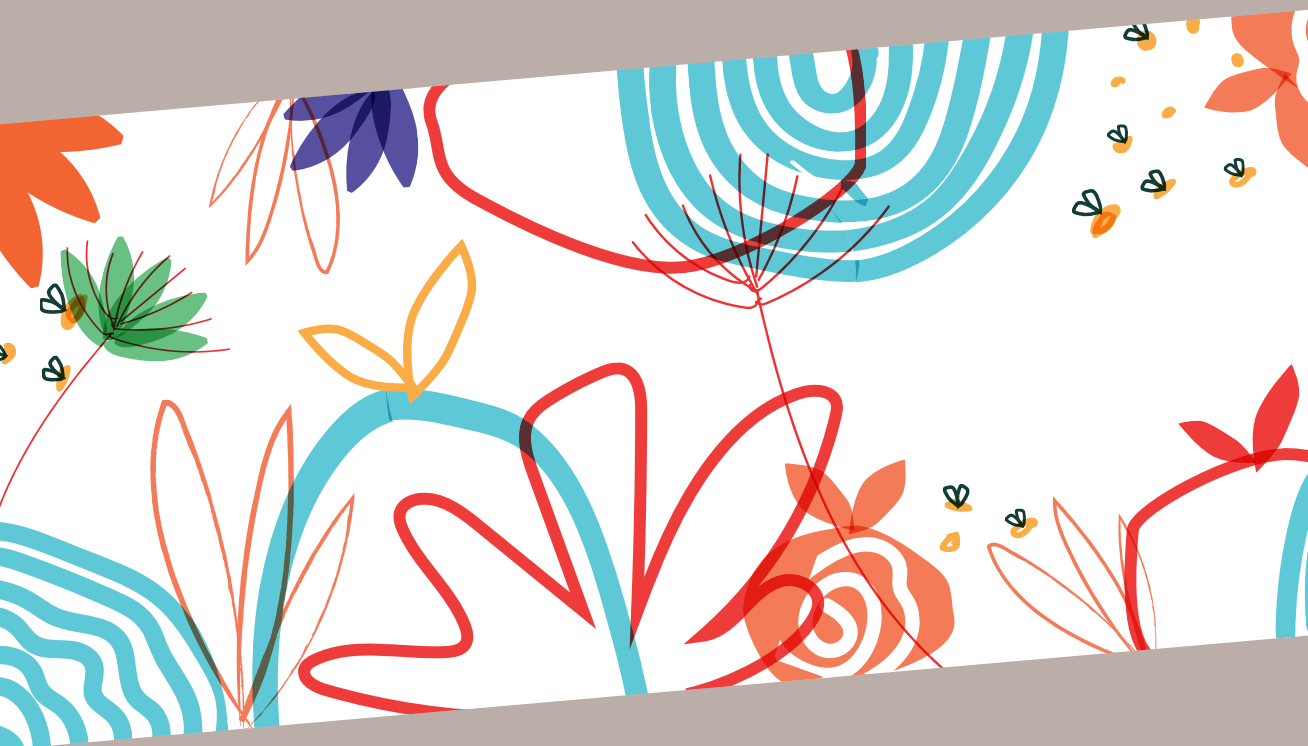


ORME ETS, ORTI METROPOLITANI
IN COLLABORATION WITH TORINO URBAN LAB

ORTORAMA

DIALOGUES ON URBAN GARDENING:
PRACTICES, PLACES, PEOPLE

Notes from the conference



Edited by Sara Ceraolo

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Translation (English version)

Consuelo Greppi

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The *first* edition of ORTO

R A M A

ORTORAMA, an event organised by the Association OrMe ETS, Orti Metropolitan (OrMe) in collaboration with Torino Urban Lab, was held in Turin on 23rd and 24th September 2022. Its goal was to encourage the debate on urban gardening as a multidimensional phenomenon, describing the direct experience of the local territories and people working in this sector.

ORTORAMA welcomed Terra Madre 2022 call to reflect on the issue of *regenerAction* and proposed urban gardens as a strategic tool to this purpose. The goal of the event was twofold: on the one hand representing the variety of practices and aims of urban gardening through the testimony of practitioners and organisations implementing some of the most interesting projects in Italy and Europe, and on the other promoting a collective dialogue for a joint reflection on the generative potential of urban gardens and the far-reaching implications of this phenomenon. For this reason, ORTORAMA stressed the importance of each single case, acknowledging urban gardens as an essential component for the design of our urban, food and social future.

To achieve this goal, OrMe and Urban Lab organised an event consisting of three initiatives, open to the public, which animated the city of Turin.

THE ROUND TABLES

On 23rd and 24th September, the round tables were held at Urban Lab's premises in the morning. Their contents are reported in this publication. Sixteen speakers from some Italian regions and European countries attended them.

During the four thematic sessions – each coordinated by an OrMe representative – the speakers had the opportunity to share their experiences about urban gardening, covering a wide range of subjects: the value of gardens for international cooperation and integration initiatives and in the relation between food and city; the meaning of gardens in the projects for urban regeneration, wellbeing, health and care of citizens; the reflections about food systems and local food and health (also mental) policies. From Bolzano to Bari, passing through Rome, Brussels and Manchester, and from Poland to Portugal, each experience contributed to outline a heterogenous framework of urban gardening.

THE ITINERARIES

The afternoons were dedicated to exploring the different spaces and areas of Turin where urban gardens are located. The organisations belonging to OrMe network proposed two itineraries for a free tour by bus: one to visit the gardens in the northern area of Turin (on 23rd) and the other to see the gardens in the central and southern parts of Turin (on 24th). As a result, the participants had the opportunity to find out more about Turin's urban gardens, meet the associations managing these spaces and listen directly to the people's experience.

LA PARTY

On 23rd September in the evening, inside the garden called "Ortoalto di beezanam", a cocktail party was offered by the young chefs involved in the *Youth and Food project* together with a music performance by *Tobeas- sonorizzazioni per la biodiversità*.

The organisers

ORME ETS, ORTI METROPOLITANI (ORME)

OrMe is a 2nd level association based in Turin. It gathers all the organisations dealing with urban gardening to promote collaboration and the development of a common agenda. It currently consists of eleven partner organisations and several “allied” organisations. Supported by Fondazione della Compagnia di San Paolo, the association’s goal is to facilitate the sharing of practices at local and international level on urban gardening related issues, sustainable urban life models, critical and conscious food consumption, environmental education, self-production and enhancement of biodiversity, protection of pollinators and wildlife. ORTORAMA is the most ambitious international event organised by OrMe.

Ph. Stefano Fiorina
Orto del Lidl - RE.TE. ONG



TORINO URBAN LAB

Through the public programme *Natura in Città* (*Nature in the city*), in 2022 Urban Lab documented and described Turin’s environmental condition, pointing out any open issues and all the resources, projects, plans and policies focusing on the environmental re-balance in contemporary urban contexts.

Natura in Città provided a documentation centre with free access, as well as meetings, workshops, guided tours, artistic performances, on-site explorations, to offer different types of experience for a better knowledge and understanding of these issues, with a particular focus on the role of urban regeneration that living organisms can play inside the current urban settings. From this perspective, the collaboration on the initiative promoted by OrMe, broadens the scope of Urban Lab research activities, as well as its cultural offer, by further analysing the phenomenon of urban gardening – an increasingly crucial issue in humanised contexts, where it can play an essential role in the city environmental, social and economic regeneration policies.

Proceedings

This publication aims at concisely reporting the main contents covered during ORTORAMA round tables. Each session was coordinated by one OrMe representative who prompted all the speakers to answer collective or individual questions. Despite each round table focused on a specific theme, some issues repeatedly emerged during the whole event. In the following texts we have tried to present these recursive issues in a graphic way which almost resembles that of notes pointing out the key elements of the conversation and how they have been frequently mentioned by most speakers, in similar forms, with slight nuances or in a radical different way.

Without claiming to be in any way exhaustive, this publication contains the precious contributions offered by the different experiences of the people who took part in the debate, starting from the audio recording of their speeches. Putting an oral speech into writing requires a decoding effort which is not merely confined to reporting the speaker's

thought, whose logical connections must, sometimes, be explained more clearly, but it also implies the representation of the communicative aspects typical of the spoken word which, once on paper, require other ploys to emerge. On the basis of these assumptions, we do hope that the following pages, though inevitably partial, will be able to return the cultural richness and liveliness of an event that tried to leave a meaningful sign in the debate about the role of urban gardening in our society and, hopefully, to be the first step towards a permanent reflection on this theme.



FIRST SESSION

Urban gardens for *international cooperation and integration*

Main TOPICS

#RELATIONS

#REGULATIONS

#PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

#MULTICULTURALISM

Ph. Stefano Fiorina
Ortoalto beozanam - OrtiAlti



Coordinator
Giuseppe Deplano
OrMe and RE.TE. ONG (Turin)

RE.TE. ONG is one of OrMe co-founders. RE.TE. promotes social justice and a fair, sustainable and alternative development for the global South and North. Since 2015, it has been implementing the project *AgroBarriera* in Turin, using urban gardening multi-functions to encourage local development and favour social inclusion.

Giuseppe Deplano graduated in International Studies; he also has a master in Social Agriculture and a Permaculture Design Certificate. He is in charge of *AgroBarriera* and, since 2008, has been dealing with territorial development projects to promote community empowerment.

DISCUSSANTS



Maria Bottiglieri
*City of Turin,
International Cooperation and Peace
Department (IT)*

Maria Bottiglieri is Organisational Manager at the Department for International Cooperation, Peace and Education on Global Citizenship of the City of Turin. She is also Project Manager for European and international projects. She obtained a Phd in Local Autonomies, Public Services and Citizens' Rights from Università del Piemonte Orientale (University of Eastern Piedmont), with a dissertation on *The right to adequate food. International, constitutional and local protection of a "new" fundamental right, and a Certificate of Higher Education in Food Legislation (CAFLA)*.

Her research mainly focuses on constitutional law, local bodies, public accounting, international law and cooperation, fundamental rights and right to adequate food. She has published essays on these issues and curated collective works.

Monica Vercelli
*Federation of Mediterranean Beekeepers
(FED API MED)*

Fedapimed was born in 2011 and, so far, it is the only way through which Mediterranean (Europe, Africa and Asia) beekeepers can talk and meet. This Federation promotes the sharing of knowledge and experiences with a view to safeguarding and enhancing beekeeping production places and activities, but also pursuing people's wellbeing through economic and human development. The Federation's main goals are to support the beekeeping sector in the Mediterranean area, promote beekeeping products at local level; lay down common rules, encourage transparency and the opening of new markets in this economic area as well as the creation of a Mediterranean quality brand, safeguard the biodiversity of ecosystems and honeybees.





Franco Beccari

Orti di Via Padova, Circolo Legambiente Reteambiente, Milan (IT)

Franco Beccari is a member of the executive committee of Circolo Legambiente Reteambiente Milano, the promoter of the urban garden project *Orti di via Padova*, set up in 2014 to redevelop an abandoned area by involving local citizens and associations. The creation of an interactive lab encouraged the use of this area for educational purposes by providing spaces where people can socialise and discuss different environmental issues.

Throughout time, *Orti di via Padova* urban gardens have become a place for sharing knowledge, taking care of the environment and promoting culture, a meeting point of different cultures and educational initiatives, a model of actions that can be imitated and replicated in other parts of the city, an example of solidarity fostering the process of aggregation and sharing.



