December 1st, 2024

Subject: Bursary report for participation at 1st Porto Urban Greening Biennial

Author: Jessica Horta Gomes

This past October 2024, during two full days, I had the opportunity and joy of attending the **first Porto Urban Greening Biennial**, made possible through MGAP's support. The event was organized by the *Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade do Porto*, the Porto City Council, and the *Associação Biopólis*.

It was incredible to engage with such an outstanding panel of professionals, many of whom I've followed and studied for years. It was equally heartening to see a large audience of students added to my colleagues, all coming together to explore answers and foster a new perspective on urban nature within the current zeitgeist.

The Biennial featured remarkable talks, workshops, and garden visits. The **talks** included:

- **Nigel Dunnett**: *Transformational Urban Gardens: A 'People-First' Approach to Nature in Cities*
- **Claudia West**: *Rebuilding Abundance: Shaping Future Nature with Planting*
- **Salvador Rueda**: *Urban Renaturalization with the Superblock Model*
- **Anna Lena Hahn**: *Maintenance is Mastery: Bringing Design into Action in Urban Green Spaces*
- **Noel Kingsbury**: *Wild in the City? The Potential and Challenges of Mediterranean Vegetation in Urban Environments*
- **Robert Ryan**: *Urban Greening to Connect People to Place: Challenges and Opportunities for Healthier Cities*
- **Joan Nassauer**: *Making Urban Greening Sustainable by Anticipating Public Response*
- **María Sánchez-Blanco**: *Plan Director del Arbolado Viario de Madrid*
- **Paulo Farinha Marques**: *Afforestation Plan for the Streets of Porto*
- **Martí Franch Batllori**: *The Gardeners of the Metropolis*
- **Duarte Mata**: *"Terras da Costa" Agrarian Park: A Social Challenge to Promote Ecological Landscape Renovation*

Although I couldn't join the **workshops** due to limited registration, the themes were fascinating. Highlights included:

- *Norma Granada v. 2020: Ecosystemic Philosophy and Methodological Approach to Economic Valuation of Urban Trees* by Pedro Calaza-Martínez
- *Introduction to the Green Flag Award* with Michele Walde & Lynsey Artherton
- *Installation and Cultivation of Autochthonous and Mediterranean Plants*, led by Filipe Tavares Soares (founder of Sigmetum, a renowned native and Mediterranean plant nursery in Portugal).

For **garden visits**, I chose the Jardins do Palácio de Cristal, guided by Teresa Portela Marques. Her deep knowledge and ability to weave history, geography, and design offered a profound experience, making me feel as though I was traveling the world within the garden. The breathtaking views over the Douro River and the early autumnal hues in the surrounding vegetation added to the charm. I also visited the municipal library in the park and purchased a book on its history.

Attending the Porto Urban Greening Biennial proved highly beneficial for enhancing my knowledge and aligning it with MGAP's mission of promoting Mediterranean gardening and conservation practices. The event's focus on urban greening, particularly through lectures by esteemed professionals like Claudia West, Anna Lena Hahn, Paulo Farinha Marques and Nigel Dunnett, provided valuable insights into the integration of ecologically principles within urban planning. The discussions emphasized the importance of recognizing nature's role in urban environments, not just from an aesthetic perspective (plants to people relationship) but as a critical factor in sustainability and resilience (plants to plants, and plants to site). These concepts are

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directly applicable to MGAP's initiatives, especially in advocating for climate & site appropriate plant selections with minimal resource use, and longevous plants life spans.

Moreover, the exchange of ideas with lecturers and attendees deepened my understanding of practical strategies for addressing the challenges posed by limited urban spaces. From selecting vegetation that adapts well to Mediterranean climates and requires fewer resources to optimizing carbon sequestration potential (namely longer-lived specimens such as trees and shrubs), the knowledge gained supports MGAP's goals of showcasing sustainable gardening models. The event reinforced that even small interventions can create meaningful ecological impact, aligning perfectly with MGAP's efforts to educate and inspire communities about sustainable practices. This experience equips me to bring fresh perspectives and strategies to future MGAP projects, enhancing their reach and effectiveness.

Jessica Horta Gomes,

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