

Green Heritage at the urban peripheries:

Allotments and Community gardens

between preservation and social struggles

Editors

Linda Boukhris (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), Maria Gravari-Barbas (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne & Penny Travlou (University of Edinburgh)

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Allotment gardens and urban agriculture have always been integral components of urban life and have the potential to become valuable tools in contemporary urban planning. In many cities, these practices are anchored in systems of micro-gardens - such as allotments and community gardens (Acton, 2011) - that contribute to the greening of urban environments, improve dietary habits (FAO, 2010), revitalise traditional agricultural practices (Jansma et al., 2022), and foster social ties through shared projects and collective engagement (Robertson, 2012).

These gardens provide essential ecosystem services, positioning them as key elements in urban landscapes. Their benefits extend beyond food production to include climate regulation, biodiversity support, and the creation of healthier and socio-environmentally friendly cities, especially in the context of the post-pandemic city (Connolly, Kythreotis, 2025).

Many micro-gardens, some of which have existed for centuries, have played a formative role in shaping European cities (Landsteiner & Soens, 2020). Although their structures and vegetation may seem temporary, the sites themselves - and the formal and informal networks that maintain them - possess tangible and intangible heritage value, including gardening knowledge, practices, traditions but also memories of social and political struggles and memories of migrations in the postcolonial city.

Despite their cultural, ecological, social and political significance, allotments and community gardens often lack formal recognition as urban heritage. They remain fragile and are frequently perceived as obstacles to new urban developments in relation to the (re)production of fragmented and uneven urban and regional space (Grange and al, 2024). In response, recent grassroots movements have begun advocating for the recognition of these gardens as vital elements of local heritage, with the potential to preserve collective social-ecological memories of food production (Paddeu 2021; Barthel and al, 2015), to support environmental justice (Ernstson, 2013), racial justice (White, 2011), and social cohesion (Lohrberg, 2022) or to advance a decolonial and feminist agenda (Ortiz et al. 2025; Brega Bizarria et al., 2022). On the other hand, the revitalisation of urban gardening can also lead to gentrification processes and displacement of racialised minorities in the production of the metropolises (Stehlin, Tarr, 2015). From micro-spaces of resistance to the new front of neoliberal urban governance, the urban gardening movement is complex and encompasses a variety of initiatives and projects, involving different stakeholders -including the non-humans (Jhagroe, 2023) and taking place in very different urban contexts. Tensions and contradictions must be analysed

from a situated and multi-scalar perspective (McClintock, 2014). This edited volume invites contributions that explore the multifaceted, complex and sometimes contradictory roles of allotment gardens and community agriculture within the context of urban (re)development. We welcome chapters that address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

1. **Green Heritagisation:** The processes through which urban gardens are recognised (or not) as heritage in the face of rapid and often aggressive metropolitan development.
2. **Stakeholder Dynamics:** The complex interplay of local actors involved in urban agriculture, including civic organisations, NGOs, residents, policymakers, and informal networks. Power relations at play between these different networks in the urban struggles over land-use and (competing) strategies to justify the value of these green urban areas (the social production of values)
3. **Environmental Functions:** The role of micro-gardens in promoting food justice, supporting biodiversity, and contributing to urban and peri-urban climate adaptation strategies.
4. **Social Life and Practices:** Community events, informal gatherings, and everyday encounters that make these gardens spaces of conviviality and cultural expression.
5. **Struggles for Preservation:** Local mobilisations to defend, protect, and institutionalise gardens threatened by real estate or infrastructural projects. Narratives and strategies mobilised by local networks.
6. **Pedagogical Roles:** The use of public orchards and gardens in combating food deserts, educating communities on sustainable food systems, and promoting food sovereignty in peripheral neighbourhoods.
7. **Heritage and Peripheries:** How peripheral urban populations mobilise heritage narratives to resist or reshape metropolitan development pressures.
8. **Gardens as “total heritage”:** Rethinking gardens as “total heritage” - an intersection of natural and cultural, tangible and intangible values.
9. **Gardening as a mode of preservation.** How gardens and gardening can be used to physically preserve historic urban sites that may have other values and histories as well as those of gardening.
10. **Gardens, Commons, and Spatial Justice:** How do allotments and community gardens embody claims for spatial and environmental justice in unequal metropolitan landscapes? In what ways do they confront urban fragmentation, privatisation, and exclusion while fostering collective governance, solidarity economies, and rights to the city?
11. **Gardens, Heritage, and Refugees:** Investigating how migrant and refugee communities engage with gardening practices as forms of cultural continuity, healing, and heritage-making. How do gardens become places of memory, survival, and integration in contexts of displacement? Contributions may explore how gardening enables refugees to re-root identities, transmit knowledge, and negotiate belonging in cities that often marginalise them.

12. **Gardens and Global South Struggles:** Highlighting urban gardening in the Global South as sites of resistance to dispossession, food insecurity, and environmental injustice. How do gardens intersect with decolonial practices, struggles for sovereignty, and alternative urban futures? We invite case studies that foreground situated knowledges and grassroots movements in African, Latin American, Asian, and Middle Eastern cities, challenging Eurocentric models of heritage and urban greening.
13. **Methodologies of Studying Gardens:** We especially encourage methodological reflections that place green heritage at the centre of inquiry. How can researchers capture the tangible and intangible values of gardens, their historical depth, and their role in shaping collective memory and identity? What kinds of interdisciplinary and experimental approaches allow us to interpret gardens as forms of living heritage that evolve through practices of cultivation, transmission, and struggle? Contributions may also address broader methods - from ethnography and participatory action research to archival work, GIS mapping, and more-than-human approaches - that help illuminate the ecological, social, and affective dimensions of gardens, as well as the challenges of translating grassroots practices into academic or policy frameworks.

This volume aims to shed light on the complex social, cultural, environmental, and political dynamics involved in safeguarding, recognising, and enhancing allotment gardens and community agriculture, particularly within metropolitan peripheries.

We look forward to receiving contributions that offer critical, interdisciplinary, and grounded insights into these vital urban landscapes.

Submission guidelines

Proposals for papers (500 words) must be accompanied by a biographical note (200 words). They must be submitted to jpi-cumet@univ-paris1.fr by January 10th, 2025.

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Full texts: June 30th, 2026

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