Hilary Solly

Project manager for Orto Semirurali, Ass. Donne Nissà, Bozen (IT)

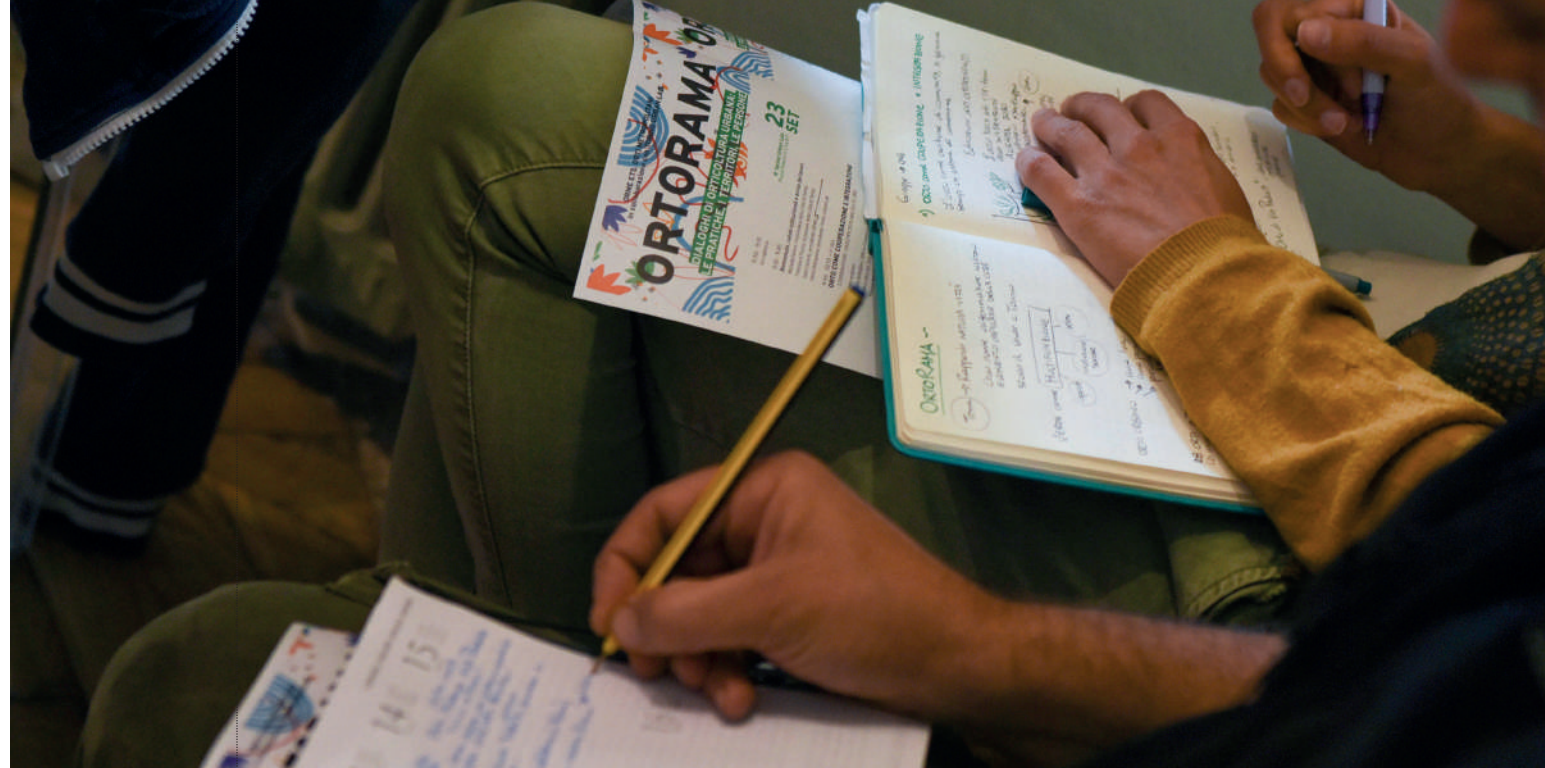
Hilary Solly is a social anthropologist that, since 2008, has been working for the women's association Associazione Donne Nissà. In 2010 she set up the project *Orto Semirurali* on a vacant plot of land owned by the Municipality of Bolzano, in a residential neighbourhood. The experimental project for the creation of a small community garden grew into a multidimensional programme promoting intercultural communication and the integration of migrant women and their families.

In 2022, the project included more than 80 participants from 18 countries: Albania, Austria, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Cape Verde, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Latvia, Morocco, Peru, UK, Romania, Thailand, Tunisia. A group from the Unione Italiana lotta alla Distrofia Muscolare (UILDM - the Italian Union for the Fight against Muscular Dystrophy) also joined the project.



Ph. Stefano Fiorina
ORTORAMA Urban Lab's headquarter

The urban garden is a multifunctional tool which favours dialogue and peace among peoples. The first session of ORTORAMA dealt with the way an urban garden can be used as a means to generate cooperation and integration.



To respond to this question, four diverse experiences were presented during the first round table. They can be classified into two scales, each corresponding, respectively, to different ways of using the garden: the first, at macro level, is based on cooperation among states and, therefore, operates on an international scale, where the garden is a tool fostering the dialogue among nations, peoples and cultures; the second, at micro level, includes all the projects considering the garden as an instrument for cooperation among people, promoting dialogue with local territories and collaboration among the related bodies (associations, public services, schools, free citizens).

The macro level, linked with international cooperation projects, was represented by an institution, namely the International Cooperation and Peace Department of the City of Turin, in the person of its Organisational Manager Maria Bottiglieri, and by an association, i.e. Federazione degli Apicoltori del Mediterraneo, the Federation of Mediterranean Beekeepers represented

by the university researcher Monica Vercelli. The conversation started with the experience of the City of Turin and the extended use of the garden as a multifunctional tool for international cooperation initiatives.

The reason for using the garden as a tool for international cooperation projects encouraging different parts of the world to communicate is linked to the widespread distribution of gardens on a global scale. As M. Bottiglieri pointed out, they are everywhere and can be considered as a common language fostering dialogue and exchange of ideas among cities, similarly to what can be achieved through other sustainability related themes.

Besides being a common language, in international relations the garden is also a tool for comparing territories. By observing the city urban policies and the different contexts and ways of managing this tool, it can be used for educational purposes, for local government and to promote

public green policies, to support the most vulnerable people (e.g. in terms of income and disability). It is interesting to note that, anywhere in the world and regardless of the goal the garden was created for, it always leads indirectly to establish communities and bonds, and to play an important role for the education of global citizens.

The possibility of using the urban garden to promote international collaborations is not just limited to growing vegetables. Fedapimed presented several projects where the garden, and agriculture in a broader sense, are successfully combined with projects promoting beekeeping, safeguarding biodiversity and encouraging micro-entrepreneurship at local level.

Beekeeping and gardening, as M. Vercelli suggested, must be conceived as a common good going beyond the production of a specific product (honey or veggies), as practices making up a common strategy to raise people's awareness and involve anyone co-participating in these projects

on a wide range of issues, such as ecosystem thinking, implementation of biodiversity, strategies to safeguard wild species. The intrinsic value of a community which can be found in the garden concept, as mentioned by M. Bottiglieri, can be seen also in the projects developed by Fedapimed, as they involve local beekeepers, farmers and communities, thus raising the citizens' awareness on the above-mentioned issues. M. Vercelli pointed out how, when talking about the involvement of different players, the development of urban gardening and beekeeping projects in different nations is a clear signal of the stakeholders' strong will to collaborate and create the conditions required for the project implementation, facing any institutional challenges and, at the same time, working out actions with a direct impact on the citizens and people living in the regions involved in the projects.

The impact, at micro level, of the international gardening and beekeeping projects led to the introduction of the third speaker – Franco Beccari, one of

the promoters of *Orti di via Padova* in Milano – and the fourth speaker – Hillary Solly, project manager of *Orto Semirurali* in Bolzano. The discussion addressed the impact on neighbourhoods and micro-territories, analysing the garden value as a tool to create new social bonds to promote multiculturalism and integration.

Orti di via Padova gardens, as F. Beccari explained, were strongly wanted by a group of citizens who worked tenaciously to build a multicultural space in that part of the city, close to via Palmanova, known as the most dangerous place in Milano. F. Beccari explained *that via Padova is the most multicultural street in Milano, in via Padova it is possible to travel around the world, from north Africa to south America, and Asia.*

The garden construction process, gradual but always visible and constant in time, and the choice of the name, going against the stereotype labelling this neighbourhood as individualistic and dangerous, triggered a phenomenon called placemaking – a rethinking of the identity of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants who, thanks to this new initiative, could consider themselves as active participants in an area where also positive things may occur.

Orti di via Padova established a new relationship between the neighbourhood and the rest of the city. Also in this experience, the involvement of the people is a crucial factor. In Milano it was achieved by organising public events during which the promoters of the initiative presented to all the citizens their proposal for the transformation of an area in via Padova into an urban garden. These occasions of public debate paved the way to several generative actions for the project implementation

based on people's help and participation in the construction of a space welcoming the neighbourhood multicultural identity. *Orti di via Padova* are now collaborating with the University of Milano-Bicocca to study solitary bee habits; a hydroponic cultivation project is about to be started with the Faculty of Agriculture of Università Statale; gardening and yoga classes, cocktail parties, markets and meetings with schools are organised.

Also the experience told by H. Solly deals with the theme of cultural integration at micro level. *Orto Semirurali* in Bolzano is a grassroots project that started spontaneously in 2010 with Associazione Donne Nissà. Despite this initiative was never promoted, H. Solly explained, it was *by starting to do things together in an abandoned place that change became visible and people's curiosity was triggered.* The peculiarity of Bolzano's experience, that best represents the multicultural integration potential of urban gardening, lies in the composition of the group: 80 people, mainly women, coming from 18 countries, a valuable example of cooperation inside the neighbourhood.

As to the coexistence of different cultures, H. Solly stressed the fundamental role of the garden where the people participating in the project can grow a small plot of land autonomously. Indeed, for women from cultures other than the European-Western one, this is a crucial factor, as the garden is another place where they can go besides their house, but it is *still their own and makes sense as a place where they can meet other women, farm the land or simply spend time or work together.*



A second question aimed at better understanding how communities and territories welcome and internalise projects, especially when they are run by people, so to make sure they will keep on implementing them autonomously.

M. Bottiglieri pointed out that, from the public administrations' point of view, it is important not to underestimate the intrinsic value of the garden in its simplest form as a plot of public land assigned to citizens who will then take care of it. As in most cases gardening projects aim at involving more vulnerable citizens, they can also generate social value. For a city, the possibility to cooperate with just one single citizen through an outsourced parcel of land is a significant social and economic achievement.

One example that can better clarify this point, as M. Bottiglieri explained, is offered by the care and maintenance of green areas: if it were up to the local administration to look after the greenery used for an urban garden, it would be a high cost for public expenditure. Therefore, the cooperation between the city and the grower is an added value for cities all around the world. Besides, the garden can lead to what M. Bottiglieri called the next step, i.e. the fight against one of the most invisible expressions of poverty – solitude – through the creation of a place where people can meet and develop a sense of community.

