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Green or golden landscapes

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ABSTRACT

In Mediterranean urban green spaces the green colour of lawns is the image that marks in the landscape. The Mediterranean gardens were invaded by turfgrass. The same green "carpet" is present in front of the Prado museum in Madrid, in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, or in front of the Jerónimos Monastery in Lisbon. However, in the driest climates like the Portuguese as Mediterranean one, the landscape summer colour is golden. Since a long time the anglo-saxonic image of gardens with perfect green lawns conquered their place in the south of Europe. This work is a deep critique reflection about the role of the landscapes in the improvement of the quality of life in the Mediterranean Portuguese landscapes. A question will guide us: why is the green colour of lawns so important in the Mediterranean urban landscapes when the rural landscapes are golden in the summer? To answer this question we will analyse the evolution from the typical Mediterranean Portuguese garden, the recreation farm, to the gardens that are being created nowadays. The bases of this study are key references that explore the essence of the Mediterranean gardens like Carapinha (1995), IGESPAR (2012a and 2012b). Historic gardens like Bacalhoa farm, Fronteira Marquis farm, and Monserrate garden are examples of historic Portuguese gardens that show the evolution of a typical Mediterranean garden to a garden of anglo-saxonic inspiration. Today, almost all gardens have to have lawns. A few projects that have great influence in the well-being and recreational needs of people from the biggest cities in Portugal, nowadays, like, for example: the Gulbenkian Foundation gardens in Lisbon, the city park in Porto, or the Poets Park in Oeiras, are explored and criticized in order to answer our main question. Other references, like: Keil (2011), Filippi (2011), Tsalikidis and Athanasiadou (2007), Hitchmough and Dunnet (2004), Hitchmough (2008), Jorgensen (2004); that explore the need of sustainable landscapes that permit the correct use of resources are used for trying to build a theory that may allows us to understand how we get to the actual use of lawns in places that cannot be actively exercised.

Keywords: Mediterranean, gardens, lawns, well-being, sustainability.

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