

Urban sustainability and relational values of green spaces in Milan

Stefania Benetti*

Keywords: *Urban sustainability, green spaces, relational values, social inclusion*

Parole chiave: *Sostenibilità urbana, spazi verdi, valori relazionali, inclusione sociale*

Mots-clés : *Durabilité urbaine, espaces verts, valeurs relationnelles, inclusion sociale*

1. Introduction

Cities emerge from complex networks of interconnected socio-ecological processes that intertwine human, physical, discursive, cultural, material, and organic dimensions (Heynen *et alii*, 2006). Their planning and management can support the achievement of sustainability and resilience at the local level but also in the perspective of global scenarios related to climate change. Particular emphasis is placed on open and green spaces, which include bodies of water or areas of vegetation in urban landscapes, like forests or wilderness areas, food crops, street trees, parks, but also gardens or backyards (Loughran, 2020; Taylor, Hochuli, 2017). These elements are integral parts of cities, varying in availability according to population density and urban morphology, and differing in distribution in terms of surface area and type, for example, school gardens and outdoor sports areas.

In environmental geography (Castree *et alii*, 2016), urban green spaces and parks can be assumed as social-ecological systems (Petrosillo *et alii*, 2010; Martín-López *et alii*, 2017), for the co-production of environment and human society (Braun, 2005; Byrne, Wolch, 2009). In particular, within the geographical debate of Ecosystem Services (ES), urban green spaces are considered strategic for our increasingly urbanized society, as the presence of nature significantly contributes to quality of life. These spaces provide various ES: from ecological resilience and integrity (e.g., wind and noise buffering, microclimate stabilization, air and water purification), to social and psychological benefits (such as fostering social cohesion and inclusion, reducing stress, enhancing contemplativeness, promoting rejuvenation, and creating a sense of peace and tranquillity), as well as economic benefits (e.g., increased attractiveness, tourism promotion, job creation, and revenue opportunities) (Wolch *et alii*, 2014; Díaz *et alii*, 2015; Pascual *et alii*, 2017).

* Vercelli, University of Eastern Piedmont, Italy.

Over time, various methods for ES assessment have been adopted to support the development of natural resource management strategies at different scales, including green spaces at the urban level. However, these approaches have been criticized for commodifying nature (Castree, 2003), overlooking the diversity of variables and interactions across scales (Ostrom, 2007), and placing excessive emphasis on ecological and economic aspects, while neglecting the social dimension (Brown *et alii*, 2014; Scholte *et alii*, 2015; Capocefalo, Leuti, 2024). To address this gap, the concept of Relational Values (RV) has emerged as a turning point in the research on social-ecological systems and ecosystem services.

RV constitute an emerging category that transcends the traditional dichotomy between instrumental values (the utility of the environment) and intrinsic values (the inherent worth of the environment, independent of human use) (Arias-Arévalo *et alii*, 2017). According to Chan *et alii* (2016), these values concern the relationships and responsibilities between people, and between people and the environment. A first key component of RV is stewardship, which refers to actions aimed at the wise and responsible use of natural resources, a RV grounded in care for, knowledge of, and agency toward the environment (Jax *et alii*, 2018; West *et alii*, 2018). Secondly, are expressed and experienced differently by individuals, particularly in how they respond to their responsibilities toward the environment (Anguelovski *et alii*, 2020). Thirdly, through place attachment and intergenerational responsibilities (Kenter *et alii*, 2016; Klain *et alii*, 2017), RV are manifested in social relations, cohesion, inclusion, and justice (Chan *et alii*, 2018; Grubert, 2018; Vos *et alii*, 2018).

