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Lisbon. Livable Cities

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INTRODUCTION

Lisbon. Livable Cities Cities, Culture, People & Place

Lisbon, the capital of Portugal has increasingly become a 'mecca' for European expats wishing to relocate. Attracted by sun, beaches, food, culture and a low cost of living, it has been ranked as the world's third most livable city for foreigners. Inevitably, the results of this have been varied. Seen as a boost to the local economy, it also adds to property prices. It places strain on public services like health and transport, and is criticized repeatedly from a social sustainability standpoint.

Livable for many then, Lisbon is also a city of challenges for others. Like a multitude of other places across Europe, it has experienced epochs of deindustrialization, periods of population growth and decline, and varied phases of investment and disinvestment. It has had architectural and urban 'golden ages', as well as times of abandonment and degeneration. It has seen attempts at city boosterism, concerns about resilience and public health, efforts to improve its sustainability, and attempts to preserve its heritage. It has been a site of innovations in housing, and a place of social unrest.

In all this it is prototypical – a city that has documented the social and urban changes of recent times – whether they be Daniel Bell's post-industrial society, Jane Jacob's life and death of cities, or David Harvey's city and social justice. It has echoed Richard Florida's cultural city and reflects the traits of the smart city. It is the home of UNESCO world heritage sites and a place where public transport can be, and is, complicated and slow. It is a city and, as such, is contested.

Interested in examining the city as a site of livability across times and places, the papers collected in this volume offer here were responses to the above context from the perspective of urban life and social issues broadly defined.

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QUINTA DOS INGLESES: HISTORY, ECOLOGY, ACTIVISM, AND THE QUEST FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN PLANNING

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INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates the historical trajectory of Quinta Nova, more widely recognized as Quinta dos Ingleses (QI), located in Cascais, and examines the citizen-led movement advocating for its preservation as a public green park. The case is situated within broader debates on sustainable urban development and the contestation of dominant urbanization paradigms.

Dating back to the eighteenth century, Quinta dos Ingleses constitutes a site of substantial cultural and ecological significance. Yet, its continued existence is imperiled by large-scale urbanization projects that privilege intensive development over heritage and environmental conservation. The site thus occupies a dual position: it functions simultaneously as a historical landmark and as an ecological enclave within an increasingly urbanized coastal territory.

This study further analyses the mobilization strategies of the grassroots initiative SOS Quinta dos Ingleses, interrogating the challenges it encounters in countering the interests of powerful real-estate actors and local government policies that promote high-density development models. Through this analysis, the paper foregrounds the discursive struggles over the value and function of urban green spaces, particularly within the tension between high-density growth and more ecologically attuned planning frameworks.

In evaluating the proposal to transform Quinta dos Ingleses into a public park, the research considers the project's potential to serve as a balanced alternative that reconciles urban growth with the protection of cultural heritage and ecological assets. Particular emphasis is placed on the contributions of such an initiative to environmental sustainability, the enhancement of urban quality of life, the strengthening of social cohesion, and the bolstering of resilience to climate change.

Ultimately, this case study underscores the significance of civic engagement in advancing sustainable urban futures. It demonstrates the capacity of local movements to challenge entrenched development logics and calls for the systematic integration of natural and historical preservation into urban planning frameworks at both local and global scales.

HISTORY OF QUINTA DOS INGLESES. GENERAL CONTEXT ON THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RELEVANCE OF THE FORESTED AND HERITAGE AREA OF QUINTA DOS INGLESES IN THE PARISH OF CARCAVELOS

The Civic Movement and the Historical Trajectory of Quinta dos Ingleses

The history of civic mobilizations around the preservation of Quinta dos Ingleses—while not unprecedented in its general contours within the European context—provides a paradigmatic example of the conflict between competing models of territorial governance in Portugal. It simultaneously illustrates the structural limitations of popular action in confronting political decision-makers who often lack technical expertise and remain beholden to entrenched clientelistic and private interests. This dynamic must also be understood within the context of a relatively young democracy of just fifty years, shaped by a historically fraught relationship to land and territorial administration, marked by episodes of dispossession and diverse constraints.

