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“Growing foods from home”: Food production, migrants and the changing cultural landscapes of gardens and allotments

ABSTRACT

The paper arises out of research that explored how migrant identities are constructed in relation to food practices in a Northern city. Using narrative accounts and participant observation collected through a small scale qualitative study we examine how, in using gardens and allotments to “grow foods from home” alongside locally established fruit and vegetables, a landscape approach allows us to see how migrant gardeners are re-shaping existing cultural landscapes and constructing places of belonging. Whilst these landscapes can be viewed visually as representations of both traditional and hybrid practices, the paper draws on non-representational theories in landscape to explore emotions, embodiment, performance and practice. Such an approach uncovers some of the differences in the meaning of food production for diasporic and non-diasporic migrant gardeners.

KEYWORDS: food production, gardening, cultural landscape, migrants

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1. Introduction

This paper considers various aspects of cultural landscapes and cultural landscaping through the food practices of first generation migrants in a Northern UK city. We understand these to include practices beyond cultivation, growing and harvesting to include distribution and sharing practices as well as consumption, though within this paper we will not be paying attention to the latter. Rather the focus here is on gardening practices, with a particular emphasis on allotments as a location in which to explore cultural landscapes and landscaping through the embodied practices and memories of a heterogeneous group of migrants. In addition, through the convergence of ideas about ethnic identity and migration experiences we seek to explore how migrant identities are constructed in relation to food production and other food practices in one Northern city. Like all landscapes, garden and allotment landscapes are multidimensional, incorporating both the natural and the social environment and through gardening and related¹ practices spatial surroundings as well as social networks are negotiated and shaped. Our interest here is in how migrant gardeners

¹ We wish to point out that “gardening” itself comprises more than the practices involving soil and plants but should be more widely understood as involving planning and imagining the plot, saving or ordering seeds, as well as the social interactions on the plot. Thus gardening entails material landscape and practices as well as immaterial ones.

participate in food production and how this is linked to aspects of belonging and identity, both in relation to “host” communities and diasporic communities, and the cultural landscapes within which this happens.

1.1 Gardens, allotments, food and identity

The relationship between people’s food and their identity has long been a focus of social scientific research, from Levi-Strauss’s (1966) construction of the culinary triangle to explore the symbolism of food to Warde’s (1997) more recent exploration of food, identity and post modernity. A strong theme throughout such studies is that food, culture and identity - and the particular case of migrants - often features, leading to studies of acculturation and consumption (see, for example, Cleveland *et al.*, 2009) or the idea of gastrodynamics² in migration contexts (see, for example, Oyangen, 2009). However, the relationship between the actual production of food and identity has attracted attention only in recent years and a range of work on gardens and identity has demonstrated the way in which “gardens can express personal, social, cultural and environmental/ecological identities” (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012, p. 259). Gross and Lane (2007), in their study of domestic gardens and gardening, explore how the development of a garden can “embody the individual’s existing interests, passions, preferences and characteristics, signifying identity ...” (p. 236). Bhatti (2006) also takes up this theme exploring the place of gardens as part of home-making in the life of older people, and their importance in terms of memories, identity and self esteem, and embodied practice.

These themes - perhaps not surprisingly given their history of immigration - are also explored in a number of studies from New Zealand and Australia in relation to migrant identities and gardens; for example Graham and Connell (2006) studied Vietnamese and Greek migrants with regard to how their identities were reflected in evolving relationships with gardens; Li *et al.* (2010) investigated gardening as a means of forging a new sense of self and place in Chinese immigrants’ adoptive country; and Morgan *et al.* (2005) focused their research on the backyards of immigrants to Australia and how, in growing ‘authentic homeland food’, they “symbolically recapture the homeland in the new land” (p. 97).