As to the aspect of collective involvement, Fedapimed also pointed out that urban gardening and beekeeping projects on an international scale are closely linked with local territories and communities. For example, Fedapimed's approach is to first get in touch with the administrations, as they are the first ones that can provide a feedback on their territories and citizens. Then, M. Vercelli explained, besides the institutions, they also start collaborating with local associations, bodies and people to connect with the context where the projects are implemented locally, thus finding out what their resources and needs are.

M. Vercelli explained also that, at local level, it is possible to see the positive effects generated by urban gardening and beekeeping projects more clearly. Through the contact with the single beekeeper or farmer, belonging to the local territory or community under consideration, international projects can reach out other individuals, thus setting up new networks of citizens, beekeepers and farmers. The possibility to get in touch with individuals that otherwise could not be reached by

the project design, and to involve them on topical issues and very close to them, is a great achievement for those programmes whose goal is to spread knowledge and raise awareness on new issues, e.g. ecology and ecosystems.

As to the relationship with the neighbourhood community, the experience of *Orti di Via Padova* can teach very important lessons. In some cases, the relationship with people derives spontaneously from the changes brought about by the creation of a new urban garden. In the case of *via Padova*, for instance, the urban transformation generated by the garden led the group promoting the initiative to collaborate, from the very beginning of the project, with the neighbourhood oratory for the celebration of Mass in the garden every 1st September. As a result of this initiative and the multiculturalism of the neighbourhood and the community taking part in the project, they got in touch also with other religious institutions and started the tradition of arranging dinners to celebrate Iftar during Ramadan. The variety of religions in the neighbourhood are, therefore, welcomed in the garden as a place where every worship can be celebrated in an open and inclusive way.

However, the relationship with the local territory can be complex, as shown by the experience of *Orto Semirurali* in Bolzano, and require special care. One of the reasons making such a relation complex is the contrast arising because of the land availability, the demand for gardens and the assignment criteria, especially if the project has a strong intercultural identity. In Bolzano's experience some citizens started to feel impatient as they would

have preferred to replace the assignment criteria based on interculturalism with those based on rewarding native citizens. However, this request was in contrast with the prerequisites of *Orto Semirurali* calling for integration and the creation of a multicultural value, so it was important to handle the relations between the project participants and non-participants very carefully.

In order to address these difficulties and to prevent similar ones, H. Solly stressed the importance of implementing initiatives developing a bond between territory, garden and citizens. For this reason, many urban gardening projects promote initiatives open to everybody, to strengthen the connection with the neighbourhood, such as public events, workshops, feasts and dinners, which are not of secondary importance to the garden life, but rather the opposite, as they ensure its primary functioning.

Ph. Monica Vercelli - Souk



The last collective reflection regarded the criticalities arising when urban gardening projects are developed as a tool promoting cooperation, considering each context.

The discussion pointed out different aspects of the problem. The first point of view was that of local institutions willing use the garden to foster international cooperation, but lacking specific laws.

In M. Bottiglieri's opinion a rule, though just at municipal level, is essential as it enables the garden *accreditation*, thus recognising its institutional importance and saving it from anonymity. In some countries like Italy, urban garden legislation has recently started to consider the need to regulate different and new types of garden (educational gardens, social gardens, etc.) or regulate the garden access based on a higher inclusiveness. In other countries in the world, however, the regulatory process is in its early stage or has not started yet. And right in these contexts it is essential to use this tool and set up new projects specifically aiming at food self-production. M. Bottiglieri's macroscopic analysis also pointed out the connection between regulations and policies. Indeed, linking

the debate about urban gardens with that about local food policies is a contemporary phenomenon.

Through international initiatives, as those promoted by the *Milan Urban Food Policy Pact*, urban gardens encourage countries all over the world to meet and promote

global exchanges, as well as multilateral cooperation initiatives.

A second criticality detected at macroscopic level regards the access to funds and the amount of red tape for international urban gardening and beekeeping projects. Fedapimed stressed the importance of making a distinction between the end of a project, depending on the timeline set by the funding body, and the end of the process, i.e. when the initiative is mature and the cultural involvement of the territory and the local project economic sustainability are achieved. According to Fedapimed, in order to carry out urban gardening and beekeeping projects whose ambition is to reach maturity, it is essential to create a network of stakeholders and projects designed so that the implemented actions will lead to complete autonomy and sustainability.

Finally, at neighbourhood level, the case of *Orti di via Padova* highlighted two particularly delicate aspects. The first regards the interaction with the public administration and the need to find land assignment models consistent with the project goals and up-to-date in relation to the participatory context. The second, mentioned also by H. Solly in relation to *Orto Semirurali*, regards the management of internal relations and the need to have facilitators and agreements (rather than regulations) combining mutual commitment and favouring tolerance and spontaneity in people's relations.



Ph. Franco Beccari
Orti di Via Padova, Milan

“
The garden is a
multifunctional tool that is
well suited to foster dialogue
and peace among peoples”
”



SECOND SESSION

Urban gardes for *sustainable urban food systems*

Main TOPICS

#RELATIONS

#PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

#REGULATIONS

#LEARNING

Ph. Stefano Fiorina
Orto del Lidl - RE.TE. ONG



Coordinator
Vittorio Bianco
OrMe and Educadora ONLUS, Turin (IT)

The association Educadora operates in the educational and social-welfare sector with activities mainly addressing more vulnerable people, like minors and their families, and working to favour the social inclusion of Aurora neighbourhood's residents in Turin.

Set up in 2017, it continues the educational legacy of Cecchi Point Neighbourhood House, now managing its socio-educational department. It also manages the garden Orto collettivo Mannaro (District 5) and is co-signer of the Partnership Agreement for the gardens in Parco Mennea (District 2). Vittorio Bianco graduated in Natural Sciences and, since 2004, has been dealing with urban ecology and sustainable local development projects for several third sector bodies and institutions in Italy and abroad.



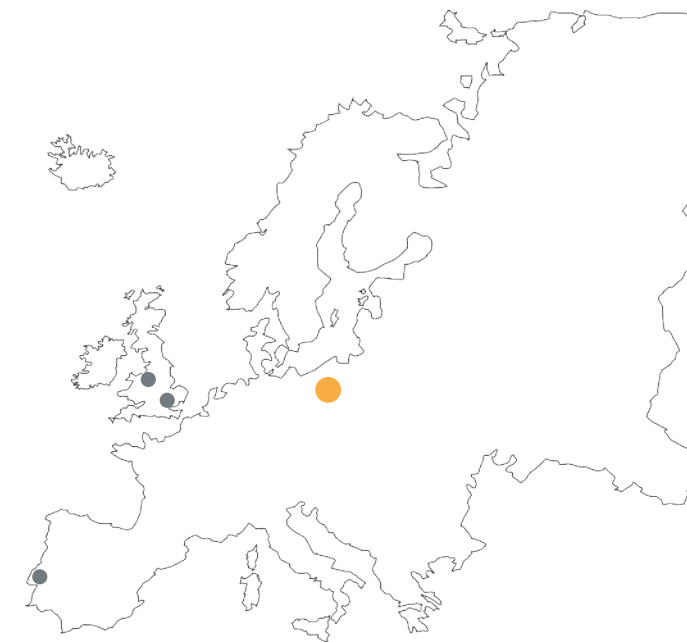
Miguel Brito
Terras de Cascais, Cascais (Portugal)

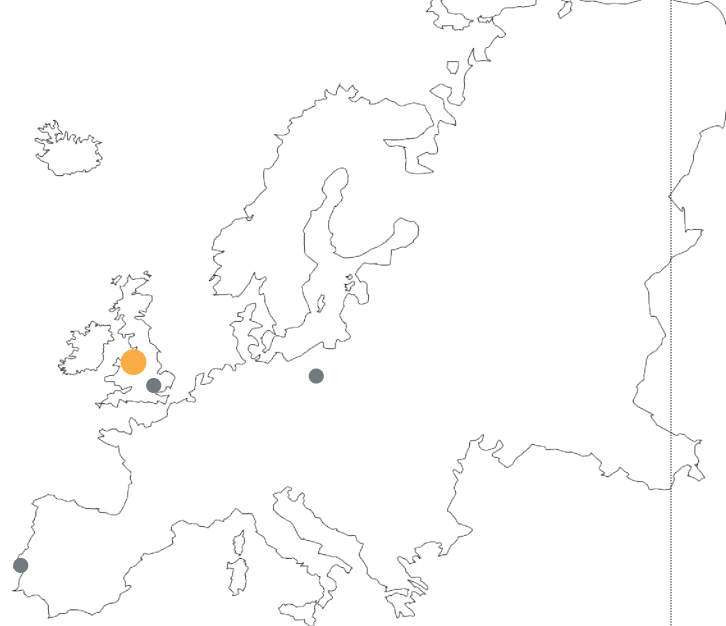
Miguel Brito is an educator and technician of *Terras de Cascais*, the organization that has promoted and manages the urban gardens in Cascais, member of Cascais Ambiente. Set up in 2009, Cascais gardens are places where everyone can be assigned a plot of land for free, through a contract based on the values of civic commitment and active citizenship. In 2012, *Terras de Cascais* launched the project *Schools Vegetable Gardens*, that so far has involved around fifty schools. Since then, the success of the initiative has been growing steadily, thus leading to the birth of many other projects: community orchards and vineyards; a farm where organic vegetables are grown (*Horta da Quinta do Pisão*); an organic vegetable garden inside a prison (*Horta do Brejo*); and, more recently, the ancient tradition of producing Carcavelos wine, typical of Cascais region, has been restored.

DISCUSSANTS

Katarzyna Przyjemaska-Grzesik
*Krakow Municipal Greenspace Authority,
Krakow in Greenery Team (Poland)*

In the last six years Katarzyna Przyjemaska-Grzesik has been coordinating the Krakow in Greenery Team, whose mission is to approach citizens by actively listening to their needs and collaborating with a series of entertainment activities performed inside the green areas. Krakow Municipal Greenspace Authority was created in 2015 and is in charge of the maintenance and development of green areas in Krakow. Since 2017, the programme *Krakow Community Gardens* has been implemented allowing inhabitants to approach urban gardening and farming. Her dream is to realise the idea of a city as a common good, because it is in the city that people share civic commitment and social responsibility.





Davide Primucci
Sow the City, Manchester (UK)
Gruppo di Agroecologia, Scuola Sant'Anna di Pisa (IT)

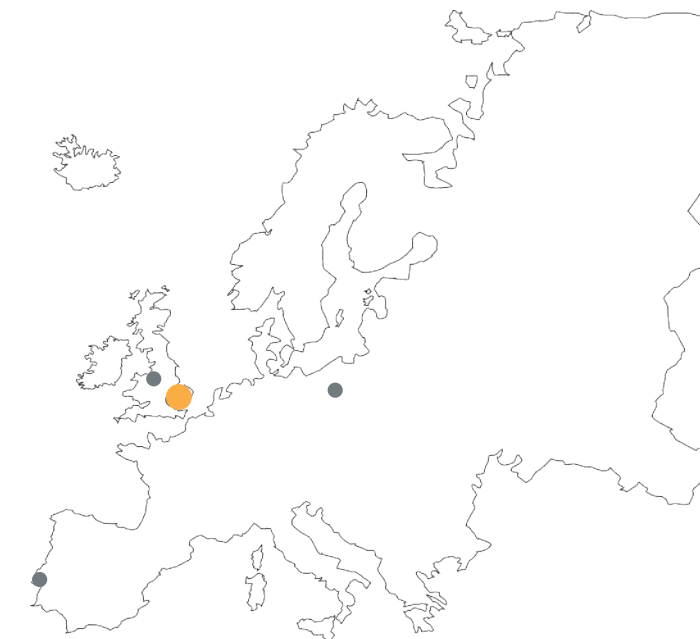
Davide Primucci is an agronomist specialised in agroecology and agroecosystem sustainable management. At the moment, he is a research fellow at Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna in Pisa, where he has been coordinating with different projects. He has recently collaborated with Sow the City in projects regarding urban food policies, sustainable food production and community empowerment. Sow the City, an award-winning social enterprise based in Manchester, is a non-profit organisation allowing communities to grow and live in a more sustainable way, building a healthier and greener city. Sow The City is a small team of six motivated people providing advice and training on every aspect of green infrastructures to the local authorities, the healthcare sector, housing providers, schools, enterprises, and the volunteer sector.