At the same time, the case reflects the broader emergence of a critical-ecological sensibility. Heightened awareness of climate crisis—frequently amplified by media discourses—has fostered a renewed public consciousness of landscapes as both heritage and as living ecosystems. Local populations have increasingly recognized the intrinsic value of natural and naturalized environments, including afforested landscapes in urban areas, many of which originated in earlier land-use interventions such as reforestation programs on marginal or common lands. In this context, the role of trees in mitigating urban heat and pollution has become a central concern. These factors have stimulated a resurgence of conservationist collective consciousness, expressed through local mobilizations that position landscape preservation as a direct challenge to public authorities and their development agendas.

Historical Background of Quinta dos Ingleses

Quinta dos Ingleses constitutes a relatively small territorial unit of approximately 50 hectares, situated in the municipality of Cascais, within the parish of Carcavelos, on low, sandy coastal cliffs forming part of the transitional zone of the Tagus Estuary.

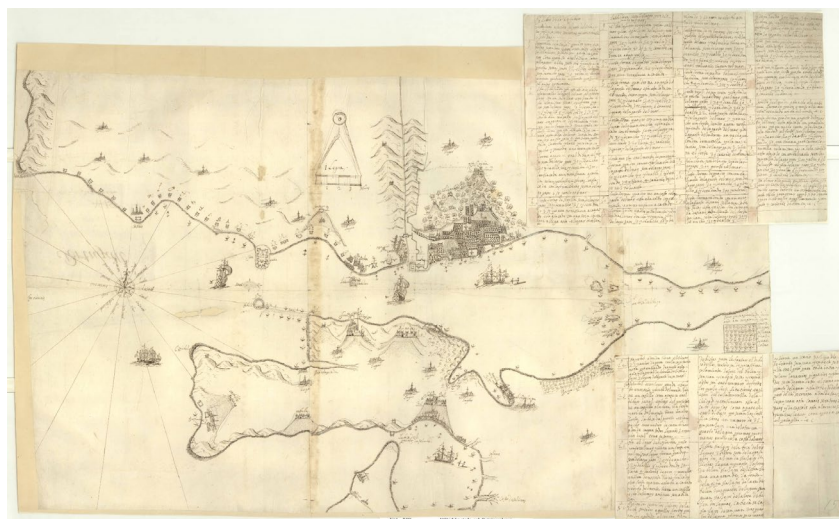


Figure 1. Historical chart of the Tagus embouchure Portugal. Lissabon. Ca. Lisboa 1661 a 4 Febrero. *Verdadera relacion del porto de Lisboa y sus fortificaciones modernas, que aun non esta acabadas.* Swedish Crown Archives: Riksarkivet, Täby, Arminge Military Archives¹

The earliest cartographic reference to the area derives from seventeenth-century military surveys: a 1661 map depicts the site as uninhabited and unbuilt, with the sole exception of a defensive wall

adjoining the Fort of São Julião, itself a component of the wider defensive system protecting the Tagus estuary and Lisbon. These fortifications were reinforced during the Napoleonic wars (1807–1814) and persisted into the twentieth century as part of the *Campo Entrincheirado de Lisboa* (Lisbon Entrenched Camp).



Figure 2. Historical chart of the anglo-portuguese defensive lines of Lisboa area: *Mappa das linhas de Torres Vedras... 1810 e 1811*. Digital copy in *Rota histórica das Linhas de Torres, as Linhas de Torres*²

Despite such military servitudes, the land remained subdivided into smallholdings until the late eighteenth century, when it was consolidated into a single estate: the *Quinta Nova de Santo António*. Conceived as a Baroque leisure estate, it combined a manor house, gardens, and productive farmland, though its agricultural success proved limited, due to poor soils, maritime exposure, and diminishing interest from absentee proprietors.



Figure 3. Carta topographica das fortificações provisionaes...levantada em 1815 pelo major Manuel Joaquim de Sousa Brandão do Real Corpo de Engenheiros, detalhe com a ligação dos redutos de 1810³

During the French invasions (1807–1814) and the civil war (1827–1832), the estate became embroiled in national political turmoil. By 1870, it had been leased to the British submarine telegraph company *Falmouth, Gibraltar & Malta Telegraph Co.*, later acquired by *John Pender's Eastern Telegraph*, and ultimately *Cable & Wireless* (1873). Under company ownership, the estate was adapted to accommodate the needs of employees and their families, transforming the property into a hybrid technical, residential, and recreational enclave.