A variant of these studies are those that focus on the specific spaces and embodied relationships in more public gardening spaces, such as allotments and community gardens (see for instance Turner, 2011). In the UK, allotment gardening has a long history rooted in modernity and industrialisation (Wilson, 2010). The allotment is neither a private nor a public space but simultaneously both; it is partly private as it is rented by an individual and it is public because it is an exposed space and has rules and regulations imposed on it. Allotments are therefore interesting settings for the study of social and political relationships and have received attention recently in relation to their transformation from a traditionally male, working class domain to a gentrified and more socially diverse location (see, for instance, Buckingham, 2005), as well as becoming sites for conflict (DeSilvey, 2003). In addition, the recent re-emphasis on urban food growing practices due to concerns around food security or in

² Gastrodynamics refers to “the dynamic of the change that occurs when people move from one gustatory context to another” (Oyangen, 2009, p.329).

relation to sustainability (see for instance Farges, 2014 or Turner, 2011) has led to a politicisation of food growing practices (McKay, 2011) which has aroused interest in the nature of allotment holders and the newer phenomenon of community gardeners. In contrast to allotments, community gardens, or 'organised garden projects' (Pudup, 2008), are intended to produce new individual *and* collective subjectivities. The multiple meanings attached to such projects are explored by Baker (2004) who suggests that the community-garden sites in Toronto which she studied "offer possibilities for understanding how individuals and groups in urban communities are actively producing space and culture through their constructions of place" (p. 305).

The linking of place, space and culture reflects recent trends in geography in the exploration of cultural landscapes. As Crouch (2003: 1953) suggests: "[s]pace is grasped through the doing, not as an object 'out there' or merely 'felt' through the body; rather it is constituted by the numerous feelings, sensualities, and, in particular, the character of these things being expressed together". This emphasis on space as something that is not 'out there' is echoed in recent debates about landscapes and it is to these debates that we now turn.

1.2 From landscapes to landscaping

In considering the cultural landscapes that emerge from migrant food growing practices we draw on the distinction between *natural environment* and *landscape*: if the natural environment exists with or without viewers and their social interactions, the notion of landscape deeply implicates viewers and their relationship and the conditions which affect the way they view their environment (Haaland, 2010). Indeed Lorzing (2001) argues that 'landscape' is not just an objective, isolated thing in itself but is created by human perceptions and also includes, as we will discuss later, human practices. Thus, social science disciplines, and particularly cultural geography, have looked upon visual images and representation of landscapes to read them as texts for expressions of cultural meanings (e.g. Crouch, 1990). Landscapes, rather than being 'out there' and seen, are subject to meaning making processes, through which people create and contest their identities (Mitchell, 1994). Indeed Cosgrove (1984) conceives of landscape as an ideological concept by which people see themselves and their world through their imagined relationships with the land and nature. Peet (1996) also suggests that landscapes frame "the social imaginary". Part of this social imaginary, and important to our undertaking here, are memories and landscapes from people's past experiences.

"By recreating landscapes, filling them with signs carrying ideological messages, images are formed of past and future 'realities', patterns of meaning created and changed, and, thereby, control exerted over the everyday behavior of people" (Peet, 1996: 23).

Stobbelaar and Pedroli (2011) also point to the ways in which individuals and groups are implicated in the social construction of landscape identity which is influenced by past and future aspirations and which is, therefore, always subject to contestation. Cultural landscapes are thus implicated in power relations between individuals and social groups and are themselves an instrument of cultural power (Czepczynski, 2010). This focus on power, it has been argued, may sometimes be missing in the

recent contributions from non-representational theories, to which we now turn.

Non-representational theories place emphasis not only on the visual but on all of the senses and thus emphasise landscape as performed and embodied. The emphasis on performance has led to a shift from looking at images of *landscape* to studying *landscaping* as practice (Wylie, 2007, p. 166). Wylie goes on to point out:

“Where a previous generation had focused upon already made *representations* of landscape (texts, images) and their varied negotiation of cultural discourse and regimes of power, current work more commonly turns towards *practices* of landscape and, especially, towards the simultaneous and ongoing shaping of self, body and landscape via practice and performance” (Wylie, 2007, p. 167).

Lorimer (2005, p. 83), who coined the term ‘more-than-representational’ to emphasise the need to add to representational theory rather than replace it, points out that recent theories take a focus that

“falls on how life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions” (Lorimer, 2005, p. 84).