Therefore, approaching urban green spaces through the lens of RV means fostering place consciousness (Magnaghi, 2020), while also encouraging the active participation of local communities. In this perspective, urban green areas are not merely aesthetic or functional features, but essential components for quality of life, environmental sustainability, and social cohesion. This study explores a case study focused on RV in relation to urban green spaces, highlighting the mechanisms that generate the three main components of relational values. The city of Milan, Italy, characterized by a limited availability of green spaces for its inhabitants, is used as the context for this investigation, which is structured around three specific objectives: (a) identifying the stewardship actions undertaken by the local administration in managing urban green areas and protecting cultural and natural heritage; (b) investigating the implementation of social responsibility initiatives related to urban spaces, as proposed by national and local stakeholders; (c) understanding the role of local initiatives in fostering social relations, cohesion, inclusion, and justice.

2. Methods

To address the three specific objectives of the study, a quali-quantitative mixed-methods approach was applied. This consisted of content analysis (Bryman, 2012) of various sources (policy documents, websites, secondary

data, and visual materials related to the case study) as well as an interview (Bryman, 2012; Clifford *et alii*, 2016) conducted with one of the founders of a local association. Specifically:

a) Information and secondary data were collected from documents available on the official website of the Municipality of Milan (SISI, 2021; CdM, 2022a-d; 2023a), along with data from a study on urban gardens (Gambino *et alii*, 2020), to describe the case study area in terms of population, surface area, territorial organization, and green space provision. In addition, sustainability indicators (Benetti, Sebastiani, 2022) were used to describe the characteristics of urban green areas and to assess their availability to residents, as well as the Municipality's commitment to the management of natural and cultural heritage, in comparison to other Italian Regional Capitals. Subsequently, using the same information and secondary data (Benetti, Sebastiani, 2022; CdM, 2022e-h), the study examined the stewardship actions of the local administration, particularly in terms of compliance with obligations regarding urban green areas (GU, 2013), the adoption of management and operational tools, and the promotion of local initiatives aimed at the development, maintenance, and management of urban green spaces.

b) Information from the section "Green" on the Municipality of Milan's official website (CdM, 2022i-k) was used to explore the administration's activities related to social responsibility in the context of urban green areas. These include the recognition of Monumental Trees and initiatives such as Milano Green Week and the Forum Ambiente. Through content analysis of the website, a wide range of actors involved in both direct and indirect participation in the development of green areas was identified, including residents, local associations, national and local organizations, and private foundations. Additionally, by consulting the websites of these actors (e.g. *Fondazione Cariplo*, *Giacche Verdi*, etc.), various types of activities involving citizens and organizations were examined.

c) Focusing on a specific case, the final objective was to understand the extent to which local initiatives can enhance the relational value of green spaces in terms of social relationships, cohesion, inclusion, and justice. Attention was directed toward *Ecologia Turismo Cultura* (Ecology Tourism Culture), an association engaged in urban greening in Milan that manages *Cascina Martesana*, a multifunctional space located in the *Martiri della Libertà Iracheni Vittime del Terrorismo* park. First, information from official websites (CdM, 2022l; CM, 2022) was used to describe *Cascina Martesana* and the surrounding park. Additionally, demographic data from the neighborhoods of Milan (CdM, 2023a-b) were used to introduce socioeconomic aspects of the area where the site is located. Second, the research investigated the history, goals, activities, and initiatives promoted by the association, using information and visual materials from the official *Cascina Martesana* websites (ETC, 2022; 2023; GNEI, 2022), its Instagram and Facebook pages (CM, 2022a-b), and local press articles (Ilarietti, 2014; Speroni, 2014; MilanoToday, 2018; PrimalaMartesana, 2018; Milanodavedere, 2020). Third, this information was supplemented through a

semi-structured interview with a representative and founder of the association. The interview was conducted in June 2022, on-site, using a face-to-face method (Bryman, 2012; Clifford *et alii*, 2016). In agreement with the interviewee and in accordance with ethical guidelines (Clifford *et alii*, 2016, pp. 110-112), I took notes and audio-recorded the conversation. The semi-structured interview served both to validate information from the previous material analysis and to fill in information gaps. In particular, the interview explored: the motivations behind the site's reappropriation; the response and involvement of the local community; the types of visitors and participants in activities; any problems or negative experiences encountered; the relationship with the municipality and other local entities; and how activities were managed during the pandemic. To facilitate readability in the results section, excerpts from the interview will be presented in indented format.

