop their social interactions with like-minded people.

However, social interaction in the garden is not limited to exchanging seeds and plants; people gather in the garden and support each other through difficulties. I attended some of the garden events and gatherings. In these picnic-like parties, people shared their cultural foods or even just barbequed hotdogs and hamburgers. One weekend at the cherry garden, six of us sitting at a picnic table were eating a delicious *ash e reshteh (an Iranian noodle soup)*. We were talking about our daily lives when Reza told us how much he missed his late wife and his family in Iran. The feeling of missing one's homeland and loved ones was a very familiar feeling to all of us, and everyone at that table was affected by Reza's genuine emotions. We immediately started to consoling him and cheering him up. Sara and Sepideh told him they had the same feelings about their loved ones, and Hamideh and Marjan assured him that he is not alone and he can count on their help whenever he needed it.

A spirit of collective support was resonating at that table. Marjan told us, "although we only see each other in the garden, we are a community, a family, and … [we] must support each other in difficult times." The rest of the group affirmed they had the same thought about their garden community. The members of this group formed family-like relationships, which turns the garden into a satisfying and relaxing environment where they can meet with their like-minded friends and enjoy support and friendship. These relationships give them a sense of community rather than isolation, and it also helps them to integrate into their community.

The feelings of belonging to a homely space and having a family-like relationship in the community garden were shared among some of my interviewees. They reported how community gardening helped them feel united with others, and how they enjoyed being supported by other members of this community. Behnam told me how Laleh helped him find a good Farsi teacher and a good school for his children. Similarly, Sam described the community garden as a site for gathering and escaping loneliness. Community gardening helped him in an unexpected way when he was facing problems in his personal life. He explained:

> I was laid off from my job, and I was very anxious and depressed because I could not find a proper job. One day in a garden gathering, I shared my problem with my friends, and one of them helped me find a suitable job. At that time, it was a great favor and it meant a lot to me. We do not come here just for gardening: we are a community. Yes, we might not see each other outside of the garden, but it does not mean we are not united (August, 2019).

The community garden provides gardeners like Sam with a homely space where they can enjoy a supportive family-like relationship—a place where its members try to help each other to the best of their abilities, even though these relationships are physically limited to the garden.

Some people come to the garden just because they enjoy being in nature with others and because being a part of a collective community is important to them. Immigration instills a sense of isolation and otherness in some people—like "Laleh" and "Behnam," who shared that they like

community gardening because they want to be a part of a community. Behnam explained he likes to come to the garden every day, as it is an intimate place where he can see his friends and engage in small talk with them. He explained: "in the garden … I do not feel like I am a stranger in this land: we are all equal and similar." Echoing his views, Laleh said she enjoys learning about other cultures and wants to be among people who care for plants and nature. She informed me: "I felt lonely and isolated from society. I needed more connection with people who were like me, you know, displaced. So I came to … this community garden, and it was a good thing for me." The community garden helps Laleh feel valued for her activities and satisfies her need to be connected to like-minded people.

Nevertheless, gardening is not all about having a sense of community; there are moments of disappointment as well. Before going into the field and starting my fieldwork, I had an idealized and romantic imagination of the relationships between community gardeners: I imagined a peaceful space without any interpersonal conflicts. But like any other homely space, community gardens are not exempt from conflicts. Scholars have shown that gathering in community gardens promotes developing social relationships among people from different backgrounds who would not form such relationships in other settings and situations (Baker, 2012; Draper & Freedman 2010; Mok et al., 2014). However, I also observed moments of conflicts, especially between immigrants who belonged to different ethnicities (Iranians, Bengalis, Indians and Greeks), socioeconomic strata, and/or different political backgrounds. This was seen in the case of garden board members—such as "Françoise" (whom I introduced in the Introduction), who intimidated non-Greek gardeners by her power and position in the garden. I also heard some negative comments about other ethnicities and observed unfriendly attitudes among these groups.

Additionally, I observed conflicts between Iranians who were exiled from Iran and Iranians who were economic immigrants with no stated political background. For example, the relationship network among three Iranian immigrants in the plum community garden demonstrated that not all relationships in the garden were harmonious or conflict-free. “Shabnam” (as a political activist she fled Iran after the Islamic revolution) was an ex-political activist who did not develop any form of friendship with Behnam and Laleh. Shabnam could not trust these gardeners, as they were not politically active in Iran. Although Behnam and Laleh had a friendly relationship with each other, they were not interested in closely interacting with Shabnam, as they were worried this relationship might cause trouble for them during their trips to Iran, given that Shabnam is an exiled political activist against Iran’s Islamic regime and they are not active in any anti-regime groups. (It should be noted that any interactions with anti-regime activists may be considered as an activity against the Islamic regime in Iran and can lead to severe consequences.) Although they respected each other, the lack of trust did not let them develop any intimacy, and both sides preferred to keep distant from each other.

In general, I focus less on this aspect of social interactions not to minimize any inter-community conflicts and problems, but because some of my interviewees were not willing to reflect on these conflicts. In sum, the friendships and supportive, family-like relationships in the garden help these immigrants integrate into society, to develop their ties to Canada. Moreover, through friendly interactions with like-minded friends, they sustain their bonds to their lost homes. The gardening advice; the medicinal and nutritional knowledge; the care for each other’s health; and the sharing of plants, seeds, and food are the social aspects of the community garden that help these immigrants develop a sense of community. Socializing with other members of the

community garden helps them enhance their mental health and reduce their depression, stress, and anxiety.

Conclusion

Immigrants from different countries come together in the urban community gardens in Montreal and grow their culturally-important plants. While cultivating plants from their homelands, they create alternative homes, form new webs of connection, and improve their well-being. In the garden, they experience a sense of "belonging, inclusion, and a re-created homeland and feel welcomed on a small patch of land" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p. 17). Cultivating familiar plants helps them to stretch a bridge between their present and their past, to find new friends, and to improve their health.

I suggest that gardening as a therapeutic practice provides people "a way to control something in the midst of chaos, they represented home and hope" (Helphand, 2006, p. 23). As in the case of some of my participants, community gardens are used to reduce depression, anxiety, and stress. I argue that the feeling of belonging to a community helps these immigrants feel at home and become integrated into the community. The garden is a place where they can act and behave in a different way and feel liberated, without being worried about negative judgements or being seen and treated as a stranger from elsewhere.

In this chapter, I discussed how community gardens, as 'home-like' places, offer a relaxing environment where people can improve their well-being and health. Belonging to a community (rather than being in a state of isolation and loneliness), interacting with like-minded people, and developing relationships with compatriots and other immigrants helps these gardeners in the process of place-making within the community garden. I suggest that the positive, supportive environment of the garden works as an escape space where these immigrants can reduce their stress

and anxiety, forget their daily-life problems, and relax. I explained how being in the community garden helps these immigrants express their personal and cultural backgrounds and how they improve their health by participating in a positive environment.

These alternative homes were described as a source of relaxation and meditation; this description confirms Utrich's argument (1986) that direct encounter with nature and plants positively affects individuals' health and increases their happiness and exhilaration. By contributing to urban agriculture and sustainable development, and by producing their own food, these immigrants have a sense of achievement and of being a part of something bigger than themselves. All positive aspects of community gardening help them develop a sense of connection and emotional attachment to Canada and enables them to create a homely space.

Social interaction and family-like relationships motivate these gardeners to leave their house and join an outdoor activity. It helps them build stronger connections with other gardeners in their neighborhood, and they become integrated into the garden's social realm. As Glover (2003) suggests, community gardening is not just about gardening: it is also about developing a sense of community and attachment. In these gardens, people feel united with the earth and nature, which increases their satisfaction; reduces their depression, stress, and anxiety; and improves their health and well-being.

Although there are moments of disagreement and conflict between the members of the community, these conflicts do not reduce community gardeners' satisfaction of being a part of the community. I conclude that urban community gardens help immigrants build and develop their social relationships as well as build a bridge connecting their past, present, and future. Cultivating plants and social interactions motivate them to leave their homes and come to the garden, as they enjoy the supportive, friendly, and vibrant environment of the garden.

Through the narration and arguments in this chapter, I built a key component of the main argument of this thesis. As mentioned before, the main argument of this thesis is that community gardens are hybrid landscapes that are neither human-centered nor non-human-centered (Power, 2005) and are potential critical sites for place-making in the lives of some Iranian immigrants. In this chapter, I focused on gardeners' roles in the process of place-making (constructing the garden). Plants in this chapter were presented as the catalysts by which my interviewees staged their relationships with other gardeners and formed family-like relationships. The role of plants was also emphasized through the process of reshaping the physical structure of the garden, reflecting personal preferences and cultural background. I also showed how plants and gardening enhance immigrants' state of health and well-being.

In the next chapter, I take another step in the main argument of the thesis by showing how non-humans are active actors that play crucial roles in the process of place-making. I do so by focusing on the challenges, competition, and negotiation between humans and non-humans. This approach reveals that place-making in the garden is neither human-centered nor non-human-centered and that both types of actors play critical roles in this process. This approach helps me dismantle the nature-culture dualism, showing that a garden is not a human playground and that the roles of non-humans must be recognized and acknowledged in its construction.

Chapter 3: Who is the boss here?

Prologue

Once upon a time, in the far and distant land of Persia, there lived an old, wise, and very kind man. He had a fabulous garden that housed a variety of precious flowers, trees, birds, animals, bees, and worms from all over the world. The old, wise, and kind man lived alone in his fabulous garden. He had no one to talk to. One day while walking in his garden, he found a wounded wishing bird. The old, wise, and kind man fed the wounded bird with the magical fruits of his trees and healed her wounds with the magical petals of his flowers. The wishing bird knew that the old gardener had just one wish: he wanted some friends. So, when the day came for the wishing bird to leave the garden, she gave the gardener a magical power: the power of speaking to other inhabitants of that fabulous garden. The old, wise, and very kind man could talk to flowers, birds, animals, bees, and worms; he could talk to the wind, rain, sun, soil, and water. He was no longer alone. The old, wise, and kind man with his precious flowers, trees, birds, animals, bees, and worms lived in that fabulous garden happily ever after. (Based on Marjan's interview and the narration of his late grandfather).

Introduction

Bending on my knees, I tried to pull a clump of dandelion out of the ground. I did not have garden gloves, and my fingers were injured. In the end, I could not separate the weed's roots from the soil. Impatient and frustrated, I showed the unsuccessful result of my attempt to "Somiya" and asked, "What is the point of weeding when weeds grow again?" Somiya laughed and explained that it is gardening, not just a leisure activity; it is all about continuous hard work, and we are rewarded with a clean patch. Somiya's words resonated in my mind: "We are here to learn in the garden, not just about gardening, but to learn from our failures." Somiya sat next to me and showed

me how to lift the plant's clump out of the soil and how to clean the soil from any remaining roots. I followed her instructions again and again until I mastered the process. I became a professional weed remover. I won the competition against the dandelion.

Gardening for some people is a therapeutic practice. It is a magical distraction that separates them from boring daily life and all its challenges. To these gardeners, plants are as important as their kin. They see the plants in a different way than someone who knows nothing about gardening. They know the plants better than many people. The garden is a scene where they can create change using their knowledge. It is a place where humans are united with non-humans. This chapter narrates the moments of this unification within the garden, which is not always harmonious. It adds to the analysis I put forth in the preceding chapter, where I argued that some immigrants utilize gardening practice as a place-making strategy and that through rebuilding a new home within a community garden, these gardeners try to overcome some of the challenges displacement may bring about (such as separation from friends, family, and familiar geography, depression and anxiety, loneliness and isolation).

Specifically, in the present chapter "I address the intersection of human-non-human" (Neves, 2009, p. 145) by focusing on daily encounters between gardeners and plants in the context of three urban community gardens in Montreal, Canada. In doing so, I engage with the posthumanist literature on multispecies ethnography (see Hartigan, 2017; Hartigan, 2015; Hale et al., 2011; Degnen, 2009; Neves, 2009; Bhatti et al., 2009; Power, 2005; Hitchings, 2003) and empirical data from my fieldwork, which presents the gardeners' perspective and conceptualization of plants' position in the garden. This helps to highlight the active presence and crucial roles of plants in the process of home-making within the garden.

Multispecies ethnography, as an informative method, brings to light the complexity of human and non-human interactions. It examines the entangled paths "in which humans and non-humans constitute each other through complex cultures, economies, and politics" (Lloro-Bidart, 2018, p. 255), and it produces “ethnographic research and writing that is attuned to life’s emergence within a shifting assemblage” of active actors (Ogden et al., 2013, p. 6). The epistemology of multispecies ethnography may affect the ways in which researchers conduct their research and may also retrain and reform their knowledge and, moreover, the ways in which they perceive the world and its inhabitants. A multispecies approach “aims to decenter the human through a variety of methodological moves such as capturing non-human action”; it reevaluates the active roles of non-humans "in what has historically been considered social (i.e., human) life" (Lloro-Bidart, 2018, p. 255).

Hence, this chapter focuses on community gardens by building on the contention that "the gardens’ fundamental commonality is that they are imagined, designed, and experienced as multispecies domains" (Hartigan, 2015, p. 483). Furthermore, gardens are recognized as educational sites (Neves, 2009; Hartigan, 2017) in which people are attracted "into both care of the species and species thinking" (Hartigan, 2017, p. 146). In the present chapter, I rely on this perspective to trace the footprints of non-humans in the process of gardening (place-making).

Following a multispecies approach, I try to highlight the active presence of humans and non-humans in the garden by focusing on interactions and entanglements between these heterogeneous actors. In doing so, I focus on gardening practices in repetitive daily rhythms whereby humans learn about their surroundings and actively engage with other than human actors (Power, 2005; Neves, 2009; Bhatti et al., 2009; Hale et al., 2011; Hartigan, 2015; Hartigan, 2017). In turn, the chapter also highlights the presence of non-humans in the gardens by focusing on

engagements, challenges, and competitions between human and non-human actors (Power, 2005). By competition I mean the less harmonious relationships humans have with unwanted plants (namely, weeds) in their gardens, as weeds in the gardens "challenge the ideal of domestication" (Power, 2005, p. 48) and can undo gardeners' hard work as well hinder the process of place-making.