The centrality of the body and the emotions to this approach is clear and an example of the engagement of bodies, affective memories and landscapes is given by Waterton (2007):

“I only need to think of the landscape across the road from my grandmother’s house and affective memories are triggered - with that, the landscape is put in motion, and a series of emotions begin to circulate my body. I know this landscape not just with my eyes or in memory, but as a body, too, as it affords me a sense of belonging and identity” (p. 70).

As mentioned earlier, one criticism of non-representational theories is that, in their emphasis on performativity, they may overlook issues of power, difference and control (Waterton, 2007). Another challenge they offer is to develop methods of research that can “access the unspeakable - the agency of landscapes, affect and sensuous experience” (Waterton, 2007, p. 72). This does not mean it is necessary to abandon traditional tools, but perhaps extend them and this is discussed further in the next section.

2. The study ‘Growing Foods from Home’

The focus of this paper is on food production, migrants and changing cultural landscapes of gardens and allotments. Following recent trends in cultural geography, exploration of representations of landscape and visual images are combined with a greater focus on landscape as process, explored through people’s everyday narratives, their embodied practices, senses and emotions in relation to their gardens and allotments, recognising that “people have an active role in conceiving, making, using, and thinking about the landscape in which they live” (Fleming, 1997, p. 112).

2.1 Research context and method

Drawing on exploratory research that was conducted in the summer of 2012, the location for this study was a Northern UK city, which according to the 2011 Census has approximately 750,000 inhabitants of which 11.5% were born outside the UK (Local Council, 2012). Our aims and framework were shaped by ideas about identity and belonging as expressed in the spatial practices of food growing and experiences of first generation migrants. Thus we were particularly interested in how long people had been cultivating, what people grew, whether these were “foods from home” or not, and what meaning they ascribed to the places they grew this produce, as well as the role of food and its cultivation within wider social and cultural networks.

As this study sought to explore migrants’ identities in relation to food growing practices from a landscape approach, a qualitative methodology was used consisting of in-depth interviews as well as participant observation of their gardens and plots (Mason, 1996). Our study used a purposive sampling method, attempting to access migrant allotment holders through distributing leaflets to all allotment sites via the local council allotment officer, as well as via known allotment secretaries. Another strategy was to contact social and cultural associations within the city. Ultimately eight participants were recruited - six allotment holders and two gardeners. They were from a variety of countries of origin: Zimbabwe, China, Jamaica, USA, Norway and Greece. All were first generation migrants and most had spent all of their adult lives in the UK, apart from the Zimbabweans and the US participant; there were six men and two women, all between 40 and 78 years old.

Half of the interviews were conducted on allotment sites to allow participants to guide us through the landscapes they had created and that were meaningful to them. However, unusually bad weather hindered the more ethnographic elements of the research design and the remaining interviews took place in people’s homes, or community premises. This led to more concentration on people’s narratives of their embodied practices, sense and emotions (Fleming, 1997), and this separation sometimes caused problems; as one participant noted, closing her eyes as she tried to remember all her crops: “I’m sort of, in my head, I’m going round [my allotment]...”. The thematic analysis of the ‘deep data’ from the single semi-structured interviews, supplemented by participatory observation, resulted in a number of core themes (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) which are presented in the next section.

3. Findings and discussion

Within the overarching focus on identity and cultural landscapes, three main themes emerged: memories and traditions, hybrid practices and adaptation and collective identity.

3.1 Memories and traditions

For all the participants, growing food, and then processing it, was linked to traditions:

Paul: It’s important as a tradition and I keep carrying it on. A tradition. And

that's what we used to do ... In the West Indies we never, never short of food. We grow we own.

The growing spaces become a focus then for the cultivation of traditional crops, such as the greens of Zimbabwe, the pumpkins, and herbs.

Philip: It was wanting to grow things really that ... we grow at home – we ate at home. Things we don't find in the supermarkets here ... The main thing really is our type of vegetables we use back home. Our greens ... [food habits] are centred around our greens. We have them with every meal daily [nyevhe, chomolia, nyemba].

Paul: It's a thing we use at home ..nearly at Christmas for drinks we make it in drinks ... and we give it around at Christmas. Just like pumpkin. Nearly in the West Indies, well I would say in Jamaica where I am from, nearly every Christmas we have a bowl of pumpkin soup.

