

# Contradictions in the collective practice of urban agriculture: a Bourdieusian analysis

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## Abstract

Urban Agriculture has achieved considerable visibility in contemporary times, although it is not a new practice, as its remote origin is associated with the emergence of cities. These agricultural practices in cities have shown to be positive but permeated by contradictions. This article analyzes an urban collective garden located in the city of Porto Alegre, RS. The Horta da Formiga was observed as a social field through a two-year participatory investigation. The authors sought to answer the research question: How do protagonist agents of a collective urban garden reconcile as inherent contradictions to this social field? Pierre Bourdieu's apparatus was used as a theoretical-methodological lens. The corollary of the developed argument is that the more the protagonists of Horta da Formiga get closer to the capitals considered legitimate to the state, the more they can reconcile the contradictions in this field. The study identified that, when considering the analysis based on Bourdieu's notions of capital and habitus category, despite the individuals' agency, they face structured conditions in the field that do not allow more organic and diverse forms of reconciliation of contradictions.

**Keywords:** Urban agriculture. Contradictions. Pierre Bourdieu.

## Condições na prática coletiva da agricultura urbana: uma análise Bourdieusiana

### Resumo

A Agricultura Urbana (AU) tem alcançado bastante visibilidade na contemporaneidade, apesar de não ser uma prática nova, pois a sua origem está associada ao surgimento das cidades. Práticas de agricultura nas cidades têm se mostrado positivas, mas também permeadas por contradições. Este artigo apresenta a análise de uma horta urbana coletiva situada na cidade de Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul. A Horta da Formiga (HF) foi observada, como um campo social, em uma investigação participativa ao longo de dois anos. Buscou-se responder à seguinte inquietação: *como agentes protagonistas em uma horta urbana coletiva conciliam as contradições inerentes a esse campo social?* Com vistas a este objetivo, o aparato de Pierre Bourdieu foi mobilizado como lente teórico-metodológica. O corolário do argumento desenvolvido é que quanto mais os agentes protagonistas da HF se aproximam dos capitais tidos como legítimos ao Estado (metacampo de poder), mais são capazes de conciliar as contradições que se atravessam nesse campo. Identificou-se, pois, que embora haja uma agência desses indivíduos, considerando a análise recorrendo às noções de capital e à categoria *habitus* de Bourdieu, há condicionantes estruturados no campo que não permitem a conciliação de contradições de formas mais orgânicas e diversas.

**Palavras-chave:** Agricultura urbana. Contradições. Pierre Bourdieu.

## Contradicciones en la práctica colectiva de la agricultura urbana: un análisis bourdieusiano

### Resumen

La agricultura urbana (UA) ha logrado una notoriedad considerable en la época contemporánea, aunque no es una práctica nueva, ya que su origen remoto está asociado al surgimiento de las ciudades. Las prácticas agrícolas en las ciudades han demostrado ser positivas, pero también impregnadas de contradicciones. Este artículo presenta el análisis de un huerto urbano colectivo ubicado en la ciudad de Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul. La Horta da Formiga se observó como un campo social en una investigación participativa de más de dos años. Se buscó responder a la siguiente inquietud: *¿Cómo concilian los agentes protagonistas de un huerto urbano colectivo las contradicciones inherentes a este campo social?* Con miras a este objetivo, se utilizó/utilizaron la/s teoría/s de Pierre Bourdieu como lente teórico-metodológico. El corolario del argumento desarrollado es que cuanto más se acercan los protagonistas de Horta da Formiga a los capitales considerados legítimos del Estado (metacampo del poder), más capaces son de conciliar las contradicciones que atraviesan este campo. Se identificó, por tanto, que si bien existe una agencia de estos individuos, considerando el análisis utilizando las nociones de capital y la categoría *habitus* de Bourdieu, existen condicionantes estructurados en el campo que no permiten la conciliación de contradicciones de formas más orgânicas y diversas.

**Palabras clave:** Agricultura urbana. Contradicciones. Pierre Bourdieu.

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## INTRODUCTION

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Urban Agriculture (UA) has expanded and gained a lot of visibility in contemporary times (Brand & Munoz, 2007), although it is not a recent practice: its origin is associated with the emergence of cities. Agricultural practice in urban and peri-urban areas ranges from the composition of individual gardens in small pots to the collective gardens where communities gather; the latter, the collective practices of urban agriculture, expose a series of contradictions: if, on the one hand, UA has become synonymous with sustainable food systems, on the other hand, it has also filled the void left by the regression of the social safety net, ensuring neo liberalization from alternative food networks, according to critical social perspectives, highlighted by McClintock (2014). It is essential to consider the contradictions mentioned to think about urban agriculture, because it is not enough to observe the benefits of the gardens: it is also necessary to analyze how the participants' relationships with each other and with the surroundings of the occupied land take place.