The community garden as a learning site provides a ground for gardeners to learn about non-human, hence it is a promising context in which to investigate human-nature relations (Power, 2005; Bhatti, 1999). As Hale et al. (2011) argue, "community gardeners describe a number of aesthetic values and experiences in the garden that impact their own, and potentially the broader community's ability to learn about 'natural' processes" (Hale et al., 2011, p. 1856). I examine how gardeners and the process of place-making are affected and altered by the active presence of plants.

I argue, moreover, that plants have active positions in the process of place-making whether they make it easier or, on the contrary, interfere with it. Following Power (2005), I engage with actor-network theory (ANT) as the theoretical framework of this chapter which "highlights the inherent hybridity of garden spaces" (Power, 2005, p. 39). My goal is to show the community garden as a complex and hybrid context whereby I unveil the garden as a result of dialogues between human and non-human actors. As Power (2005) argues, the garden is a hybrid landscape as "neither human nor non-human" is central to its construction (Power, 2005, p. 51), and I show this hybridity "by drawing attention to the moments of collaboration, negotiation, challenge, and competition that make gardening a dynamic and lively relation" (Power, 2005, p. 40).

In the first section of the chapter, I review the academic literature on environmental anthropology surrounding the garden, showing the potential of the garden as a learning site that deconstructs a nature-culture duality. In the second section, following Power (2005), I introduce

ANT as the analytical framework of this chapter. In the last section, I first illustrate how the garden was experienced by some gardeners as a human achievement, and later I examine the gardeners' perception of non-humans' active position in the garden to depict how non-humans actively complicate the process of place-making and shaping the garden.

Pedagogical arena within an ephemeral nature

The ephemerality of nature can provide a learning opportunity for gardeners, as gardeners such as "Sepideh" gradually during the years of gardening learned how to deal with their failures and develop their successes. As Sepideh explained:

> Immigration is not easy. I came to a new land where even the seasons are different than what I knew before. I had to learn everything again, even gardening. I had to learn how to do weeding, planting, harvesting, trimming, as things are new and different in this land, and everything changes very fast (September, 2019).

Hence, gardeners such as Sepideh, through their activities in the garden, learn how to be attentive to changes and details; they are well aware that in nature nothing is predictable. Recognizing the ways in which the ephemerality of nature changes gardeners' plans also helps to highlight the active position of non-humans in dismantling nature-culture dualism as it shows that nature is not "a set of passive objects to be used and worked on by people" (Macnaghten & Urry, 1995, p. 206). As Sepideh explained, in an ephemeral context such as the garden, gardeners must learn to deal with non-human actors as all interactions and negotiations happen within an ephemeral landscape.

As Neves (2009) states, "In ephemeral contexts, there are no interactions among fixed forms but rather complex relationships among dynamic systems" (Neves, 2009, p. 146). As nature changes within the frame of time and space (geography), gardeners (immigrant gardeners in the scope of this project) face new challenges. These challenges are experienced because most

immigrants come from different geographies with different weather conditions in comparison to Canada and because of the ephemeral and changing nature of gardens. Within a constantly changing environment, there are continuous negotiations between gardeners and non-humans. Through these negotiations and interactions, gardeners learn to cope with instability which, in turn, helps them to bring their desired garden into existence (Neves, 2009). This experience was shared between most of the gardeners I interviewed as many of them asserted that it is impossible to control, manage, or even anticipate the weather.

Having experienced gardening in their home country (Iran and Bangladesh), living in a country like Canada with long and harsh winters and a short growing season has taught these immigrants that gardens are not mute and still landscapes (objects). “Sara” explained that winter may occur in the middle of summer, so gardeners learn to cope with unpredictable conditions by choosing plants that are resistant to cold (such as broccoli, cabbage, radish, lettuce, etc.). Sara stated:

> There is no place like a garden where … you can see how things change fast and how life goes on quickly. Only in the middle of a garden can one see the true power of nature. You can look around and see things are different than yesterday, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow (August, 2019).

Ephemerality, along with a short cultivating and growing season, teach gardeners like Sara to become more attentive and connected with their environment in a more careful manner. This was manifested through the community garden as most gardeners have chosen appropriate plants for unpredictable weather.

Not everyone recognizes the hybrid context of the garden and the essence of complex and interwoven relationships between gardeners and other inhabitants of the garden. The ephemerality and changing nature of the garden is obvious for some gardeners who have close interactions with other actors in the garden, as what these gardeners experience (in a continuously changing

landscape) is that non-humans are beyond mere objects waiting to be shaped and controlled by humans. Through this ephemerality, the gardeners understand that non-humans are not docile objects but are actors that can change gardeners' plans. The non-humans actively alter the fixed expectations and perceptions of the individuals who interact with them, and through this constant negotiation and shifting, humans recognize the active position of non-humans. I will expand on this argument in the final section of this chapter when I develop my argument by focusing on gardeners' experiences of weeding.

As mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, the garden is a manifestation of an ephemeral and dynamic context in which non-humans actively alter the garden's settings. As I will describe, there are unexpected and unpredictable events within the garden that imply its dynamic nature. The first day I was present in "grape" community garden, I found a notice on the garden's board that notified gardeners about damages caused by marmots and reassured them that the garden's board was up to solving the problem. When I talked to gardeners to learn how they felt about this, "Malika" told me that these groundhogs caused damage in some of the plots, including her own.

She explained that most of the gardeners take care of their plots and try to keep them in a good and healthy state, but there are predictable and unpredictable problems they have to deal with such as snails, weeds, birds, and other animals. Gardeners learn by experience how to solve these problems and how to cope with them, as ephemerality has taught them how to interact with non-humans. For example, in the case of groundhogs, gardeners learned they must use chicken wire mesh to cover their plots and protect their vegetables against uninvited guests. This simple event indicates how non-humans can change gardeners' plans and "disrupt" the process of place-making.

In the ephemeral context of the garden, the "gardener learns which forms of interactions with plants [non-humans] allow them to bring a particular garden into existence" (Neves, 2009, p.

146). Gardens are sites of learning, and gardening as a pedagogical activity helps humans to recognize the crucial role of active non-humans. Gardening "may even promote the type of environmental perception that entails recognition of degrees of shared ontology between humans and all the other biological entities that inhabit gardens" (Neves, 2009, p. 146; Bateson, 1979). As an illustrating point, “Laleh” told me about her failed efforts in having her favorite tree:

> I several times tried to plant a pomegranate tree (derakht e anara in Farsi) here. You know, pomegranate (anar in Farsi) has a special meaning for me. Just think about all the poems which have been written to describe the beauty of its crimson rubies. Here we do not have a long fall, and winter comes on very promptly and suddenly. I spent a long time trying to find a way to deal with this, but I could not. I guess in this weather it is difficult to have a pomegranate tree (October, 2019).

Gardeners like Laleh learned that gardening is all about experimenting and trying new techniques that may or may not lead to the desired garden. She learned that gardening is not all about her own plans and that natural factors can change her plans as nature is not easily controlled or manipulated by humans. Experiences such as this prove that the garden is not a human-centered arena, and non-humans actively play their roles in the process of building a garden.

Drawing on Neves’s proposition, I argue that cultivating, weeding, feeding, cutting, watering, potting, composting, and any other gardening practices in repetitive daily rhythms may lead gardeners to acquiring "sets of mental and practical skills that promote the aesthetic appreciation of nature," and through this "aesthetic appreciation of nature," the fixed ontology that separates human and nature changes to reveal a deeper epistemology that is beyond human-centered epistemologies (Neves, 2009, p. 146). Through responding to environmental changes, the ways in which people interact with nature and non-humans evolve. This acquired ecological learning helps gardeners recognize the critical roles of non-humans in their daily lives (Hale et al., 2011). For some individuals, gardening practices constitute enchanting and transformative encounters "whereby human-selves come to appreciate the extent to which the nature of being

human is at once similar and different from being a plant, a bee, a tree, a flower or a bird for example" (Neves, 2009, p. 146).

For some gardeners, gardening, touching the soil, exchanging plants and seeds, and breathing earthy scents are, in sum, a way of unification with nature. “Reza” explained that since his childhood when he planted his first seed, the sense of getting dirt on his hands and growing a plant has fascinated him. He told me that when he is doing gardening it feels like he is uniting “with the earth and mother nature.” Reza believed that gardening, agriculture, and all other forms of interaction with nature are ways in which humans are able to repay their debts to the earth. This idea was shared by other gardeners. For example, “Marjan” believed that the garden does not belong just to gardeners and that birds, bees, insects, slugs, etc. must receive their share of the garden. She explained, “When I am collecting vegetables, I always leave something for birds and slugs because nature was their home first, and we should recognize that." Gardening provides an opportunity for Marjan to appreciate the presence of non-humans in the garden. Also, it helps her perceive the entanglement in human to non-human relationships and interactions.

In the presence of “an aesthetic process of ecological learning”, human and non-human actors form and develop entangled and complex relationships whereby individuals "recognize their ecological embeddedness" (Neves, 2009, p. 146). In this process, one's epistemology regarding the notion of self changes into a dynamic and "holistic concept of the self" that forms in relation to the surrounding environments and other actors that inhabit these environments (Neves, 2009, p. 147).

The process of learning within the garden was manifested especially through the task of composting. One day at the end of summer, I helped Sara collect decayed leaves, tomatoes, potatoes, and other decayed plants. Sara said, "These are the best food for plants. Rotten leaves and roots will be used again to nurture the soil and prepare the ground for next year.” She said that

plants extract nutrients from the soil and deposit them in the roots, hence, when the gardeners use this compost the following year, they repay their loan to the soil. She explained the process of composting and expressed how it makes her happy to nurture and fertilize the soil with rotten fruit and leaves. She proudly talked about how it is rewarding for her to reduce the waste. This was commonly reported by other gardeners: composting and getting back to the earth helped them see the value of devalued and unwanted parts of plants. Related to this, Reza said that "it was in the garden that I learned everything goes back to the earth. Everything here is going to be soil, rotten leaves, fruits, roots, everything." To these gardeners, gardening is not a simple act of putting a seed under the soil; it is a continuous learning process in which they learn about composting, medicinal and edible plants and their applications, as well as how to control weeds, pests, and plant diseases.

Human beings, through changing and reshaping the existing materiality (such as a garden) in fact expose themselves to being affected. As Ahmed puts it, "To be affected by something is to evaluate that thing" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 311). Cultivation, caring, shaping, and reforming our surroundings while also paying close attention to all entities and active actors around us are modes of learning, evaluation, and affection. As Ahmed asserts, "To give value to things is to shape what is near us" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 311). Berberich et al. (2013) suggest that giving value and attention to our surroundings "acts to alter perceptions, raise questions, and create doubt," and they urge us to see and sense the world and the rhythms of everyday life and quotidian activities from a new perspective (Berberich et al., 2013, p. 317). As Jacques Ranciere (2009) claims, such an approach can be considered pedagogical as it forges a "new education of the senses" (p. 6). As a pedagogy, paying attention to "ordinary affects" (Stewart, 2007) urges us to train our senses to perceive and interpret the ordinary and banal aspects of everyday life with deeper attentiveness. It makes our

surroundings more accessible and helps us to be engaged with other than humans while recognizing their active position (Berberich et al., 2013, p. 317). As Stewart (2007) puts it:

> Ordinary affects are the varied, surging capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies, and emergences. They are things that happen. They happen in impulses, sensations, expectations, daydreams, encounters, and habits of relating, in strategies and their failures, in forms of persuasion, contagion, and compulsion, in modes of attention, attachment, and agency, and in publics and social worlds of all kinds that catch people up in something that feels like something. (pp. 1–2)

Bateson and Bateson (1988) argue that human beings "learn how to learn." In the ephemeral context of gardens, human beings learn how to be responsive to the constant changes that occur in their dwelling environment and in their complex relationships with other species; they learn how to perceive their surroundings in a different way, as “gardens spark creative receptivity” (Cooper, 2003; Neves, 2009, p. 149). In fact, what turns a garden into a significant and affective landscape is "creative receptivity" (Cooper, 2003) through the aesthetic of ecological learning that creates "sensuous embodied experiences" (Bhatti et al., 2009), as aesthetic appreciation co-originates from "mutual expression” (Cooper, 2003, p. 111) between humans and non-humans to alter and co-construct one another and their shared environments (Neves, 2009). This process of co-construction emerges from the fact that "the garden is one of the most ephemeral of human creations [, s]ubject to everyday vagary of the weather, to changes in fashion and changes of ownership" (Mosser & Teyssot, 1991, p. 11; Neves, 2009, p. 149).

The garden as an ephemeral setting (constant change occurs within it) provides a setting for humans to engage with non-humans and learn how to respond to natural changes. For instance, as Sara explained above, unpredictable weather forced gardeners to cope with the continuous changes they experience in nature, and they do so by choosing plants that are resistant to cold and constantly changing weather. Through these responsive engagements, people become involved

with their surroundings, which in turn promotes their understanding of other inhabitants of gardens, in this case plants (Neves, 2009, p. 149). In the next section, I introduce ANT as a medium that may help in understanding the hybrid and complex nature of gardens. As Power (2005) argues:

> Understanding human worlds as collective achievements that rely on the enrolment of diverse human and non-human entities, ANT facilitates a re-scripting of gardens as hybrid spaces whose being occurs through the presence and interactions of heterogeneous actors. (p. 42)

Active actors in the garden

In the preceding section, I contextualized the theoretical discussion around the ephemeral nature of gardens and showed how the ephemerality of gardens leads gardeners to perceive and understand the more-than-human world. I presented groundwork on how the garden provides a pedagogical platform and how through aesthetic appreciation gardeners learn "about nature and how to face ecological dilemmas, ambiguities, and opportunities" (Bhatti & Church, 2001, pp. 370–374; Neves, 2009, p. 150). Hence, the garden is not a passive entity; it is a hybrid landscape full of transformative experiences whereby humans learn about their unity with non-humans "with whom they engage and interact" (Neves, 2009, p. 150). As Neves (2009) asserts, “Thus, the very conceptualization of self is transformed into a gestalt where self-connected-to-surrounding is the basic unit of perception and action” (Neves 2009, p. 150). Following Gregory Bateson, Neves calls this holistic form of awareness “ecological learning” (Neves, 2009, p. 150).