Thus, the look of the allotment is shaped by those vegetables whose cultivation is prioritized and which are carefully managed so as not to lose them. These crops therefore become recognizable and meaningful features of the landscape.

When respondents referred to memories of childhood and family practices, these were not always memories of crops and methods of cultivation but a general attitude to life and work:

Farai: Back home it's a case of self-sufficiency because if you don't you have nothing to eat. But here you find if you're not growing well you can go to the shops ... So now, what motivates me is that desire to work, to get up and just do something. Because I grew up doing that.

Other respondents described how the allotment or garden landscape was designed and maintained to facilitate spatial and sensory memories.

Dimitri: Every single part [of the allotment] give you different pleasure. But I wouldn't say that each one has an equal amount of pleasure, every single one give you different satisfaction. But the herb area, the herb areas ... that reminds me of the Greek countryside [gets very animated] and there is nothing growing, everything is yellow and then as you go further up, in the altitude, there you have the little things, like thyme or chamomile growing behind a stone and you touch it and the smell!! The scent they give you is fantastic! I go round and touch it and they go woof! Remind me of a different place. ... The whole thing, the allotment is an experience of sight, colours, sense and taste because you taste ... I don't know I cannot resist to take a leaf and chew it a little and see what it is like before I even cook it.

Dimitri's account about Greek herbs in the landscape slides between past and present so that the reader does not know whether he is talking about the Greek countryside or his allotment. This pertains to Cosgrove's (1984) concept of ideological landscapes

and how people see themselves through their imagined relationships with the land and the plants growing on it. The account also strongly supports the importance of recognising that a landscape “involves a full range of sensory experiences: it is not only visual, but textured to the touch and resonating with smells, touch, sounds and tastes, often mundane in nature” (Waterton, 2007, p. 69).

These sensory experiences are not confined to the garden and the cultivation of crops, but are also part of the cooking and eating of the produce:

Ingrid: I think it is important. Because it's just about memories. You know, that it does, you know, like especially if you're eating something that you produced yourself, and it just takes you back to your childhood. It's just sort of, a bit of sentimentality and it's quite nice really, yeah, it's just kind of - it's quite nice having memories and then you somehow recreate them through what you are eating. And then you can sort of say this is what I used to have, you know. And then you are giving your own family sort of the same. I think that's quite nice.

She went on to say:

The smells from when you are kind of making jelly or whatever and it's all dripping through and it has a particular smell. And, so yeah, it just evokes nice memories really, yeah.

It is not surprising that so many commented on memories and traditions when talking about growing food and processing it. Gardens are containers of memory (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012) as is food itself (Sutton, 2001) and this theme emerges strongly in studies of migrants and food production as mentioned earlier. Indeed as Casey (1987) comments:

“Place is selective for memories: that is to say, a given place will invite certain memories while discouraging others ... Memories are also selective for place; they seek out particular places as their natural habitats ... Places are congealed scenes for remembered contents; and as such they serve to situate what we remember” (p. 187).

However, memories were also notable in highlighting what could *not* be grown:

Casey: Oh, you can't grow okra here. That's a bad one. I love okra ... but okra doesn't grow here, it's like, too wet, and it doesn't get hot enough for long enough ... I totally miss okra.

However, when asked if food was important as a connection to a place, family or cultural heritage, Casey responded ‘not so much’, and we will see later that her motivations and sense of identity are as much linked to her ideological position and her “seed to table relationship” with food as with tradition and memory.

Also interesting here were the Chinese participants who did not refer to memories of food. They named the crops they grew (such as pak choi, kailan, choi sum) and shared

recipes that demonstrated traditional practices, but without explicit reference to such traditions, or sensory memories. Whilst their sharing of recipes suggested they were not engaged in what Sutton (2001) calls ‘productive forgetting’ or ‘embodied forgetting’ (a potentially liberating and active process that is often neglected in research), it reminds us again that what is not mentioned may well be as interesting as what is mentioned. Was the lack of reference to embodied memories and traditions reflective of the meaning of food production to them, or did the interviewer fail in some way to elicit responses relating to tradition and memory? These questions remind us, as Sutton (2001) points out, that:

“[F]ood is not simply another topic that “symbolizes identity”, but one that challenges us to rethink our methods, assumptions and theories in new and productive ways” (p. 170).

