



Routledge Explorations in Environmental Studies

THE POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF AUSTERITY

CRISIS, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Edited by

Rita Calvário, Maria Kaika, and Giorgos Velegrakis

ROUTLEDGE



The Political Ecology of Austerity

The Political Ecology of Austerity explores the environmental dimension of austerity that has thus far escaped academic, policy, and media attention.

Offering a better comprehension of the full socio-environmental impact of austerity measures, the book highlights the importance of considering environmental issues when designing responses to economic crisis in the future. Mobilising detailed case studies from across the world, the volume documents the ways in which austerity impacts global and local ecologies, shapes environmental conflicts and gives rise to new forms and practices of social mobilisation and resistance. Bringing together theoretical debates and rigorous case studies, the book proposes ‘the political ecology of austerity’ as an appropriate method of analysis that can inform our understanding of the shift in environmental protection policies and the intensification of growth practices (green or otherwise) that followed the 2008 global economic crisis. *The Political Ecology of Austerity* discloses austerity to be a globalised set of tools not only for budgetary discipline, but also for socio-environmental discipline that justifies the continuation of capital accumulation at the expense of further global environmental degradation.

This book will be of great interest to students and scholars of social and political sciences, environmental studies, urban studies, and political ecology.

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the Environment

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Between subaltern urbanism and green gentrification

Eduardo Ascensão and Franklin Ginn

Introduction

On 12th January 2020, a municipal initiative to plant 100,000 trees across Lisbon began. Several hundred people joined the effort at four locations near large public housing estates. The feel-good event drew families with young children and around 20,000 trees were planted. The following day work began on a new urban park at Praça de Espanha, a major traffic intersection where thousands of cars pass each day to and from the city centre. The latter €16 million project will connect the celebrated Gulbenkian Gardens to the Monsanto Green Corridor and is part of a broader regeneration plan for the Avenida de Berna and Praça de Espanha area, which in the next decade is expected to be consolidated into a new financial centre. Both initiatives are part of the Lisbon 2020 Green Capital of Europe programme, an award which has been used by the City Council as the centrepiece of Lisbon's push to re-fashion itself as a green city. They capture the way environmental celebrations tend to oscillate between an affective, altruist dimension and a competitive one. The first plays with people's desire to 'contribute as best they can' to a better urban environment, provide simple ecological experiences for their children, and produce shaded space that reduces overall urban temperatures; the second illustrates the type of city plans associated with green growth and green gentrification, whereby investment on quality, sophisticated green space is part of broader plans to attract capital and reconfigure particular spaces to attract more affluent populations (Anguelovski et al., 2019).

The 2020 Green Capital award comes at the end of a decade where much has happened. After a period of deep austerity from 2011 to 2015, Portugal moved on to a post-austerity moment, a complex combination of the rollback of some financial and ideological tenets of austerity, yet still operating in a dimension of strict financial discipline, work precaritisation (Carmo & Matias, 2019; Matos, 2015) and, in cities such as Lisbon and Porto, various forms of gentrification (Barata-Salgueiro et al., 2017; Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019; Lestegás, 2019; Montezuma & McGarrigle, 2019). One of the measures the EU-IMF-ECB troika introduced most forcefully amid the crisis was the deregulation of the rental market. Although this had no direct impact on public debt, it was presented as a way to attract foreign investment in real estate with as little friction

as possible. The resulting flexibility of having income from real estate without the onus of long-term renters made it particularly attractive for individual investors, while tax exemptions for Real Estate Investment Funds instituted in 2010 had already made it attractive for corporate investors (Montezuma & McGarrigle, 2019).

From 2014, Lisbon experienced an intense tourist and real estate boom. This was at first welcomed as the only way out of the crisis (Mendes, 2018). Investment in the tourist sector had been steady since the 1990s, but new legislation to attract foreign investors included a program for ‘Non-habitual Residents’ targeted at European citizens in 2009, and a Golden Visa Scheme targeting all other foreigners in 2012. Ninety percent of the Golden Visa scheme’s €5bn investment in the 2014–2019 period was directed to real estate (Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras [SEF], 2020). This meant an incredibly quick and unregulated change of land use from residential to tourist in many areas of the city centre, displacing incumbent populations (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019). The spike in the number of tourists, the emergence of short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb, the entry of Lisbon’s real estate into global circuits of capital as ‘deposit boxes’ for ‘high-net-worth individuals’ – all of these have taken 30,000 dwelling units off the market, while city rents have soared to levels beyond the means of low and middle classes (Rio Fernandes et al., 2019; Seixas & Antunes, 2019).