2.1 - Case study – Milan is a city in northern Italy and the capital of the Lombardy Region. It has a population of 1.386.285 residents, spread over an area of 18.176 hectares (CdM, 2022a). The city is administratively divided into nine municipalities and 88 neighborhoods (CdM, 2023a). Milan is the second most populous city in Italy, after Rome, and ranks as the fourth largest in the European Union in terms of continuously built-up urban area. As of 2021 (CdM, 2022b), the city's urban green spaces total 25.248.627 m², of which 75,54% is managed by the local administration and 24,55% by associations and other entities (SISI, 2021). Milan has 988 play areas, 684 located in green spaces and 304 within school gardens, and 407 designated dog areas, covering a total of 670.688 m² (CdM, 2022a). Furthermore, the city features 94 urban parks, 5 agricultural parks, and 2,255 vegetable gardens (Gambino *et alii*, 2020; CdM, 2022c; 2022d). From a temporal perspective (Fig. 1), the endowment of urban green areas has increased since 2011, particularly with regard to urban parks and equipped green spaces. The only exception has been a decline in the number of botanical gardens.

Overall, Milan has a high density of urban greenery (13,8 m² per capita in 2019, compared to an average of 5,7 m² among Italy's Regional Capitals). However, due to its large population, the city has a relatively low per capita availability of urban green space: 17,8 m² per inhabitant in 2019, compared to an average of 28 m² in the other Regional Capitals (Benetti, Sebastiani, 2022). Among the 21¹ Italian Regional Capitals, Milan ranks 16th in terms of urban green space availability. It is particularly lacking in historical green areas, such as villas, gardens, or parks of artistic and historical value, and outdoor sports areas, ranking 17th in both categories (*ibidem*). Despite this limited availabil-

¹ Officially, Italy counts 20 Regional Capitals, but we included both Trento and Bolzano for the Region Trentino Alto Adige because the ISTAT (2021) survey considers them separately.

ity of green space for its residents, Milan stands out as one of the Regional Capitals most actively engaged in the management of urban green areas and in the protection of cultural and natural heritage, as will be illustrated in the following results section.

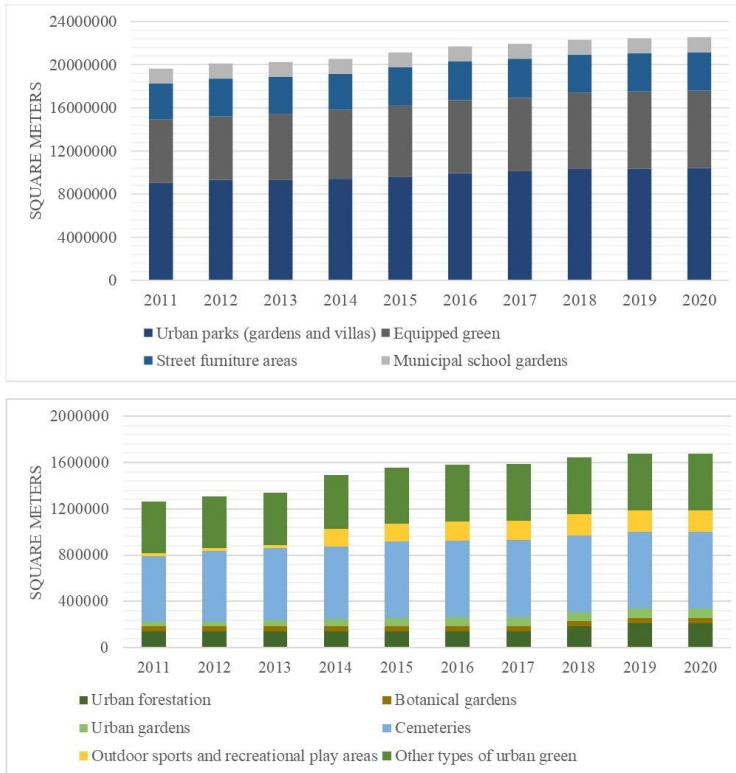


Fig. 1 – The endowment of different categories of urban green areas in Milan (2011-2020) in square meters.