3.2 Hybrid practices and adaptation

Beyond memories we might also argue that place and landscape are filled with strategies of integration or assimilation for migrant participants. What emerged clearly from all participants was that they explicitly used hybrid growing strategies and that although they grew vegetables that were traditional and meaningful to them (or were used in preparation or conservation techniques that held particular memories to them), they also grew crops that were new to them:

Ingrid: We do lots of garlic, garlic is definitely sort of an added ingredient in my adulthood; I never knew about garlic as a child. But it’s just fantastic growing it.

Casey: You can’t grow beans in [interview location]. I LOVE broad beans.

Unsurprisingly, the reasons for growing particular crops were often pragmatic:

Farai: The types of crops that I grow mostly are the British, you know, varieties, because of the environment.

In describing their mixed crops, there was frequent reference to “English vegetables”:

Wang: I do Chinese and English vegetable. English vegetables, I tend to grow tomatoes, courgette ... snap peas, string beans. Sometimes, is it - what is it ... kohlrabi?

However, many of the plants identified as “English” were neither native plants nor do they have a particularly long history of being grown in the UK, yet they have come to dominate the visual landscape on allotments. So, in studying migrants’ crops, the vegetables, like many people, had their own histories of migration in their past; for instance, neither potatoes, tomatoes nor courgettes are native to Northern Europe yet in gardeners’ talk they are ‘imagined’ as traditional English vegetables. In fact, migration histories of seeds and crops are often longer than those of people and we can look at the idea of “English vegetables” using Eric Hobsbawm’s (1983) concept of “invented traditions”.

There were also some ironies in these questions of tradition and authenticity. Paul described callaloo as something we “get from the West Indies” although he traces a history of it that places its origins as English (called Good King Henry) and Irish where, he says, they call it mercury. And Wang recounted being asked by a visiting celebrity chef at his community centre about rhubarb:

Wang: And the reason he come here is because he wants to know about rhubarb. I was ignorant, right, ignorant. I don't know rhubarb is from China. But he told me rhubarb is from China ... [T]hey say how do you cook rhubarb in Chinese, I haven't got a clue. Because none of the chefs in here know how to cook rhubarb ... But how to do it Chinese style they haven't got a clue. Because we don't eat it.

Furthermore, in relation to the wider reception amongst other gardeners on the plot, the hybrid crop growing of our respondents also diversified and hybridized other gardeners' crop selection. Whilst Degnen (2009) describes a demarcation of 'native' plants from 'invading 'immigrants', our respondents talked about the creative sharing of their imported varieties, especially bean varieties.

One final issue here in relation to the notion of traditional crops and those 'from home' were the different uses of particular crops. For instance, whilst the Zimbabwean gardeners grew pumpkins, they did so primarily to harvest the leaves:

Philip: And you know with the pumpkin ... the pumpkin themselves they're a bonus but we grow these for the leaves ... We pick those. They are prickly ... but we try to remove as much of the prickliness as we can before we use it. And we cook just like you do spinach.

“Adaptation” as both an opportunity and a need in relation to vegetable growing on allotments (and beyond) is a recurrent theme in our participants' narratives. This impacts on the ways in which people take up active roles in conceiving, making and using the landscape (Fleming, 1997) in that their cultural practices need adaptation not only to growing conditions such as the weather, pests (slugs were frequently mentioned as a new challenge) and diseases (here blight was the concern) but also, on occasion, particular legal frameworks or social norms:

Farai: The threat I met here in the UK growing vegetables is pests eating the green vegetables so I just have to cover green vegetables because I realized that the pigeons, the doves, come over and they pick all the vegetables [laughs] that's why I cover them. It's not something that we do in Zimbabwe. We just grow vegetables in the open and then leave it. And probably if you've noticed here in the UK birds are more of a threat to the vegetables because with the UK laws people can't threaten them. Whereas if they come threatening my vegetables in Zimbabwe, well, they, actually, they would become food! [laughs] the next meal! That way they don't tend to come close to where people grow vegetables or if they do... they're another meal.