Following Hitchings (2003) and Power (2005), this chapter relies on ANT as a theoretical framework to dismantle nature-culture dualism and highlight the active positions of non-humans in the garden. As Power (2005) argues, “ANT provides a framework that assists in the disruption of dualistic perspectives through the assertion that knowledge and identity are relational achievements” (p. 42). Building on Power’s (2005) proposition, I suggest that ANT sheds light on the dynamics of gardening by drawing attention to the entangled relations between humans and

non-humans. ANT illuminates the networks of actors in the garden and calls for attention to be paid to the challenges, competitions, and collaborations between these actors in reordering their shared habitations (Power, 2005).

As Power (2005) argues, "ANT's strength is founded in its recognition that categories, such as agency, identity, power, and difference, are relational achievements that are 'spun' between sets of heterogeneous actors" (Power, 2005, p. 42). This approach recognizes the active position and performance of all non-humans which were "previously relegated to a passive nature" (Power, 2005, p. 42). I follow Power and other scholars' arguments and suggest that ANT helps to accredit the performance and active positions of non-humans through the process of place-making within the garden (Power, 2005).

As Latour (1991) contends, through human and non-human (plants) interactions and connections, a hybrid network forms that is beyond just human or non-human and is constituted of both sides "at the same time" (Neves, 2009, p. 149). In this hybrid network, "the actions of either side have effects on the other side" (Neves, 2009, p. 149). This perspective promotes our understanding of "the mutual causality that connects humans and non-human beings" (Neves, 2005; Neves, 2009, p. 149). At first glimpse, gardens could be perceived as the outcome of humans' manipulation and control over nature, and non-humans could be viewed as the raw material that humans alter and shape in their desired ways. How gardeners choose specific plants, what techniques they use to place these plants in the garden, and their methods of decorating the gardens to be set in a particular way may intensify this unsophisticated perception. However, a deeper engagement with the dynamic context of the garden makes it clear that other entities have their own ways to "interrupt or ease" the process of gardening.

The actor-network theory (Latour, 1991) makes it clear that in a hybrid network such as a garden where all actors (inhabitants) dynamically interact, alter, and transform one another, what matters is that they are all following myriad paths to cope with their needs. All actors have their own interests and desires, and through the complexity of daily encounters, both sides gain their interests. However, it must be acknowledged that some participants in this relationship have more power than others. For example, humans decide what to plant, where to plant, and how to maintain their gardens, and gardeners have the power to pluck plants, and in so doing end their lives.

Following Emma Power (2005), I rely on the concept of "enrolment" to ground my analysis of the entangled relations in the garden. Quoting Hitchings, Power reports that her focus on enrolment "describes a process through which actors attempt to enlist the interest or action of another so that their own desired performance can take place" (Hitchings, 2003, p. 107; Power, 2005, p. 41, Neves, 2009). When gardeners employ particular techniques, practices, or means (for example, pruning their trees) to decorate and reshape their gardens in their desired way, the successful outcome of this close collaboration between human and non-human "allow[s] the gardener to take credit for the" (Power, 2005, p. 42) "combined actions of all enrolled entities" (Murdoch, 1997, p. 331).

As Hitchings (2003) argues, it is not always the gardener's desire and intention that determines the construction and reforming of the garden, as an active actor in the hybrid network of the garden can play a central part by "enrolling the interest and action of the human gardener through the promise of a low-maintenance garden environment or by appealing to the gardener's aesthetic sensibilities" (Power, 2005, p. 42). However, the notion of enrolment reveals that relationships and enrolments between these active actors are not always harmonious, as heterogeneous actors actively negotiate and compete to meet their own needs (Power, 2005).

Following Power (2005), in this chapter I argue that human to non-human relationships sometimes have a less than harmonious nature, which contradicts Hitchings' emphasis on harmonious relationships between gardeners and plants as he argues that through the process of "working together," humans and non-humans create and build garden spaces (Hitchings, 2003, p. 103; Power, 2005, p. 42). Building on Neves (2009) and Power (2005), I argue that although the garden is a co-constructed context, it is not the result of harmonious collaborations between humans and non-humans. Rather, I contend that it comes into existence as the result of constant and continuing negotiations, challenges, conflicts, and interaction between heterogonous actors.

ANT as a framework for this chapter helps to move beyond Hitchings' description of harmonious relationships within the garden and promotes the perception of its dynamic and challenging nature. It also highlights the unpredictable outcomes of interaction and negotiations between gardeners and plants (Power, 2005, p. 43). In the case of gardening, gardeners and plants are dynamically "enrolled" in the complex and ephemeral nature of the garden. This enrolment leads to unpredictable outcomes that are not always in line with humans' interests (Power, 2005, p. 41). Regardless of humans' intentions and desires, plants attract humans to respond to their needs, and gardeners are always in the process of learning about the other actors in this hybrid network.

As Myers (2017) states:

> Plants are, like their roots, entangling, nourishing, aromatic, sensitive, and sentient, plants entice entire ecologies of other creatures to participate in their care and their propagation: they have the know-how to entrain others in service of their rhythms, their wiles, and desires. (Myers, 2017, p. 297; Hustak & Myers, 2012)

Following Myers (2017), I suggest that human beings, by employing various methods, technologies, and techniques, "might be the best equipped of all other creatures" to serve plants (p. 297). In what follows, I show the dynamic and non-harmonious nature of the garden in the effects of collaboration, negotiations, competitions, and challenges between heterogeneous actors.

Following Power (2005), I show that the garden is constructed through moments of working together and working against one another "to the benefit of neither" (p. 44). I show how the garden can be understood as a docile landscape resulting from humans' manipulation and control also, as a hybrid landscape.

At first glimpse, gardens may seem to be inert landscapes constructed around human culture, knowledge, and desires. The way gardeners choose and site specific plants, prepare the soil, and try to maintain their patch may demonstrate an effort to control and manipulate nature toward human desires and plans (Power, 2005). Using my data, I illustrate how human-plant relations may capture this perspective, which reflects the physicality of laboring in the garden. This labor is based around "tasks in the form of work requiring physical technical/human labour, and (re)shaping an existing materiality" (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 62). The expressions from gardeners cited below describe plants as raw materials that need to be kept and controlled and gardening tasks as means to help gardeners set and follow plans for their patch.

Some gardeners look for structure and specific order in their patch. This is a way for them to rule over nature and exert their desires and plans on plants. "Hamideh" described gardening practices as a way to keep her garden neat and clean, free from any intruders. She said that "digging the soil, planting, pruning, watering, potting, mowing, fertilizing, and harvesting are necessary, and you have to do them all if you want to keep your garden in a good shape." Somiya, a gardener I spent many afternoons with helping her weed, described weeding as a way she could exert her power and desires over plants. She said, "There is something satisfying in pulling out weeds, when you look back and see the bed is tidy and covered by your favorite vegetables, it feels my plans are settled." She showed me how the weeding must be done: "Chop and lift clumps of the weeds; don't leave any roots in the soil, otherwise you have to redo it again and again." The skills and

techniques these gardeners employ to have their plot the way they want it constitute attempts to impose their plans and ideas on the garden. I suggest that these gardening practices, skills, and knowledge may create a context for gardeners to take all the credit for the final appearance of the garden and exclude the roles of plants in the garden network.

Anderson (1997) suggests that the process of domesticating nature establishes a sense of "ownership and control" (Power, 2005, p. 145) in gardeners and puts them in the center of the garden. In this process, plants do not have the chance to speak for themselves, which makes it possible to ignore their position in the garden. In this perspective, plants emerge as mere objects that represent "the ideas, cultures and concerns" (Power, 2005, p. 145) of the powerful gardeners. In this sense, gardening is perceived not as a dialogue between heterogeneous actors, but as a "monologue" produced by the gardeners (Power, 2005, p. 145).

However, this perspective is not shared by all gardeners. For some, gardening is understood as a complex and dynamic process, not as a process of taking control over a docile landscape (Power, 2005). In this sense, they try to learn about plants and provide their specific needs. As Degnen (2009) asserts, "responses to the changing seasons, weather conditions, local soil characteristics, processes of germination, and troublesome pests combine to create a body of knowledge with which gardeners engage with the plants in their gardens" (Degnen, 2009, p. 156). Following Degnen (2009) and Hale et al. (2011), I suggest that through gardening practices people get in touch with nature and plural worlds. Hence, through these interactions and by observing day-to-day changes, people engage with plants and allow "their future actions to be guided by their observations" (Power, 2005, p. 46).

In other words, gardeners learn to cope with continuous changes in the garden. As Power argues, "Plants can be understood as structuring, to some extent, both the actions of the gardener

and the context of their successors" (Power, 2005, p. 46). In this perspective, plants can be perceived as active actors in the hybrid context of the garden, thus dismantling human-centered epistemologies. In what follows, I demonstrate how gardens can be understood as dynamic and hybrid landscapes emerging from complicated relations between human and non-human actors. I develop this point of view by focusing on moments in which plants appear to challenge the plans of gardeners.

As I have shown above, gardening was represented as a reflection of human culture and the garden as a human playground. This perspective is not shared among all gardeners, and through everyday interactions with plants and learning about nature and plants' needs, some gardeners understand the crucial roles of plants in the process of gardening (Power, 2005; Degnen, 2009). Further building on Power (2005), the present section develops this perspective by focusing on the active position of plants in the process of co-constructing the garden with gardeners. I argue that some plants attract gardeners based on their appearance, utility, as well as memories associated with the plant. In this sense, these plants "entice" gardeners and earn for themselves proper care and attention. When specific plants have a meaningful position in gardeners' lives (personal preference in the sense of appearance, color, specific usage, childhood memories, etc.), gardeners spend more time cultivating and caring for those plants.

Hence, in this section, I focus on "entangled relations of care" (Power, 2005, p. 46) by taking into account the moments of collaboration, challenge, and conflict between humans and unwanted plants, namely, weeds. As Hartigan argues, "The gardens are a place of work where various forms of care take place" such as maintaining the bordered beds, cultivating, watering, weeding, etc. (Hartigan, 2015, p. 488). The gardens as "multispecies assemblages" provide a context in which "relations with non-humans are actively cultivated" (Hartigan, 2015, p. 492).

Following Power (2005) and Hartigan (2015), I employ the notion of care in this research in order to grasp "the developed and interrelated practices of care (‘techniques of existence’) that are applied to plants" (Hartigan, 2015, p. 492; Foucault, 2012, pp. 5–6, 28).

Through my fieldwork, I have learned about some plants that have been introduced as significant to gardeners. I argue that some plants are more attractive and favorable for some gardeners based on their color and appearance and because of their unique utilities. These plants attract gardeners and enroll them in their care because of their particular attributes. The special combination in “Mahoor”’s plot helps to expand this argument. Her favorite plant was purple basil. She liked the color combination of purple basil, green chilies, and green mint. Besides their appearance, these plants were cultivated because of their application. Mahoor said:

> As you see, most of my patch is covered by purple basil, mint, with some green chili peppers in between. I like the way these colors draw everyone’s attention. It feels like these plants are in an imaginary tabloid. And of course, I enjoy having them with my food. Purple basil has an aromatic scent, and it is in fact a medicinal plant. It helps to alleviate coughing. I make a special tea of dried basil leaves for colds and stomach pain (October, 2019).

In Mahoor’s case, the special appearance these plants gave to her plot, as well as their affordances enrolled her in the garden to provide proper care for these plants. The appearance and utility of plants are not the only attraction for gardeners.

Some plants are significant because of their special position in a gardener’s background. On her birthday, Sara’s father planted a sour orange tree in the garden and named it “Sara’s Tree.” Sara and her two sisters each had their own trees. Sour orange trees have a meaningful place in her life, as her memories from home were formed around these trees. Sara planted five sour orange seeds in a pot and was very careful with these fragile saplings, as she believed that if they survived, she would have a part of her past back. She cared a great deal about her tree and spent time learning how to keep it alive. As Sara explained:

> I love sour orange trees (derakht e narenj), the scent of its blossoms (shokofeh) and the unique taste of its fruits. It reminds me of the good days I had in my home. I don't know if these seedlings will survive, but I'll do my best to keep them alive. I searched for information about it. They say if I keep them in a pot inside my apartment, during the winter they will keep growing and won't die. The best temperature for this tree is between 12 to 37 centigrade.

Plants like this sour orange seedling require gardeners' care and attention, and their emotional bond to specific plants encourages them to learn about the nature and needs of the plants. Sara described her efforts in learning about sour orange trees' unique needs in terms of water, sunlight, and temperature, and she furthered her explanation by stating that this seedling hates drought and salty soils and should not be kept in direct sunlight. As presented in this example, some gardeners are emotionally attached to their plants and feel some responsibility toward them, so they attempt to learn about individual plants' particular needs. Similarly to Sara, another gardener, "Behnam," told me about his passion for gardening. He believed gardening is a gradual learning process in which the gardener acquires knowledge through searching and observing. Benham said:

> My friends call me a green thumb. I can grow a garden out of nothing. Give me some seeds and a piece of land and I turn it to a garden. During the years I have done gardening I've learned a lot just by observing other gardeners and my own plants. For example, both zucchini and okra need to be watered once a week, but zucchini needs much more water than okra. Or for mint, you need to keep the soil moist all the time. So, you must water the plant once or twice a day as mint does not tolerate drought conditions very well, and you learn these step by step. Gardening is not a straightforward practice. You must learn about different soils, weather, and the different needs of your favorite plants: how much water they need, if they must be kept under the sunlight or shade, or in what kind of soil they can grow. And this is the beauty of nature. You must be attentive and respond properly to the changes occurring around you. Gardening is a continuous learning process (October, 2019).

Gardeners like Behnam learned that plants demand their attention, knowledge, effort, and proper care for healthy growth. “Plants as entities with individual requirements” (Power, 2005, p. 47) teach and guide gardeners how to response to their needs. In these reciprocal relationships, Behnam’s plants receive the care they need to grow, and Behnam, in turn, has the chance to re-create a part of the home he left beyond the border. Hence, a garden is constructed through this collaboration.