Source: own reproduction of SISI (2021) data.

3. Results

3.1 - Stewardship of urban greening – The municipal administration of Milan recognizes urban greenery as a fundamental resource for the city's well-being and resilience. According to the Municipality's strategic guidelines (CdM, 2022e), green spaces are integrated with gardens and private areas, countryside and waterways, farmhouses, agricultural land, school gardens, and open-access spaces, forming a unified system that shapes the city. Every green space, public or private, constitutes part of Milan's heritage and contributes to both the citizens' well-being and the city's aesthetic quality.

In terms of fulfilling national obligations for urban green area development (GU, 2013), Milan is considered a model city. First, the local administration

has adopted several key planning instruments: the Green Plan (*Piano del Verde*, 2013), the Green Regulations (*Regolamento del Verde*, 2017), and the Arboreal Balance (*Bilancio Arboreo*, 2019). The Green Plan outlines a comprehensive program for medium- and long-term development, focusing on both quantitative and qualitative improvements. The Green Regulations establish specific rules and guidelines for the protection, maintenance, and use of public and private green spaces, as well as criteria for the design of new areas. The Arboreal Balance is a planning and monitoring tool that compares the number of trees in public spaces at the start and end of each mayoral term. However, data related to the Ecological Network, i.e., the interconnected habitat system that supports biodiversity and ecological functions, is currently lacking.

Second, operational tools complement planning efforts. The administration conducted the Urban Green Area Census (*Censimento del Verde*), most recently in 2019, to map and analyze green space characteristics in urban and peri-urban areas. The census was integrated into the Green Information System (*Sistema Informativo del Verde*), a digital platform that streamlines and enhances data management related to green infrastructure. In the same year, the Municipality also established a Green Cadastre (*Catasto del Verde*) with georeferenced data classifying trees by genus and species across the municipal area.

Third, the Municipality has promoted local initiatives for the development of green areas, including projects to green newly built neighborhoods and to preserve and expand tree cover in existing urban spaces. In compliance with a national law introduced in 1992 (GU, 1992), Milan plants a tree for every newborn and newly adopted child registered in the city. While this law is often overlooked by other Italian municipalities (Benetti, Sebastiani, 2022), Milan not only follows the mandate but enhances it with detailed georeferencing, integrating it into the Census and specifying tree types and planting locations. According to the official website (CdM, 2022f), in November 2020 alone, the Municipality planted 27.721 plants (20.120 trees and 7,621 shrubs) across all city districts, increasing the city's natural heritage to 501.252 trees. Of these, 246.483 are directly managed by the Municipality and are mapped in the online Geoportal (CdM, 2022g). Additionally, Milan is implementing the *ForestaMi* project in collaboration with the Metropolitan City and the Politecnico di Milano (CdM, 2022f), which aims to plant 3 million new trees in the metropolitan area by 2030, supported by the *ForestaMi* Fund that collects donations from companies and citizens.

Fourth, the Municipality promotes the maintenance and management of green spaces through free-of-charge assignments to citizens or associations. It also organizes National Tree Day activities, including awareness campaigns and training courses for green maintenance workers. The city further enhances public engagement through recreational initiatives, such as walking routes (e.g., the romance- and magic-themed itinerary in *Villa Finzi* park) and cycling routes, like the "Discovering the Waterways" path along the *Naviglio Martesana* (CdM, 2022h). Milan also protects its greenery through conservation of natural reserves and agricultural parks, and by supporting urban forestry, commu-

nity gardens, and botanical gardens. Overall, the city ranks first, together with Florence, in planning and managing urban green areas (94%) and in protecting cultural and natural heritage (84%) (Benetti, Sebastiani, 2022).