Figure 1. Farai's crop protection against pigeons as a response to UK law.

Source: Photo taken by Natalia Gerodetti.

3.3 Collective identity

Whereas the previous theme related to strategies and issues of integration and adaptation this final theme explores the collective identities associated with food cultivation. As Waterton (2007:72) points out, “part of the purpose of performing with landscape is to communicate that a person or given group exists, that they have an identity and that they matter”. Our respondents at times made explicit reference to their gardening and produce as identifying them as a group. For instance, the Zimbabweans had created an adaptive landscape in their front gardens in the UK (see figure 2) that clearly identified them:

Philip: It’s one thing really we have observed really wherever we have gone. People from our country – you can tell if someone from our country lives in the house by what you see in the garden. You always find something like that. Yeah, in the garden. Then you know there’s someone from Zimbabwe here.

Figure 2: A Zimbabwean front garden crop: *Rugare* (translated as “Comfortable Living” due to its ability to provide year round greens). Source: Photo taken by Natalia Gerodetti.

This collective identity linked to participants’ attachment to their communities. Two types of migrants emerged from this analysis: a) migrants from the global north who, whilst their initial impetus for migration is not known, have remained because of personal and intimate relationships and who do not have particular ties to a diasporic community and b) those who have migrated either in the post-war period or more recently from the global south and who, notably, have very strong links to diasporic community associations. Those with links to a diasporic community made frequent reference to that community and to their country of origin, or used the term ‘we’, such as Wang who talks about how to use pak choi: “And then, we tend to do it with soup”, where he is referring, not to his family, but to the wider Chinese community.

However, sometimes reference was made to growing practices that distinguished the respondent from others, although perhaps it is significant that this reference point *is* still the diasporic community:

Wang: When I grow I don’t grow all the same veg, right ... a couple of rows of one type and then another row of one type ... Unlike most Chinese when they grow, it’s a whole field of choi sum, a whole field of pak choi.

Another dimension of collective identity was the degree to which participants related their gardening practices to social ties with the diasporic communities to which they feel they belong. This was evident in the narratives about what they did with their produce and what they grew and why.

Farai: In fact most of what I'm growing right now here in the garden, they're all beyond my need because I've also got that small part in front of my house and that's in fact more than enough. So there is a lot of the Zimbabwean community around who we go to church with and who don't have an allotment or who don't even have a garden to grow. So I take them to the church then make a few bundle where they can buy a bundle for a pound and then give that back to the church as part of, well I do my normal type of giving but still it's type of god's money so that's what I do mostly. And that way I also help other people to get vegetables so they like it ... So I'm doing something to delight our community.

Paul had at one time cultivated five and half allotments and now with three he comments: "I give away more than half of what I grow. Honest - more than half". Indeed growing enough to give away seemed to be one of his main motivations for growing food.

By contrast, the migrants from countries of the global north never mentioned other migrants from their country of origin and using their gardening practices as a means to connect with a community. For instance Casey, the US migrant, also used her front garden to cultivate food, and had done so in the USA, as she explained:

Casey: Well, I grow a lot of the fruits and vegetables that we eat at home ... We were known to be quite controversial in [USA] because we've turned over our front garden and turned it into a vegetable patch. So we got into some kinds [of] moderate trouble.

Interviewer: Really?

Casey: Well, the neighbours asked why we grow such tall weeds and I've told them "they're beans and would you like to take some home?". And we're actually in a book called "Edible Estates" where they went round the country converting people's front gardens and they had found us and they took some pictures so this was a new thing and it's still kind of a phenomenon going on in the United States now.