Astha Johri e Francesco Cagnola
LOT service designers, London (UK)

LOT is a service facilitating the identification of vacant land lots and their assignment to citizen-led projects, thus contributing to transform underused land into productive spaces for growing food crops or biodiversity for the benefit of the local communities. People can view the available land lots on the online map and *claim* them, by submitting their project proposal. The members of LOT work as intermediaries between the land owners and the local communities and set the conditions for the land use, assigning it on a temporary basis.

Francesco Cagnola is a researcher and independent service designer whose goals is to do something good for the society and the planet. He wants to apply design to policy-making and governance, especially regarding food systems.

Astha Johri is an experience and service designer who is currently working at EY Seren in London. She designs inside cities, systems and communities. Her approach is based on emerging technologies and is focused on working out sustainable solutions.



The second session, entitled *Urban gardens for sustainable food systems*, aimed at discussing the role of urban gardens in relation to food systems, by analysing their role in local food policies, compared to the needs expressed by the cities and their inhabitants.

The first question examined to what extent, in the speakers' opinion, urban gardens can actually contribute to food production and supply for the citizens' diet, especially in those city areas where there is a scarcity of fresh food.

The first speaker was Miguel Brito, representing the organisation *Terras de Cascais*. M. Brito immediately pointed out how the question concerning productivity and the possibility to meet people's food needs should be addressed by observing the garden working methods and their impact on the garden communities and the city in general. Cascais case is a very instructive example showing how much progress has been made from different points of view – from the project vision to the relation with the public administration, from the process functioning to the capacity of generating changes in the related area.

Twelve years ago, the Environment Department of the City of Cascais, through *Terras de Cascais* – that in Italy would be called an investee company of the City –

developed the urban garden model still used nowadays.

To be eligible for a plot of land, the citizens are required to attend a gardening training course which, in addition to teaching practical skills, also informs the attendees on their duties regarding the allotted space and the tasks they must accomplish to be assigned the garden. During the compulsory training they learn concepts, such as organic farming, seasonality, the correct use of water resources and how to prevent waste. At the end of the course, the attendees will be given a certificate of attendance and, only subsequently, they will be eligible to sign the garden contract.

The plot of land is assigned for free, so people do not have to pay for the rent,



Ph. Miguel Brito - Terras de Cascais



Ph. Davide Primucci - Sow the city, Manchester

but the programme requires them to be responsible for that space and take care of it, thus creating a sense of membership based on their participation in the project and not on an economic agreement. This spirit of collective responsibility and the promotion of sociality, as M. Brito reported, inspires also the design of the space to be used as a garden, encouraging growers to take care both of the place and the people, to get in touch, to talk and exchange knowledge. This is achieved, for instance, by placing water dispensers in a position where they can serve different plots; by using low fences so that people can enjoy the beauty of the neighbouring gardens; by creating common equipped spaces and encouraging the community of the neighbourhood where the gardens are located to protect the area against acts of

vandalism or damages.

It is interesting to note that, for most Italian and European countries, the programme *Terras de Cascais* is a remarkable example. M. Brito pointed out that the project has been very successful at local level, with a demand for gardens that considerably outnumbers the availability of land and a waiting list of over 1,900 people. As to the impact of food policies, it is important to stress that the project is successful not only for the interest expressed by people in food self-production, but also for the growing attention of the whole citizenship (also the people without a garden) on locally grown and sourced food in Cascais. For this reason, *Terras de Cascais* has decided to develop a brand certifying locally grown produce, thus having an impact on the city food production and supply system.

2. ORTORAMA. Proceedings

The Krakow case brought by Katarzyna Przyjemska-Grzesik, manager of Krakow in Greenery Team, describes a different situation. Unlike what happens in other European regions, Krakow is relatively new to the phenomenon of urban gardens. To encourage their creation, the Municipality started different political initiatives and issued public calls for citizens whose goal is to transform abandoned green areas into community gardens looked after by the people living in the neighbourhood where the gardens are located.

Although in the case of community gardens the main focus is on the community and not on the production of big food quantities, K. Przyjemska-Grzesik noted that Krakow gardens are anyway playing a crucial role for food policies. Indeed, the gardens have a key educational role as they re-educate



Ph. Katarzyna Przyjemska-Grzesik
Krakow's urban gardens

people in their relationship with food, something that has gone lost due to the different intermediate steps in the food supply chain where production is separated from consumption. K. Przyjemska-Grzesik pointed out that, by promoting these gardens, also the smallest ones, like community gardens and school gardens, Krakow Administration has been offering people the possibility to rebuild their relationship with food and its production process, thus educating citizens to make conscious consumption choices.

Unlike the Polish experience, where urban gardens have been developing recently and are still a quite limited phenomenon, in the area of Greater Manchester there are over ten thousand gardens and five hundred community gardens. The work of the organisation Sow the City, presented by Davide Primucci during this session, consists in directly managing the community gardens in the area of Greater Manchester, like in Cascais, both with training and education initiatives, to promote more sustainable production models and improve productivity. Training courses encourage the attendees to adopt a holistic approach to farming, considering the gardens as a living landscape that can benefit from biodiversity, which needs to be promoted. Therefore, if the gardens are grown according to the suitable agro-forestry techniques, they can increase production and establish a beneficial relationship with nature.

As to the impact on the food system, D. Primucci brought the example of a tool developed by different players, including Sow the City: the Harvestometer is an online application helping urban growers

Ph. Davide Primucci
Sow the city, Manchester

keep track of how much food they grow and, therefore, how much money they save. First, it converts all the harvest data (entered by the grower) into money value and, then, into the value of the processed meal or dish.

Data about the saved CO2 are also provided, compared with the carbon footprint of the equivalent product purchased in the supermarket. Despite the use of this tool may not be easy, as people are required to weight every single vegetable or fruit they harvest, the Harvestometer is showing its huge potential in terms of education and raising of people's awareness about the garden value. Besides, this model has proved extremely effective for the food system, as the returned value does not only regard the production of fresh produce, but also their processing (Sow the City provides specific training courses on this aspect such as, for example, how to make jams, marmalades, preserves and pickles, thus avoiding to buy them at the supermarket).

In addition to the Harvestometer, Sow the City took part also in another significant project on an urban scale. It ran an analysis of food poverty in all Manchester areas with the aim of identifying the most vulnerable ones (the so-called food deserts) and worked to create new community gardens and to design new food hubs close to these areas. This enabled the creation of around 7,000 sqm of new community gardens and green areas in abandoned land.

Still in the UK, the fourth experience presented in this session was London's project LOT, represented by the two service designers and co-founders Astha Johri and Francesco Cagnola.

LOT initial context has some elements in





Ph. LOT Service

need to think about urban gardens as one of the components of food policy systemic actions, whose provisions must focus on people's needs and, as a result, build services and access opportunities for people living in particularly difficult conditions, where also urban gardens can certainly play a role.

common with *Terras de Cascais*: in London there is an organised system of urban garden assignment which fails to meet the demand and whose waiting times range from five to twenty years. The project developed by A. Johri and F. Cagnola is the result of this situation, as they tried to work out an alternative way to meet the requests of who is looking for a garden, in addition to the institutional system.

LOT is a public digital platform which shows unused or underused land lots. It indirectly makes it possible to map them and many are not mentioned in the land register, therefore are inaccessible from a bureaucratic point of view, as they basically do not exist. By providing the land and working in synergy with the local policy makers, the citizens and the already existing organised groups, as well as offering information on the main success factors at the basis of the urban gardening experience, *LOT* is an example of transparency in the process leading to the garden creation and the support to the people willing to participate. As to public policies, A. Johri and F. Cagnola

reported that the project has been working on different levels, by decentralising the land management, supporting the right to grow and facilitating the land access by the citizens, developing different and more effective working methods in collaboration with the city councils, which are usually the owners of the land considered by the project, promoting a new model of collaborative social relations among people, starting from urban gardens.

In terms of impact on the food system, A. Johri and F. Cagnola pointed out how this project has recently shifted its attention to community gardens, considering them as the ideal spaces to develop food growing skills. With a view to changing food policies, the collaboration with other local and national networks is crucial to exchange experiences.

Compared to the other examples, *LOT* is still in its experimental phase and the two co-founders stressed the need to consolidate the relationship with local administrators, by identifying the most suitable way to

promote the garden fundamental bottom-up approach to food production.

London's experience also pointed out the crucial aspect of food poverty and the role played by the gardens. F. Cagnola highlighted that the assignment of a plot of land to grow produce cannot be considered as a solution to food poverty and cannot relieve policy makers and society from playing an active role in building more secure, ethical food systems, which can meet the needs of more vulnerable classes. Food poverty is often just one side of a more complex situation of multi-factorial deprivation where people have to cope with poor and exhausting working conditions, are weakened by health problems, weary due to considerable caregiving work, suffering for social isolation, etc. In this complex scenario, the garden cannot be used as a surrogate of broader and more structural actions: it is unrealistic and wrong to think that a person may find a solution to food scarcity in growing a garden at the end of the day, F. Cagnola observed. London's experience has, therefore, reiterated the

Later, going back to some of the points raised in the previous conversations, the participants in the round table were asked to express their opinion on the capacity of urban gardens to generate an impact on food policies according to a bottom-up approach.

Garden life, as pointed out by M. Brito, allows people to experience directly small, but crucial issues regarding their food choices and, therefore, the food policies: the use of water, the choice of seeds, the different quality of organic food, the comparison between the taste of the produce grown according to the patient process of organic farming techniques and that of the products found in supermarkets and based on mass production.

In the light of this, M. Brito believes it is appropriate to think that all the people involved in the project *Terras de Cascais*, i.e. seven hundred families and fifty schools, have started to consider and talk about food issues and policies in a different way. And in Cascais, throughout the years, the city policy has been able to welcome the inputs resulting from the garden experience, thus promoting several changes to food access. From a more general viewpoint, the effort made by the Portuguese organisation aims

at involving all the citizens (with training courses, events and by word of mouth), so that they will speak about biodiversity, agro-forestry techniques, intercropping and make more sustainable food choices.