More positively, increased tax income enabled the Lisbon City Council to renew many parts of the city with cycle lanes, car parks, and improved public space, including a scheme aimed at having a remodelled square in most neighbourhoods. The administration also emphasises its desire for a new digital-smart-electric city. It does so in three parallel directions, all belonging to a ‘techno-managerialist’ view of urban sustainability (Kaika, 2017). First, the city aims to attract digital entrepreneurship via considerable investment in start-up hubs such as *Hub Criativo do Beato*. Second, it has developed parking apps and other sensing instrumentation for its everyday operations. Finally, it has welcomed – with very few constraints – several electric mobility companies providing dockless short-hire bicycles and scooters such as Uber’s *Jump*, *Hive*, or *Lime*. Ironically, while the city’s environmental policy has led to deep cuts in carbon emissions (official figures state a 42% decrease in the 2002–2016 period), the economy is increasingly dependent on carbon-heavy air travel or cruise ships to deliver consumers.

Clearly, in Lisbon as elsewhere, environmental rhetoric and activity have been used to support policies which explicitly aim to attract tourist and foreign capital by hollowing out the city and creating precarious jobs. In this context, as we will explore, it becomes harder to articulate an environmentalism that escapes the orbit of post-political, techno-managerial green urbanism. It is indeed clear that as Anguelovski et al. (2019) put it, “many green interventions create enclaves of environmental privilege [from which] low-income and minority residents are excluded” (p. 6). As we explore in this chapter, ‘community’ or ‘urban’ gardening spaces are a key site for both the extension

and subversion of green interventions. Scholars have moved beyond simplistic celebrations of community gardening (Darly & McClintock, 2017; Guitart et al., 2012; McClintock, 2014). They note how neoliberal strategies to create more competitive cities are often accompanied by new forms of governance, as municipalities offload responsibilities on to corporate or para-state bodies, including to community gardening initiatives (Perkins, 2010). Where the urban green is deployed to provide amenity, ensuing rises in land value or property prices can easily displace existing residents (Rice et al., 2020; Safransky, 2014). Community gardens have been seen as the flanking agents of neoliberalism: by emphasising self-reliance, sub-state reciprocity, and voluntarism, community gardening projects interpolate neoliberal subjectivity (Pudup, 2008). The terms of politics in community gardening are also constrained, as they are often about participation or coping rather than radical transformation (Cooke & Lane, 2018; Ernwein, 2017).

In this chapter we demonstrate that Lisbon's urban gardening spaces are too diffuse, too varied in their historic-geographic specificities, to be understood as simply responding to the engine of post-austerity urbanism. We turn to Lisbon's history of urban gardening as a counterpoint to privatisation and neo-liberal urbanism. For all its shortcomings, gardening in the city still to some extent offers a means to oppose the market logic of the industrial food system while enhancing well-being and biodiversity. Urban gardening in Lisbon has often involved informal use of public or private land that is tolerated: gardening spaces exemplify subaltern urbanism, claims to the city made by marginalised populations (Roy, 2011). Attention to subaltern urbanism seeks to reclaim the figure of the poor urbanite as a subject of history, valorising their tactics and makeshift architectures. What is clear, however, is that neither the deployment of gardening within austerity and post-austerity urban political projects, nor the progressive promise of gardening, can be considered in isolation. In part three of this chapter, we explore how, in different ways, politically progressive practices can persist even amid neoliberal greening but, as an ill-fated corollary, how the post-austerity green poaches these progressive practices.

This chapter draws on research conducted across the Lisbon metropolitan area. Lisbon's *hortas* (vegetable gardens) have historically been located on land classified as 'unregulated', which may be publicly or privately owned. On unregulated land, customary use is neither strictly legal nor illegal, but rather tacitly accepted. Such gardens are a longstanding feature and occupy about 1 per cent of the city's 85km² area. These are not, aside from a few more recent exceptions discussed later in this chapter, 'community gardens' in the Anglo-American sense. Lisbon's *hortas* have persisted through long-term racial and class histories associated with Portugal's late urbanisation and rapid decolonisation in the 1970s. We selected six gardens through conversation with local researcher-activists, visiting them in 2013, 2015, and 2017. An initial, unstructured visit was made to each site when we talked to different gardeners, walked around their gardens, and spoke to neighbourhood representatives. Initial visits in 2013 were complemented with five formal interviews, as well as with a dozen

informal conversations we had then and in subsequent site visits in 2015 and 2017. Our approach was an abridged version of our previous research into informal settlements and rehousing in Lisbon (Ascensão, 2015a; 2016) and domestic gardening (Ginn, 2016), in which we used the method of asking respondents to ‘show me your shack’, or ‘show me your garden’. Here we used the ‘show me your garden’ prompt to enter interviewees’ life histories as related to ecological practices. The methodology is in line with less formal qualitative approaches employed in political ecology to develop an understanding of such community spaces. The chapter begins with the history of the emergence of ‘bottom-up’ gardens in part one. Part two turns to state interventions which aim to overwrite or displace bottom-up gardening practices, and part three examines the relation between these two processes.

