

Chapter 4

The Two ‘Ages’ of Modernisation of Allotments: Changing Moral and Aesthetic Models

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Abstract This chapter sheds light on the principle transformations to allotments taking place in Western Switzerland since the middle of the twentieth century. Based on a methodology combining an analysis of both written and spoken sources, it focuses on two periods (1950–1960 and 2000–2010) characterised by notable regulatory changes, demonstrating the extent to which the action taken by ‘reformers’ of these green spaces is grounded in different moral and aesthetic models, the nature of which mutates over time. Firstly, faced with the spectre of the rural wasteland in an urban setting, this chapter documents the transition, in the mid-twentieth century, of the traditional allotment into a clean, tidy familial pleasure garden. Secondly, we see how, throughout the 2000s, these reforms are undertaken with a view to rethinking the spectacle of the formal garden (in favour of a much more fluid style), and its use (‘less privatised’) in a context where new forms of urban gardening (community gardens), ‘taking up less space’ and ‘more integrated into the urban fabric’, continue to thrive. Finally, the chapter seeks to understand how the social history of these two ‘ages’ of modernisation of allotments can be interpreted as a long process of dual construction based, on the one hand, on a succession of off-putting images produced by the ideological and moral configuration dominant from one historic context to another and, on the other hand, on a process of social regulation and normalisation applied to communities perceived as marginal to or unaffected by mainstream concerns.

Keywords Historical sociology • Allotment • Social regulation
Metamorphoses • Moral and aesthetic categories • Urbanism • Western Switzerland

Many studies have already shown how family gardens—once known as ‘allotments’—were initially the result, within Western societies, of the work of a char-

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itable venture designed to provide stability for mobile and uprooted populations—former agricultural workers—who had migrated away from their region or their country because the land could no longer support them (Corbin 1995; Weber 1998). The idea behind this means of regulating and managing people (Foucault 1976) has its origins in the transformations brought about by industrialisation at the end of the nineteenth century. It seems that these were peasants and farm workers who had been ‘uprooted’, leaving behind their traditional life worlds for an uncertain future in rapidly expanding urban centres; they became classed in the discourse of the time as ‘waifs and strays, or vagabonds’, an extremely ‘dangerous’ social class (Chevalier 1978). Envisaged by philanthropists as a space in which recent rural to urban working-class migrants would feel at home, these gardens were effectively created around the first part of the twentieth century in Western societies in answer to social issues of the time (Castel 1995). This response was at once both hygienic (fresh air rather than unhealthy miasmas), nutritional (fresh vegetables rather than alcohol), economic (an income-generating pastime) and political and moral (a group of working-class families rather than a group of male manual workers) (Frauenfelder et al. 2015; Weber 1998).

However, by the second half of the twentieth century, due to diverse social transformations, it would seem that the ‘virtues’ of these gardens were perceived in a different light. If the ‘modernisation’ of allotments in the middle of the twentieth century has been well documented, research on the transformation of gardens on the cusp of the twenty-first century, at a time when our towns were starting to rediscover a new relationship with nature (Hajek et al. 2015; Salomon 2005; Walter and Bergier 1990), was more rare (Frauenfelder et al. 2012, 2014; Guyon 2008). This article therefore aims to contribute to this field of research through a socio-historical study carried out in Western Switzerland which focused on the principle metamorphoses of allotments in the region which have taken place since the 1950s. Rather than attempting to cover the entire period, it concentrates in fact on two exemplary periods of such profound changes. In analysing social change, we recognise that the law—as Durkheim (1893[1990]) had already shown—can sometimes provide an heuristic indication. Thus, at the end of the 1960s, a ‘Law for the protection and development of allotments’ was adopted by the Geneva cantonal parliament (*Loi pour la sauvegarde et le développement des jardins familiaux* or LSDJF, 25 November 1960). The outcome of a shared agreement between the state and the Federation of Community Gardens of Geneva (Fédération genevoise des jardins familiaux or FGJF), this legislation also facilitated the renewal of long-term leases in order to maintain a presence on the territory and offer certain guarantees concerning the future for those families benefiting from the scheme. Over fifty years later, on 20 September 2013, the cantonal parliament of Geneva adopted a ‘Master Plan 2030’¹ aiming, in particular, to ‘promote new forms of community garden and to encourage the creation of planting schemes [community gardens]’ by 2030 and implying that ‘abolishing or else modifying the

¹This ‘plan’ was approved by the Federal Council (the executive body of the Swiss Confederation) on 29 April 2015.

1960 LSDJF’ was a possibility. On the strength of an analysis of these two iconic periods (1950–1960 and 2000–2010), this chapter will reveal the normative and axiological background to these changes in the law and the role played by the institutional actors involved in garden reform. It will show how much the actions of these ‘reformers’² are based on the different aesthetic and moral models the content of which changes from time to time and contributes to a process of symbolic dis/re/qualification of gardens, of their use and of those for whom they are destined. Finally, the chapter will question how much the social history of these two ‘ages’ of modernisation of allotments can be interpreted as a long process of dual construction based, on the one hand, on a succession of off-putting images produced by the ideological and moral configuration dominant from one historic context to another and, on the other hand, on a process of social regulation and normalisation applied to communities perceived to be marginal to, or unaffected by, mainstream concerns.

4.1 Approach and Questionnaire Survey

Within the framework of an historical sociology of public action and problems, this contribution aims to revisit and shed light on transformations which took place over a relatively prolonged period of time. The argument put forward is that the reform of allotments which took place during the second half of the twentieth century is not a simple reflection of an objective situation. It is the fruits of a series of ‘reworkings of the issue (of allotments) which resulted in reforms’ (Tissot 2007: 11), from whence the need to question the doubtful work undertaken by an amorphous grouping of agents all more or less involved through a host of partly different but also similar arguments and concerns. This ‘reforming nebula’ (Topalov 1999) was made up of representatives of communal gardens, public services, elected officials, professional and architectural landscapers and town planners. The methodology employed in our research is based on a review and analysis of both oral and written sources. Thus articles in voluntary-sector (for allotments) reviews, legal texts, press cuttings and official documents (such as action plans for land development) were all intermingled. For the period under review, the analysis is based, *inter alia*, on in-depth qualitative interviews carried out with a member of the FGJF,³ a landscape architect and a town planner. The global body of analysis refers back to discourses uttered by diverse actors each occupying specific and hierarchical positions in the field of land use and spatial planning policies, caught up in an activity at once cognitive (the construction of frameworks of analysis of ‘social problems’), social (creation of networks through which to promote them) and also ‘militant’ (Dubois 2014; Tissot 2007: 12–13). Additionally, faced with what would appear to be, at a

²These institutional actors are not always known as reformers, even though they spontaneously agree with the notion of garden reform and the ‘urgency’ of it.

³Federation of Community Gardens of Geneva.

given moment in time and in a given society, a self-evident problem, sociological research tends to deconstruct the way in which the problem is constituted (Blumer 1971).

From this perspective, we will first reveal the transformations that took place during the first modernisation, in the 1950s, in which allotments were given a new name (and from then on would be known as ‘community gardens’) and were tidied up. We will then set out the changes that were evident at the turn of the twenty-first century, whereby these community gardens were increasingly competing with new ways of gardening in an urban setting (shared gardens, plantations, urban vegetable plots, *community gardens*) and were, at the same time, their own aesthetic and moral benchmarks. In this ideal-typical sketch of the history of these gardens, we will see each time how much the various transformations of the allotments consolidate around symbolic considerations⁴ (What constitutes a good grouping of allotments? For whom are these gardens destined? What use will be made of them?) where uninspiring sites and garden plans to be followed overlap with proposals from reformers, sometimes resulting in revisions.

