notes from meeting with Viviane and Peter 28 January

Talking about the gardening chapter - on the whole has improved with regards to writing (still some grammar and style issues), but is excessively long.

Give general context then hone in on chemicals, then users in the discussion. Some context is useful at the start, but not so much - summarise it. Include my observation about the number of adverts for chemical products changing over time, becoming dwarfed by the number for garden objects and tools. Try not to give too much extraneous information before you get to the chemicals and the users.

Only discuss gender after the reader has seen the advert, otherwise they won’t understand so well what I’m talking about. How gender has been dealt with has generally improved since the last draft, but keep the bulk of the “gendered activity” material for separate chapter

Balance - so much info on paraquat, don’t have to drown reader in evidence argue one thing, and prove it [think this is possibly because I’m still worried I’m not certain what my argument is]

Can use more figures re. deaths, accidents - showing that very few happened, but that the consequences were severe. However, public interest was high enough for paraquat related deaths to be tabulated specifically.

Peter liked the bit about paraquat adverts and coverage in different newspapers and was surprised it was gone. I took it out following feedback that this was not about paraquat in the media. Should probably reinsert it with an emphasis on where people got information, which people got which information/adverts and how opinions could be shaped.

Should include basic details about chemical manufacturers, otherwise some of the information about sodium chlorate and paraquat just doesn’t make sense. Just don’t go overboard - remember, can always write a paper.

Consider using boxes or tables to give basic information about the chemicals - will also decrease word count

be careful when mentioning other products - bamboozling to not explain what they are/why they matter (e.g. simazine, 2,4,5-T)

What is special about the relationship between the chemical and the users? user control relationship to the state

societal change finds expression in attitude to risk which can be patronising

What about not separating out the two chemicals so rigidly? This would avoid some repetition of the misuses especially.

Peter not convinced by my line of argument about who weedkillers were for - re council housing, tenants, unemployed. Am not convinced by his assertion that if the price of weedkiller put paraquat out of reach of low income users that they would also have been reluctant to buy a hoe. Yes, a new hoe is more expensive than a box of weedkiller but you only need to buy a hoe once, can get second hand etc. I agree that “aspirational” is not the right term, but in the context of consumerism, weedkiller is practically a luxury item as it could be done completely by hand, without any tools or aids at all. This argument evidently needs some refinement, as the product was certainly priced high.

Even without full oral histories, oral testimonies and other quotes on garden practices would make this chapter stronger. Get statements from people about why they do not use chemicals/ went organic. Was it an actual decision? Is it just because they can’t get the chemicals or are unsure about using/keeping them? Viviane suggested diaries of gardeners - head gardeners of private gardens, which may have been kept by National Trust properties, Garden Museum Role of paid gardeners? Paid gardeners using chemicals?

Just because these may not have been small domestic properties does not discount them. And it links to the desire for professional products.

Viviane discussed how who writes a narrative/ history determines what is included or left out especially regarding chemicals, she used the example of histories of transplants, which focus on the heroic surgeons, obscuring the immunosuppressant chemicals that make the surgery possible. Feminist discourses of household technologies and housework have a complete blind spot towards chemicals [until they are suspected of harming women/children]. Is it that they are taken for granted?

How is it that the relationship between a user and a chemical can be so different to the relationship between a user and a hoover?

People’s use - user autonomy - is problematic for the state

Viviane - pretending to give people control, but disguised in the way of how much autonomy users actually have. Divest state responsibilities to user.

Take care - slip between user and consumer without discussion - these are loaded words and should be explained. Consumer movement does appear literally as *consumable*

Viviane - drug as alternative to (expensive surgery), not as threatening, user is responsible for the outcome. If something doesn’t go as planned, it is because the user did not take the drug properly. Peter - drugs excuse for not doing what you should (e.g. blood pressures pills instead of losing weight, improving diet) - read this in terms of effort/work in respect to weeding

Next See Viviane in Oxford to pick up/discuss her notes on the chapter Work on household chapter (sodas, CTC, Harpic) and send that draft at the end of March Next meeting as a 3 to discuss the household chapter in late April early May.