Subaltern urbanism and the emergence of gardening commons

Lisbon grew along large radial avenues through the twentieth century, broadly following the tenets of French *urbanisme* (Camarinhas, 2011). Post-war planners set aside some space for urban gardens; new 1950s and 60s modernist housing estates featured vegetable plots, for instance. Headless of planning, thousands of other *ad hoc* plots near residential buildings, in urban voids or brownfield sites, were scattered across the metropolitan area – altogether, these dwarfed in area when compared to official horticultural spaces. Emblematic of the labour of the working and unemployed poor in making the city from the soil up are the gardens at Chelas (Figure 9.1 and 9.2), an area of low-income public housing. Prior to urbanisation, Chelas was a valley with several agricultural estates, clusters of houses, and warehouses trading in metal and ceramics. Rural migrants occupying the valley took to planting vegetable gardens. Some of the remaining gardens at Chelas occupy a steep-sided valley beneath the metro line overpass. Though the demographics have shifted, from white Portuguese working class, to Portuguese-speaking African, to south Asian migrants, the different populations have consistently appropriated these urban remainders to grow their vegetables (Barreto, 2015; Bastos, 1991).

Sr. Manuel, for instance, has been gardening in Chelas for more than 30 years. His plot has gradually expanded to over 200m², as he has accumulated land left fallow when other plot-holders moved on. A skilled gardener, each year Sr. Manuel harvests some 600kg of potatoes, 200kg of onions, as well as smaller amounts of tomatoes, cabbage, lettuce, and beans. He has incorporated aspects of permaculture into his gardening practice: he compared the sizes of two cabbages, one grown during the fourth waning and one in the crescent phase of the moon. He is nonetheless adamant that chemical fertiliser is necessary to obtain this level of cropping (an issue to which we return later). The Chelas gardens are densely cropped and supplement strained domestic economies, given many people are retired with minimum pensions of €200–300 per month. They are makeshift, untidy, and ramshackle. Gardeners make use of reclaimed timber,



Figures 9.1 and 9.2 Two gardens beneath the metro overpass at Chelas, Lisbon

Source: [All photographs by the authors]

brick, or polythene, with plastic barrels and duct-taped hosepipes for irrigation systems. These gardens are on hard-to-develop public land, the interstitial spaces of transport infrastructure. Historically they have been tacitly accepted by the municipal authorities – though as subsequent sections explore, the situation is changing.

A second form of makeshift gardening commons also emerged. From the mid-1960s, the family-run agricultural enterprises which surrounded Lisbon began to struggle to compete with larger companies, and the land fell into disuse (Rodrigues, 1989). The dictatorship was ideologically unwilling to implement sufficient public housing provision and financially unable to address the housing crisis, and so rural migrants unable to access housing in the city settled in the struggling agricultural periphery, usually without planning permission or legal tenure. These settlements were called *clandestinos*. Residents depended on manual casual employment, typically in construction or agriculture (Pinto, 2009). To supplement waged labour, vegetable gardening and small livestock husbandry were an integral part of the rural migrant, working class peri-urban way of life. This pattern is replicated in many Southern European cities (Domene & Saurí, 2007) and can still be seen today, in gardeners' recollections of their life trajectories: "I lived in the countryside until I was eleven. I know a few things [about gardening], but when I don't I call my sister, who is a farmer. The moons . . . to sow and to harvest in order to coincide with high and low moons, in order for things not to rot so quickly . . . all that" (Gardener, personal communication, September 1, 2015).

Poorer *clandestinos* underwent a second period of expansion after the Portuguese revolution in 1974 as migrants from Portuguese-speaking former colonies have built shacks in vacant plots, tapping into the city's water and electricity infrastructures. Over time the migrants, drawing on their construction industry skills, improved these houses until they consolidated into dense shanty towns, demonstrating subaltern "flexibility, pragmatism, negotiation well as constant struggle for survival and self-development" (Bayat, 2007, p. 579). The new residents, particularly those of Cape Verdeans and Bissau Guinean background, cultivated gardens on site. These gardens were a link to the past and to homeland for many of the gardeners. They also give unemployed and retired residents "something to do" (Gardener, personal communication, July 29, 2015), as one gardener told us. The gardens' most important function, however, is a space to provide food – compensation in the face of economic hardship. As one gardener stated, with her specific domestic economy in mind: "My husband is unemployed, so the food [we get] from here is important" (Gardener, personal communication, July 29, 2015). The gardeners cultivate different varieties of cabbage and fava beans. Cape Verdeans have experimented with different varieties of sugar cane, adapted to the specific micro-climates of their particular gardens, to produce *grogue*, or rum (Cabannes & Raposo, 2013). As we will see, this racialised geography is thrown into relief by the differing fortunes of white Portuguese community gardening spaces: historical inequalities shape contemporary green spaces.