In recent decades, the number of research on UA has increased considerably (McIvor & Hale, 2015). In particular, the advantages of developing collective and community gardens for the improvement of life in cities stand out (Caldas & Jayo, 2019; Prové, Desein, & Krom, 2016; Purcell & Tyman, 2015; Smit, Nasr, & Ratta, 2001). However, considering some approaches that seek to highlight complex issues specific to the social dynamics of cities (Brites, 2017; Maricato, 2009), we understand that such critical perspectives can also be applied to the contradictions of the relationships established in the practices of collective urban agriculture (Jayo & Caldas, 2019; McClintock, 2014, 2018; McClintock, Miewald, & McCann, 2017; Sbicca, 2014; Tornaghi, 2017). In addition, there are complexities for the expansion of UA itself that require the development of a fairer food system (McClintock, 2014). This combination of critical views allows an expansion of the view on the collective UA, taking the discussion beyond a strictly enthusiastic perspective, without, therefore, disregarding its relevance.

The expansion of urban agriculture has generated many benefits to the populations of cities. There are several motivators that lead agricultural practice to urban and peri-urban areas; the participants, in general, seek these lands for a connection with green spaces, to rescue community ties, resume cultivation practices that they left in their inner cities, perform educational activities on health and food, therapeutic experiences, reapproach the consumption of fresh foods, among others. At the same time, as public or private land where UA happens is located in cities, the dynamics of volunteering is stressed by the crossing of contradictory situations, with which the collectives need to deal in to continue the activities; as an example, we can mention the tensions of real estate speculation, the interaction with homeless people seeking shelter, the lack of public policy support and the challenges of adhering to the movement, to name but a few. Based on McClintock (2014), we understand that such contradictions become inherent to the dynamics of constitution and permanence of vegetable gardens. In this sense, a collective urban garden is a social field, from the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu, a space in which it is possible to observe social relations through the power exercised by the agents directly involved with cultivation and by others that influence the logic of the practices established in these lands.

In this article, we analyze a collective urban vegetable garden located in the historic center of the city of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul. Horta da Formiga (HF) was observed as a social field for two years, in a participatory inquiry that sought to answer: "How do protagonist agents, in a collective urban garden, reconcile the contradictions inherent to this social field?". The Bourdieusian apparatus was mobilized as a theoretical-methodological lens. The corollary of the argument developed is that as protagonist agents of HF move closer to the capitals considered legitimate to the State (metafield of power), more capable they are to reconcile the contradictions that cross this field. Although there is an agency of these individuals, using the rights of capital and the *habitus* category of Bourdieu, there are structured conditions in the field that do not allow the reconciliation of contradictions in a more organic and diverse way. In terms of theoretical contribution to the field of organizations, we mobilized, in this work, a structural-constructionist theoretical-methodological lens to analyze a phenomenon in effervescence, little explored from the Bourdieusian perspective, which has focused on the analysis of other social fields. We understand that the positions of agents in the analyzed field change more frequently than in other fields due to volunteering and government changes in Brazil every four years, since collective and community UA practices are regulated by the municipal power, especially with regard to land that can be occupied by collectively organized civil society movements.

We seek to present discussions related to cities and their configurations thinking, initially, the occupation of urban spaces, community relations and gentrification processes, among others. Then, we brought different perspectives on collective and community urban agriculture, both from more enthusiastic views (but not superficial) and from critical looks. Next, we approach the concept of social fields from the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu and his theoretical-methodological device. In the methodological procedures section, we explain how HF, understood as a social field, was analyzed based on Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992). Finally, we present the results of participatory inquiry and the discussion derived from it. We conclude the article by reinforcing that structural contradictions affect the dynamics of agents in collective practices of urban agriculture, limiting more organic and diverse forms of response to these contradictions.

## THEORETICAL REFERENCE

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### The multifaceted practice of collective urban agriculture

The notion of city brought to this reflection is that of Lefebvre (2001), according to which the city is the individual who dwells in it. Thus, the city can be defined as a “projection of society over a place”, not only space, but also the sphere of (urban) thought. In this sense, because it is based on the complexities that make up cities, collective urban agriculture can be seen as a movement that seeks to meet demands arising from these urban contradictions, while reinforcing others (McClintock, 2014, 2018; McClintock et al., 2017; Sbicca, 2014). Such initiatives operate, as McClintock et al. (2017) highlight, in broader contradictory tensions of the city’s “unequal development”.