At the moment, the city of Krakow does not have a food policy. However, as K. Przyjemska-Grzesik pointed out, through the gardens, citizens have realized their capacity to change the city. As already mentioned, the city supports the initiative of those citizens willing to create an urban garden through public calls (based on funds allocated by a participatory budget), thus allowing them to experience the transformative potential of group work and the collaboration with public administration. Moreover, K. Przyjemska-Grzesik added, starting a garden from scratch is often a way to better understand the functioning mechanisms of the municipal machine and its policies, which the citizens often ignore or just take for granted, therefore it also

has a civic education value. It is fair to say that the support provided by the Polish city to the garden projects developed by the citizens has definitely changed the city, not exactly affecting its food policy, but generating an impulse towards change. It has shaped a new habitus, i.e. a new mindset of the city council and public administration personnel that seem to be more inclined to welcome innovation and spread a new knowledge about the value of urban gardens as a place for socialising and encouraging civic spirit. To witness the garden project multilevel adoption both by institutions and citizens, K. Przyjemska-Grzesik explained that Krakow's Mayor designated the garden created in the city hall building as the ideal venue for online meetings or to welcome visiting groups. The change brought about by gardens has different shades, the project manager concluded, stressing that the most significant is the transformation of many politicians' mentality.

Before describing the situation in Manchester, D. Primucci pointed out that discussing food policies is certainly a complex task because the concept of food policy entails many different levels through which it can support the transition to a different food system on a city or regional scale.

Talking about Manchester, D. Primucci said that the relation between food policies and gardens (and the issue of food policies in general) involves two different organisations. The first is a bottom-up organisation (Good Food GM) based on the participation of different players, including Sow the City, to draw up a document describing the project vision to be submitted to the Municipality.

The document dealt with several aspects linked with food policies and, specifically, with food production in individual and community gardens. The second organisation is Manchester Food Board, an official institution involving different players, not just in the production sector, but also in the catering, food and wine sectors, etc. One of the actions promoted by the Food Board in collaboration with the City aimed at reducing the environmental impact of the food system and increasing the consumption of local food, trying to support activities such as, for example, growing food in the school garden.

D. Primucci pointed out that this experience, despite implying a certain complexity and involving several stakeholders, proves how much the debate about food policies - directly engaging the whole citizenship and, in particular, the people growing the garden - is still in its early stages. The reason for this difficulty is due to the fact that the concept of food policy is not very familiar and that for most people it is hard to understand that a food policy can bring about something positive. While for Sow the City it is important to make the food policy something tangible that needs to be understood, discussed and implemented practically. Therefore, it would be advisable to find the right tools to communicate with the people involved in urban gardens and, more in general, in urban farming, so that the debate about food policies will be more participatory and take into account people's daily needs.

The discussion ended with the experience told by F. Cagnola and A. Johri, matured in a great and complex metropolis like London, thus adding further inputs to the

conversation. The starting point of the designer's response is that food policies and urban gardens share aspects that, up to sometime ago, were treated and conceived as separate compartments in public policies, such as welfare, healthcare, green areas, etc. Therefore, the first step when dealing with food policies, would be, on the one hand, to adopt a different mindset from the conventional decision-making process and to make it more participatory, and, on the other, to start transforming our society according to a more holistic and sustainable approach.

Halfway between citizens and public administration, the *LOT* project offers a privileged viewpoint on the issue of participation and the promotion of urban policies regarding food and urban gardens. In some cases, F. Cagnola and A. Johri reported that the bottom-up approach is usually generated by a higher social pressure on policy makers, who, in most cases, are requested by citizens to create places where growing food or to provide economic support to the ongoing urban gardening projects. The outcome of these actions depends mainly on the level of maturity of the public authority.

A positive example of the bottom-up process can be found in Islington, a town north of London, where the citizens started an initiative called *Greener Together*, encouraging the community to take a land lot owned by the city and convert it into a garden and take care of it. This way, though on a small scale, new food production spaces are created together with new places where discussing and participating in the definition of city policies.



In addition to bottom-up initiatives, F. Cagnola and A. Johri also mentioned the presence of a top-down movement, equally interesting, fuelled by the local administrators' commitment to reaching climate goals. Many policy makers have taken up the challenge of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but have to deal with outdated policies and no longer fit for purpose. As a result of this inadequacy, many administrators have started wondering how they can work in a different way and innovate processes, thus getting away from the conventional thinking and ruling methods. This process of rethinking long-standing decision-making models offers urban gardens and the communities managing them a favourable context where they can have a say in the debate about food policies.



“ The potential of urban gardens to determine an impact on food policies is very significant.”

THIRD SESSION

Urban gardens for *regeneration* and *participation*

Main TOPICS

#LEARNING

#PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

#REGULATIONS

#PROJECT INDICATORS/EVALUATION

Ph. Stefano Fiorina
Officina Verde Tonolli - Ass. Parco del Nobile



Coordinator
OrMe and OrtiAlti, Turin (IT)

Elena Carmagnani, PhD in architecture, has been dealing with design of public and private spaces and gardens through the process of social innovation and co-design. Founder and designer of the architectural firm Studio999, co-founder and project manager of OrtiAlti, a non-profit organisation committed to urban regeneration through nature-based solutions and the involvement of the communities, and vice-president of the community hub beezanam based in Turin.

DISCUSSANTS

Sophie Dawance
Collectif ipé, Réseau des potagers de Bruxelles (BE)

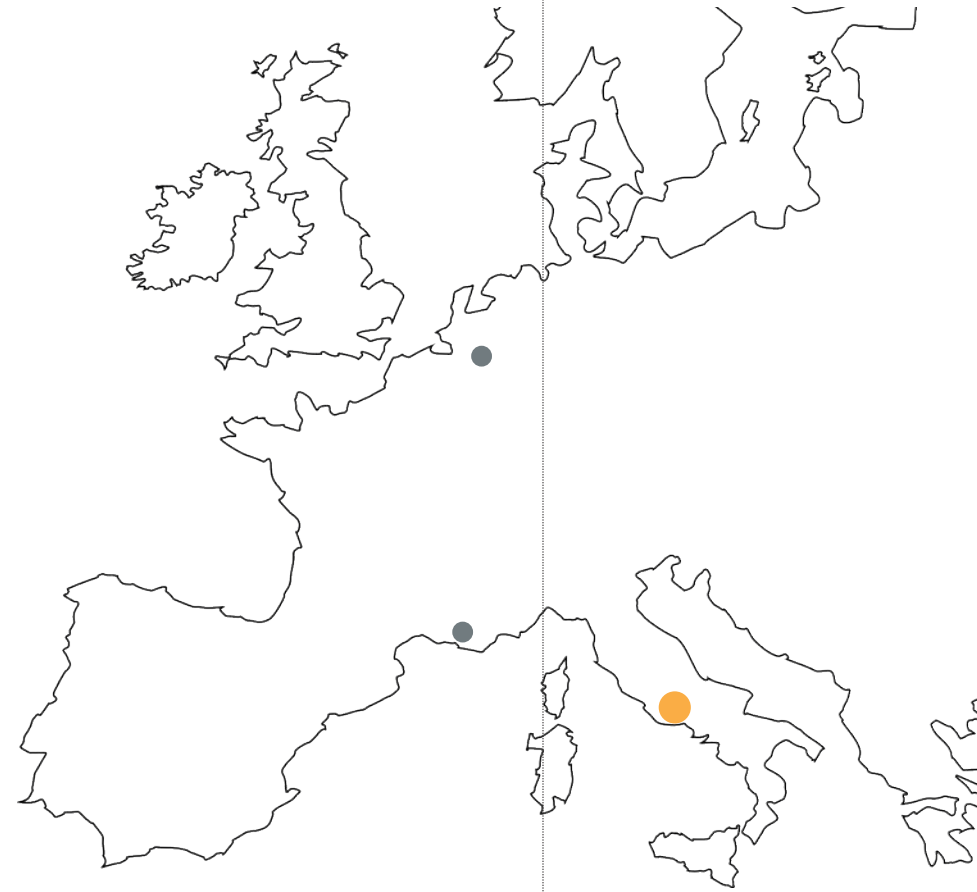
Sophie Dawance is an architect and urban planner of Collectif ipé that, since 2018, has been creating a network of Brussels' collective gardens. Urban regeneration and local development are her main focus and the involvement of citizens is a priority to her. She develops participation vector projects that, according to their very nature and approach, involve local players in the city production and transformation processes.

2. ORTOGRAMA. Proceedings

Louis Roland
Chief Operating Officer - Cité de l'Agriculture, Marseille (FR)

Louis Roland grew up in France, in Bourgogne, he graduated at Po Paris University in Territorial and Urban Strategy. Since his early career, has been interested in the citizens' participation in the design of sustainable cities. His first professional experience was in the Public Administration where he focused on Sustainable Housing (European Metropolis of Lille) and Participatory Budget (City Hall of Paris). After spending two years in Latin America to develop projects about agroecology, free access to good and fair food, he joined Cité de l'Agriculture and, in 2020, he replaced Marion Schnorf, founder and general manager, becoming the new executive director.





Michela Pasquali
*President and founder of Linaria
Associazione culturale, Rome (IT)*

Michela Pasquali, landscape architect, has been dealing with public space regeneration for twenty years through books, events, installations and projects. In 2011 she founded Linaria Associazione culturale to develop participatory processes and methods for public spaces. Social commitment is at the basis of her work in order to support and facilitate the exchange of ideas, skills, sustainable and inclusive design solutions. She promotes the inclusion of refugees through collaborations and participatory initiatives linking art, design and botany. She won the UNHCR WE WELCOME award in 2022.

Silvia Cioli
*Co-founder of Zappata Romana,
Rome (IT)*

Silvia Cioli is an architect and co-founder of the architectural and urban planning firm studioUAP, specialised in the design of public spaces and award-winner for the experimented engagement processes. Co-founder of Zappata Romana, an association whose goal is to study communities and urban gardening in Roma, since 2012 she has been collaborating with Parco Appia Antica, to revalue run-down areas and transform them into new public spaces.



The second day of round tables focused on the relation between farming in the city and the process of urban regeneration and transformation.

The first question aimed at examining what instruments and methods have been adopted by each speaker to foster the process of urban transformation and establish a relationship between citizens and administrations.

The first session speaker was Luis Roland representing Cité de l'Agriculture from Marseille, a non-profit organisation working for a more ecological and social city. The instruments used by the organisation for this purpose are urban farming and the access to sustainable food for all. The peculiarity of Cité de l'Agriculture, L. Roland explained, is to reconcile two roles: on the one hand, operating on site, working with citizens, CSA groups (community-supported agriculture) and with local players, to make sure everyone has access to sustainable food; on the other, implementing meta-projects which can have a political impact and change the system, for example, by gathering the urban farmers in a federation and creating a network (over seventy facilities), promoting actions based on shared values. Marseille experience demonstrates that the most effective strategy to accomplish

the City mandate is to be an interface connecting public policy-makers and field projects. The methodology adopted by Cité de l'Agriculture, as L. Roland pointed out, has been developed consistently with the role of intermediary and facilitator, starting from an analysis run at the beginning, in 2015. As a result, the organisation realised that, to manage Marseille sustainable transformation, it was essential to communicate with the relevant stakeholders at different levels (City offices, farmers, citizens) and operate on diverse project scales (system, policy and field project).

Sophie Dawance, the second speaker, presented Brussels case, a very interesting context in terms of urban gardening experience thanks to Collectif ipé, an organisation made up of architects and urban planners dealing with the city



Ph. Louis Roland
Capri el Cities, Marsiglia

social development. The organisation's main focus is on the urban transformation taking place as a result of the activities performed by the City players, generating social cohesion and innovation. In particular, since 2015, Collectif ipè has been supporting Réseau des potagers de Bruxelles, the network of gardens in Brussels region. Their purpose is to promote collective garden projects, encourage mutual support and sharing of experience, knowledge, know-how among the groups carrying out these projects, and facilitate access to technical and methodological information.