A third more recent process has created new gardens in the city. The financial crash of 2008 drove unemployment up country-wide to 14 per cent in 2011 and peaking at 17.5 per cent in 2013 (Instituto Nacional de Estatística [INE], 2015). In response to the crisis, gardens cropped up in the interstices of the urban fabric: along railway lines, in abandoned lots, and under viaducts. In 2008 a network of young, unemployed but highly educated people appropriated a small patch of land at the edge of one of Lisbon's historical districts, Graça. Digging terraces, setting up raised beds, and planting vegetable crops, the group established the Horta do Monte. Many of these activists were loosely connected to *Occupy* and associated with the *Transition Towns* movement and *Permaculture* networks. Their motivations blended concern over industrial agriculture, food miles, food security, and sustainability. They aimed to deliver free food to those most in need. This garden exemplifies the recent, creative appropriation of urban interstices seen in many European cities: organically planned, collectively implemented, and carried forward with hard graft into a precarious future. These efforts create new forms of sociality and ecology, and, since they provide sustenance and social support, governments can allow or even encourage them to flourish during times of crisis. As we explore in the next section, in this case the Horta do Monte ran up against regressive state policies regarding urban development.

Each of these three forms of garden – white working class, black post-colonial, young liberal-leftist – is exemplary of different form of gardening commons. The commons, as conceived by political ecology, offer a counterpoint to enclosure by state or capital, and in how differences of interest or power play out in the commons (Kirwan et al., 2016; Lang, 2014; Turner, 2016). Rather than a form of institutionalised resource management, such urban commons point to improvisational, ongoing, and persistent claims to the city made by gardeners as well as a place through which subjectivities can emerge, sustain themselves, and become 'at stake' through their claims to space. Urban gardens make shared natures in compromised spaces of the present, but they are commons-in-the-making which are not necessarily on a pathway prescribed by any uniform, underlying ideal. While offering a counterpoint to regressive austerity, such gardens cannot be seen as radical or revolutionary solutions to systemic crises – they are simply everyday spaces of compensation.

Gentrification and erasure in austerity gardens

From long-standing gardens in appropriated land beside public housing, to postcolonial migrants establishing gardening spaces and shanty towns, to the more recent expansion of micro-gardening spaces associated with gardening as resistance – this range of informal gardening commons has precipitated various state reactions. In this section we outline two of the most direct and violent: the erasure and replacement of the Horta do Monte, and the long-running removal of Lisbon's shanty settlements and their gardens. Both of these are inflected by recent post-austerity strategies, focusing on property-led urban development;

as land values change, sites occupied by gardening commons become more lucrative.

Early one morning in June 2013, the Council arrived at the Horta do Monte, cleared the plants, removed fences, and razed the garden with bulldozers. The Council allowed no space for negotiation and refused to recognise the garden activists (Sousa, 2014). This should not be seen as a blanket rejection by the authorities of bottom-up claims to the city articulated through gardening. In fact, the Lisbon City Council has infused many of its schemes and programs – such as the *Bip-Zip* program that funds small community initiatives usually located in low-income public housing estates – with participatory rhetoric and rules (Falanga, 2019). Likewise, the network of horticultural parks we discuss later in this chapter has been set up by an independent town councillor responsible by the municipality's environment division. The decision to terminate the Horta do Monte was rather due to the prominence of the site – perched on the hillside, highly visible to all. Publicly, the council justified their actions as necessary to ensure an equitable distribution. They claimed that people 'squatting' the land were depriving others of access (Boaventura, 2013). Preceding gentrification, then, is a spurious attempt to turn tacitly accepted, unregularised use of land into something illegal, dangerous, unacceptable, and thus erasable. The underlying reason was that this garden did not fit with the mayor's tourist-led strategy. The garden borders Mouraria-Intendente, the city's historic migrant reception district (Fonseca & McGarrigle, 2013). This area is currently undergoing a state-led urban regeneration scheme, including refurbishing historic buildings for council offices, arts centres, new public squares, and a major new park (Tulumello, 2015). A garden which had its own internal, community-generated rules was outside the City Council's control and so, unaligned with the tenets of private-led green gentrification, was deemed a threat. The garden has since been reinstated and integrated into the horticultural parks network; plots are now allocated and very strict rules set by the city council. This includes sheds and fences to enforce a specific tidy, ordered, functional aesthetic (Figure 9.3). The ecological gentrification embodied by the replacement garden signals a green future; it becomes a commodity valued for the way it suggests sustainable living, even for those who do not participate: it becomes a spectacle allowing the passer-by or the tourist to "experience eco-friendly life, without having to actually do much about it" (Harper, 2020, p. 60).