4.2 The Mid-twentieth-century Modernisation of Allotments

By the end of World War II, with the role of allotments in supplying the country’s food no longer deemed indispensable, many associations disappeared. Allotments had, in fact, enjoyed a golden age under the Wahlen plan (1940–1945). In assuring the extension of field crops in Switzerland, the aim of the plan drawn up by the Swiss agronomist and politician Friedrich Traugott Wahlen was to increase agricultural production during the war thanks to the country’s indigenous resources, in this way responding to the risk of an imports embargo and to Switzerland’s particular situation. The dominant argument of the allotment as a response to the risk of food shortages was no longer valid once this particular moment of crisis was over. This change of context—characterised, *inter alia*, by a phase of economic, demographic and urban expansion⁵—ended with the closure of many allotment sites. Set up in March 1950, the Western Swiss review of the Swiss Federation of

⁴The expressions of which are sometimes quite concrete, as at the beginning of the twenty-first century: revisions to the space allotted to the vegetables plot/sheds, revised layouts and access to the plots and a rethinking of the links between them and their immediate surroundings.

⁵Between 1950 and 1970, Switzerland went through a phase of impressive economic expansion: its gross national product grew four times as quickly as it did before World War II (an average of 4.5% per year). The population grew from 4.7 million inhabitants to 6.3 million by 1970 thanks, in part, to international migration. In 1950, 62.2% of the population lived in communes of more than 2000 inhabitants (compared to 52.1% in 1900). By 1970, the rate of urbanisation reached 77.7% (Thomas 2013: 107).

Home Gardens—*Le Jardin familial* or *Communal Garden*—which publishes the concerns of those authorities seeking to maintain these gardens, calls this situation deplorable:

The issue of small-acreage plots was only seriously considered in Geneva as the need arose or under pressure from the federal authorities. It was only in times of trouble that small-scale gardeners began to be understood and to receive a little support from the authorities [...]. As soon as the Wahlen plan came to an end, the land was repossessed [...]. 23 allotment groupings have disappeared in recent years to make way for buildings or sports facilities [...]. In spite of great encouragement, no new ground has been given to us nor, to date, has any plot been granted long-term rights of use (*Le Jardin familial*, No. 7, September 1950: 9).

Thus, in Geneva, of nearly 50 allotment groups existing in 1943,⁶ almost half were closed down between 1945 and 1950, with similar closures taking place elsewhere in Switzerland, especially in Basle (see Colon 1985). In August 1951, the review *Le Jardin familial* published a list of the groupings which had disappeared/ been wound up/were soon to disappear; the list took the form of an obituary. The article stated that 23 groupings had disappeared since the end of the war, three had been dissolved in 1950 and two would disappear in 1951.

In response to this denunciation of the closure of many groupings, a resolution adopted in August 1951 by the FGJF demanded of the cantonal authorities of Geneva that 'new grounds [be] made available' in order to 'compensate for the disappearance of many dissolved groupings'. Under the rubric 'What the Genevan press thinks', a mix of stances taken by the local press, of various political leanings (*Tribune de Genève*, *Voix Ouvrière*, *La Suisse*, *Courrier de Genève*) was published, as a way of implicitly suggesting that there was some consensus over the good cause that the allotments represented:

During the war, the Federation of Allotments was inundated with encouragement and congratulations. The authorities were not slow in lauding this ancillary activity of many workers – all good citizens working for the good of the community and contributing through their efforts to the economic security of the country. So what of today, now that these difficult times are just a distant memory? It is easy to see that, nowadays, the very existence of these allotments is threatened. Why? Regardless of their popularity in the lower social classes, these allotments do not receive the support which they deserve ('Resolution', in *Le Jardin familial*, No. 8, August 1951: 1).

In many respects, the transformation of these allotments in Geneva in the mid-twentieth century occurred *de facto*, but is only recognised through the reactions which they generate, the uses which are made of them and the appropriations

⁶A grouping is a body of the FGJF or Federation of Community Gardens of Geneva. Each grouping consists of a committee ensuring the proper management of the plots (location and granting of plots, admission of new members, exclusion, etc.) within the statutory limits of the FGJF. The terms of the lease determine the length of time for which an allotment is granted or how long the land is available. Each person renting a plot becomes a member of the grouping, membership which ceases when he or she no longer rents the plot. Each member renting a plot also becomes the owner of a garden shed.

to which they are subjected. We will see that these discourses will contribute significantly to the direction taken by the process of reform in the decade.

The spectre of the rural wasteland in an urban setting: clean and tidy gardens which are pleasing on the eye

Archival analysis (reports and lawsuits of the FGJF) confirms the extent to which the decade from 1950 to 1960 (the first modernisation of allotments) was progressively marked by the importance accorded to the issue of the aesthetics of the allotments and any buildings thereon. If the dominant public formulation of allotments as a response to social questions was a crucial issue of the first half of the twentieth century, the visual appearance of allotments was at the heart of problematisations from the 1950s onwards. Here, it was the absence of economic crisis which, paradoxically, triggered the crisis surrounding allotments⁷ and constrained their spokespersons to find new means of legitimising their presence on the territory and a cleaning up of the allotments. Having gardens which are ‘pleasing on the eye’ stems from an eminently strategic option on which depend both the continued existence of current groupings and the desire to acquire new territories, as expressed by an FGJF report in the 1950s:

It is on the beauty of our allotments, of their appearance, of how they are maintained, that the making available by the local authorities of new sites and their integration in urban development plans depends (Official body of the Cantonal Federation of Allotments, Editorial ‘To the reader’, in *Le Jardin familial*, No. 7, July 1951: 1).

It is clear that, to survive and to flourish, we need the backing of the authorities; these latter will offer neither ground space nor support to poorly managed projects which will destroy the scenic beauty of the outskirts of the town. It is therefore vital that, alongside our negotiations with the local authorities to promote these allotments, the different groupings make a conscious effort to ensure that the allotments are well-maintained and rendered more attractive. If they do not, our allotments run the risk of being closed down sooner rather than later (*Le Jardin familial*, official journal of the Western Swiss Federation of Allotments, edited by the Genevan Federation of Home Gardens, Geneva, No. 10, November–December 1958: 11).

For Weber (1998: 48), the theme of the tidiness and cleanliness of the allotments has been interpreted differently since the 1950s: ‘From enthusiasm for this moralistic undertaking, with its promising future, combined—up until 1950—with the relative good will of those gardeners who saw it as a way of building an honourable reputation, the clearing up of these gardens has become an argument for the preservation of some of them’. This concern is clearly spelled out by the local press of the period:

⁷More generally, the changes which took place during this period were innumerable. Without going into detail, we can mention ‘the historically exceptional increase in income; the unprecedented educational development; the setting up of a welfare state with its extended coverage of health and housing needs, protection of the family and, little by little, drop-outs from society as a whole; the disappearance of urban slums [...]; the start of mass consumption and access for ever-expanding segments of society to household appliances, television, telephone, holidays, etc. The list is never-ending, but the crucial point to mention is the context of full employment’ (Chauvel 2010: 65).