Urban farming practices are positive because they lead people to come together in communities of interest; this integration through a task requires a collective effort that engenders social relations such as cooperation, solidarity, and mutual respect for the space of others, although, of course, it also emphasizes the differences. In addition, this practice has a significant potential to act against the alienation of other people’s work, food, ecological processes, and urban space, and often offers people an opportunity to approach urban ecologies. As Costa and Almeida (2012) argues, based on issues such as food production, access or preparation, the chains of relationship between production, appropriation, and consumption of space in cities can be recreated.

In the perspective advocated by Purcell and Tyman (2015), the cultivation of food in the city has the potential to challenge dominant regimes that structure the production and use of urban space. Within this point of view, Prové et al. (2016) argue that, due to the growing interest in urban agriculture, new purposes are being attributed to it, since it has been seen as a conceivable way to achieve the sustainable objectives in cities. Caldas and Jayo (2019) rescue the relevance of urban agriculture in the city of São Paulo, using as time markers the years between 1983 and 2016. Given the complexity of social relations engendered in a megalopolis, the growth of these cultivation spaces also contributes to a better understanding of other issues related to an intense urbanity. Cumbers, Shaw, Crossan, and McMaster (2018) understand that these common gardens cannot be separated from underlying and regressive economic and social processes that accompany neoliberal austerity policies. These gardens provide space for important forms of work that address social needs and promote community strengthening. Brand and Munoz (2007) argue that urban agriculture policies have great flexibility for expansion, and can be adjusted and applied in diverse spaces, from downtown New York to the slums of São Paulo.

Coming from a purely enthusiastic perspective, authors point out contradictions in urban agriculture practices. The reflection proposed by Jayo and Caldas (2019), for example, deals with captured urban agriculture, characterized not by community organizational practices, but aligned with market interests, image improvement, real estate speculation, among other potential factors. For Rosol (2012), urban agriculture presents itself as a soft strategy to reinforce neoliberalism by involving civil society in urban governance by outsourcing public service and infrastructure responsibilities. In the same direction, Tornaghi (2017) understands that, although urban agriculture is gaining more space and visibility, it remains a residual, marginal and interstitial practice, full of contradictions and disturbed by restrictions. For Sbicca (2014), urban farming practices are being portrayed as benevolent and non-problematic. Thus, from the perspective of these authors, there are many controversial and potentially unfair dynamics that are not explored but motivating questions.

While several modalities of UA practices grow, McClintock et al. (2017) point out that activists question who these practices are actually serving and for whom they are being orchestrated, the concerns of these groups are about possible gentrification effects of these interventions in cities. There are UA advocates who expand their practices to struggles in the pursuit of social justice and policy making and equity. The goal of McClintock et al. (2017) is problematizing the often uncritical celebration of the UA, highlighting spaces of conflict in this growing movement and, at the same time, emphasizing the social, health and environmental benefits of food production in cities and peri-urban areas. This is not a simple confrontation; Tornaghi (2017) recalls that even the projects that articulate a policy of food justice, recognize that the limits of neo liberalization are difficult to overcome. According to Costa and Almeida (2012), the areas and practices of UA face obstacles and resistances associated with a subaltern and peripheral insertion, even to the urban economy.

McClintock (2014) points out that contradictions are fundamental to urban agriculture in general and that by focusing on one interpretation or another, there is a risk of weakening the transformative potential of this practice. Reconciling internal contradictions with urban agriculture can help better position it within coordinated efforts for structural change; to do so, instead of promoting agriculture in cities as an end in itself, we should think of it as one of the many means for a greater purpose.

Based on the above broad spheres that make up the problem of cities and collective urban agriculture, we identified the possibility of thinking of HF as a social field. We look at the social relations established by its leading agents and their efforts to reconcile the contradictions that cross the movement.

### The Bourdieusian theoretical-methodological apparatus

Social fields can be understood as structured spaces of posts whose properties depend on the position in these spaces, which, however, can be analyzed independently of the characteristics of their occupants. Even in different fields, it is possible to identify invariable operating laws and use what is learned from each field to interrogate and interpret other fields (Bourdieu, 1984). The field has no parts or components, as each subfield has its own logic and specific rules (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The relationship established between the fields in the social world denotes how autonomous they are because of the influence of one another and their ability to refraction. Every social field is also a field of forces and struggles to conserve or transform this field of forces (Bourdieu, 2004). The positions taken in the field should be considered relationally, because, when the positions of the agents are characterized, personal properties can be identified that predispose them to occupy such positions and to realize the existing potentialities. The agents of a field who have similar social conceptions and political positions also closely share a social trajectory (Bourdieu, 1996).