A longer-term process has played out in Lisbon's postcolonial shanty settlements. The case of Santa Filomena is just one recent example in a long history of government violence against slum dwellers in Lisbon. Shanty settlements were initially developed by white Portuguese rural migrants from the 1960s onwards and, later, by Black postcolonial migrants from Portuguese-speaking African countries from 1970s onwards. Many gradually expanded to a size where the state was unable or unwilling to raze them because of the cost of re-housing residents. To address this problem, in 1993 the central government enacted a Special Rehousing Program known as PER, *Plano Especial de Realojamento*. In a fragmented process spanning over 30 years, the state has cleared



Figure 9.3 The reordered Horta do Monte garden

Source: [All photographs by the authors]

nearly all Lisbon's shanty settlements and rehoused their residents, often in segregated public housing estates. In particular, whenever land was needed for infrastructure or middle-class residential development, municipalities demolished settlements and relocated residents elsewhere (Ascensão, 2015b, Ascensão & Leal, 2019).

Santa Filomena was surveyed in 1993 with a view to clear and rehouse its population, then around 2,000 people. The Amadora city council was, however, unable to implement the programme because of financial constraints. A situation of stasis with the neighbourhood 'pending demolition' persisted for two decades. During that period, people moved in and out, but those who moved in after 1993 were not eligible for rehousing. In 2012, the city council estimated there were only 166 households still living in Santa Filomena eligible for resettlement. But in reality, there were other 172 households not eligible for relocation under the program (Carmo, 2013). These non-eligible households were served eviction notices and their homes summarily demolished in 2013 (Pozzi, 2017). The residents' preferred solution – *in situ* rehousing in a public estate – was in this case impossible. The landowner, a real estate developer with close ties to the Amadora mayor, had earmarked the site for expansion of a nearby private development. Activist housing collective *Habita* drew attention

to the case; the national media published several pieces; Members of Parliament (MPs) from the *Bloco de Esquerda* (Left Bloc) and the Portuguese Communist Party visited the site. None of these stopped the demolition. As investment capital flows, so do the bulldozers. These processes of displacement are different to those applied to the Horta do Monte: rather than a tactical deployment of the urban green for enhancing economic competitiveness, the story here is about sustained state acts of disciplining poor migrant communities and privileging middle-class residential development by politically connected real estate funds (see Figure 9.4).

On our visit to Santa Filomena in 2015, there were only a few remaining shanties. Across the former settlement, the soil was full of rubble after the demolitions, but remaining residents along with some evictees cleared the site and began to garden amid the ruins. One young man still living on the site planted beans, corn, and potatoes. We counted ten gardens of around 40m² each to the west of the settlement and 15 to the east, as well as several larger ones to the North, in the area where a future gated community will be built. There were also around 15 garden plots where once houses stood. These gardens, once a large-scale poaching of private land and a key part of community subsistence, have been largely erased, made victim to a development project, itself stalled in



Figure 9.4 Gardening amidst the rubble in Santa Filomena

Source: [All photographs by the authors]

the face of financial difficulties. These remaining gardens subsist at the violent endgame of Lisbon's postcolonial urban politics as highly provisional, improvised attempts to sustain precarious lives. This is where the power of gardening to offer hope stretches thin. The struggle against dispossession and eviction is all but over here. All that is left is gardening as consolation amid the ruins of a shattered community.