We cannot be expected to shed a sentimental tear for a suburb easily critiqued for its garden sheds, its patchwork of small buildings and its air of false abandonment [...]. But do you find the current appearance of the Bouchet crossroads any more attractive? There is a solution: lease to the Cantonal Federation of Allotments any plots of land which are suited to this type of culture. The plots being on a long lease means we could ask lease-holders to pay rent, especially concerning their buildings. We have, in fact, been assured that a small one comes in at around 1,000 francs. Again, we need a guarantee that these plots will be available for some time to come (*Journal de Genève*, 14 April 1953: 6).

Criticism over the poor maintenance of the gardens, brought up at annual meetings of the FGJF, arose following formal visits to these allotment groups. The idea behind these visits is to 'identify and heap praise on deserving gardeners' and maintain a controlling hand over their practices, while sometimes needing to action 'the expulsion or voluntary departure' of any 'undesirables' (Weber 1998: 31–32). Some FGJF reports of visits are quite evocative in this respect, such as this next extract reporting on a visit to a group of allotments on the Right Bank of Geneva in July 1954:

Account of a visit to several groups of allotments on the Right Bank on 17 July 1954: [...] we were welcomed by committee members who showed us round the allotment, where some of the gardeners had undertaken the enormous task of levelling the ground and improving the uncultivated plots; on the whole, these allotments are flourishing and well-maintained. However, we were shocked, when we arrived in front of Mr. Z's hut, to find that it was surrounded by an overwhelming mess; this member was served with a serious warning and told that he must immediately turn this house of horrors into a presentable plot. Other members have installed chicken-runs without permission. [...] On arrival at Château-Bloch around 18.45, we were received by three committee members who showed us round; we saw that great efforts were being made by this group of allotment-holders to spruce up their plots and noticed the good taste shown in their choice of buildings and how clean the surroundings were. We were told of the obstructive behaviour of certain members of the grouping which was having a negative effect on the good running of the allotments. After having been guests at a richly appointed table, we took our leave of Mr. R, whom our president congratulated for the great effort made by the committee to restore this important group of allotments [...]. The under-secretary [of the FGJF].⁸

Defenders of the cause, while confirming high and wide their belief in the values of law and order ('well-built sheds', plots that are 'well-maintained and something to be proud of'), still link allotments to the post-war period of modernisation characterised by unprecedented social and economic development and by an explosion in population. This aim can be found in other national contexts, for example in France, as Weber (1998: 62) underlines in his study: 'To earn their place on the outskirts of the modern town, allotments must offer to the eyes of the public a neat and tidy appearance—an ornament for the neighbourhood. This is the price of their future [...]. Modern allotments must, with their "arbours and shelters", both set themselves apart from the slum area—a sort of degree zero, impoverished and ill-equipped, of the housing estate—and resemble a green space with

⁸Report of the Cantonal Federation of Allotments, 17 July 1954, in the archives of the Genevan Federation of Home Gardens'.

“well-maintained pathways, well-trimmed hedges, a well-decorated entrance to the group of plots (flowers, etc.)”, as stated in the questionnaire survey’. Thus, the original huts, usually thrown together from salvaged materials and criticised for their slum-like appearance, would give way to elaborate, good-sized chalets, the design of which was submitted for planning permission, as covered by building regulations. In Geneva, in 1957, two new groups of allotments appeared (‘Le Grand-Chêne’ and ‘Le Temple’),⁹ groups held up as the model to follow:

Among the encouraging outcomes of the recent exercise is the continuation of the landscaping of the new ‘Grand-Chêne’ group of allotments, which is now looking great. Federation-style chalets are now plentiful and contribute to the overall pleasing and harmonious aspect of this attractive site. How far we are from the old ‘urban wastelands’ of the past with their ‘rabbit huts’ decorating these unofficial allotments [...]. Another project has been the organisation and the development of the ‘Le Temple’ group. This group of allotments, opened this year on a magnificent piece of ground offered by the Federation on a long lease is almost completely full. These 91 plots, superbly placed, with the Salève in the background and their neat rows of chalets, will be the delight of many a family (FCJF, *Le Jardin familial, op. cit.*, No. 1, January 1958: 2–3).

By the end of the decade, this strategy for the upgrading of allotments seems to have spread to all groupings.

A welcome change has gradually taken place in the allotment buildings too – the ‘*gloriettes* or little rooms’ as our French friends have so aptly named them. Little by little the jumble of rusty corrugated iron sheds has disappeared, making way for simple but elegant buildings where the family can enjoy spending time together (*Le Jardin familial, op. cit.*, September 1959: 6).

In many respects, this upgrading of allotments appears to be a meeting-point between the obligation imposed by local authorities to clear up the plots and the FGJF’s struggle to gain recognition of and, in a context of unprecedented social, economic and demographic development, a stable future for such an institution. In a bid to enforce the ‘good maintenance’ of these allotment groups, the terms and conditions of use of these grounds offered to the FGJF by the local authorities were fixed in a law adopted in 1957. The agreed measures consist in transforming the plots so they no longer look like ‘urban wastelands’, as lauded by some local newspapers: ‘Clever redesigning has removed all traces of ‘urban wasteland’ and the little chalets which the tenants have been authorised to construct are of the style agreed upon’ (*Journal de Genève*, 10 September 1957). When necessary, the state can also remind tenants of these agreements, as the state is actually still the real owner of these allotment groups, as stated in a law of 17 February 1966 concerning ‘the leasing of land as allotments to the Genevan Federation of Home Gardens’.

As well as the care taken by leaseholders over the appearance of the allotments and chalets and the maintenance of the vegetable gardens, we will later see that this

⁹To respect the anonymity of the three sites under investigation, we are obliged to use pseudonyms. Thus, ‘Le Temple’, ‘Le Grand-Chêne’ and, later, ‘La Plaine-des-Renards’ are completely fictitious names. Note that, just as the work was published in 2015, two of the aforementioned groups (‘Le Temple’ and ‘La Plaine-des-Renards’) were moved to new emplacements.

modernisation also crystallises around the new way of defining the target population. However, here too, behind the promotion of a new selection process for tenants and their practices, we also see a renaissance of 'old-style' allotments. These 'ancient' plots represent, through the distinctive struggles to which they are henceforth committed (Bourdieu 1979), a figure of ugliness, as we will see below.

4.3 Promoting the Family Garden: Upward Social Mobility?

In the 1950s, the Federation changed its name. If the name Federation of Workers' Gardens was still in use at the beginning of the decade, the qualifier 'worker' progressively disappeared in favour of the term 'family'. Why? This evolution is due to the transformation of the economic situation, which would alter the expectations of gardeners:

With the improvement in the economic situation, the post-war years saw a significant reduction in the number of amateur gardeners. However, what is pleasing to note is that a number of employees and workers, who previously were required to work the land, now take pleasure in cultivating their plots and continue this culture, which not only provides them with often appreciated crops, but also a healthy pastime and a degree of clean air which they cannot hope to find during the long hours spent in the polluted atmosphere of offices or factories (FCJF, 'A cry for help! Calling on public opinion – Our briefing on the situation of allotments in Geneva', in *Le Jardin familial*, April 1953: 3).

Entitled 'Combining business with pleasure: vegetable gardens or family plots?' the case study selected from the Western Swiss review *Le Jardin familial* clearly explains what is at play at the end of the decade.