Interventions included:

- the creation of sports fields (cricket, tennis, football),
- limited attempts to revive viticulture, and
- **extensive afforestation** led by company technicians. A surviving draft of a reforestation plan, dated 1921, preserved in the company archives at Portsmouth, attests to the systematic nature of this effort. This **reforestation** profoundly reshaped the landscape, converting a barren coastal terrain into a densely wooded estate. In this period, the estate's renaturalization aligned with contemporary maritime health culture and reinforced its symbolic and material significance for local residents. The popular designation *Quinta dos Ingleses* eventually supplanted the official name *Quinta Nova de Santo António*, embedding the estate into the identity of Carcavelos.

From the 1920s onwards, the gradual downsizing of *Cable & Wireless* and the technological evolution of telecommunications weakened the strategic importance of the estate. Portions were leased for other uses, most notably for the establishment of St. Julian's School in the mid-twentieth century. In 1959, the estate was sold around the time of the foundation of *SAVELOS (Sociedade Imobiliária de Carcavelos, Lda.)*, marking the onset of enduring conflicts between real-estate actors, political authorities, and local citizens.

Early proposals for urban development date to the late 1950s, following planning studies by *Alfred Agache* and *Étienne de Gröer* in the 1930s–40s. These plans sought to subdivide the estate and reclassify its legal status from rural to urbanizable land. However, the first such proposal was rejected by Minister of Public Works *Eduardo Arantes e Oliveira*, who cited the significant landscape value of the area. This decision provoked direct appeals from the developers to Prime Minister *Oliveira Salazar*, revealing the political stakes of the dispute.

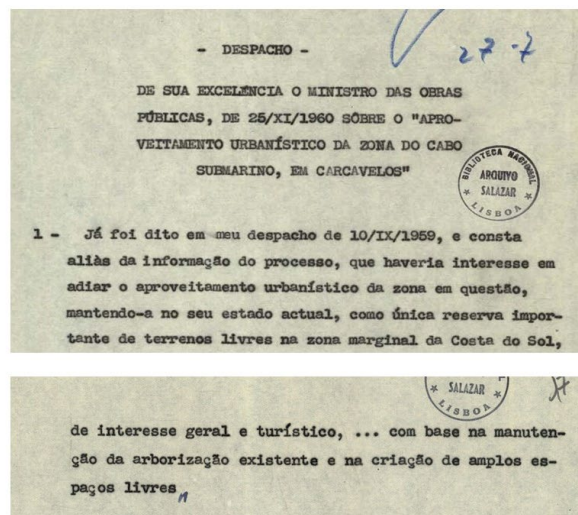


Figure 4. Informação para sua Excelência o Presidente do Conselho/Memorando da Sociedade Imobiliária de Carcavelos: Copy of a letter following the ministerial order by Eduardo Arantes de Oliveira to António Salazar on the Quinta preservation, 25 de novembro de 1960⁴.

After the closure of the submarine cable station, new development proposals were advanced. In 1982, the Cascais municipal council approved an urbanization plan, albeit without unanimity. A first draft subdivision license was published in 1987, but citizen opposition—gathering momentum since the 1970s—effectively stalled the process. Fifteen years later, the license remained unissued, underscoring both the persistence of civic resistance and the contested nature of land-use transformations in Cascais (<https://en.sosquintadosingleses.com/onossopassado>).

CITIZEN MOVEMENT FOR QUINTA PRESERVATION

In 2013, Quinta dos Ingleses was granted partial heritage classification. However, this decision represented a weakened and limited resolution, failing to encompass the estate's landscape in its multidimensional and holistic significance as recognized by local citizens. The classification, promoted by the Culture Division of the Cascais City Council, was restricted to the eighteenth-century manor house and the main entrance avenue, while disregarding the broader historical importance of the estate as an integrated whole, including its role in national military engineering and in global communications during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Notably, the century-old pine forest was also excluded, despite the stipulations of Cultural Heritage Law no. 107/2001 of 8 September, which explicitly frames such elements as integral to cultural heritage protection. (<https://en.sosquintadosingleses.com/onossopassado>).