Between the post-austerity green and autonomous gardening

In Lisbon, the city council has begun to implement its own vision of gardening. These gardens blend entrepreneurial, post-austerity urbanism with longer-running liberal ideas of citizenship, responsibility, and ecology. Exemplary of this new form of urban green is one of the Council's showpiece gardens in Telheiras (Figure 9.5). Although residents had been proposing a garden for many years, the *Parque Hortícola de Telheiras* was implemented with little consultation in 2012. Soil was trucked in from a golf course and the garden was laid out with 22 80m² plots. A competition to allocate these plots attracted over 1,000 entrants. Some gardeners attend almost every day, while those with smaller



Figure 9.5 The middle-class horticultural park in Telheiras

Source: [All photographs by the authors]

parcels typically spend four to six hours per week gardening. As one gardener put it: “I feel good to come here. My back doesn’t like it, but psychologically it’s good. Out in the open air . . . I’ve met new people . . . There’s a lot of sharing, though I don’t know everyone here” (Gardener, personal communication, July 22, 2015). While the gardeners can exercise the right to exclude outsiders, their management is constrained by externally set rules: selling produce is forbidden; only organic agriculture is allowed; plastics are banned. A consultant visits to check that gardeners adhere to these regulations. The garden is sponsored by *Vitacress*, a multinational vegetable distributor. Participation in the gardening commons here is conditional, interpolated through bureaucratic hoops and requiring compliance with the rules of the game.

In order to understand why this garden was established, we need to take a step back to the story behind the municipality’s current green policy. From the 1960s onwards, the influential landscape architect Gonalo Ribeiro-Telles (born 1922) advocated planning that explicitly conserved urban nature and enabled gardening within the grounds of residential estates. “Green spaces in the city,” he wrote, “must not be circumscribed to the residual areas left vacant by buildings, roads and car parks. On the contrary, they should constitute full systems and structures with territorial and cultural expression . . . Nature’s presence is indispensable to the quality of the urban environment, to the city’s beauty and to the recreation, health and wellbeing of the population” (C mara Municipal de Lisboa [CML], 1992, p. 8). Telles’ plan centred on the goal of connecting pre-existing green areas across the metropolitan area through a network of ecological corridors (CML, 1992, p. 3030; Telles, 1997, p. 19).

Way ahead of his time, Telles’ ideas were ignored by planners for three decades. They eventually found favour in the new Green Plan for Lisbon, formally adopted in 2006 (Telles, 1997). As one landscape architect put it, “he used to go on about urban gardens and everyone said, ‘This man’s crazy!’ but now he’s not crazy anymore” (Landscape architect, personal communication, July 22, 2015). Due to urban expansion through the 1990s and early 2000s, much of the area allocated for ecological corridors by Telles was crisscrossed with major roads, industrial or commercial zones, and residential developments. A less ambitious version of Telles’ plan, along with a patchwork of smaller parks and cycle-ways, was initiated 15 years ago and is now nearly complete. While highly visible, the rise of green infrastructure in the city since the 1990s has paid little more than lip service to biodiversity and the ecological goals of Telles’ plan. Lisbon’s current post-austerity strategy has inherited Telles’ ecological vision, but has done so in a way that puts amenity and appearance over ecological function.

As part of this Green Plan, the Lisbon City Council has implemented a network of urban allotment gardens (*Parques Hort colas*) – one of these is Telheiras. The Telheiras gardens appear frequently as a best practice model in the media and in policy reports. From a critical perspective, however, the gardens are a token for political marketing and the top-down creation of an environmentally friendly urban citizen. As one gardener told us, “This is all about an image

for the city council to exploit, it is a highly visible project of the councilman, and they mostly care that it looks productive and that it looks nice” (Gardener, personal communication, July 22, 2015). The visual semiotics here reveal the centrality of branding and appearance over and above any substantial shifts in urban ecologies (Harper, 2020; Van Holstein, 2016). And while the Council’s publicity foregrounds earthy permanence, the gardens are temporary. Each resident has an annual contract, making long-term plans unviable and pitching bureaucratic time against the longer-run temporalities of soil, plants, and growth. The Telheiras garden, moreover, is positioned on a patch of public land zoned as ‘residential development awaiting future construction’. This means that the garden’s future is uncertain. If land values increase sufficiently, there is no promise that the Council will not develop or sell the land out from under the gardeners. This site of urban agriculture enters into longer-term development strategies as a means to “keep vacant sites warm while development capital is cool” (Tonkiss, 2013, p. 318).

However, even if temporary and circumscribed, gardeners have staked a claim founded on use value: the land’s capacity to feed and nourish, rather than its exchange value for property developers. Rules are broken, as many gardeners have informally divided their already small plots to give access to friends and family. One gardener told us, “There are some common areas where there are companion species to call bees, like thyme, rosemary. Not everyone keeps this common space free, and it’s a shame they don’t. They encroach on it with their plants, it’s not good” (Gardener, personal communication, 2015). This is a reminder that such gardens are not harmonious spaces, but full of their own micro-dynamics of exclusion/enclosure. Moreover, abstract municipal rules can be internalised by commoners. As one gardener told us: “I agree with the rules as it’s considered a recreational park, for residents” (Gardener, personal communication, July 22, 2015). Having a simple rule banning pesticides meant collective organic gardening; the ban on trees means no shading; banning economic activity also means that there is no “economic pressure to sub-let plots” (Gardener, personal communication, July 22 2015), as another gardener put it. Held to a standard of an insurgent or radical garden, the gardens at Telheiras fall short. But held to this impossible standard, all gardens would fall short. These gardeners cohere around a set of practices to create new eco-social networks that would not otherwise have existed (Chatterton, 2018). Some commitment to beneficial socio-ecological outcomes exists here, even as they re-articulate notions of civic responsibility, liberal citizenship, and middle-class lifestyle gardening.