Over the years the conception of the allotment has evolved to become less utilitarian. We now see very few plots exclusively devoted to the growing of household crops. A worthwhile annual yield is (certainly) still the goal but, next to the lines of vegetables, it is nowadays quite common to find a relatively large plot reserved for flowers. The vegetable garden is increasingly becoming the family garden not only where the amateur gardener can grow seasonal vegetables but also a place where the whole family can find pleasure, tranquility and beauty (*Le Jardin familial*, Official Western Swiss journal of the Swiss Federation of Home Gardens, Geneva: Cantonal Federation of Home Gardens, No. 9, September 1959: 6).

Garden competitions: how to rank cultivation?

Reading through the articles published in *Le Jardin familial*, we can see that the extent of actual garden produce, as depicted in the review, will increasingly be competing with other preoccupations which go way beyond vegetable growing. In the mid-1950s, visitors to the allotments in question (forming a 'commission' composed of 'a professional', a 'qualified colleague from another allotment group' and a 'committee member', none of whom are

entered in the competition) felt it necessary to introduce a ‘tiered scale’, as they explain in *Le Jardin familial* published in June 1954.

‘How to rank cultivation? A scale of 1–10 results in a surfeit of *ex-aequo* scores. It would be far better to attribute scores on a scale agreed in advance: 10 points for cultivation (care, diversity of the crops, distance between the rows, treatments), 10 points for the orderliness and cleanliness of the plot (pathways, weeds, compost heap) and 10 points for the pleasure aspect (flowers, chalet, arbour, children’s play area)’. However, the review leads us to believe that some of the criteria reserved for the evaluation of allotments are not universally applied: ‘This way of attributing points is often criticised by its opponents, who feel that our allotments are for growing vegetables and that this is the only perspective that should be considered in the competition’. However, as the review explains (slipping into the argument the view of the Federation), ‘We do not agree at all. We are not looking for vegetable gardens but HOME GARDENS where the whole family can experience pleasure each time they visit. It is not a beautiful bed of cabbages, however exceptional, which will endear the plot to the housewife and her children. On the contrary, a beautiful garden, with a perfumed flower bed, an arbour where the children can have their tea in the shade, and a chalet covered in climbing plants. Or, quite simply, a bench in the shade where the family can relax in the evenings. This is what makes a HOME GARDEN so agreeable, and this should be taken into account’ (‘Garden competition’ in *Le Jardin familial*, No. 6, June 1954: 9).

However, this change in the classification of the target population is again part of the social transformations to which the groups are aspiring—in particular, *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world. In liberating themselves gradually from the sordid image often associated with the working classes (Grignon and Passeron 1989), they are bringing to public attention a new perception of the role of allotments. It is a question of suggesting that, from now on, the allotment serves ‘other purposes’, the group hastens to add. Although previously in response to the need some years earlier for the growing of vegetables, seen as a necessity for working-class households as it provided them with the means to be self-sufficient and to meet their own consumer needs, the allotment is increasingly seen as a space of relaxation and leisure. Changes in the assessment criteria during gardening competitions organised by some allotment groups in order to reward particularly deserving gardeners reveal the dynamics of reconfiguration of the functions associated with plots which are mutating from the ‘vegetable garden’ to the ‘pleasure garden’ (see the box below).

This new representation of the home garden is completely in keeping with societal transformations engendered by the shortening of the working day and the development of the ‘leisure industry’ (Corbin 1995; Lalive d’Epinay et al. 1983). The image of the ‘family leisure garden’ is often invoked as an argument in the struggle for recognition of the cause: the image of the gardener is often compared

with that of sportspersons or music lovers. The situation of these other 'contributing groups' is more favourably viewed by the FGJF, which reveals one of the difficulties it encounters in trying to safeguard its place in the social space. Over and above this form of social competition for urban space, the federation intends to symbolically ascribe the development of home gardens as a new, flourishing social issue.

A whole class of citizens, mostly of modest means, does not understand this indifference on the part of the local authorities towards home gardens, while so many other contributing groups, such as sportspersons and music lovers, seem to automatically obtain the developments they seek (FCJF, 'A cry for help! Calling on public opinion – Our briefing on the situation of allotments in Geneva', in *Le Jardin familial*, April 1953: 5).

However, this expanded concept of the function of allotments, concerned to no longer use these forms of self-sufficiency as the main argument in their defence, goes hand-in-hand with a broader vision of the targeted population. It is as though the category of 'worker', once an official term used by the federation, was now seen as too limited and reductionist *vis-à-vis* the new roles conferred on the allotment and elements of the population potentially involved (notably public sector employees). Where vegetable gardening remains very important, those defending the cause of allotments hasten to explain that it is just a pretext for self-fulfillment and leisure activities, and not a survival strategy. In federation discourse, maintaining this distance from utilitarian gardening seems juxtaposed with conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1970): it is not only the products of one's labour which are consumed, but fresh air, sun and free time. No doubt suppressing use of the term 'worker' should be put into perspective following the reconfiguration of the gardening population (Schwartz 2011) and the lower classes in general. During the second half of the twentieth century, we know that the working classes for the general category of salaried workers in the world of the proletariat (Castel 2009: 364). The category of employee is increasing numerically while workers—usually 'skilled'—are seeing their way of life transformed thanks to a loosening of economic constraints and the opening up of social opportunities. By the 1960s, workers and employees will both benefit, thanks to collective claims, social protest movements and the development of the welfare state—from progress either in areas linked directly to employment (accident insurance, health, pensions, social insurances, the right to work and wage increases) or in their private lives (access to mass consumption and to leisure activities, as well as to collective assets such as health, hygiene, housing, training and some participation in social ownership) (Alonzo and Huguée 2010: 21–22; Castel 1995: 519–620). Note, however, that the survey which we carried out in Western Switzerland in the early 2010s in three allotment groups seems to confirm this specific social and historical relationship with the garden. We were able to show how closely the garden represents, for many keen gardeners among employees (usually those in the 60+ age bracket), some of whom worked in the public sector (policemen, inspectors, bus or tram drivers, home-helps, office

workers) a space for leisure, friendships and entertaining (Frauenfelder et al. 2015).¹⁰ According to this logic, growing vegetables is a seasonal occupation. These gardeners do not store or freeze their crops, but spend considerable sums on gardening products; they do not perceive the garden as saving them money.

Furthermore, in lauding the pleasurable aspects of an allotment, the reformers were seeking to distance themselves from forms of charitable guardianship which saw allotments as a means through which to control and alleviate social poverty and disorder. In many ways, the FGJF newsletter symbolically drives the idea that the allotment is more a space appropriated by gardeners who have come together to form an association than a means to morally elevate and civilise those social categories recently urbanised. Seen initially as a ‘good cause’, allotments would progressively take on a different meaning, gradually turning into ‘gardening associations’. One tangible indication of this metamorphosis: where once these plots of land were offered as a gesture of goodwill, those with the good fortune to be working them would soon be required to pay an annual subscription. Through these changes, those to whom the allotments had been graciously granted originally would be able to shrug off the symbolic mantle of the deserving poor (and the notion of the allotment as a sort of charitable gesture) and virtually return to a social security regime because they have transformed these plots ‘to which they have every right’ thanks to their licence fee (Weber 1998: 94). The desire to distance themselves from the supervisory relationship initially established between local authorities and the workers themselves—often played out in the discourses of those promoting allotments in the first half of the twentieth century—is very evident, for example, in the tone of the first volume of the Western Swiss journal *Le Jardin familial*, published in March 1950. Created at the insistence of the FGJF’s members and symbolically equated to a sort of ‘companion you would be happy to meet up with again, in your old shack, between sowing seeds and a break for a snack’, the journal thus clearly indicates its desire to distance itself from certain moralising goals whose aim is not so much to provide ‘wise advice’ as to keep up with any interesting ‘titbits’.¹¹ The rubrics ‘Ramblings of an old gardener’ and ‘Father Gaspard’s ramblings’, which reappear regularly in the volumes of *Le Jardin*

¹⁰According to our analysis of FGJF (2010) statistics, of the 1335 gardeners who had indicated their profession at the time of their application for an allotment in Geneva, 78.4% were working class (employees and workers), 17.2% were middle class and 4.4% were categorised as ‘other’ (homemakers, small-business owners and the unemployed). Other surveys came to the similar conclusion that there is an over-representation of the working class in these places. Weber (1998: 70) notes, for example, that, of the two sites visited during her ethnographic survey, three-quarters of the employees were in the public sector: the electricity board, the RATP transport company, the railways, welfare, the police and local authorities. She concluded that ‘[...] thus a portrait is revealed of a respectable working class with stable employment’.