Mint, basil, green onion, radish, parsley, strawberry, tomato, green beans, dill, potato, beetroot, zucchini, okra, kale, and chili peppers are popular plants in these community gardens. With the attention they receive from the gardeners, these plants co-construct a conventional Iranian or Bengali garden, a place with shades of the past that remind the gardeners of what they left behind. As Power (2005) states: “These plants recommended themselves to the gardeners through a variety of characteristics,” for example, their specific appearance, color, taste, scent, medicinal utility, etc. (Power, 2005, p. 48). These gardeners have been familiar with these plants since their childhood growing up near yards or gardens with the same plants. Thanks to the plants’ mobility, the gardeners can rebuild their homes in a new land, or what some of them call a foreign land (ghorbat in Farsi). For example, Iranian gardeners planted jasmines, honeysuckles, and roses in the community garden’s communal area as the scent of these flowers reminded them of ‘home.’

Plants are crucial to the process of constructing the garden and place-making, and with their special characteristics, they capture gardeners’ attention, care, and “emotional commitment” (Power, 2005). Hitching (2003) and Clock and Jones (2003) report that plants attract people to their world and that gardening is a manifestation of the care and commitment these gardeners show for their plants. Following Power (2005), I suggest that taking care of self and others in the process of place-making in the community garden and “being-for-the-other” (Cloke & Jones, 2003, p. 210)

dismantles the nature-culture duality by involving heterogeneous actors "into the relation of care" (Power, 2005, p. 48) and commitment.

In this perspective, the garden is not a docile landscape, and plants are not represented as raw material under human control to satisfy humans. Rather, these small patches in community gardens show that humans are altered and captured by plants, and both actors equally go through the process of changing, becoming, and making. This perspective is supported by the effort, commitment, and time people invest in their gardens to look after their plants in response to their needs. As Anderson asserts, "people . . . reserved their deepest commitments for their pets and their most ardent affections for their gardens" (1997, p. 478).

This section contradicts nature-culture duality and human-centered epistemologies by focusing on non-humans' active presence in the garden. Following Power (2005) and Neves (2009), I showed that in the process of domestication, gardening and ecological learning entangled relations between humans and non-humans. Based on these entanglements, both humans and non-humans are altered through the process of transforming, becoming, and making. In this perspective, the non-human no longer emerges as an object. I showed that plants are crucial in the process of gardening and that, in this view, gardens do not appear as human playgrounds and mere "reflection[s] of human cultures and understandings" (Power, 2005, p. 48).

In the section that follows, I briefly introduce plants that are known as being unwanted in the garden to show how plants as active actors can cause trouble for gardeners, as these plants constantly challenge gardeners "by refusing their enrolment into the gardeners' plans" (Power, 2005, p. 48). Hence, these plants challenge "the ideals of domestication: in fact, challenge the perception that considered garden as a human-centered landscape" (Power, 2005, p. 48). In contrast to other plants that require gardeners' care and attention, weeds lead gardeners to learn effective

ways to remove them from the garden. Weeding, which may seem to be a straightforward task, requires knowledge, technique, and skills (Degnen, 2009). In the following section, I therefore reflect on the less harmonious relationship between humans and the plants that are not welcomed in the garden.

Less harmonious relationships

As mentioned in the preceding section, not all plants are enjoyed and welcomed by the gardeners. There are some plants whose presence in the garden dissatisfies gardeners. Plants such as mare's tail, couch grass, pigweed, chickweed, dandelion, and bindweed cause trouble for the gardeners and force them to rearrange their gardens again and again. These are perfect examples of rebellious plants that do not let gardeners follow their own plans. As Power (2005) states, "Weeds were plants that entered ongoing, competitive relations with the gardeners by refusing their enrolment into the gardeners' plans" (Power, 2005, p. 48). Learning how to care for certain plants is important, but identifying weeds and learning the required techniques for removing some of these plants is important, too (Degnen, 2009).

Following Power (2005) and Degnen (2009), I suggest that weeds challenge the ontology which considers gardens as human-centered contexts, and they do so by disrupting the process of gardening and domestication. In this view, plants interrupt humans' plans for nature, hence, gardens do not emerge as "simple reflections of human cultures and understandings" (Power, 2005, p. 48). Reza's words captured these ideas most aptly when he said that "weeds (alaf e harz in Farsi) are plants that can undo whatever I have done in my garden. I must always keep an eye on my patch or they will invade my beloved vegetables' territory." In Reza's viewpoint, weeds appear as active actors that cause him trouble and turn the garden into a task space where he has to work

very hard to remove weeds and provide proper resources for his own plants. As I explain next, hard physical work is not the only negative outcome of weeds' presence in the garden.

Weeds promote a sense of shame and guilt for those who feel inefficient in taking care of their garden as they had planned. "Rita" shamefully expressed, "I feel sad about the appearance of my garden. What do other gardeners think about me? I do not have that much time to visit my garden and keep it tidy. So that's why my patch has weeds." Rita, as a single mother with a full-time job, does not have enough time to spend caring for her garden. This makes her feel guilty about letting weeds cover her plot. However, this state of inattentiveness does not decrease her commitment to the garden, and she tries to care for her plot during any free time she has. Following Hale et al. (2011), I suggest that some gardeners care deeply about the appearance of their patch because they believe its state is a manifestation of their "commitment and ability to be responsible and productive" (Hale et al., 2011, p. 1859).

Neves (2009) argues that "ecological learning and the emergence of an aesthetic of relationship, holism, and attachment amounts to a transformative experience whereby the self becomes deeply aware of the continuum that exists between self and environment" (p. 151). Following Neves (2009), I suggest that through the process of ecological learning and awareness of ecological aesthetics, gardeners create a new form of embodied experience and relationship that transforms and changes them in relation to their surroundings. As Hale et al. (2011) suggest, "It is something that arises through the garden experience and can create an embodied relationship between the expectations of the garden and the maintenance and productivity that follows" (Hale et al., 2011, p. 1859).

To illustrate my theoretical arguments regarding the active presence of weeds in the garden, I present examples from "Sam," Sepideh, and Reza. Sam said, "Any plant in the garden that you

did not plant is a weed. They usually are not easy to control and will grow without any need for care and attention. They are like hard-headed people." Weeds were commonly referred to by gardeners as uninvited guests and as uncontrollable and unwanted plants. Sepideh stated, "I come to the garden every day to water and collect some vegetables, also to weed. If you give weeds time, they will cover the whole plot and will steal the resources you repapered for your vegetables." Related to this, Reza told me:

> Here we mostly grow medicinal and edible plants, so anything other than what we planted in our plot is unwanted and a sort of weed. We do not plant weeds, but they come to the garden by humans, birds, wind, water. And the problem is that we cannot control it (August, 2019).

As described in these examples, weeds as unwanted plants can reduce gardeners' control over their gardens and challenge their ideas of a perfect garden. Also, in the case of weeds, the mobility of seeds and plants works against gardeners' plans, as I describe below.

While plants' mobility assists gardeners to rebuild their home in a foreign land, it also can work against their plans and wishes. Plants' seeds are transferable by wind, water, humans, animals, birds, or any other external power. Invasive plants can grow rapidly, making it difficult for gardeners to manage the situation and control them; they exploit the resources that gardeners provide for their favorite plants (Power, 2005, p. 49). Weeding requires physical labor as well as learning about methods for removing diverse weeds. Weeds emerge as active actors in the hybrid context of the garden. They not only challenge human-centered ideas by changing gardeners' plans; they also show that plants are not mute objects ready for human control and manipulation. They find ways to rule over the garden and keep gardeners busy learning about weeds and how to remove them quickly and effectively.

The less harmonious relation weeds manifest throughout the community gardens departs from the harmonious relations Hitchings (2003) described to show how the garden is co-

constructed through collaborations between humans and nature. For example, in describing his efforts and hard work in dealing with mare's tail, "Sam" said:

> They [weeds] eventually find a way to undo all my efforts. I do whatever I can to eradicate them, yet they return to the garden. I spray weed killer; I remove them from the roots, and I dig and turn over the soil. Still, they reproduce seeds, rapidly grow and survive in any conditions. I tried to prevent them from setting their seeds, but what can I do against wind or birds? (August, 2019)

Sam's description of his confrontation with weeds simply dismantles the idea of the human-centered garden. As this example shows, weeding is a continuous process based on a competitive relation between humans and non-humans, and it indicates that all these heterogeneous actors attempt "to ensure their own garden performance" (Power, 2005, p. 50).

Power (2005) asserts that weeding involves a dynamic and competitive relationship between humans and non-humans as gardeners try to enroll plants into their plans, and weeds "refuse" to follow gardeners' plans. In this perspective, weeds emerge as the rebels and active actors that challenge the process of gardening "by refusing their designation within the gardener's plans" (Power, 2005, p. 50). Focusing on weeds as active actors in the garden helps us understand that the garden is not a human-centered arena, and weeds are "capable" of challenging gardeners' plans and refusing to play the roles gardeners assign to them (Power, 2005).

As to the concept of enrolment, I suggest that plants are not obedient objects forcefully enrolled into the garden. Rather, they enroll gardeners into their care to meet their needs; this argument is acknowledged by Power (2005). The common plants in Bengalis and Iranians' patches manifest that these plants "recommended" themselves to these gardeners who were looking to re-create some part of their home back in a foreign land. These gardeners provided the plants with care, love, and attention, as well as creating a nice and tidy space. They reshaped their environment to rebuild the home they left beyond the borders. In this view, both plants and gardeners were

enrolled in these relations and gained what they were longing for: a home in which to set down their roots. As Power argues, “This process so fully entwined the needs and actions of the plant and human that neither can be understood as central to the relation” (Power, 2005, p. 50).

Conclusion

The main argument of this chapter was that the garden as a hybrid landscape is neither human nor non-human centered and that plants have active positions in the process of constructing an enchanting landscape such as a garden (Power, 2005). I showed that plants can facilitate the process of constructing a garden by entering into "collaborative relationships with the gardeners" (Power, 2005, p. 50) in which both actors meet their needs. Also, I showed that non-humans can interrupt the process of gardening by challenging gardeners' "ideals of domestication" (Power, 2005, p. 50) and refusing to be enrolled in gardeners' plans. The arguments of this chapter help to form the main argument of this thesis, which is that place-making in the garden as a hybrid, complex, and gradual process is neither human nor non-human centered and that both actors are critical in this process, whether they make it easier or interfere with it.

Through the lens of ANT, this chapter revealed the active positions of plants in the process of place-making. From the point of view of ANT, plants emerge as active actors in the gardens. I illustrated my theoretical arguments by providing data from my fieldwork. Relying on this approach, I highlighted the moments when plants were active in their entangled relations with gardeners and emphasized the learning process in the community gardens. From an ANT perceptive, plants can be seen as actors that actively “negotiate” their needs through collaborating with or challenging their human caregivers.

Through the lens of ANT, I emphasized that gardens are hybrid landscapes, neither human nor non-human centered (Power, 2005). I described through the aesthetics of ecological learning

how humans come to learn about self and the other actors that live in a shared environment with them. I emphasized that both plants and gardeners were enrolled and engaged in the process of domestication and that both were transformed through their entangled relations. Through reciprocal and entangled relations as well as challenges and conflicts, I tried to show that gardening is a dynamic dialogue and negotiation between heterogeneous actors who both equally go through the process of altering, becoming, and making (Power, 2005; Neves, 2009).

In presenting the garden as a hybrid landscape in which neither humans nor non-humans are central to its construction, an ANT perspective disrupts the human-centered epistemologies that consider gardens as human playgrounds ready for human manipulation and control (Power, 2005; Hitchings, 2003; Neves, 2009). By challenging the idea that the garden is a human playground, I emphasized the active positions of plants in the process of place-making and the ways they may ease or interrupt it.

Conclusion: Last day in the garden

Prologue

Summer was mulberry season

Grandma used to bring in a wide, white fabric

Baba used to climb up the tree

And shake it down

Cousins, sisters, and I held the fabric under the tree

Laughing and screaming out of happiness and joy

Baba used to pretend he was falling down

“Mother, I am falling down.”

Every time

Grandma believed him

Ran to him and stretched her skinny hands toward the tree

and said

“Do not be afraid son, I will catch you.”

We laughed even louder

Grandma slipped away

Baba never climbed the mulberry tree again

We did not go to that garden again

Old and alone Mulberry tree

Your white and sweet fruits are falling to the ground

Do you still remember us and our laughter?

Conclusion of the thesis

In this thesis, I have focused on examining the critical roles of humans and non-humans in the hybrid and complex process of place-making by Iranian immigrants in three community gardens. Through my research participants' interviews, I conceptualized the notion of place-making (community gardening) as practices for creating a new home and developing a sense of belonging, stability, and emotional attachment to Canada. The main argument of this thesis was that place-making within the garden is a complex, gradual, and multilayered process. In this process, heterogeneous actors (humans and non-humans) play critical roles in constructing home-like spaces for some immigrants. It is a complex process, as heterogeneous actors (actants) can facilitate or hinder it, and each of them plays a critical role. However, the human is the more powerful actant in this process. The overall aim of this thesis was to highlight the entangled relationships between humans and non-humans in the community gardens. This approach helped to emphasize that the garden is not just a docile object reflecting human culture and to move beyond the perspective that considers the garden to be a human achievement.

In order to form the main argument of this thesis, each chapter worked as a puzzle piece that contributed to the whole picture of the thesis, as each chapter delivered an argument that took a further step into the main argument to answer the main questions[2]. Three main themes found in the empirical data have been analysed: the community garden as an enchanting landscape (where people develop a sense of belonging to Canada), the community garden as a home-like space

[2] To what extent and in what ways do immigrants work to create new, homelike spaces within urban community gardens in Montreal, Canada?

How do non-humans collaborate with, interrupt, and/or ease the process of place making?

(alternative home), and the community garden as a hybrid landscape (that is neither human centered nor non-human centered). In what follows, I expand on this in three steps.