As well as creating new horticultural parks, Lisbon’s Green Plan gives impetus to disciplining existing gardening commons. We return to the gardens of Chelas where, driven by an aesthetic vision of the ‘right kind of nature’, the council has tried to ‘regularise’ the gardens. The City employed landscape architects to formalise and beautify plots, removing makeshift sheds, fences, and plastics. Unlike at the showpiece Telheiras gardens, the soil – as one gardener put it – “was like rock” (Gardener, personal communication, September 1, 2015). Chelas is now

home to the largest park in the Urban Allotment Gardens Network, with 220 plots (Mata, 2014; Sousa-Matos, 2015).

But the informal, ‘unregularised’ gardens between the public housing estates – which are generally larger – remain more important for the food security of many residents than the highly regulated municipal park. Sr. Manuel, who we quoted in an earlier section, was allocated one of these plots, but quickly gave it up as “the area [of the Horticultural Park plots] is too small for people in need” (personal communication, October 5, 2015). He drew a clear distinction between the kind of hobby gardening envisioned by the council and subsistence agriculture: “One thing is for you to be employed and wanting to plant a lettuce or a tomato for fun, a different thing is you’re retired and need to get food from your garden . . . Plus they have all these prejudices: they don’t want chemicals, they don’t want this, they don’t want that. You can’t grow in quantity like that” (ibid). The claims and practices of the poor rub against the frontiers of urban greening and development. One form of urban green (implemented following a model; run according to the rules of the bureaucracy) ascends over another form of green (historically embedded; bottom-up). The state’s tacit acceptance of informal claims to the city is only ever provisional. While gardening spaces can be subject to state violence and erasure – as the case of the Santa Filomena slum clearance discussed in the previous section shows – they can also be tamed or pacified, made to fit a vision of appropriate nature and gardening.

A commitment to liberal values and unitary notions of green citizenship is also visible in a green initiative at a housing estate, Adroana, built to rehouse inhabitants of the former shanty towns *Marianas* and *Fim do Mundo* (End of the World) in the Cascais municipality. The estate is segregated from surrounding houses, far from the shanty towns which were demolished, far from resident’s existing employment, and far from good transport and commercial links. The original site of the Marianas shanty is now prime real estate. The Cascais City Council has attempted to improve the new neighbourhood by providing a basketball court/futsal pitch, a small horticultural park and garden workshops. These workshops, named *Mãos à Horta* (a pun on getting one’s hands dirty and the Portuguese word for vegetable garden, *horta*) aimed to teach residents what kind of seeds they should plant, including which species from their countries of origin (Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau) would be suitable for the sandy soil. ‘Eco-creative cooking classes’ were supposed to teach residents how to cook these vegetables. Classes were taken by 60 people, including many single men, who form a significant part of the population of many estates where former slum dwellers were rehoused. Residents then applied for one of the new garden plots laid out by the council. However, there are only 28 plots – insufficient to satisfy the considerable demand. As the gardeners of Adroana told us, there is nonetheless a mutual support network, with people giving some of the food they grow to their neighbours, as well as sharing seeds, advice, and equipment. Others helped look after their neighbours’ tomatoes and lettuces. Nonetheless, unlike at the middle-class gardens of Telheiras, here “no one has sub-divided their plots” (Gardener, personal communication, July 29, 2015). These plots are

too small to subdivide since the gardeners of Adroana rely on their produce for subsistence. As a temporary solution, some unemployed residents established plots beyond the official park, although the soil there is rockier and much less fertile (Figures 9.6 and 9.7). This is a micro example of the resurgence of the



Figures 9.6 and 9.7 Plots inside (left) and outside (right) the fence, Adroana

Source: [All photographs by the authors]

autonomous commons in response to state-led enclosure. These plots are on municipal land and have apparently been tolerated, although the residents do not know for how long this will continue.