¹¹Cantonal Federation of Allotments (Genevan section). *Le Jardin familial*, *op. cit.*, No. 1, March 1950: 1. Similar developments have been noted in France: Although at the turn of the century the rhetoric used by members of the League highlighted social distance (e.g. in the use of the term ‘those good people’), familiarity is today emphasised (e.g. in the term ‘the lads’) (Florence Weber, *op. cit.*: 100).

familial from the mid-1950s, bear witness to the need to reinforce the idea that the preoccupations of the core membership are represented. With the obvious need to both keep members of the FGJF informed of the stakes at play in a critical context characterised by the closure of many sites and to strengthen internal solidarity between them, the journal plays its part more generally in the strengthening of the associative dimension of the movement, by the same token seeing those responsible more as spokespersons for the FGJF's members than as representatives of state authorities or funding bodies.

Furthermore, this distancing of the practical aims associated with vegetable gardens reflects certain ethical transformations in the homestead. The idea of creating workers' homesteads—a philanthropical concept very common in the first half of the twentieth century with the creation of allotments¹²—resurfaced periodically during the 1950s. In the first half of the twentieth century, the allotment was first and foremost seen as a way of encouraging the working classes to 'live as a family' in order to drag the proletariat off the streets and away from social disorder (alcoholism, nightclubs, strikes) to a life of domestic bliss (Donzelot 1977). However, during the 1950s, the family values attached to the allotment start to perceive it—in a context of relative loosening of economic constraints—as a self-referenced end in itself: the space becomes a place of leisure and relaxation for the whole family. Yet here, again, it is a question of those in favour of allotments turning their back on the 'old-style traditional' allotment and looking resolutely to the future. Of course these symbolic strategies of re/presentation of the group echo those objective and thorough transformations taking place in the working classes. We know that the turn of the 1950s seems to have represented a sort of golden age of grassroots familialism where the family is at the heart of social life; concrete proof of the perfect daily life, the 'home, sweet home', while remaining privileged spaces of sociability and solidarity (Hoggart 1970: 53). This relationship with the private sphere will grow in strength, amongst the lower classes, throughout the Glorious Thirties, particularly within those elements which are stable or socially upwardly mobile (Frauenfelder 2009; Schwartz 2002[1990]).

By the end of the 1950s, the allotment reform movement—obliged to modernise if it is to survive—will benefit from a sort of public blessing. Effectively, on 25 November 1960, a 'Law for the protection and development of allotments' was unanimously adopted in the Genevan Cantonal Parliament, giving defenders of the modernisation of allotments some recognition of their commitment to the cause: the state undertakes to ensure 'the safety and development' of allotments by taking responsibility for 'the building of allotments' and facilitating the 'conclusion of long-term leases'. At the institutional level, while the state remains the true 'owner' of allotments,¹³ the FGJF is now recognised as credible and knowledgeable in the

¹²Philanthropical motivations are behind the upgrading of family values at the heart of the federation's official designations. For example, in France and Belgium, *Ligues du coin de terre et du foyer* (*Leagues of Earth and Hearth*) were set up in 1896.

¹³'Genevan Federation of Allotments, 75 years', *op.cit.*: 5.

management of this public utility. Thus, through this first modernisation, the old-style allotment becomes the modern allotment—the home garden.

4.4 The Second Modernisation (2000–): New Models of Home Gardens

From the 1980s, the issue of allotments has been the subject of many debates, both in Switzerland and in other European countries; increased public and political attention has focused particularly on the issue of urban gardening (DAT 2006; Guyon 2004; Monédiaire 1999; Weber 1998). It is seen as an opportunity for towns to redeem themselves by restoring ‘a lost link with nature’ (Kebir and Barraqué 2014; Salomon and Ernwein 2014) through experimenting with and developing forms of gardening which take up less space and are more integrated into the urban fabric. Influenced by new frameworks of public action and urban representation (green towns, urban agriculture, urban nature, biodiversity, eco-neighbourhoods and sustainable towns), sometimes codified as ‘urban marketing’ (Breviglieri 2013) under the banner of ‘sustainable development’,¹⁴ the original concept of the allotment is revisited. In Geneva, this tendency can be seen in the promotion of allotment reform in the 2000s, presented as ‘necessary’ and ‘inevitable’ by the local authorities.¹⁵ New garden concepts make an appearance during this decade, and the ‘urban vegetable garden’ (or ‘plantings’)—which correspond to the ‘shared gardens’ model found in France or the ‘community gardens’ of North America (the US, Canada)—is increasingly used in public debates to indicate a new form of gardening space, sited at the base of buildings, of a reduced size (6–50 m² as opposed to 250 m²) and with no shed. Appealing to the political and institutional authorities of the State of Geneva, to local authorities, town planners and landscape architects alike, urban vegetable plots are, however, only given a muted welcome by the FGJF, even if it is encouraged by local authorities to accept planned changes. Effectively, the focus of the new Genevan cantonal master plan adopted by the local authorities on 30 September 2013 is the future development of the territory through ‘promoting new forms of allotment and encouraging the creation of plantations’, referring to the possibility of ‘revoking’ or ‘modifying’ the ‘Law for the protection and development of allotments’ (25 November 1960). Responding to certain concerns at once pragmatic (the very limited and highly urbanised Genevan territory, inciting the authorities to develop ‘spatially restricted’ allotments) and ecological (linked to the litres of petrol needed to travel to the allotment outside the town just

¹⁴With their increased public visibility at the turn of the twenty-first century, these environmental and managerial concerns promote the urban trend towards ‘sustainable development’, a concept which received a great deal of publicity after the Rio Summit of 1992 (Dubost 2010) and which plays an important role in the structuring and legitimisation of public action at the level of urban planning (Lafaye and Thévenot 1993; Lascoumes 1994; Ollitrault 2001).