First, in Chapter One I argued that enchanting encounters[3] experienced by people through embodied and multi-sensorial engagement in community gardens helped immigrants have a sense of stability and belonging and develop emotional attachment to Canada. In order to build my argument, I employed the notions of lived space,[4] haptic perception[5], and lived image[6], and using my empirical data, I revealed how some gardeners, through inhabiting the garden (through their body memories, senses, and imagination) and experiencing enchanting encounters, developed emotional attachment to Canada. Emotional attachments are motivated when people develop a sense of belonging to their surroundings and consider the new place as a home-like space. Hence, by emotional attachment I mean that immigrants developed a sense of stability and belonging towards Canada that helped them to consider this their new home.

My research participants reported that enchanting encounters in the community gardens transformed their mood (increased their happiness, satisfaction, and peace and helped them cope with the depression and sorrow they experienced after displacement), gave them a sense of stability and belonging, and helped them to develop an emotional attachment to their surroundings. These immigrants informed me of the prosaic pleasures they experienced performing mundane routines

---

[3] Transformative encounters that change peoples' connection with their surroundings and help them develop their sense of belonging and emotional attachment to their new environment.

[4] Places we inhabit and know through our body, senses, and imagination.

[5] The ability to sense the world by moving within it.

[6] Is neither a mere reality nor a "subjective representation it has a dualistic nature "something that lives in a vibratory space of relationality" (Bhatti et al, 2009, p. 66). It evokes immigrants' memories of their beloved childhood gardens.

in the garden which had profound meaning for them and turned the garden into an extraordinary landscape where they enjoyed spending time.

As my research participants reported, through multi-sensorial engagement with the garden[7], reveries emerged (memories of childhood in a beloved garden). They reported that through enchanting encounters and revising their childhood memories in the garden, they experienced prosaic pleasure. They informed me of how the hope of re-experiencing these prosaic pleasures inspired and motivated them to choose the community garden as a place to create a home-like space. My interlocutors' narrations of emerged reverie and enchanting encounters in the community gardens endorse Bachelard's concept of reverberation[8]. This approach helped me to justify the fact that immigrants have chosen community gardens as a potential site for place making.

Based on my interlocutors' perception of non-humans and their stories of enchanting encounters with them (which transformed their connection with nature), I indicated the nature of place making as being the result of processes of human/non-human embroilment by showing that the garden was not just an inert object manifesting human culture; rather, it had an active position in immigrants' lives. By exploring my research participants' experiences, I highlighted non-humans' active role in generating emotional attachment to Canada.

The argument of this chapter helped me to take the initial step toward the overall aim of this thesis, as in Chapter One I briefly highlighted the active position of non-humans in immigrants' lives by focusing on enchanting encounters experienced by people in the garden which helped to

---

[7] Such as weeding, digging, raking, planting, getting their hands dirty, or simply being there, sitting on a bench, singing a song, puttering around, enjoying the sounds, tastes, scents, and scenes of nature.

[8] Bachelard defines this concept as modes of activities and poetic images of enchanting encounters within a natural world that cannot be analyzed using logical science (Bhatti et al., 2009, p. 65)

reveal the co-constructed nature of place-making processes that occur as humans and non-humans interact in the garden. Also, I contributed to the main argument of the thesis by demonstrating the complex process in which immigrants developed emotional attachment to the garden (as a home-like space) and to Canada. This approach provided groundwork on which to build the main argument of Chapter Two, which focused on the community garden as an alternative home in some Iranian immigrants' lives.

In Chapter Two, I focused on daily routines and practices in the garden, social relationships that formed within it, and ways in which gardeners re-shaped their plots through gardening practices, techniques, and plant preferences as a place-making strategy in the community garden. This approach helped me reveal that place making in the community garden is a complex, multi-layered, and gradual process that is beyond a simple reconfiguration of physical appearance in an urban landscape. Three main themes emerged from my interviews with the gardeners which acknowledged the complexity of place making and the ways in which the community garden served immigrants as an alternative home. I will briefly expand on these themes.

First, some of my interlocutors reported that by planting familiar and meaningful plants from their homeland, they were able to re-create their motherland in Canada as plants' mobility helped them have something of what they left beyond the borders. Hence, through reshaping the urban landscape, these gardeners developed a sense of familiarity. Furthermore, some of my interlocutors reported how the physical appearance of their plots worked as a communication tool and helped them to build new social relationships within the garden. They informed me that by planting specific plants, sharing gardening tools, knowledge, and experience, and by exchanging seeds, plants, food, and life stories, they developed connections and social relationships with other

gardeners. These social relationships in the garden helped them experience and enjoy family-like relationships and to have a sense of belonging to a community.

Lastly, some of my research participants acknowledged that community gardening worked for them as a therapeutic and soothing practice. They informed me that community gardening helped them overcome social isolation and cope with their fears, stresses, and anxiety and forget about the daily life difficulties they faced after immigration. They reported that being in a community garden as an escape space and doing community gardening among like-minded people improved their health and increased their life satisfaction, which in turn enhanced their well-being. Most gardeners said they developed relationships with people from their same socio-economic strata and ethnicity. However, it is notable that some gardeners reported that not all relationships in the gardens were harmonious: there were moments of conflict and disagreement.

Through reporting these three themes, my interlocutors acknowledged that place making within a community garden is a complex process that goes beyond a simple reconfiguration in the physical appearance of the landscape, and several steps (as described previously) must be taken by immigrants to feel at home in the community garden.

The argument of Chapter Two helped me take the final step into the main argument of my thesis, as in this chapter I showed that place making was a complex and multi-layered process, and I highlighted the ways in which human actors constructed the gardens as home-like spaces. In the final step, I positioned the last piece of the puzzle in the picture by highlighting the active positions of non-humans in the process of constructing a garden. The main argument of Chapter Three was that the garden is a hybrid landscape that is neither human centered nor non-human centered, and non-humans have active roles in the process of constructing gardens (Power, 2005). This argument helped me form the final part of the main argument of this thesis, where I argued that the process

of place making within the garden is neither human centered nor non-human centered, and heterogeneous actors paly critical roles in the process of constructing alternative homes within the community garden, whether they make it easier or interrupt it.

In order to form the main argument of the Chapter Three, I focused on entangled relationships between heterogeneous actors (human and non-human) within the garden through the lens of ANT. This approach helped me show that the garden (as a hybrid, home-like space) is the result of constant dialogue between heterogeneous actors. It also provided a ground from which to highlight the moments of engagements, challenges, and competitions between human and non-human actors.

Some of my research participants reported how through learning about plants' specific needs in terms of proper soil, temperature, water, fertilizer, etc., gardeners were able to grow familiar and meaningful plants. They also reported how plants, by enrolling in gardeners' plans and growing healthy, helped gardeners re-shape the urban landscape and construct their favorite gardens (that reminded them of their homeland). However, gardening was not all about harmonious relationships, and there were moments of failure and defeat. Some of my interlocutors informed me of how, through daily encounters with non-humans within the ephemeral landscape of the garden, they learned that gardening was not just about humans' plans, wishes, and desires. They reported on the challenging moments when non-humans (nature) as active actors changed gardeners' plans, for example, how a short growing season, a severe drop in temperature, and a marmot family changed their plans and prevented them from constructing their home-like spaces. They also informed me about the moments of competition when heterogeneous actors worked against each other (for example, competition between gardeners and unwanted plants, namely

weeds). The competition between gardeners and weeds demonstrated that plants are not docile objects for human manipulation; rather, they are active actors that challenge gardeners' plans.

Some gardeners acknowledged that the garden is not a still and inert landscape and that non-humans as active actors constantly change gardeners' plans, perceptions, and expectations. Although the perspective of ANT acknowledges that heterogeneous actors have active roles in the process of place making, I acknowledged that the power relation between humans and non-humans was not equal, as gardeners decided what to plant, when and where to plant, and how to provide their plants with proper care (in terms of food, water, temperature, light).

Hence, by linking the main arguments of these three chapters, I formed the main argument of this thesis: in the complex and multi-layered process of place-making within a hybrid landscape such as a garden, heterogeneous actors play critical roles. Although the human in this network of actants has a more powerful position, the active position of non-humans must not be neglected. Hence, by illustrating that place making is not a human-centered process, I dismantle the nature/culture duality and human-centered epistemologies.

In this thesis, I addressed the entanglement and junction of humans (Iranian immigrants) and non-humans (plants) in the context of three urban community gardens in Montreal, Canada. In doing so, I contributed to the existing body of literature in environmental anthropology by illustrating the ways in which humans acquire and form knowledge of non-human nature. Even though community gardens (nature) have been studied as potential home-like spaces in the lives of immigrants, the critical and active roles of non-humans (such as plants) in this process have received little attention. Hence, I contributed to this body of literature by showing that the hybrid context of community gardens (as critical home-like spaces) has enormous potential to provide a

better understanding of the complex and entangled relationships between humans and non-humans in the process of home-making in garden settings.

Focusing on the entangled relationships of humans and non-humans and recognizing non-humans' active role is beneficial as it affects our consciousness regarding environmental challenges such as global warming and yields an ecological awareness. The disruption of the nature-culture binary is crucial, as this perspective has led to the current environmental crisis (Dunkley & Smith, 2019). In the end, we may learn to what extent our lives are dependent on the lives of other biological actors. Furthermore, how our disruptive actions harm not just non-humans, and we are not immune from the consequences of our disruptive actions (Neves, 2009, p. 151; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015).

This project looked at two groups, namely, the first generation of Iranian immigrants in three community gardens in Montreal, Canada. The data I collected was limited to just 15 research participants. The decision to only focus on three community gardens alternative homes, and hybrid landscapes was intended to limit the scope of my thesis. However, considering the crises brought about by COVID-19 such as mass unemployment, social isolation, and collective trauma, future research could be done on the role that urban gardening can play in addressing COVID-19-induced challenges pertaining to food security, collective trauma, and well-being. Indeed, I believe such research would be highly relevant.

Epilogue

The community garden is compartmentalized with gray fences that separate the garden from the surrounding buildings. It is a quiet day at Grape Community Garden. A few gardeners are here, weeding their plots and socializing. Someone picks up the water hose and starts watering his patch. The scent of the watered soil refreshes me; it reminds me of our garden back in Iran. I

am sitting on a gray bench under a beautiful sunshade, enjoying a bright sunny day. There are rectangular vases placed around the sunshade; they are decorated with solenostemon, marigolds, and colorful violets.

The sunshade is next to the garden's gate on the right side. On the left is a small office. A blue board is located in front of the office containing notices about cleaning days and instructions for new gardeners. Everything around me is verdant and resonating with tranquility. Colorful plants stand side by side, weaving a carpet of beauty and comfort. Morning's soft air touches my skin, and I feel like I am in the middle of a magical canvas surrounded by the green blood of nature. The heartbeats of the garden under my feet reveal life. A chilling breeze passes through the garden and caresses the little basil plants standing hand in hand in a plot next to my bench.

Occasionally, short beeps of passing cars disturb the silence of the garden. Despite this, I enjoy the sound of tweeting birds. The blue sky is splashed with white and fluffy clouds; it seems like a flawless ceiling. I stand and stretch my body. After a second, I start walking through the garden. The soil crunches under my feet. Some of the plots are covered with chicken wire mesh. This is suggested by the garden board as a family of marmots who live in the garden have damaged some of the plots. Many plots have short scaffolds to support beans. All the plots' beds are covered with compost, and its darkness contrasts with the mulched walkway.

A veiled lady in a white and orange Bengali dress smiles at me. I stop for a short chat while she removes rotten leaves from the beans, which are in a good and healthy state and cover their supporting scaffold. The woman kindly allows me to help her hang the beans on the scaffold. The leaves are green and fresh, soft and delicate. I am careful not to hurt the plant. There is no vacant space in her plot; I see zucchini, basil, beans, chilies, lettuce, eggplant, and tomato bushes with

some red and many still green tomatoes. Around this plot everything has an earthy scent. I feel reunited with nature.

I keep walking through the garden; downtown's glassy towers are visible from where I stand. We are in the middle of the city, and still it feels like we are in another world, far from the city and its turbulent lifestyle. I see some berry bushes, and they remind me of summer days when my cousins and I would spend hours collecting sweet fruits in a forest next to my grandmother's house. There are many berries on the bushes. Next to the berry bushes something catches my eyes. A pair of red sandals are hung on two wooden sticks. Apparently, someone tried to create a scarecrow. It does not resemble a human to me, although maybe it does to a crow or a groundhog.

The sun plays hide and seek, appearing and disappearing behind the cumulus clouds that float lazily across the sky. I arrive at a plot covered with red basil, mint, honeysuckle, jasmine, and gardenia. The combination of red, green, purple, and white creates a magnificent view. The scene gently touches my heart; it's like a surreal painting where colors meet and move the viewer. The scent of jasmine is aromatic, and the contrast between colors is breathtaking. I touch the fresh leaves of the basil and mint; they are soft like a baby's skin. Two little girls laugh and run through the garden. Their father calls out to them in Bengali, and the kids slow down their game. The children have doubled the positive energy in the garden.

Many stories are buried in the heart of this garden, and they never die. One must dig deep to get in touch with them. Old trees from far away come to this garden to set down their roots in solid ground. They are tired, uprooted, and hopeless. They feel lost and forgotten, yet they still try to find a way to survive. They become weak like a newly growing plant. Any wind may dissipate them. They try to set their roots down and grow strong. There are millions of them, displaced and looking for a ground to call home. This was a story of where those trees live.

References

Ahmed, S. (2010). *'Happy Objects'* (pp. 29-51). Duke University Press.

Anderson, K. (1997). A walk on the wild side: a critical geography of domestication. *Progress in human geography*, *21*(4), 463-485.

Arai, S., & Pedlar, A. (2003). Moving beyond individualism in leisure theory: A critical analysis of concepts of community and social engagement.

Archambault, J. S. (2016). Taking love seriously in human-plant relations in Mozambique: Toward an anthropology of affective encounters. *Cultural Anthropology*, *31*(2), 244-271.

Bachelard, G. (1969). The Poetics of Space (1958), tr. M. Jolas.