The permanent change of the field is related to capital mobilizations. Capital is a work that takes time to accumulate, whether in its materialized or incorporated form (Bourdieu, 1985). According to Bourdieu (1985), capital can be: economic, convertible into cash and property; which can be institutionalized by educational qualifications, and, in some situations, convertible into economic capital; social, characterized by social connections or obligations, also liable to conversion into economic and institutionalized capital, as occurs in a title of nobility, for example. In addition to these three, there is symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990), which concerns reputation and prestige, composed of a set of commitments, debts of honor, accumulated rights, and duties, which can be mobilized in extraordinary circumstances. The credibility given to symbolic capital can only be granted by the group. Thus, the field is temporalized together with these capitals (Hilgers & Mangez, 2011).

For a field to work, there must be something at stake and people willing to play, that is, endorsed with *habitus* that implies the knowledge and recognition of the laws inherent in the game, what is at stake etc. (Bourdieu, 1984). *Habitus*, for Bourdieu (2004), is the basic principle of practices and judgments adopted by agents, a system of socially constituted provisions that, as structured and structuring frameworks, constitute the generating and unifying principle of all practices and ideologies characteristic of a group of agents. Besides being the structuring framework that organizes the practices and perception of these practices, *habitus* is also a structured framework, since it is the principle of division into logical classes that organizes the perception of the social world and the product of the incorporation of division into social classes (Bourdieu, 2007).

Bourdieu also discusses the state as a metafield of power. One of the principles that unify the fields of power is precisely the dispute between people for power over the State, because, through it, they can preserve and reproduce the various forms of capital. The political field is, according to Bourdieu (2014), the quintessential place of symbolic capital. The State can be understood as a meta capital, a power above the powers, in the sense that it is it that legitimizes, by its mechanisms, the existing capital. From the formal education system, the distribution of capital of interest to the State is already defined. The concentration of these capitals allows universalization; legitimate culture is the culture of State because the process of universality also takes place in its concentration. It is necessary to analyze the State as a mechanism beyond its functions. In this sense, one can think of it as a hidden and invisible principle of social order and domination, both physical and symbolic (Bourdieu, 2014).

Although different elements of the discussion about field have been presented, it should also be considered that thinking in terms of the field is to think in a relational way and that the limits of the field are located where its effects cease (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). We analyze HF, understanding it as a social field involved by other fields in urban metamorphosis and suffering state influences as a metafield of power.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

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We defined as theoretical-methodological way for this research the perspective of structuralism-constructionist by Bourdieu (1990). Therefore, through the data collection method, a participatory inquiry was conducted (Pozzebon, 2018) for two years at HF. The participation period was uninterrupted from November 2016 to November 2018.

HF was developed by the Association of Collective Gardens of the Historic Center (AHCCH, in Portuguese) in a private land of 320m<sup>2</sup> provided by the owners temporarily, under a regime of loan for use (called “comodato” in Portuguese). The association sought legal access to a public land of the municipality for the constitution of a collective garden but faced with the barriers to the release of the desired land, accepted the invitation to occupy a private land that gave the AHCCH the opportunity to create a pilot collective garden project. In addition to the members of the board and members of the Fiscal Council of the Association, the group also expanded with its supporters, partners and itinerant volunteers who participate in the task force and actions. The group seeks to establish dialogues with the public authorities and with other collective initiatives of urban agriculture in Porto Alegre and other regions of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, to strengthen collective and community movements. The justification for the centralization of research in a particular case of collective urban garden is its use as an instrumental case, according to Stake (1998), which considers the possibility of, through a case study, analyzing a phenomenon. From this perspective, it is possible to seek insights through the perspective directed by the case, differently from what occurs when working with intrinsic case, in which the analysis focuses on the exploration of the case itself.

Throughout the participatory inquiry, in addition to the daily experience, fourteen interviews were conducted (with people from the garden and representatives of the public authorities), complemented by notes and field observations in the most diverse spaces of discussion of the group (task forces, round-table discussions, meetings of the organization, among others). We also made photographic records, reading documents – about the constitution and interests of the group – and collection of materials in conventional media and social networks; in addition, we participated in academic discussions on the subject and popular forums on urban agriculture in Rio Grande do Sul.

When considering the collective urban garden a social field, we focus on three important moments in the analysis of a social field, according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992): initially, we observed and analyzed the position of the field in relation to the field of power; then, we sought to establish the objective structure of the relations between the positions held by the agents or institutions that are competing in the field in question; finally, we analyzed the *habitus* of the agents, the different systems of dispositions that they acquired through internalization of certain social and economic conditions that are in a definitive trajectory within the field. This analysis, in three moments, was conducted following a critical-interpretative approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000), because we understand that constructivist approaches, such as the Bourdieusian lens, aim to conduct in-depth investigations on how a social reality has been constructed. The critical focus is on the power dynamics and ideology surrounding social practices.