The gardening initiative at Adroana stems directly from the longstanding state goal to govern and manage these urban populations as others (Fikes, 2009): as accepted others if they assent to being guided, taught, and managed; or undisciplined others if they go off-script, such as those gardeners who have appropriated nearby land. It speaks to graduated sovereignty, the division of the population into subjects constituted through a range of punitive, caring, and managerial technologies (Ong, 2006; on Portugal see Cabannes & Raposo, 2013; Luiz & Jorge, 2012). Although the cooking and gardening programmes both had a nod to cultural specificity, they were also an attempt to force residents into the same hobbyist and lifestyle mode of gardening as that seen in Telheiras – a paternalist attempt to make their gardening practices *appropriate*. The small scale, micro-management, and top-down approach integrates the urban green into the broader historical project of governing the poor, Black postcolonial migrants who started to settle Lisbon in the 1970s.

“How”, Anguelovski et al. (2019) ask, “does municipality-led urban greening transform and undermine existing informal relationships to nature and socio-ecological landscapes?” (p. 1071). Following this section, an initial response to this question must be: it depends on the historic and geographic landscape into which urban greening initiatives are inserted. In Telheiras, the municipality’s urban greening responded to, on one hand, an inchoate local desire for some kind of space for urban agriculture, and on the other hand, the strategy for green branding through an international aesthetic of wholesome, organic gardening. Elsewhere the municipality has attempted to sanitise and regulate larger, pre-existing urban gardening spaces, notably at Chelas – and it is perhaps not coincidental that the metro-line running from Lisbon’s airport to the city centre, and so also the tourist gaze, passes over this space. A commitment to certain forms of liberal green citizenship demarcates the green initiative at Adroana, amounting to a municipally circumscribed form of gardening that precludes the continuing existence of other, less bourgeois, forms of classed and racialised natures.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how urban gardening relates to recent post-austerity urbanism in Lisbon, Portugal. This relationship works in two ways. The first is the historic emergence of autonomous, bottom-up commons. The question of property – legal rights to the land – is less important here than historical precedent. The compromise between poor urbanites and the state concerning unregulated land has eroded slowly in Lisbon, but opportunities for collective organisation around shared interest and benefit persist and continue to emerge. In Lisbon, new gardens have been made: some represent overt claims of a right

to the city, while others are temporary gardens amid the ruins of a displaced community. Gardening also continues in long-established plots, a traditional response to economic hardship by the urban poor. Further from the centre, where opportunities for claiming space have been more available, postcolonial migrants use the urban garden as a means to express and perform cultural identity, while simultaneously experimenting with practices of belonging in Lisbon. Gardening here is not pre-scripted, but emerges through “unstable and malleable social relation[s] between a particular self-defined social group”, cohering around the idea that their piece of land be treated as off limits to the “logic of market exchange and market valuations” (Harvey, 2012, p. 73) – at least for a while. The hope born in these gardens is not that they will save the city or heal deep social, economic, and racial injustices; the hope might be simply to put a few more beans in the pot and mentally connect to a previous ‘home’ in their country of origin.

The second way gardening relates to a financialised post-austerity urbanism is the re-scripting of gardening spaces, either through the erasure of unwelcome existing gardening spaces or the creation of new gardens associated with green gentrification. Recent urban development has created a pleasant green network where tourists ride *Segways* past the Horta do Monte, the increasingly insolvent middle classes are meant to ride bicycles while their neighbourhoods are hollowed out by corporate investors with short-term rental multi-listings, and the tolerated working class can garden provided they stick to the script of sanitised nature. Beat-up old blue barrels full of scummy rainwater and insect larvae – as vital as they might be for some types of gardening – do not fit this aesthetic vision of nature. Nor do unruly gardens which appropriate disused urban space without license from the state and create their own, insurgent rules; and much less those on the fringes of shanty towns due for demolition.

Urban gardening in Lisbon has thus morphed from a space of rural or cross-cultural gardening traditions to more insurgent spaces that react to acts of urban disciplining by moving repeatedly to the next available interstice in urban space, as well as to a tailored, hobbyist ecological space. It has morphed cumulatively, never fully erasing signs and patterns of its previous manifestation. Such juxtaposition also includes the urban garden as set out in planning imaginations since at least the 1960s, as well as one of the symbols of the period of deep austerity in the early 2010s, when it was presented as a sign of the resourcefulness of the urban poor. This role as rhetorical tool continues in ‘post-austerity’ times, which points to the fact that, in Lisbon as in other southern European cities, the urban garden was never strictly just a response to austerity (although it was that, too), but rather belonged to longer-running genealogies of class, nature, race, and urbanism that then gets percolated by the social process *du jour*. Today the most pertinent of these processes is the greening of urban space through techno-managerialist hoops. The urban garden is a token of good will in a process where green is not a good for all: it benefits some more than others, for whom new or exacerbated vulnerabilities arise.

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