Clearly, green management cannot rely solely on institutional efforts; active citizen participation is essential. The Municipality of Milan (CdM, 2022e) emphasizes the importance of involving a wide range of actors in green stewardship. This engagement not only expands the range of services offered but also fosters active citizenship, strengthens the bond between citizens and their environment, and builds mutual trust and credibility with local authorities. The potential of participatory green care plays a key role in improving quality of life by repairing and reinforcing the social fabric of the city, as the following section will explore.

3.2 - *Social responsibility for natural heritage* – The Municipality of Milan acknowledges the involvement of a plurality of actors, both directly and indirectly, the development of urban green areas as a crucial element in designing the city's governance process (CdM, 2022e). A tangible example of this is the active role of residents in identifying Monumental Trees (CdM, 2022i), trees that are notable for their exceptional dimensions, botanical rarity, unique conformation, longevity, or connection to significant historical or religious events. Citizen reporting enables such trees to be included in the official registry and ensures their protection. The administration also encourages citizen participation in the direct management of green areas through local associations and social enterprises, as in the case of urban gardens.

A prominent initiative in this context is *Milano Green Week* (CdM, 2022j), an annual event launched in 2016 to promote urban greenery and environmental protection. The 2022 edition took place from September 30 to October 2, featuring a wide range of activities distributed across the city. Organized in collaboration with associations, neighborhood committees, and various public and private entities, *Milano Green Week* offered free events such as exhibitions, presentations, guided tours, excursions, workshops, and games. The initiative served as a platform for citizens to discover Milan's lesser-known green spaces. Additionally, from September 29 to October 7, 2022, the Municipality's Department of Environment and Green Spaces hosted the first *Forum Ambiente* (CdM, 2022k), a cultural and scientific forum focusing on ecological transition, climate change, landscape, and green space management, and the protection of natural resources such as water, soil, and air. The event was aimed at professionals including architects, engineers, agronomists, landscapers, doctors, journalists, and environmentally conscious citizens.

Beyond municipal initiatives, various national and local associations, as well as private foundations, are active in Milan with the shared goal of fostering resilient, sustainable, and inclusive urban systems. For example, in 2022, 16 organizations focused on urban greenery, 4 on waste management and recycling, and 17 on environmental education participated in *Milano Green Week* (2023).

Among the key organizations operating in Milan is *Fondazione Cariplo* (2022), which is active throughout Lombardy. It is committed to the protec-

tion and promotion of natural heritage and community resilience through partnerships with citizens, institutions, businesses, associations, academia, and schools. The national association *Giacche Verdi* (2022a; 2022b) is involved in environmental education and in supporting socially disadvantaged groups. Its volunteers carry out surveillance activities in parks, protected areas, and environmentally significant sites, including those within the Municipality of Milan. Another key actor is *Italia Nostra* (2022a; 2022b), a national association dedicated to protecting the country's landscape, as well as its historical, artistic, and natural heritage. Its operational center, *Centro di Forestazione Urbana* (2022), has managed the design, construction, and maintenance of *Boscoincittà* since 1974, a 120-hectare public park in southern Milan that includes 200 urban gardens assigned to citizens. The local volunteer association *Circolo Legambiente Reteambiente Milano* (2022) promotes environmental protection and civic engagement. One of its main initiatives is the community garden *Orti di via Padova*, which is managed in agreement with the Municipality. Finally, *Ecologia Turismo Cultura* (Ecology Tourism Culture - ETC) is a Milan-based association dedicated to promoting citizen involvement in the ecological and cultural regeneration of abandoned urban spaces (ETC, 2022). Its work emphasizes the right to the city, environmental awareness, psycho-physical well-being, and social inclusion. Due to its nonpartisan approach, this association was selected for further investigation. The following section will focus on *Cascina Martesana*, located within the *Martiri della Libertà Iracheni Vittime del Terrorismo* park, a privately managed space under the care of ETC rather than the Municipality of Milan.