## RESULTS: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

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### Horta da Formiga's position in relation to the field of power

Following the presentation, we deem most appropriate to this discussion, and by the process of analyzing a social field according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), we began to discuss the position of HF in relation to the field of power, highlighting the State as a metafield. We deem important to think about the State beyond its functions, reflecting on its genesis (Bourdieu, 2014). Through the analysis of this case, we identified universal mechanisms to which the genetic notion of State is linked.

HF is located in the Historic Center of Porto Alegre/RS, adjacent to João Manoel Street Staircase, a scenario in which relations of conflict over space are a constant issue. We understand that analyzing this space encourages the need to think about the city beyond its physiography and to look at other dimensions involved in urbanity, as Freire (2010) points out. First, we observe that a collective movement of urban agriculture, by agreeing to settle on a private land, ends up establishing itself in a contradiction with regard to access, because not everyone will be able to enjoy the occupation of space. This is common in the relational configurations of the contemporary city, as Maricato (2009) points out in his discussions about challenges in urban relations. Thus, at the same time that an urban vegetable garden is a beneficial initiative (Prové et al., 2016; Purcell & Tyman, 2015; Smit et al., 2001), is also questioned by the possible reinforcement of a logic that can culminate in exclusion patterns (McClintock, 2014, 2018; Sbicca, 2014; Tornaghi, 2017).

The State, as a metafield (Bourdieu, 1984, 2014), promotes essential directions to the establishment of dialogues within the social order necessary to maintain its own logic. The acceptance of "it is what it is" by the various agents inserted in the dynamics of the field of power, regardless of their position, is what is based on the symbolism of the power exercised without the need for the use of physical force in daily unwinding. Thus, the position of HF in relation to the field of power, in the understanding achieved here, is, precisely, of a social field under construction that is constituted in the relationship with other fields and that constantly receives the effects of conditioning necessary for the maintenance of the social order. We understand that it is by this adequacy conditioned to the logic of the field of power that the leading agents of HF seek to reconcile what we classify as contradictions of urban agriculture, following the perspective highlighted by McClintock et al. (2017). Such contradictions are placed in the structured daily dynamics and in the established social order.

The scenario of the case analyzed is of a land that has remained unoccupied by the owners for decades. In it, there is always the circulation of people classified as "unreliable", a perception conditioned by normality standards, according to a state logic, which incites a strangeness before everything that does not "fit" in the order. The presence of poor urban people within or around the HF terrain is a daily challenge for the protagonist agents, who resort to dialogue and support these people, even with limitations. The HF group seeks to reconcile more amiable ways for the presence of these people in the region and, thus, to ensure the movement fewer negative effects of this coexistence on the project (such as entering the field to meet physiological needs). The volunteers of the garden, in turn, try to contain the attacks of residents of the surrounding area who do not see in a positive way the reception offered by them to people in street situation or in extreme vulnerability in that space. In the contemporary configuration of the neoliberal city, the structures are designed in more privileged spaces (as in the case of the Historic Center of Porto Alegre), so that there is a "natural" expulsion of the poor and a high investment in real estate capital, as highlighted by Brites (2017) when analyzing more widely this problem. The dynamics of demarcation about which spaces of the city the subjects should occupy manifests itself in a way that is consented to by institutional means, and, because of this, the structures of privilege continue without fundamental questions regarding the established segregations: these are the foundations of the field of power, based on a symbolic power, according to Bourdieu's apparatus (1989, 2014). People in a condition of social vulnerability do not have, in their favor, means of mobilizing capital that may be essential to the State, in order to contribute to the stability of this as a metafield. In this way, such people become "noises" in the dynamics of the power field, although they are still important for their configuration, as they are part of the balance of forces necessary for domination.

The State, as a symbolic power, is always present (Bourdieu, 2014). However, not only in relation to the agenda of urban agriculture, but to all the inequalities visible in cities. It was observed, through this study, that the presence of the State is almost nonexistent. The AHCCCH participated, in the Legislative Assembly, with other movements, in the construction of a state law of urban agriculture, sanctioned in 2018, which until 2021 had not been implemented by the municipalities.

As for the capitals arranged in the analyzed field, we noticed that the leading agents of the AHCCCH concentrate and mobilize economic, social, and cultural capitals at HF according to the conceptualization presented by Bourdieu (1985), such capitals mobilized by the group are aligned with the logic of the metafield of power represented by the State, also according to Bourdieu (2014). Analyzing the capitals of the protagonists at HF, it is possible to observe that, although derived from the middle class, the group has little economic capital to employ in the project, also remembering that it is a voluntary work in a private land. However, with regard to the mobilization of social capital and cultural capital, the group has good networks of articulation of both, which contributes to this conciliation and to the permanence of the active movement, in addition to intimately dialoguing with the power of such capitals, according to Bourdieu's conceptual perspective (1985). The leading agents of HF see the State as something outside its activities, the institutional one that should "help" in the operationalization of the project. And, in this process of frustration in the attempt of a dialogue "we - they", do not realize that the absence of institutional support is also the presence of the field of power, because it imposes the attribution of unilateral responsibilities and neoliberal civil. The presence of the field of power remains in the discourse of accountability of citizens for dealing with idle and abandoned public spaces, but not always for their democratic occupation.