¹⁵The next section draws on Frauenfelder et al. (2014).

to grow ‘a few lettuces’, as well as the ‘overfertilisation’ of the soil which, according to some studies, is too high),¹⁶ urban vegetable plots fit the bill entirely. The enthusiasm of the political and associational world of Geneva for this type of allotment has not ceased to grow, as suggested by the half a dozen motions deposited and/or adopted in the State of Geneva parliament and some communes. The titles of these motions, the initiative for which stems from the centre-left ‘Green Party’,¹⁷ are revealing of the ideological investment in this new type of garden: ‘In favour of vegetable gardens close to homes’ (accepted by the canton in 1988) and ‘In fashion, plantations *à la mode*’ (accepted by the city in 2003). These policy demands will be welcomed by local authorities as they offer solutions to a number of objective and legal constraints. With their surface area well below that of existing allotments, urban vegetable gardens also have the advantage of being sited near to people’s homes. Traditional allotments, on the contrary, tend to be situated on the outskirts of the town,¹⁸ are harder to access on public transport (thus less ecologically sound) and vie with other pretenders to the space (market gardening and sporting venues). Apart from being favourably considered by politicians, such concrete undertakings have also been initiated by some town halls. Since 2006, Geneva—together with three suburban communities—have had their own plantations. According to their sponsors, these urban allotments are destined more for people originally from the country (who appreciate working the soil—often full-time—and who thus prefer allotments) rather than for urbanites who have less available time. The fact that all the political actors we met often borrowed ideas from other national contexts bears witness to how these ideas circulate when it comes to creating urban vegetable plots.

Because, and we should not be afraid to admit it, we copied to some extent what was happening in Lausanne and in France, the book ‘*Les jardins partagés*’ – ‘*Communal Gardens*’ – was published (in France) but it’s exactly the same thing, gardens surrounding blocks of flats, I liked the word ‘plantings’ in order to distinguish them from allotments (Mr. Belloz, 40, Mayor of Vernier, socialist).

Note that the story of ‘community gardens’ should not be confused with that of allotments which originated initially, as we saw in the introduction, as a charitable project, dating back to the end of the nineteenth century, designed to boost the morale of recent rural to urban working-class migrants. The model of the shared garden, however (Baudelet et al. 2008), mentioned by some of the interviewees in our study, was a different story altogether. It originated in the community gardens

¹⁶From 2003, the coverage in the media of certain studies supports the ‘academic’ legitimisation of the negative image of the ‘polluting gardener’ (see ‘*Des jardins familiaux pas très bio*’—‘The not-so-bio allotments’—<http://www.rts.ch/video/emissions/abe/396748-des-jardins-familiaux-pas-tres-bio.html>).

¹⁷This party’s influence on the promotion of this type of allotment would seem to originate in a grass-roots movement. Dubost (1994: 1) highlights that the fashion nowadays for gardens and horticulture is ‘in line with the ecological movement’.

¹⁸A situation which will only get worse with the outward spread of towns and cities and the relocalisation and resettlement of many groupings.

of the US, and New York in particular, in the 1070s, with the appearance of the first gardens in Manhattan following an urban and financial crisis in which many abandoned buildings were demolished, leaving great swathes of wasteland. On the pretext of clearing and replanting these wastelands, a whole new world will be explored by a cultural and artistic *avant-garde* keen to throw off the shackles of the traditional *bourgeoisie* (seen as cultivating a form of grouping which is very divisive in wealthier neighbourhoods) by developing in more diverse quarters a whole new way of life—centred, in particular, around gardening. In the communal gardens surrounding their blocks of flats, these ‘promoters of diversity’ (Tissot 2011: 271–272) cultivate not so much vegetables as ‘flowers, fragrant herbs and some tomatoes’, a use of the space which is evidence of a ‘movement of reform, this time for the upper classes and not the working classes’ (ibid.). More than mere self-display, relations with others—spaces where people meet up with others from different social spheres more than spending time with the family in the home garden—seem a highly distinctive way of life: ‘Enhancing the mix at the level of the neighbourhood, cosmopolitan, [...] they represent a way of life which is less exclusively focused on the family circle [...], breaking away from the image of the *pater familias* and of the good little wife at home’ (2011: 13).¹⁹ In Geneva, it is the Rue Lissignol, a street right in the centre of the city which, in the 1990s, introduced the current wave of ‘urban gardening’; a while later, in 1994, ethno-planners, journalists and councillors at the town hall—drawing up an inventory of projects carried out on French territory with the aim of promoting, through practical advice, this new and ecological utopia—reported that a similar experience had seen the light of day in Lausanne (Baudelet et al. 2008: 139–142).

Presented as an alternative to the traditional allotment, urban vegetable gardens seemed to satisfy diverse concerns and interests. Taking their inspiration from the new models created ‘as examples’ to be copied, institutional actors such as urban planners and landscape architects involved in the reform of allotments in Geneva have a tendency, when working on displacement and resettlement projects, to rely—over and above any rational and ecological concerns—on tried and tested aesthetic and moral designs.

From the avoidance of ‘cumbersome’, ‘uninteresting’ layouts ...

From our interviews with the various actors involved, we can see that it is the aesthetic design of the well-thought-out, well-laid-out allotment which comes under scrutiny at the turn of the twenty-first century. Created during the twentieth century as an alternative to the spectacle of the rural wasteland in an urban setting, the well-kept appearance of the allotment acted as a foil in the discussions of those planners and architects involved in the creation of new forms of allotment when the time came to relocate two sites. This is what Mr. Robert (57 years old, architect,

¹⁹This is why, in France, the idea of the ‘shared garden’ is preferred over that of the ‘community garden’, a term which could cause some confusion: a garden that is ‘communal or of the community’ could wrongly be perceived as belonging to a single community, which is in complete contrast to the spirit of this type of collective garden.

project manager for the cantonal department of planning and development of land (DAT) suggested, insisting that, in future,

... we will break up the plots a bit, this rather cumbersome grid pattern, these groupings ... they really have a extremely boring appearance, they do nothing to improve the look of the area, let's be clear about this, I don't find them very attractive, I find them ugly...

Compared to new norms of aesthetic evaluation employed by competent actors who had the professional skills to allow them to justify their idea of 'good taste', and to present it as desirable and preferable, it turns out that both the 'orthogonality' of the layout of the groups of allotments (having had their finest hour when plots were laid out in lines and squares cross-cut periodically by several main entrance paths which crossed over lengthways) and the 'chalet-style' allotment appeared to be 'problematic':

Everything is standardised, the tiles on the roof of the sheds are all the same colour, [...] thus there is one aspect which is extremely repetitive, just like neighbourhoods full of blocks of flats where each block is the same as the next. We would say 'Goodness, how horrific is this?' because the design is so offputting, so ordinary, repetitive, concentrated into one small space – there is no spatial expansion! [...] In itself it is not interesting as it has no pastoral charm; which ever way you look at it, it's always the same' (Mrs. Romy, 53 years, DAT architect).

Landscape architects deplore current FGJF conventions, with their too-standardised and monotonous appearance, in favour either of gardens redesigned without sheds—which have the advantage of being smaller and taking up less space—or of allotments with some sort of shelter but less 'chalet'-style, with a sloping, slightly curved roof in order to stop it looking like a pretty basic, straightforward hut. With a proposition which still has to be negotiated with representatives of the FGJF, these professionals are demonstrating that they are taking on board the wishes of the end-users (see also Dubost 2010).

In accordance with what would seem to be a new urban-style model, it is also sometimes a reference to a 'natural' garden, to a messy space where here and there tall grasses grow, symbolising the forces of 'informal living' (Lizet 2010: 599), as uttered by some reformers. A model which also strongly contrasts with the aesthetic ideals of a well-tended. One landscape planner highlighted, during the presentation to potential users of a new development of allotments, the need to plant hazel, copses, forsythias or grasses in order to give the site a more natural feel. More generally, this new relationship with nature will manifest itself, according to the landscaper, in the creation of kitchen gardens which blend in with the characteristics of the landscape rather than to simply apply a formal design:

Nowadays there is a sort of overall logical landscape! We now bring back in some of the characteristics of the landscape [...] What is perhaps new in the ideas which are part of it, is that plants can bring in something more important than was thought up to now [...]. What were prevalent in cityscapes of the nineteenth century were trees, certainly, but planted very formally along the main roads. It is typical of our town centre! And it's a language which is now somewhat losing ground (Mr. Forster, 50, independent landscape architect).