3.3 - *A green area of social relations, cohesion, inclusion, and justice* – The *Martiri della Libertà Iracheni Vittime del Terrorismo* park is located in the eastern part of Milan and follows a stretch of the Martesana canal (CdM, 2022l). Established in 1978, the park features a long cycling path along the canal banks, an amphitheater, and groves with various tree species including maples, cherry trees, white hornbeams, elms, and paulownias with purple blossoms. Nestled in this green environment is *Cascina Martesana* (Fig. 2), a multifunctional space that serves as a hub for culture, social interaction, and recreation.

Located in one of the most densely populated and multi-ethnic areas of Milan, *Cascina Martesana* lies between two major roads (Via Padova and Viale Monza). This area includes two major parks (*Trotter* and *Martiri della Libertà Iracheni Vittime del Terrorismo*) and the Martesana canal, representing the last remaining fragments of nature in an otherwise fully urbanized zone (CM, 2022). *Cascina Martesana* is situated in the Padova-Turro-Crescenzago district, within Municipality 2. As of 2022, this district had nearly 38.000 inhabitants, making it the fifth most populous in the city, the seventh in terms of population density, and the second highest in terms of the proportion of foreign residents (34,8%, compared to a citywide average of 20%) (CdM, 2023a). According to 2020 demographic data (CdM, 2023b), 2,3% of the population were of nursery age, 2,4% kindergarten age, and 4,2% were seniors over the age of 85.

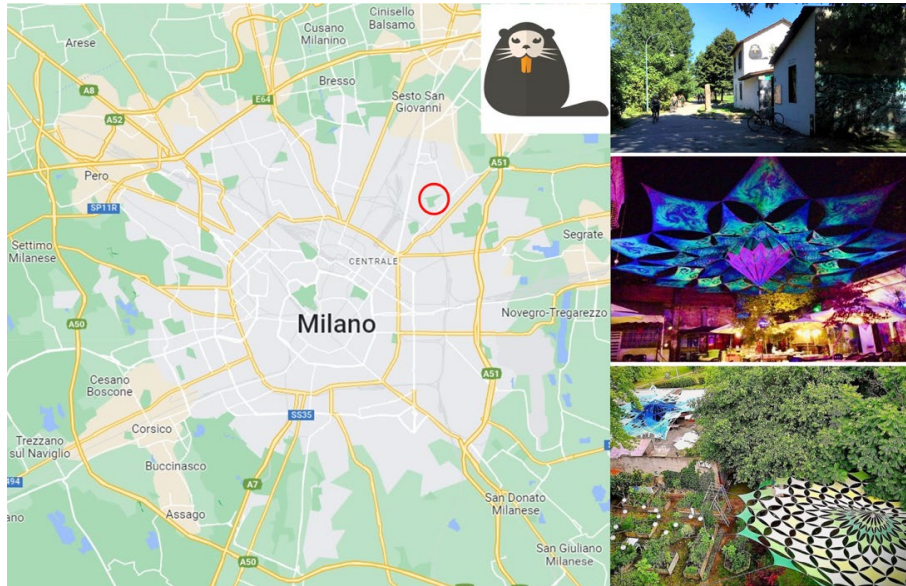


Fig. 2 – Location of *Martiri della Libertà Iracheni Vittime del Terrorismo* park in Milan, logo and pictures of *Cascina Martesana*.

Sources: Google Maps; CM (2022a; 2022b).