### The objective structure of the relations between the "positions" occupied by the agents or institutions that are competing in the field in question

The second focus for the analysis of HF as a field concerns the objective structure of the relations between the "positions" occupied by the agents or institutions that compete in the field in question, following Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992). We consider that the objective structure of this relationship is directly linked to the volume and structure of the capitals they hold and are able to mobilize, considering what Bourdieu (1985) states on the several types of capital. The structure of the field is defined according to the balance of power between the players. Thus, the objective structure of the relations between positions undergoes a continuous adjustment (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

The leading agents of HF, linked to the AHCCCH group, were given the responsibility to function as intermediaries that reconcile the contradictions that cross HF, considering it a field. The AHCCCH group was assigned the mission of mediate, from the capitals they could mobilize, the dialogue with and between the other agents and institutions that are competing in the field, seeking to reconcile the contradictions common to urban agriculture practices, according to the perspective of McClintock (2014) and McClintock et al. (2017). Among the agents considered in the dialogue, there is the family that owns the land, the community living in the houses and buildings surrounding the land, the homeless people who circulate or live temporarily on the Staircase and the representative organs of the public power. Each agent who composes the group of protagonists of the AHCCCH involved in the field assumes different responsibilities in order to ensure that the movement can resist on the ground and achieve the fundamental purpose of setting up the pilot garden. Thus, the mobilization of the capacities of these agents contributes to a relative balance of forces and resistance; however, as not always every member of the AHCCCH at HF has clarity of what he is doing, ends up moving by a practical sense. This concept was presented by Bourdieu (1989, 1980, 2001, 2007) and refers to organic forms of action, without the use of more reflective processes. We identified that the strong presence of this practical sense is also a signal that the field is still not very autonomous, suffering more from the crossings and influences of more consolidated fields such as the field of power, especially with regard to the State.

Among themselves, the Agents of the AHCCCH in the field of Horta da Formiga find themselves in disputes about how to proceed regarding the daily dynamics of the movement and the challenges that surround them. The internal dispute with the HF field is due to the primacy of deciding on how space occupation can occur: there is always a tension in this mobilization, because the agents involved are constantly defining the best occupation of the land. Internal disputes in a field are characteristic of its dynamics (Bourdieu, 2004). We understand that HF agents have their main capital mobilized in the social capital, because the AHCCCH was formed through an articulation of a virtual network of neighbors that configured the first group. It is not considered, here, the independence of this type of capital in relation to the others, but its clear preponderance, including in relation to the accumulated cultural capital of the group. Thus, the networks were mobilized by the conversion of these capitals into other types and, thus, generated the possibility of arousing responses to the constrictions presented in the field.

Regarding the relationship with people in street situation who occupied the land and circulated along the Staircase, we observed that they do not exercise any kind of dominance or power over the field in question, given that all the other agents involved and already highlighted here are, by alignment with the field of power and social order, in condition of some dominance in the field. Homeless people do not have the volume or capital structure necessary for them to exert some kind of influence in the field. The dominated position in which these people are is relevant to the configuration of the field, since it is a field of power disputes, and the importance of the mobilized capitals only emerges when we compared them with other capitals or with their absence.

Regarding the residents of houses and buildings neighboring the land, they position themselves in diverse ways regarding the existence of HF. Some defend the project because they believe in the benefits of the UA practice itself; others support for convenience, since the land that was previously abandoned and ended up being used by people in situations of social exclusion was occupied for purposes that contradicted the order. There are also indifferent neighbors and some who oppose the occupation of the land for reasons of possible gentrification and hygiene of the Staircase area. There is a mixture of enthusiastic perspective (McClintock et. al., 2017; Mclvor & Hale, 2015; Purcell & Tyman, 2015) and critical perspective of urban agriculture (McClintock et. al., 2017; Rosol, 2012; Sbicca, 2014; Tornaghi, 2017). In this configuration of the field, the contradictions to be reconciled constantly emerge (McClintock, 2014; McClintock, et al., 2017).