Bachelard, G. (1971) The Poetics of Reverie; Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos. Boston: Beacon Press. First published in French in 1960.

Baker, L. (2012). Grow TO Urban Agriculture Action Plan Launced!". Toronto Food Policy Council.

Bateson, G. (1979). *Mind and nature: A necessary unity* (Vol. 255). New York: Bantam Books.

Bateson, G., & Bateson, M. C. (1988). Angels fear: Towards an epistemology of the sacred. Cresskill.

Bennett, J. (2001). *The enchantment of modern life: Attachments, crossings, and ethics*. Princeton University Press.

Berberich, C., Campbell, N., & Hudson, R. (2013). Affective landscapes: An introduction. *Cultural Politics*, *9*(3), 313-322.

Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel optimism*. Duke University Press.

Bhatti, M. (1999). The meanings of gardens in the age of risk Chapman T Hockey J Ideal homes. *Social change and domestic life, Routledge London and New York*.

Bhatti, M. (2006). 'When I'm in the garden I can create my own paradise': Homes and gardens in later life. The Sociological Review, 54(2), 318-341.

Bhatti, M., & Church, A. (2001). Cultivating natures: homes and gardens in late modernity. Sociology, 35(2), 365-383.

Bhatti, M., & Church, A. (2004). Home, the culture of nature and meanings of gardens in late modernity. Housing studies, 19(1), 37-51.

Bhatti, M., Church, A., Claremont, A., & Stenner, P. (2009). 'I love being in the garden': enchanting encounters in everyday life. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *10*(1), 61-76.

Blunt, A. (2005). Cultural geography: cultural geographies of home. *Progress in human geography*, *29*(4), 505-515.

Boccagni, P. (2016). What's in a (migrant) house? Changing domestic spaces, the negotiation of belonging and home-making in Ecuadorian migration. *Housing, Theory and Society*, *31*(3), 277-293.

Boisvert, R. (2010). Convivialism: A philosophical manifesto. The Pluralist 5(2): 57–68. Borremans V (1978) Reference Guide to Convivial Tools: Techno-Politica CIDOC Series 79/13. New York: Bowker.

Brown, K. H., Carter, A., & Bailkey, M. (2003). *Urban agriculture and community food security in the United States: Farming from the city center to the urban fringe*. Community Food Security Coalition.

Bruno, G. (2002) Atlas of Emotion. London: Verso.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford university press.

Burls, A., & Caan, W. (2005). Human health and nature conservation.

Butler, J. (2010). *Frames of war: When is life grievable?*. Verso Books.

Chevalier, S. (1998). From woollen carpet to grass carpet: bridging house and garden in an English suburb. *Material cultures: Why some things matter*, 47-71.

Clayton, S. (2007). Domesticated nature: Motivations for gardening and perceptions of environmental impact. *Journal of environmental psychology*, *27*(3), 215-224.

Cloke, P., & Jones, O. (2003). Grounding ethical mindfulness for/in nature: trees in their places. *Ethics, Place & Environment*, *6*(3), 195-213.

Cooper, D. E. (2003). In praise of gardens. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, *43*(2), 101-113.

Cooper, D. E. (2006). *A philosophy of gardens*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Davidson, T. K., Park, O., & Shields, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Ecologies of affect: placing nostalgia, desire, and hope*. Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press.

Degnen, C. (2009). On vegetable love: gardening, plants, and people in the north of England. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 15(1), 151-167

Draper, C., & Freedman, D. (2010). Review and analysis of the benefits, purposes, and motivations associated with community gardening in the United States. *Journal of Community Practice*, *18*(4), 458-492.

Dunkley, R. A., & Smith, T. A. (2019). By-standing memories of curious observations: Children's storied landscapes of ecological encounter. *cultural geographies*, *26*(1), 89-107.

Foucault, M. (2012). History of Sexuality, Volume 3: Care of the Self. Vintage: New York.

Francis, M. (1990). The everyday and the personal: Six garden stories. *The meaning of gardens*, 206-216.

Francis, M. (1995). Childhood's garden: Memory and meaning of gardens. *Children's Environments*, 183-191.

Francis, M., Hester Jr, R. T., & Hester, R. T. (Eds.). (1990). *The meaning of gardens: Idea, place, and action*. Mit Press.

Frøystad, H. L. (2019). *The Journey of the Broccoli: The'Feel-Good'Activity of Community Gardening, Reconnection to Nature, and Food Waste* (Master's thesis).

Furnass, B. (1996). Introduction. In B. Furnass, J. Whyte, J. Harris, & A. Baker (Eds.), Survival, health and wellbeing into the twenty first century: Proceedings of a conference held at the Australian National University, November 30–December 1, 1995 (pp. 5–6). Canberra: The Mulanggarri Foundation and The Commonwealth Department of Human Services.

Game, A., & Metcalfe, A. (2011). 'My corner of the world': Bachelard and Bondi Beach. *Emotion, Space and Society*, *4*(1), 42-50.

Gans, H. J. (1982). *Urban villagers*. Simon and Schuster.

Gibson, J.J. (1982). Reasons for Realism: Selected Essays of James J. Gibson, Reed, E. and Jones, R. (eds) Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Giraud, D. D. (1990). Shared backyard gardening. The meaning of gardens: Idea, place and action, 166-171.

Goodman, L. A. (1961). Snowball sampling. *The annals of mathematical statistics*, 148-170.

Gross, H., & Lane, N. (2007). Landscapes of the lifespan: Exploring accounts of own gardens and gardening. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *27*(3), 225-241.

Guitart, D., Pickering, C., & Byrne, J. (2012). Past results and future directions in urban community gardens research. *Urban forestry & urban greening*, *11*(4), 364-373.

Gupta, A., & Ferguson, J. (1997). Discipline and practice: 'The field'as site, method, and location in anthropology. *Anthropological locations: Boundaries and grounds of a field science*, *100*, 1-47.

Hale, J., Knapp, C., Bardwell, L., Buchenau, M., Marshall, J., Sancar, F., & Litt, J. S. (2011). Connecting food environments and health through the relational nature of aesthetics: Gaining insight through the community gardening experience. *Social science & medicine*, *72*(11), 1853-1863.

Harris, A. (2016). Rethinking youth conviviality: The possibilities of intercultural friendship beyond contact and encounter. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *37*(5), 501-516.

Harris, M. (1964). *The nature of cultural things* (Vol. 5). Random House.

Hartigan Jr, J. (2017). *Care of the species: Races of corn and the science of plant biodiversity*. U of Minnesota Press.

Hartigan, J. (2015). Plant publics: Multispecies relating in Spanish botanical gardens. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 481-507.

Helphand, K. I. (2006). *Defiant gardens: Making gardens in wartime* (p. 21). San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press.

Henderson, B. R., & Hartsfield, K. (2009). Is getting into the community garden business a good way to engage citizens in local government? *National Civic Review*, *98*(4), 12-17.

Hitchings, R. (2003). People, plants and performance: on actor network theory and the material pleasures of the private garden. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *4*(1), 99-114.

Hitchings, R. (2006). Expertise and inability: Cultured materials and the reason for some retreating lawns in London. *Journal of Material Culture*, *11*(3), 364-381.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (2017). At home in inner-city immigrant community gardens. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, *32*(1), 13-28.

Hustak, C., & Myers, N. (2012). Involutionary momentum: Affective ecologies and the sciences of plant/insect encounters. *differences*, *23*(3), 74-118.

Kingsley, J. Y., Townsend, M., & Henderson-Wilson, C. (2009). Cultivating health and wellbeing: members' perceptions of the health benefits of a Port Melbourne community garden. *Leisure studies*, *28*(2), 207-219.

Latour, B. (1991). *We have never been modern*. Harvard university press.

Lawrence, S.M. (1997). The congruent garden: An investigation into the role of the domestic garden in satisfying fundamental human needs. Sydney: University of New South Wales.

Lloro-Bidart, T. (2018). Cultivating affects: A feminist posthumanist analysis of invertebrate and human performativity in an urban community garden. *Emotion, Space and Society*, *27*, 23-30.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (1995). Analysing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis. *London: Wandsworth*, *3*.

Macnaghten, P., & Urry, J. (1995). Towards a sociology of nature. *Sociology*, *29*(2), 203-220.

Majeed, A. (2018). Unsettling the Homeland: Fragments of Home and Homeland among Iraqi Exiles in Amman, Jordan.

Maloney, S. A. (2012). Putting paradise in the parking lot: Using zoning to promote urban agriculture. *Notre Dame L. Rev.*, *88*, 2551.

Mares, T. M. (2012). Tracing immigrant identity through the plate and the palate. *Latino Studies*, *10*(3), 334-354.

Massey, D. (2013). *Space, place and gender*. John Wiley & Sons.

Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation*. Duke University Press.

Massumi, B. (2015). *Politics of affect*. John Wiley & Sons.

Mazumdar, S., & Mazumdar, S. (2012). Immigrant home gardens: Places of religion, culture, ecology, and family. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *105*(3), 258-265.

McDowell, L. (1999). Home, place and identity. In L. McDowell (Ed.), Gender, identity, and place: Understanding feminist geographies (pp. 45–85). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mok, H. F., Williamson, V. G., Grove, J. R., Burry, K., Barker, S. F., & Hamilton, A. J. (2014). Strawberry fields forever? Urban agriculture in developed countries: a review. *Agronomy for sustainable development*, *34*(1), 21-43.

Mosser, M., & Teyssot, G. (1991). *History of garden design*. Thames and Hudson.

Murdoch, J. (1997). Towards a geography of heterogeneous associations. *Progress in human geography*, *21*(3), 321-337.

Myers, N. (2017). From the anthropocene to the planthroposcene: designing gardens for plant/people involution. *History and Anthropology*, *28*(3), 297-301.

Myers, N. (2019). From Edenic apocalypse to gardens against Eden. *Infrastructure, Environment and Life in the Anthropocene.(a cura di) Duke University Press, Durham*, 115-148.

Neves, K. (2009). Urban botanical gardens and the aesthetics of ecological learning: A theoretical discussion and preliminary insights from Montreal's Botanical Garden. *Anthropologica*, 145-157.

Neves-Graca, K. (2005). Chasing whales with Bateson and Daniel. *Australian Humanities Review*, *35*, 1-9.

Nieman, D. (2010). *Exercise testing & prescription*. McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Nowicka, M., & Vertovec, S. (2014). Comparing convivialities: Dreams and realities of living-with-difference.

Ogden, L. A., Hall, B., & Tanita, K. (2013). Animals, plants, people, and things: A review of multispecies ethnography. *Environment and society*, *4*(1), 5-24.

Polity.

Power, E. R. (2005). Human–nature relations in suburban gardens. *Australian geographer*, *36*(1), 39-53.

Rancière, J. (2009). *Aesthetics and its Discontents*. trans. Steven Corcoran, Cambridge:

Relph, E. (1976). *Place and placelessness* (Vol. 67). London: Pion.

Scannell, L., & Gifford, R. (2010). Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework. *Journal of environmental psychology*, *30*(1), 1-10.

Schmalzbauer, L. (2014). *The last best place?: Gender, family, and migration in the new West*. Stanford University Press.

Schmelzkopf, K. (1995). Urban community gardens as contested space. Geographical review, 364-381.

Schneider, M. A. (1993). *Culture and enchantment*. University of Chicago Press.

Stewart, K. (2007). *Ordinary affects*. Duke University Press.

Taylor, A., & Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2015). Learning with children, ants, and worms in the Anthropocene: Towards a common world pedagogy of multispecies vulnerability. Pedagogy, Culture & Society, 23(4), 507-529.

Trewin, D. (2001). Measuring wellbeing. *Australian Bureau of Statistics*.

Ulrich, R. S. (1986). Human responses to vegetation and landscapes. *Landscape and urban planning*, *13*, 29-44.

Waites, I. (2012). 'Places in which I forgot things': memory, identity and the English council estate in the paintings of George Shaw.

Wen Li, W., Hodgetts, D., & Ho, E. (2010). Gardens, transitions and identity reconstruction among older Chinese immigrants to New Zealand. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *15*(5), 786-796.

WHO. (1946). Preamble to the constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference (adopted on June 19–22, 1946; signed on July 22, 1946 and entered into force on April 7, 1948). New York: WHO.

Appendix: Garden maps

Garden maps number 1 to 8 belong to Iranian community garden and from number 9 to 15 belong to Bengali community gardeners.

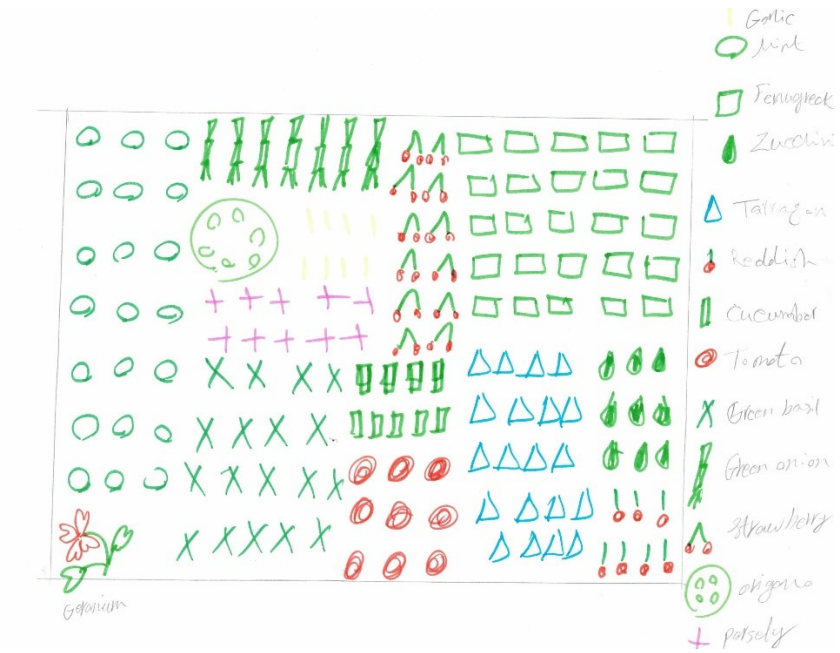

Figure 7: Garden map NO.1. Marjan's plot.