The story of *Cascina Martesana* began when a group of friends decided to reclaim a long-abandoned structure, derelict for over 25 years, and reopen it to the public. Unlike traditional Milanese farmhouses, *Cascina Martesana* has a different origin. In the early 20th century, the site hosted a men-only outdoor swimming pool, known locally as *El bagnin de Gorla*, built in a basin formed by the Cavo Taverna, a now-covered irrigation canal branching from the Martesana (Speroni, 2014; Milanodavedere, 2020). In the 1970s, a metal shearing plant was established on the site, but the facility closed in the 1990s, leaving the building abandoned and subject to decay and vandalism (*ibidem*). Despite lacking historical agricultural or residential use, the structure, with its architecture, garden, and courtyard, resembles a traditional farmhouse. For this reason, the ETC association adopted the term *Cascina* as a poetic license when naming the site (Speroni, 2014). Following the closure of the industrial plant, the surrounding park area became neglected and unsafe, deterring public use, especially at night, due to vandalism and drug activity (Illarietti, 2014; Speroni, 2014):

The association's goal was to reclaim this neglected and feared space, restoring both the structure and the usability of the park. By doing so, they aimed to foster social cohesion, culture, and a sense of security. More broadly, the initiative sought to transform the perception of urban parks, from passive, underutilized green spaces to dynamic,

multifunctional areas offering cultural activities and opportunities for community engagement, interaction, and inclusion.

The idea to establish a cultural and social center in a neighborhood with limited offerings was launched in 2012 (Illarietti, 2014). In 2014, three friends took over the abandoned structure, formed a dedicated LLC (Speroni, 2014), and established the ETC association. The organization is non-partisan and non-profit, with the mission of pursuing civic, solidarity-based, and socially beneficial goals (ETC, 2023):

When the association reopened and reactivated *Cascina Martesana*, the response from local residents was immediate and spontaneous. Curious individuals stopped by to ask for information, took part in the initial cleaning activities, and donated tables, sofas, and other furnishings. Many were eager to reclaim and experience a place that had long evoked fear and discomfort. During the first season, the association organized its first major community meeting with neighborhood residents, aimed at listening to and understanding the needs of those living in the area. This step proved fundamental to shaping the association's future planning.

In the planning phase, carried out in collaboration with the local community, it was decided to repurpose *Cascina Martesana* as a multifunctional center, using eco-sustainable materials compatible with the natural surroundings of the park (Illarietti, 2014).

In 2015, the association submitted a proposal to manage a small plot of land owned by the Municipality. This land, located between public and private properties, had been neglected and had become an illegal open-air dumping ground due to its inaccessible location:

The goal was to transform the site into a shared garden and outdoor cultural hub. The local district council approved the request and granted a concession for its use. With support from the Milan Environmental Services Company, the association cleared the land during the autumn and winter seasons. That same winter, they constructed large raised planting beds for a vegetable garden, designed from an inclusive perspective to allow people of all ages and physical abilities, including seniors, children, and individuals with disabilities, to participate without needing to kneel or work directly on the ground.

Today, this adjacent area, named *Giardino Nascosto* (Hidden Garden) “*Elda Iannone*” (GNEI, 2022), hosts the project *La compagnia dell'orto* (The Company of the Vegetable Garden). The garden is open weekly to both members and non-members who wish to participate in its activities (Fig. 3). Currently, the Facebook group dedicated to this initiative includes more than 700 members:

The association sustains the project through a collaboration agreement with the Municipality of Milan and the active participation of *La compagnia dell'orto* members in managing the space. The long-

term goal is to open the garden to the broader public, while maintaining direct management by members. Several other initiatives across Milan have drawn inspiration from the experience of *Giardino Nascosto* and *Cascina Martesana*, seeking to replicate this participatory model in different contexts.

In July 2018, *Giardino Nascosto* was severely damaged by an arson attack. Although no one was injured, several cultivated planting beds (some of which had been created with children), the greenhouse nursery, and part of a nearby tree were destroyed (MilanoToday, 2018; PrimaLaMartesana, 2018):

We believe that the perpetrators were drug dealers who had previously occupied the area during its years of abandonment. Since we reopened *Cascina Martesana* and revitalized the park, they have repeatedly attempted to halt our progress, even going so far as to set fire to the *Giardino Nascosto*. The following day, more than 100 volunteers responded to the incident by helping to restore the area, rebuild the raised beds, and reconstruct the greenhouse. This collective action became a powerful expression of solidarity and civic resilience.



