

URBAN VEGETABLE GARDENS AS LOCAL POLICIES: EXPERIENCES AND PROSPECTS

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From a individual point of view: hobby, economic advantage and health

Living in a city means losing the daily contact with nature; an urban garden makes the possibility to be an "urban farmer" real.

This is why urban vegetable gardens are supposed to be in a city. A lot of people start working in a urban garden as a hobby; this is called "hobby farming". If linked to the loisir, urban farming can be compared to any other activity that people like doing in their freetime, like practicing sports.

Moreover, one of the most evident goals of an urban garden is the production of food. The vegetables produced in these kind of gardens can help families to save money.

Finally, some people decide to take part in an urban garden to be sure of the origin of the vegetables they eat.

From an overall point of view: sociality and sustainability

The activity of farming an urban garden joins different people together. Usually the citizens that participate in urban gardening activities build up a group based on common interests or neighbourhood. For example, urban gardens are really important in order to create social gatherings for the elderly. Furthermore, in places where there are poverty and disadvantage, these common spaces can contribute to the emergence of good relationships between citizens.

Frequently, people who farm an urban garden follow the principle "think globally, act locally", trying to change some aspects of the world, such as pollution. In this case, on the one hand the goal is to promote good environmental practices and spreading environmental awareness, on the other hand to reduce the transport's emissions and the pesticide pollution with the direct production of food.



Initiative

Like the implementation of every policy, an urban garden can be realized and implemented following a top-down or a bottom-up initiative.

The actor who launches the project of urban garden determines the aims of the project itself; this is why are there a lot of different kinds of urban gardens. From "labourers' gardens" to "war gardens" and from "didactic gardens" to "collective gardens," we can see a vast array of socio-historical contingencies.

Context

Urban gardens build a link between urban and rural area. In this kind of spaces we can find a lot of cities inhabitants who don't know how to farm and want to learn ancient techniques and knowledges, trying to recover a rural dimension. Otherwise the urban gardens are places where skilled farmers try to experiment new techniques. So, an urban garden can also be considered as a platform of experimentation of more sustainable or productive agricultural methods.

CASE STUDY: Spiazzi Verdi

Spiazzi Verdi project, since 2009, is an urban garden located in Giudecca island, in Venice. It is located in the context of a city surrounded by a lagoon: this city it's formed by a system of small islands, bridges and building, so it's rare to see a garden or a tree.

As other urban gardens, Spiazzi Verdi creates a link between the city and the rural area around; moreover, it is also connected with the agricultural activities of the lagoon islands. So, during the years, this urban garden project joined a network of people with really different knowledges and skills.

This project take place nearby a nursing home, in an area that belongs to IRE. The aim of the project is to create a place that both the citizens both the old people who live there can visit and enjoy.

The people who work in this urban vegetable garden farm it in a biological and permacultural way; the project, following the degrowth idea, wants to build a network of green areas in the city. The act of farming, in this project, is also a way to spread the awareness of the environmental costs associated with massive, long-distance production.



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