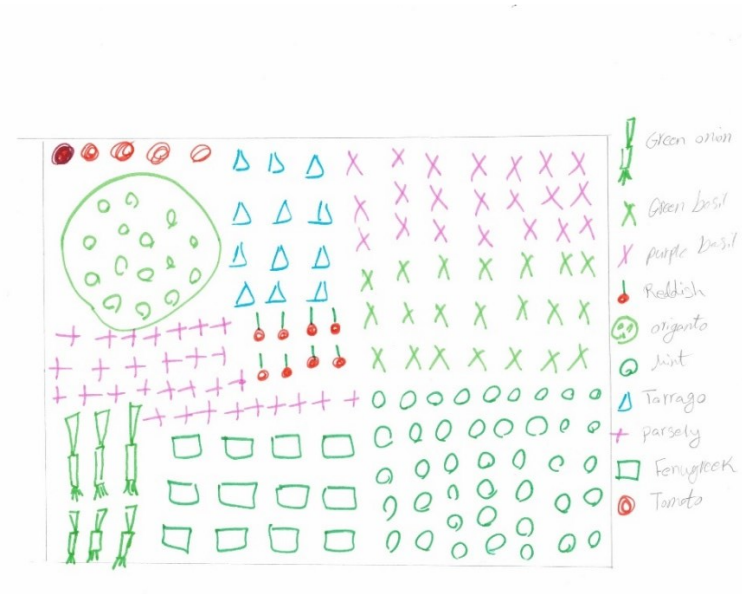

Figure 8: Garden map NO.2. Reza's plot.

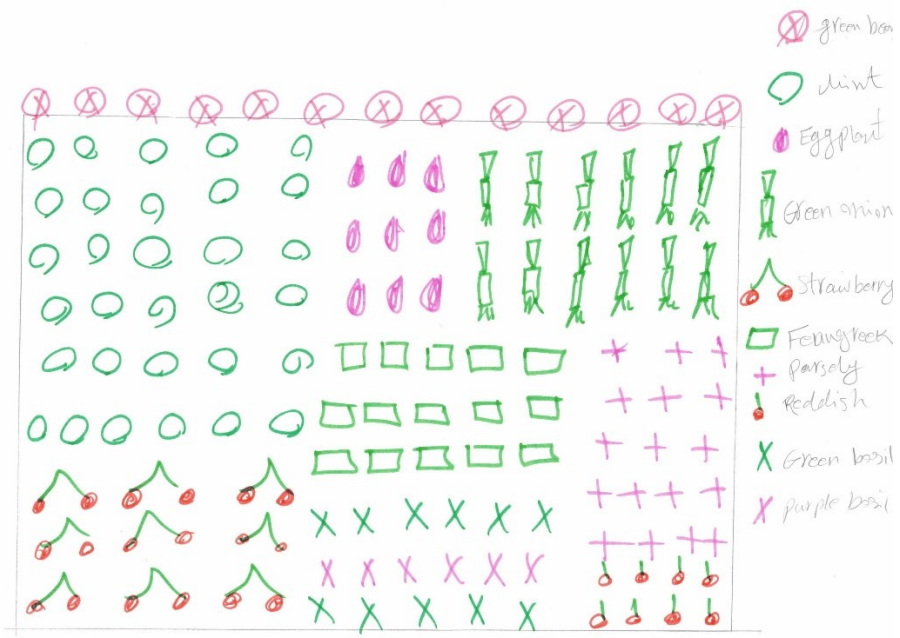

Figure 9: Garden map NO.3. Sepideh's plot.

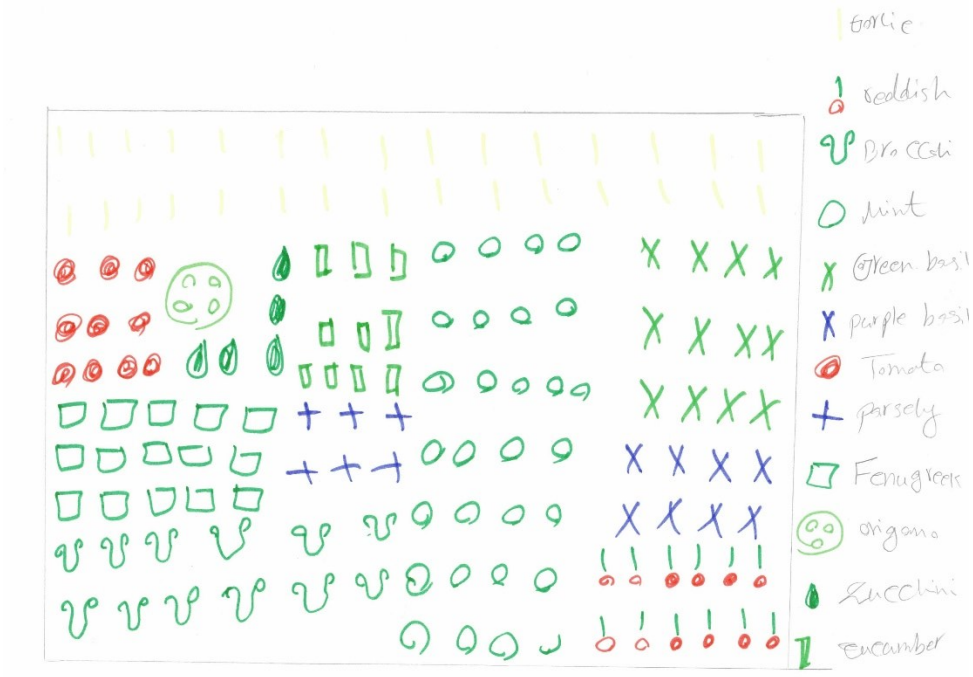

Figure 10: Garden map NO.4. Hamide's plot.

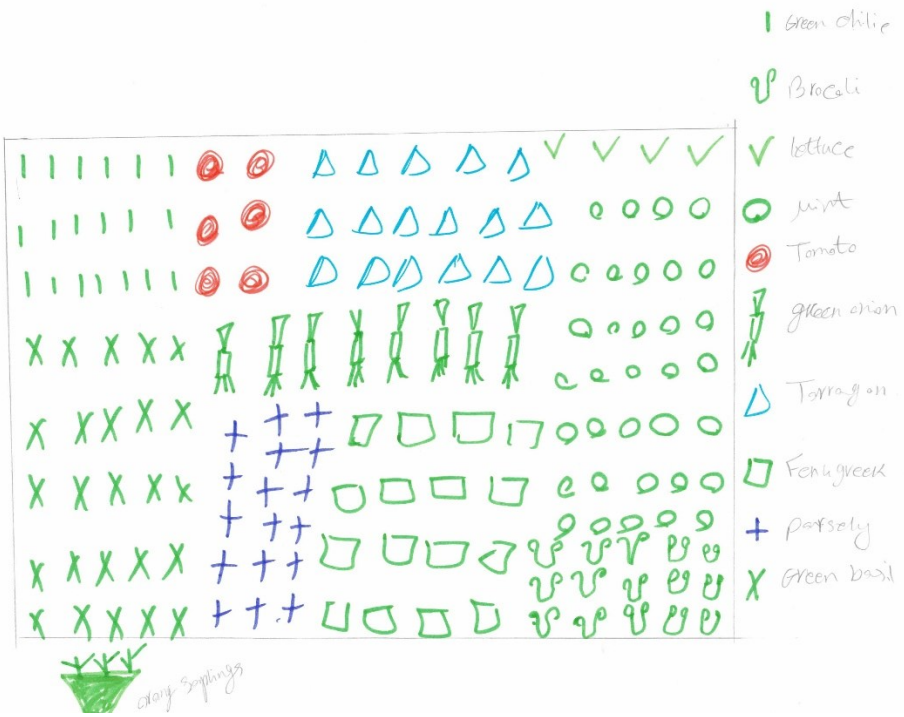

Figure 11: Garden map NO.5. Sara's plot.

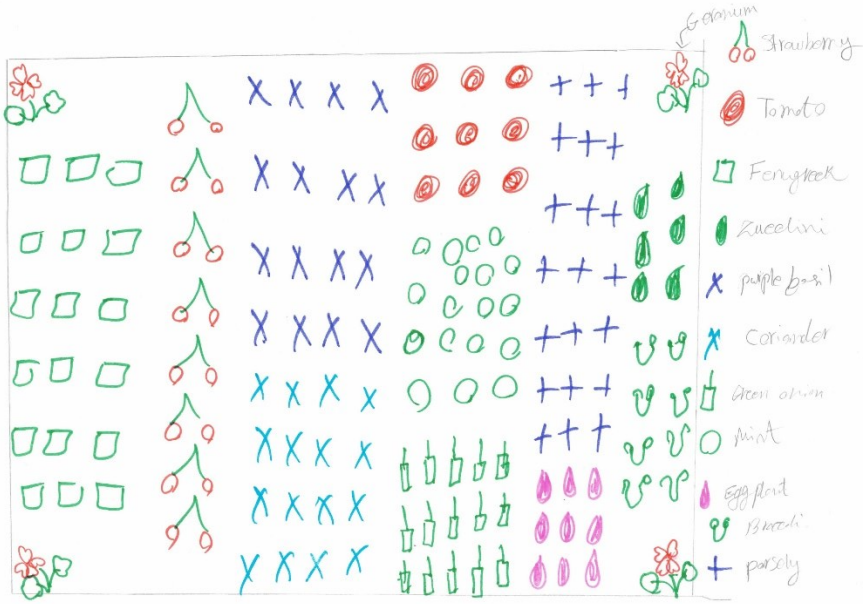

Figure 12: Garden map NO.6. Laleh's plot.

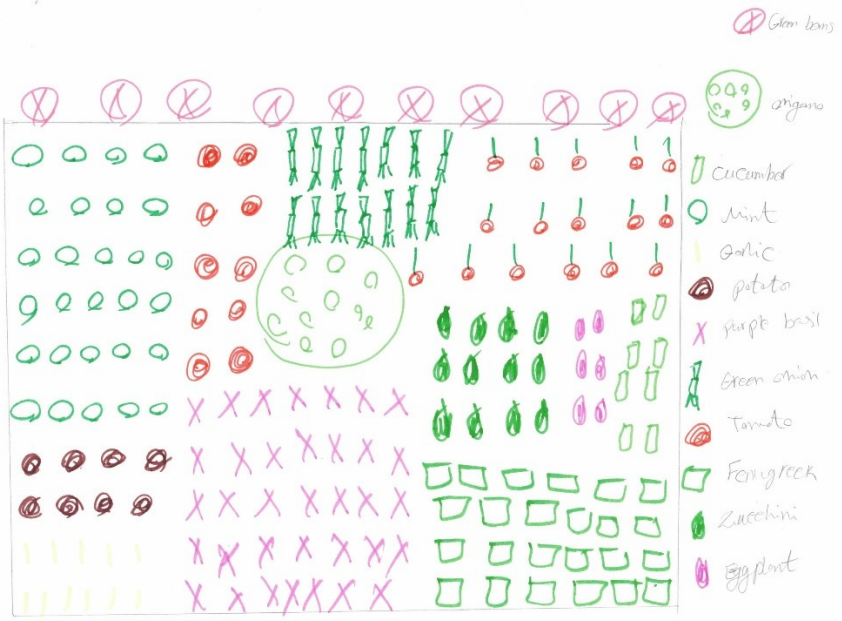

Figure 13: Garden map NO.7. Behnam's plot.

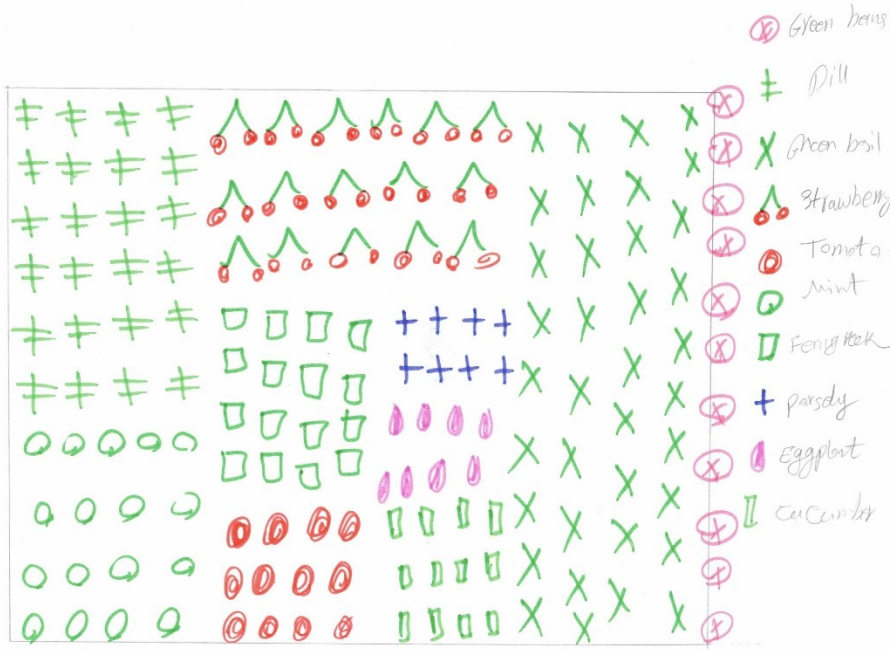

Figure 14: Garden map NO.8. Shabnam's plot.