However, behind this evaluation of the natural framework for allotment sites, with a more liberal planting scheme²⁰—more than a simple evaluation of unspoilt nature in itself—lie perhaps all the ambiguities felt towards contemporary nature. Welcoming the workings of nature but taking control of them, an ambiguity where the ‘wilderness’ remains, if it is to be completely accepted, very ‘socialised’ (Lizet 2010). In parallel with this ‘aesthetic criticism’ which the reformers favouring allotments have put forward, their private use is also questioned.

... to the desire to decompartmentalise familial inward-looking attitudes

If the importance of family is an ethico-moral virtue of allotments which was enshrined in the state’s adoption of the law in the 1960s, this form of familialism is today criticised for the insularity it can engender. The new models of allotments are designed as a response to this criticism. While retaining the garden shed, some of the new sites under construction should ‘open up’ the group of allotments to the public in order to avoid their being off-limits to the rest of the population:

It’s a question of not allowing this sector in society to become cut off, [to become] increasingly marginalised [or] too shut in, closed (Mr. Forster, landscape architect).

This concern can be seen in the layout of the pathways designed to bring gardeners closer to the population of the neighbourhood via other public amenities—such as footpaths which are always open, with their public benches—in order to avoid allotments becoming ‘isolated plots’. Another idea is to construct, alongside the individual plots, some training spaces as requested by teachers keen for their pupils to be aware of the benefits of nature and of an ecological mindset. We can see these concerns outlined in different ways by government officials:

... to try and find ways [...] which are more flexible compared to other uses of green spaces, which can be open to the general public (Mr. Robert, architect, DAT project manager).

...reintroduce our dear grandchildren to the workings of the earth, the cosmos, how things grow, why... (as underlined by a DAT town planner).

Other allotment developments saw the light of day a few years ago, even if they were not wholly appreciated by the end-users—these allotments had no shed on each plot but instead an enclosed building in the centre of the group—and, as some cantonal DAT planners recalled, it was once again a bid to ‘break away from the private or individual sphere’ and to ‘try to get users to share materials instead of having each for their own’. Thus, these ethical criticisms (where the value of working together with one’s neighbours is compared unfavourably with the notion of each allotment holder working for him or herself alone) draw some of their strength no doubt from the fact that they strongly justify economic criticisms which

²⁰Unlike the dream of taming nature, which we find in French-style gardens, in squares laid out by Haussmann and even in the green spaces of the 1970s, shared gardens offer an abundant, freer and wilder vegetation [...]. The hand of the gardener is there, but the imprint is more gentle (Baudelet et al. 2008: 16). In other words, the landscape is the result of a cultural vision and of a certain ‘artialisation’ of nature (Paquot 2016) rather than a constant presence in all cultures.

underline the necessity, due to the pressures of a large number of people on a small patch of ground, of developing allotments which take up as little space as possible. Embodied in the new style of allotment being built, a perfect example of this issue, which echoes the conception of the 'shared city' much favoured by urban planners (Grafmeyer 1994: 107) can be seen in the urban kitchen gardens which, even in their name (shared garden), reflect this spirit of openness, constructed as an ethical and distinctive imperative.

The spirit of the allotment ... it's still the idea of having a little house on one's plot, it is really [each] having one's own bit of land: 'It's mine and I will not share any of it'. I have never heard this said in the plantings [in the city] (Mr. Belloz, Mayor of Vernier).

Seen as anti-privatist, this social philosophy anchors the issue of social links, conviviality and exchange (intergenerational, intercultural, interclass) between neighbours in the same area at the heart of the action. The target audience is no longer quite the same in the shared gardens: now it is not the family but the relations between residents in the same block of flats/neighbourhood which are a central concern. The focus of urban reformers on the issue of social bonds, of ties to be (re)created between residents, cannot be dissociated from the liberal transformations typical of our advanced capitalist societies, in which the 'relational' skills are highly valued (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999). In line with public actuation policies (Castel and Duvoux 2013), the mayors in the towns nearby propose certain material developments which are deliberately designed to 'instigate' (Donzelot 1997) good neighbourhood relationships such as 'picnic areas' (offering the possibility of creating a convivial space to be shared by all) rather than 'offering the possibility of each person setting out their own barbecue and grill on their individual plots' (an 'each to his own' outlook). Each time, the material structures employed are designed to 'facilitate exchange', we are told, while being reminded of the indirect benefits in terms of the struggle against 'feelings of insecurity' that these structures can help to quell, at a time when this issue has begun to come to the attention of the general public and is often raised by town mayors. In many ways, contemporary complaints about the current model of allotment (individual use²¹ and monotonous appearance) and their authorised spokesperson are evidence of attempts to resolve criticisms in which the virtues once extolled of allotments (sheds carefully lined up, the value of being 'at home') are nowadays shunned. As for FGJG managers, they are sceptical about the principle of collective management invoked by those in favour of shared gardens. They fear the problems that the absence of an explicit structural framework might induce. Note that the reservations of the FGJF are essentially focused less on reformed allotments currently under

²¹From a legal point of view, the state guarantees the existence of allotments and takes responsibility for managing their construction or demolition, as well as for collecting rents. The state remains the true owner. For those families who have been granted an allotment, this creates a somewhat ambiguous situation: lessee of their plot, but owner of their shed, given that they bought it when they took over the allotment or will pass it on to the next lessee when they give up the plot (on the basis of an FGJF estimation).

construction than on urban vegetable gardens (shared and community gardens), no doubt because these latter stand out from the traditional family allotment (through the absence of a shed, the reduced size of the cultivatable plots or the more flexible type of social organisation that characterises them) and are more publicly visible:

I have to admit to having some reservations about this type of thing. We don't normally work within frameworks so what happens after a while? [...] Because there are no basic rules, from what I can see, the plantings in Lausanne ... [in some places] it would have been better to leave them as grass as the alternative was somewhat catastrophic! [...] Live and let live, [...] there's a little leeway but there is nevertheless a structure in place (in allotments) and after a bit we say 'Stop, it's not working' [...] while in the urban vegetable plots there is no structure, no one in charge, no responsibilities! (Mr. Suter, former president of the FGJF).

Elsewhere, the absence of sheds on urban plots is seen in a negative light by FGJF management and the gardeners. If such material infrastructures are both a practical amenity (sheltering from the rain under a pergola) and a framework for socialising (feeling at home with those on the neighbouring plots, within the intimacy of the family circle which acts as a form of protection), access to this type of substitute for owning your own small property has a social and cultural significance, particularly for the working classes. Considered by some as the 'poor man's mansion', we can see that, in this opportunity to have 'one's own place' is also the desire to create a permanent group, united in their stable social relations, while at the same time being a space that each person can make their own, as outlined by Schwartz (2002[1990]: 31), to the extent of making them into spaces of 'self-belonging' in which to create a certain 'relationship with the self'. Finally, the much smaller surface area of the shared gardens (compared to that of allotments) means that the former are sometimes ironically equated, by some of our FGJF spokesperson interviewees, to 'tiny herb gardens'. Without wishing to offend anyone, they are generally keen to stress that these urban vegetable plots are too small to allow any 'proper' gardening to take place.