All these manifestations and problems have as a transversal thread the field of power, when considered that the criteria and norms for the definition of a private property, as well as for the assignment of this space, are based on the most normalized and accepted definitions of the metafield, analyzing according to the reflections brought by Bourdieu (2014). Thus, we understand that the positions of the agents and institutions in the field in question are also based on the structures of the field of power, since it is through the symbolic determination of the most legitimate capitals that the conceptions of legitimate occupation of space are established, as well as reinforce themselves as these capitals continue to be mobilized in the direction of this alignment. Reconciling contradictions (McClintock, 2014; McClintock et al., 2017) in this case of urban agriculture seeks conditions to configure HF and, in a way, prove to the community the social contribution of the movement. Since HF is a pilot project and laboratory for AHCCCH, there is a fundamental interest that the difficulties presented are overcome so that one can more maturely continue to plead a public land for a community garden. Approaching legitimate capital stems from the field of power, in this sense, proved fundamental, because it is in the recognition of the legitimacy of the work conducted by the AHCCCH that the chances of temporary or definitive assignment of a public land may materialize.

### Analysis of agents' habitus

As highlighted, *habitus*, as a system of structured and structuring provisions, concerns a dispositional patrimony acquired by the agent throughout its socialization process and that will influence, as a basic principle, the practices and judgments adopted by this agent. Moreover, it is the generating and unifying principle of all practices and ideologies characteristics to a group of agents (Bourdieu, 1983, 1990, 2004). In this sense, as agents in the HF field, we highlight the board and volunteers of AHCCCH (protagonists), the family that is the transferor of the land, people from the community surrounding the land and people living in street situation who live or frequent the Staircase and used to occupy the land ceded. The group of members of the AHCCCH consists mostly of people with some degree of education at a higher level, predominantly, middle class and white skin, living in the region of the Historic Center of Porto Alegre or in immediately adjacent neighborhoods, which already signals the volume and capital structures mobilized, if we consider the perspective of Bourdieu (1985). Due to the sharing of institutionalized cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1985), minimally similar, as well as knowledge about the environment, sustainability, eating habits and other issues that end up involving urban agriculture, we understand that these agents share what Bourdieu (1985, 1990, 2004) calls dispositional heritage; this is what allows them to establish an aligned dialogue to set up a collective and community urban garden. They also share common perspectives regarding the use of urban space and the right to the city, perceive the negligence of the public authorities and agree with other issues that orbit the agenda of urban agriculture in contemporary times (McClintock, 2017; McClintock et al., 2017; Mclvor & Hale, 2015; Purcell & Tyman, 2015; Rosol, 2012; Sbicca, 2014; Tornaghi, 2017).



By the participatory inquiry conducted, it was possible to observe, using the Bourdieusian apparatus (1983, 1990, 1999), that the *habitus* of these agents leads them to act in relation to the contradictions that need to reconcile in an “automatic” way, because they are producers and breeders of objective sense, knowingly or not, whether they like it or not, since their actions are the product of a *modus operandi* that goes beyond conscious intentions. Thus, through a practical sense and not a necessarily engendering at the level of a reflexive action, the *habitus* is put into practice in a naturalized way (Bourdieu, 1980, 2001, 2007). It is in this context of practical sense that we perceive, given the construction of provisions through which these agents have passed, that they mobilize, without continuously noting themselves, aligning their practices to the field of power, because this proves to be efficient from the point of view of the stability of the movement.

The inhabitants of the neighborhood, in general, are also middle class and have provisions that allow them to understand the discourses shared by the AHCCCH group regarding the defense of HF's relevance, whether to support or question it. Thus, there is a space in which a common *habitus* is shared with regard to the understanding of urban agriculture. Moreover, in the internal integration of the protagonists of the AHCCCH, there is the sharing of a relatively common *habitus* – in social conceptions and political positions – and elements of social trajectory according to Bourdieu (1996, 2004).

This range of provisions incorporated by the member agents of the AHCCCH (identified both in the participant investigation and in the interviews) allowed the established dialogue with the transferor family of the land, given the configuration of a symbolic capital, in the notion presented by Bourdieu (1990), which enables this interface and mutual identification. The first approach took place, precisely, in the mobilization of the group's social capital – one of the volunteers knew both the members of the AHCCCH and the family inheriting the land. When there was an approach to dialogue about the assignment of the land for HF configuration purposes, the communication was immediate and accessible on account of a common *habitus* between the members of the AHCCCH and the transferor family. Thus, the group's social and cultural capital has become an economic capital through access to private property for the creation of the vegetable garden: this is based on the volume and structure of capital mobilized by both parties. The representative of the interviewed family stated that they were always close to nature and that the possibility of transforming the idle land into a collective urban garden was enthusiastically received by all family members, especially because the proposal was aligned with discussions regarding the sustainability of cities, revitalization of green spaces and cultivation of food. Thus, it is clear the dialogue of the conceptions shared with the members of the AHCCCH.