The toolbox and methods used by Collectif ipé and Réseau des potagers, as S. Dawance explained, have been developed in time, through two specific project phases: the first promoted networking of the urban gardens managed by citizens, i.e. individual and shared plots of land (2015); while the second, since 2017, has focused on the support needed for the creation of new urban gardens in partnership with other non-profit organisations, according to a multi-disciplinary approach based on the collaboration between urban planners (from Collectif ipé) and urban gardening specialists (partner organisations). S. Dawance's testimony is in line with L. Roland's, as they both stressed the importance of a multidisciplinary and multi-level approach. Brussels experience distinctive feature is, however, that the organisation's work had the political and economic support of the city authorities, thus creating a favourable working context for the promotion of ambitious urban and green regeneration projects.

Zappata Romana and Linaria experiences ended the third session, presenting two Italian cases.

Zappata Romana, represented by its co-founder, Silvia Cioli, is an association of architects committed to rethinking public space and one of their first experiences was the participatory design of Appia Antica Regional Park. Right after the creation of the park, the citizens, worried about its possible neglect and abandonment, decided to take direct action and started to take care of it. By analysing this phenomenon and running a research covering the whole Roman area, Zappata Romana team found out that in many urban green areas there were examples of park reappropriation by the citizens. The creation of a digital map emphasised this phenomenon, which has been acknowledged by the Roman citizens and also at international level, thus gaining the recognition of best practice.

As a result of this first experience of urban regeneration, implemented and documented, Zappata Romana could identify its main operating tools for public greenery and gardens. In addition to the above-mentioned multidisciplinary approach of the working groups, S. Cioli mentioned two aspects highlighting the importance of involving people as a crucial factor for the actual accomplishment of the regeneration process – the use of social media to trigger word-of-mouth and potentially viral initiatives, and the creation of meeting places where people can get in touch, thus generating intangible common goods, such as exchange of experiences, skills, relations, work.



Ph. Silvia Cioli, Rome

In Linaria's experience, told by the founder Michela Pasquali, the toolbox derives directly from practice, from what each project suggests, but finds its distinctive feature in the methodology adopted to develop the association projects, i.e. labs, workshops, engagement actions free and open to all, for the regeneration of specific spaces.

Linaria, as M. Pasquali explained, works with a wide range of players (beneficiaries, migrants, students, residents) and contexts, such as schools, family homes for minors and women with children, shelters – collective places often with neglected or no outdoor spaces. So, in these open places, once their features have been mapped and the relevant stakeholders identified for collaboration, Linaria promotes a participatory work for their transformation, involving people with a view to constant experimentation and change, allowing everyone to give a personal contribution according to one's skills and talents.

Linaria's strategy for urban regeneration is, therefore, to create active citizenship

spaces, green areas where developing training initiatives about public spaces and their sustainability, providing information for informed choices.



Then, the speakers were asked to think about the involvement of the people taking care of the gardens and the power of advocacy of these places, in relation to the changes brought about by public administrations.

In L. Roland's opinion, talking about food and urban gardens at present is an excellent way to engage people in the debate about the city and food system injustice. Cité de l'Agriculture, for example, noted that when people visit Marseille's urban farm, managed by his organisation and where it is possible to farm the land and attend educational activities, they change their attitude on these issues, as through experience they understand the need to adopt a radically different lifestyle and food consumption. By visiting the farm and trying to farm the land, Marseille citizens discover a food system based on sustainability and accessibility, develop critical thinking and mature the desire to exercise the right to a different state of affairs. L. Roland pointed out that creating moments where producers and consumers can meet is also very useful, so that people can understand how important, but complex it is to gain access to good produce and food.

As to the relation with public administrations and the possibility for the gardens to promote advocacy, Cité de l'Agriculture

pointed out that proving the garden impact is a crucial problem. A powerful aspect of urban gardens and green areas in general, as L. Roland explained, *is the fact that they are places where people can spend time without doing anything, or where meeting new people, building relations, reconnecting with nature and biodiversity.* Idleness, rest, leisure are all crucial activities for the wellbeing of the people using green spaces, but they are extremely difficult to describe and monitor, especially if you are required to use the project evaluation indicators usually adopted by public administrations.

In L. Roland's analysis, the problem lies in the fact that the public administration has increasingly been asking organisations to assess their projects and prove their benefits (e.g. to access funds to finance their initiatives), but, in the garden case, it is difficult to identify indicators expressing how much a green space can be beneficial to the community. To address this question, the strategy currently adopted by Cité de l'Agriculture is to use a mainly quality-oriented approach, documenting the



Ph. 1 Sophie Dawance - Bruxelles



Ph. 2 Sophie Dawance - seeds exchange Bruxelles

projects with images and interviews in order to support advocacy and further urge politicians to think about urban farming as a public service, financed by the state/region.

As already mentioned, Brussels public policies recognise and support garden initiatives with such a vigour that, compared to most European cities, could seem otherworldly. As a result, the relationship between the garden people and public administration is based on mutual recognition and interest. To give some examples of the policies supporting urban gardens, S. Dawance explained that for a long time, a public call has been issued every year inviting citizens (not necessarily



Ph. Stefano Fiorina
Giardino di via Nomis - Coop. La Rondine

in a structured way, an informal group of five people would be enough) to put forward a garden project. If the project is selected, the City will allocate a 300-euro budget to cover the cost of seeds and equipment, besides an operating support to start the garden. Thanks to this call, every year ten new gardens are created.

A second aspect regards the citizen's engagement which is the main mission of Réseau des potagers, i.e. the creation of a network of urban gardens, both individual and shared plots of land. Through the work carried out by Collectif ipé, Réseau des potagers acts as a network to meet the garden needs (e.g. for the construction of rainwater harvest systems or self-construction actions). All the people in the network who take care of a garden are invited to participate, on a voluntary basis, in the activities for the garden upgrade or improvement, for mutual learning and handing over techniques and

skills. These days are usually followed by dinners or cocktail parties to encourage socializing and informal meetings. Besides coordinating the garden needs and bringing them to the public administration's attention, conferences on bees, pollution, seeds, etc. are held both to promote education and offer cultural, recreative and social activities.

Finally, as to advocacy and the right to local and healthy food, and more specifically in relation to the policy potential in promoting change, S. Dawance story further proves the garden value as a tool enhancing social cohesion and raising awareness. The specific method adopted in Brussels, through a call as above mentioned, inspired by the principles of active citizenship, offers people the possibility to develop a project together, thus contributing to improve urban spaces. The garden, as the speaker pointed out, gives people the possibility to participate directly in a

process of urban regeneration and to be the protagonists of initiatives that, often and unfortunately, take a long time to develop and cannot be "touched by hand". In terms of impact on the policies, not only food policies, S. Dawance stressed that *the urban space reappropriation, with people being the protagonists in their own territory through direct experience, competence and trust, is an empowering process which can be transferred to other areas and encourage citizens to take new directions of change.*

Going back to the urban garden empowering value introduced by S. Dawance, S. Cioli from Zappata Romana underlined how this is inherently a political act. The garden is a truly unique space, inspired by the principles of sharing and interaction among the people living in a city who have different ages, cultures and social classes. The garden, as a political act, is therefore a bottom-up action, resulting from the civic sense pushing people to react to social and environmental injustice.

S. Cioli also pointed out that in the relationship with administrations, there are different scenarios, some more responsive and open-minded, others more reluctant. In general, those phenomena triggering changes in the city, like urban gardens, are welcomed first by the people and then by the administrations. According to Zappata Romana experience, a slow but growing awareness can be found also inside those bodies promoting urban farming initiatives. Therefore, despite some cities are more sensitive and evolved in supporting urban gardens, it does not mean that those areas which are slower in developing a similar awareness cannot be equally generative.

Associazione Linaria, that concluded the

round table, focused on those circumstances where it is not possible to get in contact with the administrations because they lack the capacity to comprehend the potential of the actions in public spaces and gardens and, although in some cases it is possible to obtain a formal backing, the institutions fail to provide practical support to these initiatives.

To face such a situation, Linaria, rather than working with decision-makers or creating permanent gardens, develops projects aiming at shaping the unexpressed potential of spaces and people, emphasising the narrative and evocative process of places and trying to encourage the exchange of different skills and experiences. The task of this type of initiatives, including also a recent mapping project of all the fruit trees in the city of Roma, conceived as one single large orchard, is to prompt a different way of thinking about urban spaces and communities and to promote new forms of involvement based on the concept of care. The latter, hopefully, will be triggering new projects based on the factual collaboration with the administration.

With the last round table of this session, the speakers reflected on

the post-Covid scenario and the prospects of urban regeneration through green spaces. They also wondered how the garden full potential as a tool for sharing best practices through networking can be expressed and achieved.

Ph. Silvia Cioli, Rome



While confessing not to be very optimistic about the future, L. Roland claimed that the great impact of the pandemic on the city players was particularly felt by non-profit bodies dealing with urban spaces and gardens. Despite the crucial role played by these organisations at social level, he pointed out that the post-Covid scenario poses many challenges. One particularly tough is the need to find new funds to support the urban garden projects, more and more important due to the growing poverty of people, the higher cost of life, the fight for the land in the city and the pressure of gentrification, depriving citizens of urban spaces and making houses and services unaffordable.

According to Collectif ipè, also in the post-Covid scenario what matters is to keep urban gardens as free places where people can make decisions together. This freedom must not be considered only from an ideological viewpoint, but it is a primary feature as it enables the gardens to respond more quickly to urgent matters, just like those arisen during and after the pandemic, thanks to the cooperative spirit of the communities.

As to the future, also the situation in Brussels poses some challenges. The first is the already mentioned issue of the land access, as there is a great competition between farming and housing projects. A second setback is the soil pollution. S. Dawance explained that, as a result of the public call for the creation of gardens in the city, the people will identify a plot of land where they wish to make a garden, so a land analysis will have to be carried out. But, if the soil is polluted, they need to grow above the ground and, clearly, this way the

farming land will be reduced. To address this challenge, Collective ipè has joined a consortium and is involved in a research-action project whose goal is to develop a depollution system (phytodepuration) that people can implement autonomously, also without being experts. Anyway, the size of the problem suggests the need to think about the whole system.

An interesting position about the future, also regarding the concerns expressed by the previous speakers, is the one of S. Cioli from Zappata Romana. In the architect's opinion, the city is both the problem – for the reasons mentioned by L. Roland and S. Dawance, like, for example, gentrification and pollution – and the solution. In post-pandemic cities, S. Cioli pointed out that *there is a lot of positive energy and urban gardens are an element with a positive “infectious” potential which needs to be part of a broader strategy.*

The session ended with the conclusions drawn by M. Pasquali from Linaria explaining how, in post-Covid Italy, some of the most urgent and hardest issues can be presented and processed through the initiatives taking place inside the gardens: promotion of new lifestyles, actions for climate change, biodiversity, inclusiveness and use of public space conceived as a rewarding, generative, multi-cultural, open and diverse place.



“ It is essential to dialogue with stakeholders pertaining to a variety of levels (city offices, farmers, and citizens) and to operate on diverse project scales.”

