

Publication

Gardening as Geopolitics

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Gardening is usually understood as an individual experience and an intimate relationship with the natural world. Yet it should also be studied as a cross-scalar political instrument to shape empire and transform territory. German reformers at the turn of the twentieth century called their garden settlements 'colonies' and understood them as a domestic form of settler colonialism. With the forced abdication of Germany's overseas colonies in 1919, garden settlements became even more explicitly geopolitical. Landscape designers now conceived of them as a form of colonization no longer based on imperial expansion, but on domestic development through the intensified use of the soil. This approach was foundational to the design of modern housing estates during the 1920s and 1930s. In this context, working one's back garden was seen as a heroic act of national development and a sublimation of empire.

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