We must also think about the *habitus* of the homeless people occupying the Staircase, who continue to dispute access to the land. We do not consider it prudent to classify them all in the same way, as we were able to approach some, while others were not accommodating. Considering those we were able to approach in this period of two years of research, we can highlight a few patterns: homeless people, part of them with some basic school education, vocational courses, and others, illiterate or semi-illiterate. In general, this was the profile of men and women, young people, and adults, with whom we were able to establish dialogue and attempt contact. Thus, if we analyze the encounter between the *habitus* of the actors at HF and the *habitus* of people in street situations, we found that there was, to some extent, difficulty in adjustment, but the relationship was always necessary due to the social constraints of the order, which demanded conciliation and even the sanitizing pressures expressed by residents of the HF surroundings. The alternatives were always aligned with the possible order. There are also regulars of the Staircase who are not properly homeless, but who occupy the place for the use of narcotics and their commerce: the Staircase is in a favorable location because it provides an immediate escape from the wider streets of the historic center of Porto Alegre.

Understanding that *habitus* is not a fixed scheme, but that it undergoes a constant update during social interaction and incorporation and inculcation processes, we believe that the relationship between the different *habitus*, made possible by the dynamics of occupation of HF terrain, allows the protagonist agents of the AHCCCH to incorporate new conceptions of reality, as well as people in street situation, whose reality is far from what they are used to. What can also be observed is that the agents most suitable and adapted to their *habitus*, the field of power and the legitimate capitals end up classifying the entire social structure based on these corporate schemes, which are also the most legitimate for the current social order and this generates a clash of *habitus* when they need to interact with *habitus* “misfits”.

Thus, we understand that it is in the practical manifestation of *habitus* by practical sense (Bourdieu, 1980, 2001, 2007), in the immediate responses given to each need, voluntarily conditioned, that contradictions have been reconciled in the HF movement. Through this process, the most legitimate capitals are in line with the field of power, which have guaranteed a minimum stability, conquered in the field of Horta da Formiga.

## FINAL REMARKS

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Urban agriculture is presented as a multifaceted practice in contemporaneity, contributing to positive changes in the dynamics of cities, but also reinforcing exclusionary practices, depending on how collective movements of cultivation establish social relations. Because of this dual logic, which stresses a series of issues, we understand that a collective urban garden can be understood as a social field, considering the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu: it was the wide possibility of reflection on this phenomenon that aroused interest to conduct this investigation. Considering the recurrent discussions on sustainability, resilience, community ties, rescue of the relationship with food production and consumption and occupation of idle green spaces, as well as critical aspects of these relationships, urban agriculture has achieved relevance, given its multiple character. The actors involved with the collective and community UA have the need to reconcile the contradictions inherent to this practice, challenges always present in the unequal structure of cities.

There are several elements observable in this investigation. Due to the complexity, it was decided to treat a collective vegetable garden, the HF, as a social field from the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu. This analytical choice allowed us to look at the broad relations of power and domination, constitutive of social life and which are also present in this field. Although HF was understood as a field with little autonomy, it allowed us to observe the broader relations tied to it, such as the discussions that are presented for the observation of the neoliberal city and, more structurally, the representativeness of the State as a metafield of power. We classify as a neoliberal city the one in which there are spatial markings of privileges and expulsion of people through gentrification processes and high investment in real estate capital, a perspective present in the discussions presented by Brites (2017), Harvey (2008) and Maricato (2009).

Thus, urban agriculture comes from an exclusive focus on the enthusiasm of its operationalization, to be discussed based on the foundations of its constitution and considering the contradictions that are proper to it, when we consider the entire social structure that not only surrounds it but sustains it.

Based on this broad and relational analysis, this research sought to address the great complexity of reconciliations at HF so that the movement could resist in that context, following three moments for analysis of the social field, as proposed by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992).

The theoretical and practical implications of this research lead to the debate on the unveilings necessary for the observation of phenomena that are usually enthusiastically approached by the superficial description of practices, but which require a greater depth of analysis for the understanding of underlying mechanisms, veiled in contemporary mottos of resilience and sustainability. Fundamentally, we emphasize that the contradictions highlighted are inherent to the capitalist system, that they become more evident and stronger with the advance of neoliberalism and that this approximation/alignment with the metafield does not constitute an expectation of overcoming these contradictions, but a strategy of advancement to enable the struggles around UA. We highlight that there certainly is always a risk that a strong alignment of capitals with the metafield can strengthen the order of domination in force and the co-optation of collective movements of urban agriculture.

The reflections in this article intend to contribute to the organizational view of collective urban agriculture movements, mobilizing a robust theoretical-methodological lens that allows to deepen the discussion of issues essential to the phenomenon. Other investigations with instrumental or intrinsic cases can be developed using the same lens and engaging in participatory research. We believe that this contributes to the highlight of unapparent complexities in the daily practices of urban agriculture.

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