This minimalist designation of Quinta dos Ingleses as a municipal heritage site failed to clarify, let alone justify, the municipality's simultaneous intent to pursue land subdivision and urban development—an agenda that would effectively result in the destruction of the estate's forested heritage. Such inconsistencies and ambiguities intensified public dissatisfaction and mistrust, ultimately catalyzing the

formation of the first civic movement in 2014, *Fórum por Carcavelos*. In its inaugural act of protest, the group organized a human chain on Carcavelos Beach, symbolically opposing the municipal plans that threatened the Quinta's forest landscape.



Figure 5. Aerial View of South Carcavelos.⁵

The *Detailed Urban Restructuring Plan for South Carcavelos* (PPERUCS) was approved despite public consultations that had revealed significant opposition. The disregard for citizen input generated widespread indignation, transforming what had previously been a relatively quiet civic initiative into a visible and influential presence within both the local public sphere and the media landscape.



Figure 6. Real estate project planned for quinta dos ingleses⁶.

Between 2018 and 2025, popular mobilization intensified in opposition to the proposed destruction of QI. Both spontaneous initiatives and organized citizen groups emerged, experimenting with diverse strategies of resistance and civic action. Demonstrations took place both on the beach and in the town, including human chains, walking protests, and the circulation of public petitions.

The first petition, submitted in 2021, was presented to the National Parliament's Committee on Energy and Environment and culminated in a Parliamentary Resolution recommending the preservation of QI as a site of local natural and cultural heritage. In the same year, a new civic movement was formally established: SOS Quinta dos Ingleses (SOS QI).⁷

The contestation has since escalated. In 2024, following the authorization granted by the Cascais City Council for land development, construction activities commenced on the estate. This decision prompted a legal injunction filed by a newly constituted association, SOSQI. It is pertinent to note that the authors of this paper, Pedro Mendes and Filipa Candeias, are both founding members of this association as well as local citizens.

This case study brings to light several critical dimensions:

- a) the emergence of ecological discourses under an authoritarian regime (initially top-down in orientation);
- b) the inherent difficulties of mobilizing the vox populi in the early stages of civic action;
- c) the cumulative, “snowball effect” of mobilization, which became particularly evident after 2014, facilitated by social networks and new digital communication platforms.

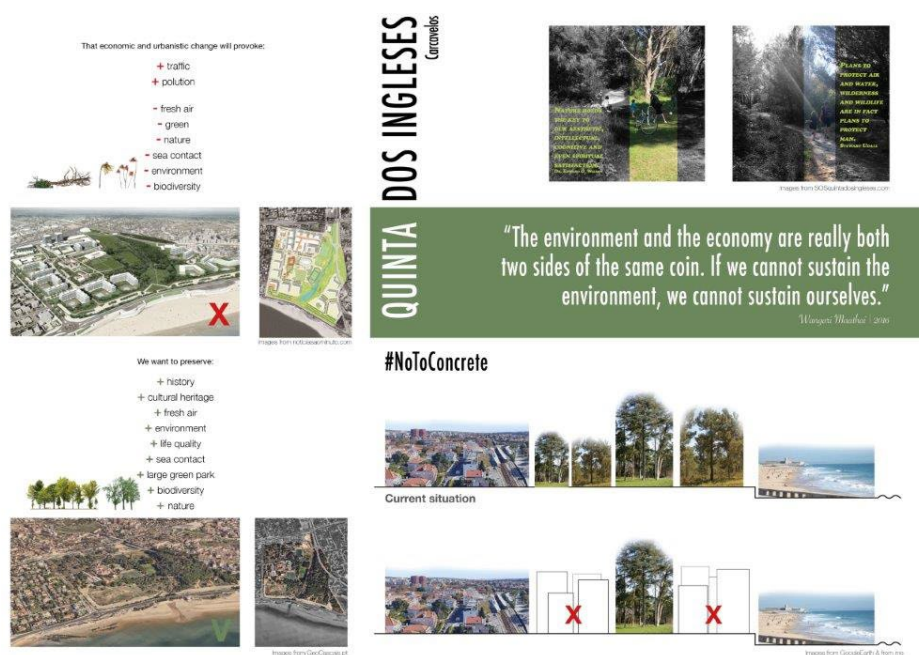


Figure 7. Analysis/proposal of the panel carried out for the New Bauhaus. (Inês Miranda, Pedro Mendes, 2021)

THE FUTURE OF QUINTA DOS INGLESES, POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS, PROSPECTS

Objectives

The proposed intervention is anchored in the design of a **multigenerational public park** that integrates ecological restoration, rehabilitation of existing built structures and pathways, and the reactivation of cultural and historical heritage. The project is grounded in the recognition that the history of the site—both its built fabric and its natural elements—constitutes the foundation of future interventions. The aim is to establish a sustainable balance between constructed and natural environments, giving rise to what may be described as a “**forest architecture**”, where built forms are not imposed upon but rather coexist with the ecological matrix.