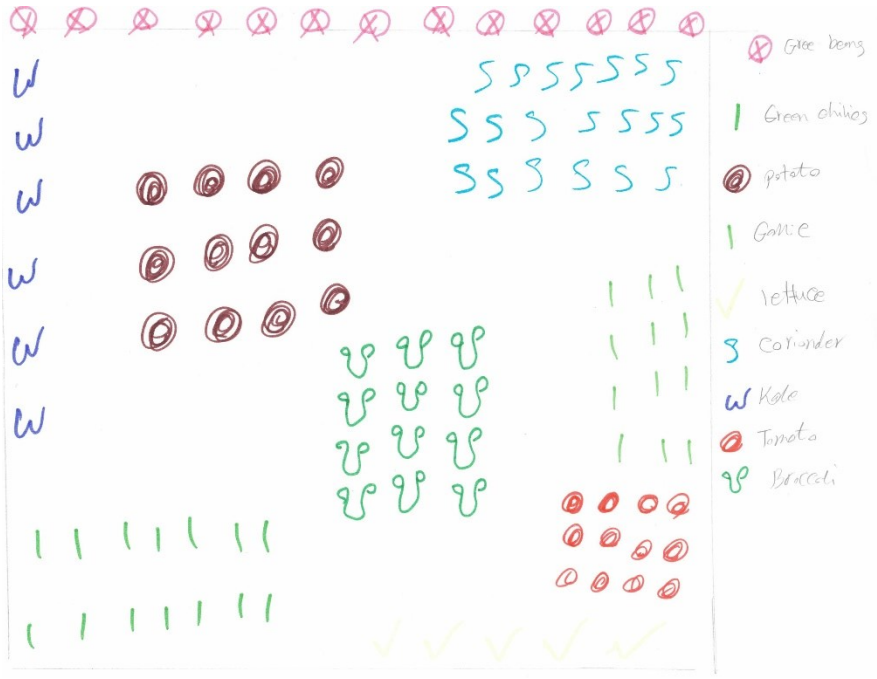

Figure 15: Garden map NO. 9. Kevin's plot.

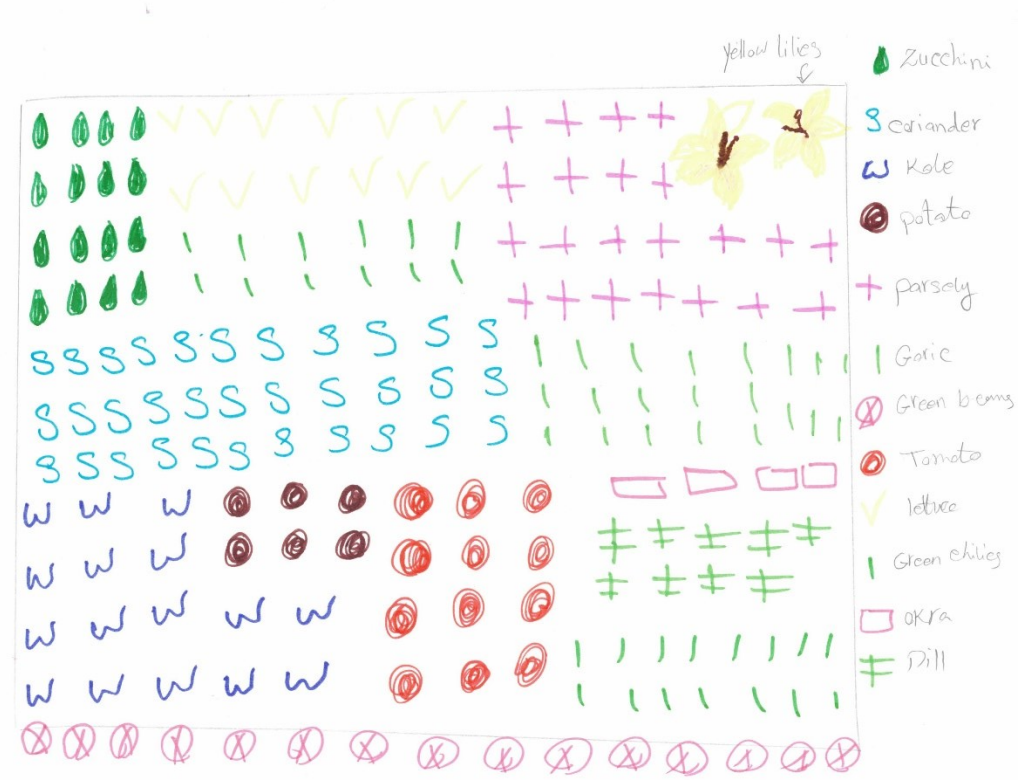

Figure 16: Garden map NO.10. Shamila's plot.

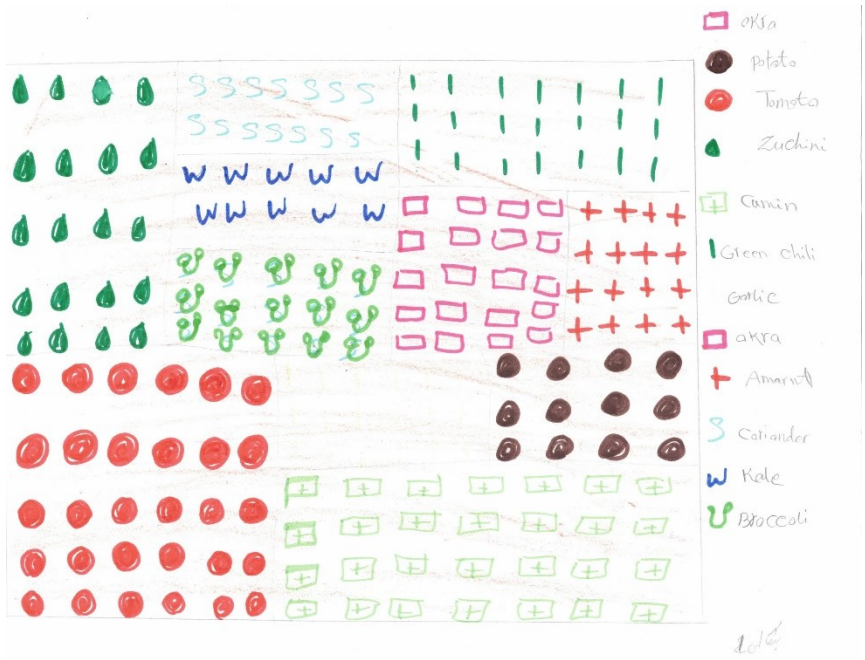

Figure 17: Garden map NO.11. "Sam's plot.

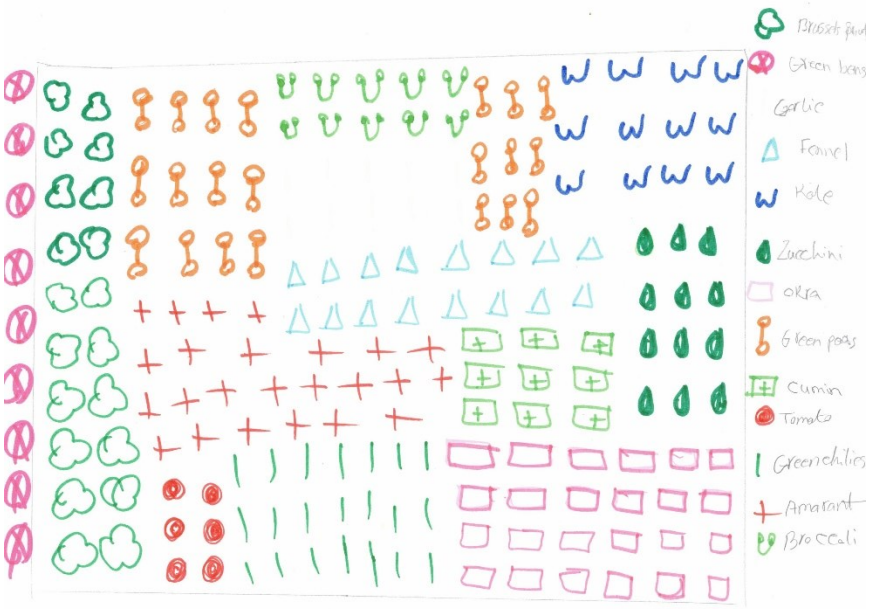

Figure 18: Garden map NO.12. Malika's plot.

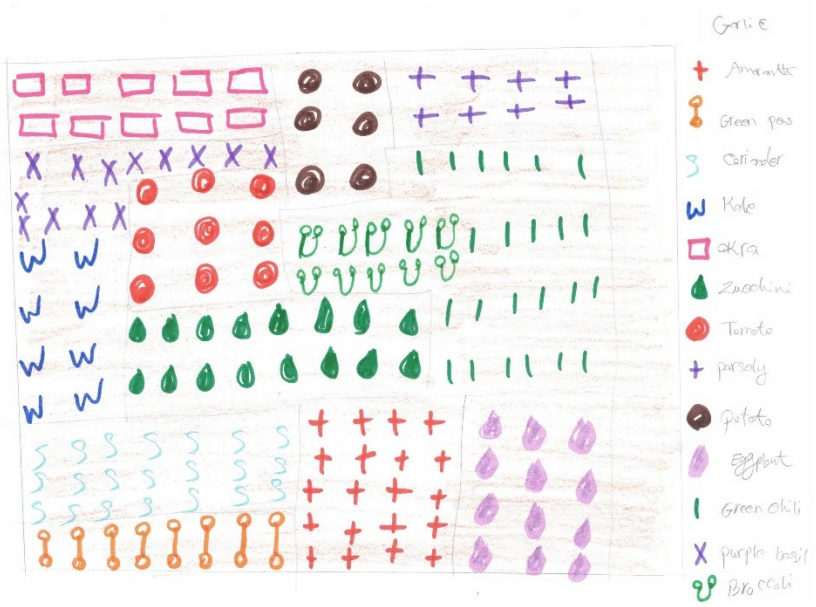

Figure 19: Garden map NO.13. Somiya's plot.

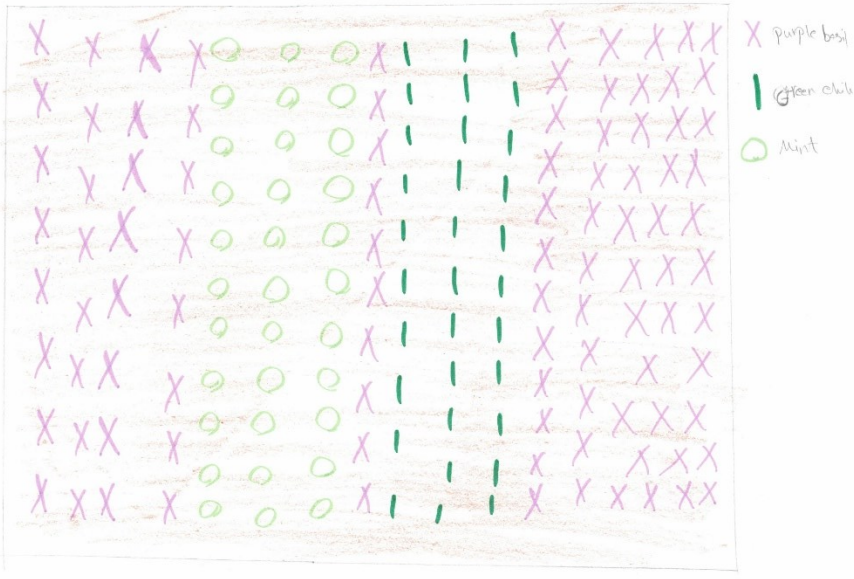

Figure 20: Garden map NO.14. Mahoor's plot.

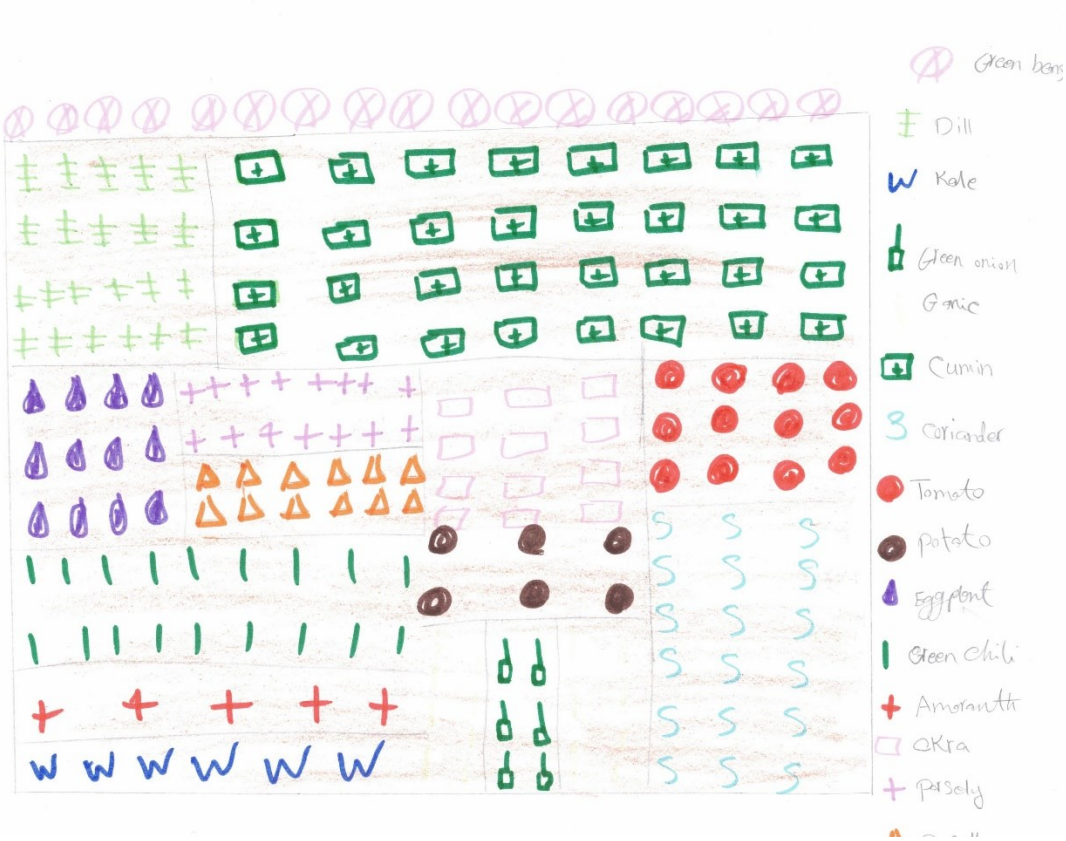

Figure 21: Garden Map NO.15. Rita's plot