FORTH SESSION

Urban gardens for *wellbeing, health and recovery*

Main TOPICS

#LEARNING

#PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

#REGULATIONS

#PROJECT INDICATORS/EVALUATION

Ph. Stefano Fiorina
Orto del Bunker - FiescaVerd



Coordinator
Chiara Casotti
OrMe and Casematte APS, Turin (IT)

Chiara Casotti is a social designer and educator, she has taught Art history and worked as an architect. She lives in a cohousing community near Turin. She is the founder of the association Casematte APS, mainly operating for local and community development by promoting participatory and mutual help processes. Casematte has created the first collective garden in Turin and believes that, thanks to sharing and care, the garden can become a place of social integration and a tool for taking care of distress and disability.

DISCUSSANTS

Nicoletta Caccia
Ortho-therapist, Milan (IT)

Ortho-therapist, expert in educational/rehabilitation gardening, trainer, yoga instructor for children, functional juggling operator. She designs, develops and coordinates nature and gardening activities in educational service departments, schools and reception centres. She guides children and adults in outdoor experiential and educational activities. She collaborates with magazines and blogs dealing with nature-related themes, with a special focus on the connection with the world of children and teenagers.



Anna Materi
Associazione Parco Domingo, empathic and sustainable community, Bari (IT)

As a communicator, Anna Materi's work for *Orto Domingo* is to tell the experience of people's civic commitment in Poggiofranco neighbourhood, part of the programme Rete Civica Urbana "Picone Poggiofranco". *Orto Domingo* is the urban community garden project promoted by Associazione di Promozione Sociale Parco Domingo, built in 2017 on a land of around ten thousand sqm owned by the Municipality of Bari.

The area, abandoned since the '70s, has been reclaimed and now it is home to fifty olive, walnut and almond trees and plots of land on a surface of around sixty sqm assigned to the people members of the association and used for growing veggies and small plants.





Sara Costello
Il Giardino degli Aromi, Milan (IT)

Sara Costello is the coordinator of the project *Il Giardino degli Aromi*, a community of living beings: thousands of trees, also fruit trees, wild and farmed animals, insects, human and cultural artefacts. *Il Giardino degli Aromi Onlus* was set up in 2003 in the area of the former Psychiatric Hospital Paolo Pini, as a result of an initiative promoted by a group of women experts in growing and harvesting aromatic and medicinal herbs. The members of the association are now over two hundred. It mainly helps disadvantaged people to achieve social reintegration by carrying out activities in green areas. Through therapeutic gardening, internships and a tailor-made reception approach, the people participating in the activities organised by *Il Giardino degli Aromi* can study, observe and work with the land and plants. The recovery of a direct relationship with the urban natural world helps people regain balance in terms of thinking and biological rhythm, useful for people suffering from different forms of distress or malaise, but actually good for everyone.

Valentina Bergonzoni
Fondazione Villa Ghigi, Bologna (IT)

Valentina Bergonzoni, ortho-therapist and environmental educator, works at Fondazione Villa Ghigi di Bologna, an important centre at regional level for education but also for managing and enhancing the territory natural and landscape-environmental aspects. She has been dealing with therapeutic gardening projects for a long time, addressing in particular the patients of the Department of Mental Health and Children's Neuropsychiatry, in collaboration with local social-healthcare services and cooperatives.



The fourth and last session focused on the idea of garden as a tool providing care, health and wellbeing and involved four professionals – ortho-therapists, environmental educators and operators – who deal with people suffering from mental disorders.

Unlike the previous round tables, in this case a specific question was asked to each single expert in order to better understand the details of their experience and examine the peculiarities of each case.

At the beginning of the session the conversation focused on the figure of the ortho-therapist.



Nicoletta Caccia defined the ortho-therapist as a professional figure that is poorly recognised and whose task is to establish a link between individuals and plants and support people who are in underprivileged economic and/or social conditions to achieve their physical, mental and social wellbeing. The ortho-therapist's main goals are care and relations through the implementation of activities for the benefit of the participants. These activities are provided in dedicated spaces and monitored through the suitable instruments.

The ortho-therapist, as N. Caccia explained, has different competences, including the capacity to listen, communicate, observe and “read between the lines” to understand the people who find it difficult to express their thoughts and feelings. An ortho-therapist must also be skilled at organising and planning activities, inclined to adapt to unexpected events and changes, must have creativity, flexibility, empathy and, obviously, the capacity to engage the people or group he/she is working with. The ortho-therapist usually collaborates with other professionals in different contexts (schools, elderly homes, associations, day care centres, local healthcare authorities, etc.)

Despite in Italy there are extremely valuable training courses with specialisations in specific aspects of ortho-therapy, N Caccia concluded that the figure of the ortho-therapist is currently not recognised or regulated. There are no standards, monitored and updated indicators to be used as a benchmark, there are no official places where this profession can be performed.

Later, the speakers addressed the issue of including the urban garden experience in contexts based on civic commitment defending the vision of an inclusive city focused on people's needs, especially when they are particularly vulnerable.

This experience was told by Anna Materi from Associazione Parco Domingo based in Bari, an organisation working to create a system based on gardens and civic commitment, with a particular focus on some weaker categories of people, such as the elderly or individuals who were diagnosed Alzheimer.

The birth of Parco Domingo association, A. Materi explained, dates back to the seventies when the residential complex bearing the same name was built. The related architectural project included a strip of land of around ten thousand sqm that was left abandoned until a group of residents felt the need to do something and committed to using that land. After several meetings with the City council, an agreement was reached and the land was granted for free. Later, that small group of residents set up Associazione Parco Domingo with the goal of creating some

plots on the allotted land to be assigned to the people interested in farming, based on a ranking. This first initiative encouraged other voluntary sector bodies to develop their own projects in that area.

Analysing more specifically the initiative inclusive nature, A. Materi explained that one of these projects started during the lockdown focusing on families having members suffering from dementia and other neuro-degenerative pathologies. Thanks to the collaboration between Associazione Parco Domingo, the Welfare councillorship of the City of Bari and Associazione Alzheimer Bari, the initiative called Una passeggiata nell'orto (A walk in the garden) was implemented to let the people suffering from dementia or with documented health needs spend time outdoors in a safe place, so that they could fulfil their need for leisure in compliance with the existing Coronavirus regulations



Ph. Anna Materi
Bari

issued by the Government. Inside the urban garden, a green area was created to let this people take a walk safely. The people suffering from dementia could go there upon prior reservation, one at a time and accompanied by a caregiver, so that they could enjoy some relaxing moments. *Orto Domingo* space, therefore, proves how urban gardens during the pandemic were able to provide a tangible contribution for people's wellbeing, especially the most fragile ones, with the possibility of organising daytime activities when all the other social-welfare initiatives were suspended or limited. The garden has established its role as a place promoting people's care and health, going beyond the already evident function of food production or green area.

Another interesting aspect of the project civic value witnessed by this experience, A. Materi added, was observing how this

initiative, resulting from an emergency, encouraged the people who were assigned the gardens to get informed about the ongoing projects and be trained to play an active role in them.

Ph. Valentina Bergonzoni
Villa Ghigi

The third experience, dedicated to the role of nature, was that of Valentina Bergonzoni from Fondazione Villa Ghigi. The foundation provides training about nature, based on its 10-year long history and expertise. Here, ortho-therapy was introduced a long time ago.

Villa Ghigi is based inside a public municipal park in Bologna suburbs and is famous for the public greenery citizens can benefit from. V. Bergonzoni explained that the park where the Foundation – a private body with investments from public funds - is located is a particular place, on a surface of over thirty hectares, with a very deep-rooted educational function.

The main activities, that first regarded schools and later also educators and caregivers, focus on the connection between individuals and nature and the search for different ways through which bringing nature closer to citizens.

Throughout time, Villa Ghigi has promoted ortho-therapy initiatives by matching educational activities with programmes enhancing people's health and wellbeing through the relationship with nature. By means of carefully designed, assessed and monitored programmes, the

Foundation daily takes care of people, especially youngsters, providing them emotional and psychiatric support. Some of these youngsters, at the end of these programmes, went back to their area of origin and could found a job linked with nature, because working in a garden can help people change their condition, but also gain new professional skills.

As to the pandemic, V. Berzongoni pointed out that there are times of historical crises and upheavals leading people to change their relationship with what surrounds them and also change the way they give value to spaces. The pandemic was certainly one of these moments and, through the public park where Villa Ghigi is located, it is possible to observe how people's consideration of natural open spaces has changed: there is now more awareness of the fact that spending time in nature is beneficial and so people constantly seek the contact with it.



The fourth and last experience of this session was the one told by Associazione Giardino degli Aromi, in the space bearing the same name inside the park of the former Psychiatric Hospital Paolo Pini in Milan.

Sara Costello, the project coordinator, stressed that the gardens dedicated to people's care and wellbeing are, very often, moving and transforming spaces, where the relationship between territory, communities and uses are constantly re-defined to better and more accurately meet any arising needs.

The story of Giardino degli Aromi is consistent with this constant transformation as it has steadily evolved and worked out the suitable responses to the changing needs of the people who attend the park and its activities.

S. Costello said that the first core of Giardino degli Aromi, called Giardino circolare, started in 1999 when the Italian Law 180 established that soul asylums had to be closed as healthcare facilities, thus giving back those spaces to citizens and transforming them into potential labs.

The space was offered to a group of former women inmates. Indeed, a little gardening project had been started inside the prison following the women inmates who had wished to make one and so received the

seeds by post. The park area was then used to build a garden and organise activities for the citizens. As a result, S. Costello pointed out, an abandoned space turned into a place providing women entrepreneurship training and then leading this group of women to set up their own association in 2003.

The residents, who once saw the soul asylum walls as a border separating the city from the park, started getting curious and going to this green area that was finally accessible. Giardino circolare became a place where people could meet and recognise each other, thus playing an important symbolic role. After several projects with different local players, Giardino comunitario was created in 2005, also thanks to a strong grassroots movement that convinced the Provincial Authority to grant that land for free.

In S. Costello's opinion, one of the key aspects of Giardino degli Aromi, in addition to its dynamic and vibrant story, is the sense of protection it offers. The Association considers and talks about this place as a refuge where people can take care of each other. All the individuals participating in the

life of this place bring their experiences and competences, with mutual benefits for all: operators providing peer support, migrants and people with disabilities take care of the garden and its activities all together.

and recognise the garden as a safe place they belong to and where they can express themselves.

The idea of refuge and reciprocity is further strengthened and enhanced by the presence of animals, that can be beneficial to people's wellbeing. The natural space, the garden and the animals directly contribute to the educational process, S. Costello concluded, making it successful and consolidating a feel-good atmosphere where people can connect to the space

*Ph. Sara Costello
Il Giardino degli Aromi, Milano*





“ Gardens dedicated to the well-being and care of people are spaces in motion, places in transformation, in which the relationship between land, communities and uses is constantly being redefined. ”

Closing remarks

*Ph. Stefano Fiorina
Orti Generali*



The value of an urban gardens' network

Sara Ceraolo
OrMe ETS - Orti Metropolitani, Turin

The idea of building a network of associations promoting urban gardening in Turin was the result of an urban gardening congress held in 2016. On that occasion, after exchanging ideas and knowledge during the congress sessions, the participating bodies shared a mission statement to start working closely on urban gardening related issues and set an agenda for the creation of an informal group of urban, peri-urban, social, community and support gardens.

From the following year, the informal group consolidated its identity as a place for collective reflection and started to consider itself as a network (OrMe) whose main goal was to give visibility and practical support to the existing and upcoming urban gardening projects in Turin by providing informative services and training activities to solve regulatory and bureaucratic problems, enhance mutual collaboration and with the local community, bring about social benefits and create a community.