This use of front gardens for food cultivation challenges some of the norms and expectations existing in relation to what plants are seen as appropriate in a particular location or landscape. Whilst the back-garden has become an extension to the living room and is codified as a private space which is kept out of anyone's sight by tall fences, the public facing front garden is increasingly either lawned or paved for ease of use and care or is an aesthetic buffer zone for homeowners between them and the street. These social trends that Bhatti and Church (2001) have eloquently explored in relation to the cultivated natures of homes and gardens in late modernity are clearly specific to western English speaking countries where home-ownership is highly esteemed, yet it might strike one as a wasted landscape using a different cultural reading (Chapman, 2004). So, in the two examples we have given, there appear to be different motivations; in the case of Farai, there is a sense of a pragmatic approach to the use of the front garden which might otherwise be wasted space, whereas with Casey there seems to be, perhaps in addition to the pragmatic, a conscious transgression of white middle class domestic norms.

Casey also made frequent reference in the interview to the 'differentness' of her

crops:

Casey: I grew tomatillos last year which nobody knew what they were. I talked to a lot of people who asked “what’s that?” .. and they say “what do you do with it” and I say “I make salsa” and they say “what’s salsa” - nobody here know what salsa is.

One interpretation of this account would be that it refers, albeit implicitly, to ‘home’ food and being from the southern USA; yet in talking about her different crops, and her different methods of cultivation, it seemed that she was constructing an individual identity through the crops and methods she uses, rather than a collective cultural identity. Indeed, when asked if food was important to her in connecting her with place, history and culture, she responded:

Casey: Not so much. For us it’s more, we decided early on that we did not want children that thought carrots were coming from a grocery store. We wanted them to be in touch with where the food was coming from.

Thus, the migrants in our study attest to different kinds of affective and embodied landscaping practices with migrants from the global north attesting much more to individualized and reflexive life course identities that have been identified as characteristic of late-modern subjectivities (Giddens, 1991). By contrast, the recent migrants from the global south linked their food growing practices much more explicitly to collective, diasporic cultural and affective landscaping practices.

4. Conclusion

The main purpose of this paper has been to gain an insight into migrants’ allotment and gardening practices and the ways in which these can be related to food and identity in cultural landscapes. Incorporating natural and cultural environments, migrants, as gardeners, transform their spatial surroundings. Although all gardening practices can be argued to be part of imagining and working the landscape, our migrant participants reveal that their specific practices importantly contribute to their individual and social identities by reaffirming connections to their places of origins and embodied and affective-sensory memories attached to those, as well as adapting to new food growing landscapes. Motivations to grow the particular array of vegetables link some migrants very strongly to diasporic communities of which they are part, as well as integrate them into local growing cultures and traditions. In doing so, their growing practices contribute to the cultural landscapes of both established and migrant communities. The vegetables they grow as well as the ways in which the plots are organized contribute to the diversity of allotment landscapes and urban gardening.

“Adaptation” to the local and/or regional landscaping practices that the migrants find upon their arrival emerged as a crucial aspect and cultivation and the resulting landscaping has to be read against this. The climactic migrations that the gardeners often experienced thus makes some growing practices harder and some impossible and, as Cadman (2009) points out, to our emphasis on agency and practice we may need to introduce:

“notions of passivity and the non-relational to counter the imperative for non-representational geographies to always instill an affirmative will to connect, relate, and become” (p. 7).

Thereby, in asking what people grow and why, it is equally important to ask what is not grown, or what parts of growing plot is unattended or neglected. Thus, to draw attention to the nuances of marginal spaces and landscaping in both physical and cultural landscaping practices would constitute a further step of analysis and reflection upon the project.

Drawing upon the conceptual tools from both representational and non-representational theories of landscaping our contribution here has sought to consider the ways in which migrants’ food growing practices might constitute practices of landscape which pay attention to the various sensory aspects. Whilst there are important differences discernible between what we call diasporic and non-diasporic migrants they were, nevertheless, cohesive themes in their narratives which pertained to memories and traditions, hybrid practices and adaptation and collective identity which were woven into their landscaping practices.

“Gardens are culturally loaded spaces that are textured by human movement and action, identities and relationships” (Li *et al.*, 2010, p. 794)

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Figure Captions

Figure 1: Front garden crop: *Rugare* (translated as "Comfortable Living" due to its ability to provide year round greens).

Figure 2. Crop protection against pigeons as a response to UK law.

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