Guiding principles include **sustainability, aesthetics, and social inclusion**. These converge in the broader discourse of sustainable urbanism,⁸ where environmental stewardship, cultural continuity, and social justice are considered interdependent dimensions of spatial production.



Figure 8. Proposal perspectives carried out for the New Bauhaus. (Inês Miranda, 2021)

Programmatic Possibilities

The program reflects a plural and hybrid conception of space, consistent with the notion of “multifunctional landscapes”⁹ and with contemporary calls for resilient and adaptive urban commons.¹⁰ Potential uses include:

- Development of a **multigenerational public park**, accessible to diverse age groups and communities.
- Provision of **public facilities** to support outdoor recreation, sports, and leisure (with a specific focus on surf culture, emblematic of the Carcavelos context).
- Establishment of **community gardens** as spaces of ecological practice and social encounter.¹¹
- Revival of **traditional agricultural practices**, including the planting of Carcavelos wine vineyards and cultivation plots, linking local heritage with contemporary sustainability agendas.
- Creation of an **interpretative centre for undersea cables**, acknowledging the site’s infrastructural history as part of global communication networks.
- Development of a **documentation hub** on the history of Quinta dos Ingleses and Carcavelos, bridging memory and identity with educational functions.
- Provision of **multipurpose indoor spaces** to host workshops, debates, artistic residencies, and exhibitions.
- Establishment of **spaces for community-building and prospective futures**, enabling experimentation with social innovation.¹²
- Inclusion of **housing and accommodation**, in dialogue with mixed-use development strategies, provided these do not compromise the ecological and cultural integrity of the site.

Civic Mobilization and the Contestation of Urban Development

Between 2018 and 2025, civic mobilization surrounding the preservation of Quinta dos Ingleses intensified considerably, reflecting both the persistence of local resistance and the broader transformations in ecological awareness and civic engagement in Portugal. What began as a relatively dispersed and quiet set of concerns gradually evolved into a structured, multi-scalar movement, marked by diverse forms of collective action, ranging from symbolic demonstrations to institutional interventions.

Citizen initiatives during this period adopted both spontaneous and organized forms. Local residents and concerned stakeholders convened to deliberate on strategies of resistance, drawing on traditions of

neighborhood solidarity while also experimenting with new modes of activism facilitated by digital platforms. Public demonstrations were staged on Carcavelos Beach and in surrounding urban areas, including human chains, walking protests, and other performative acts of dissent. These embodied practices of protest played a crucial role in transforming the defense of Quinta dos Ingleses into a widely recognized cause, both within the municipality of Cascais and across the Lisbon metropolitan area. As Manuel Castells has argued, the “networked” character of contemporary social movements enables local grievances to be amplified through digital media, thereby enhancing visibility and political resonance.¹³

Institutional channels of participation were also pursued. In 2021, the first large-scale public petition was presented before the National Parliament’s Committee on Energy and Environment. This act signaled the formal entrance of the movement into the national political arena. The petition culminated in a Parliamentary Resolution recommending the preservation of Quinta dos Ingleses as a site of natural and cultural heritage. Although not legally binding, this constituted a symbolic victory, reinforcing the legitimacy of the movement and underscoring the growing recognition of heritage and ecological arguments within Portuguese political discourse.