Talking now about the need to build collaborative relations at local level through networks and alliances between “peers” seems pretty obvious, but over seven years



Ph. Stefano Fiorina
Orto del Bunker - FiescaVerd

ago, when this group of associations started its work, the possibility of setting up a network seemed promising, though unusual and still to be explored.

With the same exploring spirit that led to the creation of OrMe first version, in 2022 an international event was conceived to discuss the role of networks and the need to know, exchange information, spread knowledge and create bonds between urban gardening practitioners, but this time on an international scale.

With ORTORAMA, OrMe renewed the challenge about the need to build alliances among subjects that, in other contexts, could be rivals, and established a first bottom-up experience of international relationship. We conceived ORTORAMA as a high level, but de-institutionalised meeting, for an honest debate.

In the projects dealing with humanised contexts and the future of urban communities, local dimension and international dimension have proved to be tangent and intersecting. In some fields this has occurred in a structured way for several years – e.g. research in the field of sustainable mobility or food policies.

However, as far as urban garden practices are concerned, the transnational exchange among practitioners has a potential that has not been fully explored in terms of processes that can combine theory and practice. The local and international dimensions are connected, also in urban gardening, because social challenges get harder and harder, they are on a global scale and keep on growing in parallel with the inequalities of our economies. For this reason, it is necessary to search for answers which, taking into account local specific features (in terms of detected difficulties, but also resources), can be open to the knowledge and experience shared at international level.

As a result, firmly convinced of the need to keep specific and general together, know-how and strategies, we invited to Turin the representatives of some of the most significant urban green projects in Europe. Thanks to this small but important event, OrMe started to establish solid relations with the new allies, for designing projects together, as well as growing and maturing together, thus reflecting and taking actions to lead our cities to a more sustainable, more inclusive and healthier future. To us this is just the beginning of a long path to walk together.



Ph. Sara Ceraolo
Orti al Centro - Innesto

Nature in the city

Elena Dellapiana
Torino Urban Lab

The year 2022 was still quite complicated for its divergent and convergent situation at global level: on the one hand the after-effects of the pandemic, on the other the efforts to resume what had been interrupted, often tragically, and to approach it with a new sensitiveness. The cities went through rapid transformations, not physically, but rather in the use and perception of spaces, shifting from unexpected almost metaphysical void to the reappropriation by nature of interstitial or even central areas. *Wilderness*, a word with a romantic flair used more by landscape designers than urban planners, broke into the conversation about cities.

According to these assumptions and one of the citizens' reactions to COVID-19 crisis – the need to fill the physical and intangible void generated by the lockdown – Urban Lab developed its 2022 activities around a common theme. As a result, the public programme *Natura in città* (*Nature in the city*) tried to examine problems and suggestions on the relationship between two spatial categories, but also world perspectives that are normally unrelated to each other, or even in sharp contrast.

The members of movements like *City Beautiful* in the late 19th-century America – architects, city planners, agronomists, citizens' associations – had seen in great

urban parks the solution as well as the acceptance of the city-nature dichotomy. Recently, wide urban areas have been literally invaded by wilderness – from the south-American metropolises giving in to the surrounding tropical forests, to the herds of wild boars wandering in the European cities; while heat islands and cloudbursts have abruptly changed the way public spaces are used.

These and other less extreme phenomena, though more and more frequent, call for an analysis of two conflicting factors that have always been debated by planners and administrators. So, the involvement of the civil society and the attempts to manage “wild nature”, without prejudice to its functional factors – food sourcing, sustainability, local dimension – and perception – leisure – were discussed during *Ortorama. Dialogues on urban gardening: practices, places, people*. Two days of round tables, itineraries to find out more about this hardly known but pervasive phenomenon and a closing party. The event was organised together with ORME ETS to expand the research conducted by Urban Lab through the programme *Natura in Città* and enrich its cultural offer, by focusing on urban gardening as an increasingly relevant issue in humanised contexts for its crucial role in the cities' environmental, social and economic regeneration policies.

The outcome of this two-day event is far from providing definitive solutions, but it presents a composite fabric where academic and bottom-up thoughts and actions are intertwined, outlining not only the main features of a more and more common phenomenon, but also proposing, hopefully, a collaborative model which can be replicated and applied to other urban sectors.



Ph. Stefano Fiorina
ORTORAMA Urban Lab's headquarter



Green together

The potential of urban gardening in the city

Francesco Tresso

Councillor for the Care of the city, Public Greenery and Parks, City of Turin

Lucia Baima

Councillor's Office for the Care of the city, Public Greenery and Parks, City of Turin



The City of Turin has a rich public and private green heritage of around 4,700 hectares corresponding to 38% of its surface. Around 2,000 hectares - nearly 50% - is made up of public green which means a “garden” of around 30 square metres per inhabitant.

The recent pandemic has boosted the value of this resource, emphasizing its intrinsic potential and capacity to adapt to unexpected uses which necessarily go beyond its ordinary boundaries, through solutions that have not only affected the spatial limits and conventional functional programmes, but also redefined new paradigms, relations and outcomes.

Through practical actions and small initiatives, the parks and green areas have been transformed into classrooms, meeting rooms, co-working spaces, creative workshops, outdoor gyms, venues for events, explorations, etc. The green areas have become or, better, have revealed themselves as open and vibrant spaces capable of intercepting and welcoming multiple uses and collective practices, overlapping in space and time, thus strengthening their aptitude to promote socialisation, relations and interactions

among the people living in the different neighbourhood communities.

One of the legacies of this period is, therefore, the awareness that the urban green heritage can be seen not only as a series of surfaces developing all around the city, but also as an infrastructure of platforms capable of intercepting and triggering different and, sometimes, surprising uses, increasing the citizens' active participation in the urban space public dimension, thus encouraging environmental and urban redevelopment, but above all social inclusion.

There is an element which embodies and represents this multi-functional and multi-potential aptitude of green spaces - the garden. In Turin, there are 28 gardens: 7 in the neighbourhoods and 21 belonging to associations, for a total amount of 140,000 square metres of green areas owned by the City and used for urban gardening, with over 3,500 people directly involved. The different experiences have generated in time a wide range of management models and related outcomes - from the more conventional and traditional neighbourhood gardens to the more experimental and innovative association gardens, co-managed by social cooperatives, associations, groups of citizens, which have expanded the range of programmes, opportunities and potentials offered by urban gardening.

Indeed, the garden is a spatial device which can be considered as a place for testing social regeneration through more and more inclusive co-management models (based on the collaboration of the different subjects involved). At the same time, it can become both an instrument to strengthen

social cohesion and develop micro-systems and local economies, as well as an urban and environmental regeneration tool - a lab capable of boosting biodiversity and offering solutions to the new challenges resulting from the climate crisis and the effects of climate change.

From this point of view, urban gardens provide a range of opportunities covering the whole city and its territory, thus creating a network of interests and common demands around a single element which can also be considered from a different perspective - from a simple green element conceived for individual vegetable and fruit production to an instrument used to take care of people as the centre of a plural and collective dimension. Around the garden, the space as well as the actions, practices and relations are shared, as they are generated by initiatives for the co-management and co-decision of the actual needs. Growing a garden means staying together and looking after a common good that is transformed into a powerful tool of social inclusion, capable of communicating in a cross-cutting way with the inhabitants of the different neighbourhoods, with different social and age groups, from the children involved in educational-playful activities to the youth rediscovering the relationship with the earth, and the elderly looking for opportunities to socialise.

At the same time, the garden becomes an urban regeneration instrument, especially in those contexts where there is limited access to green resources, by offering innovative solutions which redefine the existing urban heritage - from the city vertical and horizontal surfaces, to abandoned buildings and suspended places. As a result, green roofs, vertical green walls and gardens

3. Closing remarks

inside abandoned areas and buildings have been created to transform the urban space through innovative greenery, conceived for vibrant, inclusive and sustainable uses which also become experiments of nature-based solutions originating urban micro-systems capable of increasing biodiversity and creating or strengthening ecological corridors.

These innovative, out-of-the-box experiences stress the importance of establishing an active dialogue between administration, associations and the different players to redefine the toolbox, i.e. the administrative tools which can boost urban gardening potential and functions, encourage urban transformations promoting eco-systemic services and measuring their multiple effects, as well as co-define the participatory and collaboration processes among the different subjects involved to manage also informal situations.

It is therefore an opportunity to innovate the tools which can re-interpret the urban green on the whole, in all its different aspects and uses, as a multifunctional greenery capable of triggering transformations both inside the ordinary city urban fabric and create occasions for re-considering the green heritage from a systemic and territorial point of view, like the one offered by the UNESCO MaB Man and Biosphere Reserve Collina Po consisting of 85 municipalities, Turin included.

Therefore, the green resource, starting from the gardens, can become a space for experimenting alternative models of building the city and its citizens, through their active participation, in order to make the whole city more resilient.



The civic dimension of urban gardening

Luca Scarpitti

Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo

The significant role of urban gardening in the urban landscape is by now recognised and consolidated, also due to the recent syndemic.

Indeed, there is a greater attention and awareness of the value and impact of cultivated green areas in concrete and paved zones which bring benefits to the environmental quality of the whole city. Similarly, urban gardens are not only recognised as places for agricultural self-production, but also as spaces in the city where people can gather and socialise, where active citizenship and participation can be promoted and supported. This more “civic” dimension of urban gardening can facilitate the use of the urban space with a light infrastructure and, by potentially addressing and involving all the citizens, can improve the quality of territorial relations.

As a result, the spaces dedicated to urban gardens can be considered as a sort of ideal training camp, where introducing and testing new methods and instruments for collaborative practices, where the dialogue and collaboration among the different players (individuals, informal and/or formal groups, Third Sector Organisations, profit organisations, civic administrations) can positively contribute to their care and management throughout time. This process

can also be implemented through the so-called “negozi civici”, a shared management established by the regulations about urban common goods adopted by several municipal administrations.

This can be achieved in different ways, e.g. by creating or keeping a community of urban gardeners which can be cohesive but at the same time accessible to third parties, offering the support of a sensitive administration open to different solutions and opportunities. Therefore, the

contribution of players mainly from the non-profit sector, though not necessarily as garden managers, is crucial to lead the development process defining the civic use of these spaces and the role played by the people involved, to facilitate the creation and implementation of civic urban presidia.

For this function, multiple capacities and skills are needed, and therefore training – both vocational training and academic education – would be recommended to train professionals.

Last but not least, in order to improve the visibility of urban gardening culture and promote it in time and space, the Third Sector Organisations play a crucial role in collaboration with second-level subjects, as in the case of ORME-ORti METropolitani, that can represent and support civic urban gardening growth and contribute to transform it from practice into local policy.



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Orto del boschetto - RE.TE. Ong



June 2023



ORTORAMA, DIALOGUES ON URBAN GARDENING: PRACTICES, PLACES, PEOPLE

Notes from the conference

ORTORAMA is an event organised by the Association OrMe ETS, Orti Metropolitan (OrMe), in collaboration with Torino Urban Lab, held for the first time in September 2022.

The goal of ORTORAMA was to encourage the debate on urban gardening as a multidimensional phenomenon, enhancing the direct experience of territories and people working in this field.

As part of ORTORAMA, two round tables were organized with the participation of sixteen guests from different Italian regions and European countries. This publication aims to share what emerged during the conference and to contribute to conversations about the value of the urban garden as an essential device for designing the food, social and spatial future of our cities.

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