I am not fundamentally against these plantings, I think they offer an alternative for those people who want to be able to pick a couple of bunches of parsley, and for that one does not need to jump in the car and travel 20 kms to one's allotment, it's true! Now [...] if it's just for growing a couple of things or some herbs, I cannot see that this is a problem, but it's clear that I would no longer call this gardening, but just a bit of DIY! You could grow them just as well on the balcony! [...] The advantage of that would be that no one can see the mess from outside at least! (Mr. Suter, former president of the FGJF, in his sixties, retired, former head of IT for a national company).

This reaction is not meant to undermine the importance placed by the appropriate body representing allotments—together with those lessees from diverse working classes of rural origin—on a certain ideal of self-production and self-consumption (the main economic aspect of allotments) which cannot be dissociated from the notion of a form of productive leisure activity the results of which can be seen in the crops grown, a source of pride. Finally, the concern of town planners to 'open up' the area may meet with some resistance from those gardening families involved. Commenting on a recent project whereby a new group of

reformed allotments had benefited from development which would render it, in future, 'more open to the outside world', one of our interviewees led us to believe recently, on the subject of the absence of fencing around the site and of a footpath crossing through which is used by the general public, that 'I am personally not in favour of this, it's as though they were planning to throw peanuts at us' (Mr. Jeanneret, 55, retired, member of the federation, interview notes, November 2014). From our interview with a landscape architect working on a redevelopment project for an allotment, it is easy to see how the genuine desire to open up allotments to the outside world, 'to not allow this section of society to be shut off from what is going on, or to become more and more marginalised [or] too shut in, closed' can have a number of undesirable side-effects whereby the physical proximity to the outside world can contribute to the widening of some social gaps (Chamboredon and Lemaire 1970).

4.5 Conclusion

With our focus on the two defining periods illustrative of the transformation of allotments in Western Switzerland (the 1950s and the 2000s), as in other countries of Europe, we have seen the extent to which the moral and aesthetic benchmarks set by the redevelopers of these allotments have undergone considerable change. We first set out to document the transformation, in the middle of the twentieth century, of the traditional worker's garden or allotment into a tidy, well-kept family leisure garden, a new conception of a garden wishing to disassociate itself from the utilitarian, uninspiring functions and slum-like image attributed to allotments since World War II. We then looked into the documentation on allotment redevelopment which took place during the 2000s and the way in which—through the adoption of new planning guidelines—people were encouraged to consider this new image of the beautiful garden and its use in a context in which new ways of urban gardening (shared gardens) 'which took up less space' and which were 'more integrated into the urban fabric' now had the wind in their sails. Under the influence of these new models, styles of allotment which were more open to the outside world (the invention of 'teaching plots' available to schools, community spaces, etc.) while being associated with a less boring appearance (new pathways, redesigned sheds, etc.) were being recommended in planning discourses and tried and tested occasionally as part of relocation projects. Through these metamorphoses, we have seen how—thanks to the use of some very clever ideological tricks—some old values once conferred on the traditional workers' allotment (sheds carefully lined up, the sense of belonging) were now being revisited; a recycling of the image of the garden which was almost certainly not without displeasing some spokespersons of the FGJF: 'We are now criticised for doing what we were asked to do' (Mr. Jeanneret, member of the FGJF).

Furthermore, analysis of the role of FGJF management in the urban reform process would seem to suggest that these advocates for the cause are caught up in

arguments which are more ‘reactive’ than ‘proactive’. This hypothesis, which would need to be tested more thoroughly, appears to reveal that the fragile status of allotments depends on their historical context. Their legitimate presence on urban territory stems from the struggle to get allotments recognised, arguments which changed over time and in different power relations, but in which the state seemed to represent each time a way of recognising the main style of garden in fashion in the different public arenas.²² The work of the FGJF largely bears witness to these symbolic struggles, with the federation’s management seeming sometimes to be in a bit of a delicate situation, caught as they are between those at the top (government bodies, urban development professionals) and those at the bottom (the gardeners) (Frauenfelder et al. 2015; Weber 1998). Although sometimes sceptical about the outcome of current transformation projects (which brings them closer to the basics), they are obliged to go along with certain external requirements, and to pass on more general ecological advice: one that comes to mind is the need, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, to see some current allotment practices modified as far as their use of fertilisers and pesticides is concerned.²³ More recently, in 2015, a change in the law in Geneva on public houses, making the selling of drinks much more strictly controlled, was seen as a threat to the informal social occasions on which gardeners set up little ‘*troquets*’ or ‘pop-up cafés’ in the public areas of allotments at weekends, and which would no longer be permitted.

Finally, our analysis has revealed how much the aesthetic and moral categories found in the discourses of allotment reformers about the form which these gardens should take and promoting the use that should be made of them are always situated within the framework of social relations: in many respects, we are talking here of social valuation categories reinterpreted as moral and aesthetic ones (Bourdieu 1979). In this case, Corbin (1995: 455–466) reminds us how much the allotment reforms undertaken prior to the 1950s were also the expression of a highly ambivalent social relationship with the peasant classes. This latter social group appears to have served both as a model for allotments (as was the case at the end of the nineteenth century) and as a foil (as would be the case in the mid-1950s). ‘The cultivated garden has successively been praised, feared and mocked by those in favour of allotments. These latter, motivated by the fear of seeing immigrants arriving from the countryside having to break away completely and suddenly from the land and its values, initially wanted to see a continuation of familiar gardening practices, to act as an antidote to the rural exodus and a way of calming the immigrants’ fears. However, quite quickly, they became aware that the continuation

²²Holding the monopoly as far as legitimate symbolic violence is concerned, it embodies in our highly differentiated societies a moment of recognition of ‘public interest’ via a formalisation and dramatisation blessed with a non-negligible symbolic efficacy (Bourdieu 2012).

²³Together, in the early 2000s, the FGJF and the FSJF (Swiss Federation of Allotments) edited a brochure designed to make gardeners aware of the damage caused by the use of fertilisers and pesticides (FSJF 2001). About ten years later, the FSJF once again published a brochure on the same topic entitled ‘Allotments in harmony with nature’ (Müller et al. 2010), which was intended to support its members ‘in making their allotments more eco-friendly’.

of these rural practices might hinder their integration into urban life. The ‘small farmstead’ might encourage the proliferation of hutches and an increase in livestock thefts. The model favoured the building of sheds. The spectre of the rural shack and slum area took root in the minds of many working men who were against the transformation of the allotment’s gazebo into a permanent construction in which to live’. Today, the allotment reforms carried out by town planners and landscape architects aim to promote new forms of gardening activities by combining both environmental and production concerns. Based on experiments with a style of urban garden which aims to represent the town–countryside–agriculture nexus²⁴ and to avoid inevitable classic opposition (Salomon 2005), the ‘good cause’ of allotments is thus symbolically and ideologically revisited. Even if the public diffusion of these societal concerns—more or less passed on by the bodies representing allotments—is differently received depending on the end-users (as some of our observations will confirm—see Delay et al. 2014; Frauenfelder et al. 2015), their benchmarks remain socially situated. They appear to indirectly resonate with the move towards the reformulation of upper-middle-class values according to which the expression of a certain preference for ‘authenticity’ is very famous (Régnier et al. 2006; Tissot 2011: 306) and is seen as a particular type of refinement (Coulangeon 2011: 129) associated with the enlightened strata of the *Creative Class* (Florida 2004; Ley 1996).

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²⁴See Le Caro et al. (2016).

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