The year 2021 also marked the formal consolidation of grassroots mobilization into an organized structure with the establishment of SOS Quinta dos Ingleses. This association represented a strategic evolution from informal protest to institutionalized civic organization, enabling a more sustained and coordinated engagement with municipal authorities, national government, and the wider public. The group actively mobilized media coverage, leveraged social networks, and built alliances with other environmental and civic associations, thereby amplifying its visibility and influence. Here, the dynamics resemble what Sherry R. Arnstein theorized as a struggle for “citizen power” in planning processes, where residents seek to move beyond tokenistic participation towards genuine influence.¹⁴ In parallel, the movement also resonates with Christopher Alexander’s conception of participatory, pattern-based design, where collective intelligence is harnessed to generate resilient and human-centered spaces.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the conflict deepened in 2024 when the Cascais City Council authorized land development on the estate, effectively endorsing urbanization plans long contested by citizens. The commencement of construction triggered a new phase of resistance: the establishment of SOSQI, a legally constituted association formed with the explicit purpose of mounting judicial challenges to the municipal decision. The filing of a legal injunction marked a strategic shift, moving from protest and advocacy into the domain of litigation. It is relevant to note that the authors of this paper, Pedro and Filipa, are founding members of this association and active citizens within the movement, underscoring the intertwinement of research and civic engagement.

Taken together, these developments highlight three critical dimensions. First, the genealogy of ecological thinking in Portugal, which emerged during authoritarian rule in the form of top-down conservationist policies, contrasts sharply with the bottom-up mobilizations that now define the civic landscape.¹⁶ Second, the early difficulties in mobilizing the *vox populi* illustrate the structural barriers faced by grassroots movements in contexts marked by asymmetries of power and knowledge.¹⁷ Third, the post-2014 period evidences a pronounced “snowball effect” of mobilization, catalyzed by the communicative affordances of social media platforms¹⁸ and the growing consciousness of climate crises.

This case study of Quinta dos Ingleses therefore demonstrates the dynamic interplay between local struggles and broader processes of environmental citizenship¹⁹, spatial justice, and the contested governance of urban space. It exemplifies Henri Lefebvre’s notion of the *right to the city*, as citizens reclaim threatened landscapes not only as ecological assets but as collective heritage and social

commons.²⁰ Through these mobilizations, civic actors reshape the terms of public debate and expand the democratic imagination regarding the future of urban development.

CONCLUSION

The case of QI, as examined here, underscores the landscape as a socially produced formation, historically sedimented yet continually subject to processes of spatial reconfiguration and temporal transformation. Far from a neutral backdrop, the landscape emerges as a site of struggle, acquiring ontological and aesthetic density as a repository of collective memory and affect. It is precisely this depth—apprehended by residents as an existential and lived value—that has persistently resisted state-driven strategies of urbanization, generating recurrent refusals in the face of its projected (and perpetually deferred) erasure.

At the same time, the case exposes the structural asymmetries that delimit civic agency: the extraordinary difficulties of sustaining collective mobilization, and the even greater challenge of translating such mobilization into meaningful intervention within the apparatuses of planning and governance. This tension illuminates the uneven terrains upon which spatial justice is contested, and the limits of participation within frameworks dominated by institutional power.

The predicament of the Quinta dos Ingleses thus exemplifies the urgent necessity of rethinking urban development beyond technocratic models, toward practices capable of reconciling economic and infrastructural imperatives with the safeguarding of natural and historical patrimonies. Such a reorientation demands not only recognition of landscapes as carriers of memory and social meaning, but also the institutionalization of mechanisms of direct democracy that allow for the negotiation of antagonistic imaginaries of space and the protection of urban commons.

Ultimately, the case reveals how questions of land, memory, and collective agency converge in the production of space—making evident that urban futures are not merely technical outcomes, but political projects shaped through conflict, negotiation, and the ongoing struggle for the right to the city.

NOTES

- ¹ Cota: K0007273 URL: <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/arkiv/ny5KwYkvNI3JICFm3RGJL4>
- ² <https://www.rhlt.pt/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Mapa-LTV.jpg>
- ³ Lisboa, Biblioteca Digital do Exército, Direção de Infraestruturas do Exército, cota: 4784-6-80-90
- ⁴ Lisboa, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Arquivo Salazar OP-10 cx. 484, pt. 3. Cota: PT/TT/AOS/D-K/005/0009/00003 (DC): Urbanização da zona do cabo submarino, em Carcavelos. URL: <https://digitarq.arquivos.pt/details?id=3892461>
- ⁵ Google.com
- ⁶ <https://www.noticiasaoiminuto.com/casa/1742221/sos-quinta-dos-ingleses-promove-eventos-contra-novo-empreendimento>
- ⁷ <https://www.sosquintadosingleses.com/>
- ⁸ Timothy Beatley, *Biophilic Cities: Integrating Nature into Urban Design and Planning* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2011).
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