Fig. 3 – Activities of *Giardino Nascosto* “Elda Iannone”, managed by *Cascina Martesana* and *La compagnia dell'orto* members.

Sources: CM (2022a; 2022b).

In its relationship with the Municipal Administration, the association, consistent with its non-partisan statute, has deliberately chosen to maintain independence, ensuring political neutrality for all participants.

After years of managing the *Giardino Nascosto*, we signed a collaboration agreement with the Municipality to gain formal recognition. Aside from participating in public calls for proposals, like other local associa-

tions, we prefer to remain autonomous in order to avoid introducing divisive political dynamics into the community.

Typically, *Cascina Martesana* is open from April to October, during which the association organizes a variety of activities in collaboration with local residents. These include cultural events such as exhibitions, film screenings, concerts, and theatrical performances, all intended to foster mutual understanding through art and culture. Additional initiatives promote environmental awareness and education, including the cleaning and maintenance of surrounding green areas, garden care, and school visits focused on local flora and fauna. The association also offers opportunities for outdoor sports and recreational activities in the park, aimed at promoting social cohesion and physical and mental well-being. Other thematic areas include healthy and conscious eating, the protection of local heritage and historical memory, and social inclusion.

The audience of *Cascina Martesana* is remarkably diverse in terms of gender, age, and cultural background. All activities are voluntarily open to the public, ensuring inclusive participation. Outside of official opening hours, the association allows private groups, such as kindergartens, school classes, parish groups, and expert communities, to organize their own activities on site. Many events are co-organized with local organizations, networks of farmhouses or community gardens, and private foundations.

Cascina Martesana has rapidly become a point of reference for the North Loreto area and for the entire city, with over 40.000 visitors per season and 23.000 registered members (CM, 2022).

The association employs a hybrid model of space management, co-managed by a for-profit and a non-profit entity that operate in symbiosis: the for-profit branch generates income through food services and paid activities, while the non-profit reinvests these resources into the organization and promotion of public initiatives. This structure enables the association to cover operational costs while keeping the annual membership fee accessible: only 5 euros per year. During the COVID-19 pandemic, *Cascina Martesana* initially closed, despite most of its activities being held outdoors. After the first lockdown period, it managed to remain open thanks to its food service operations. This allowed the site to stay active, offering citizens a valuable opportunity to access an outdoor space during a time of widespread restrictions.

The experience of the ETC association in reopening *Cascina Martesana* enabled the local community to reclaim not only an abandoned structure but also a neglected public park. The initiative had a significant impact on fostering positive relationships and a renewed sense of shared responsibility between people and their environment.

4. Discussion

The mere presence of green spaces does not ensure the achievement of urban sustainability. As Tavano Blessi *et alii* (2015) demonstrated ten years ago, some areas of the city of Milan have a higher concentration of green, while others are deficient, with the risk of exacerbating socio-spatial inequalities. Indeed, dynamics that shape cities can produce devalued spaces of inequality and fragmentation (Pineda-Pinto *et alii*, 2021). For this reason, the present research explored urban green spaces in the framework of RV for a better understanding of requirements for addressing sustainability challenges in cities. In this study, RV have been considered as the environmental stewardship and the social responsibility of green spaces in the city of Milan, and in terms of social relations, cohesion, inclusion, and justice in the specific area of *Cascina Martesana*.

Despite the city lacks enough green availability for inhabitants, the local administration of Milan showed a great engagement in the protection and management of green areas, especially compared to other Italian Regional Capitals (Benetti, Sebastiani, 2022). Section 3.1 showed the city's commitment to legal obligations, adopting management and operational tools regarding urban green areas, as well as the offer of different initiatives for the development, maintenance, and management of green spaces. However, the city of Milan is witnessing a decrease in the influence of public institutions in green planning and management, promoting a greater diffusion of public-private collaborations, especially in urban regeneration processes led by private actors (Azzimonti, 2024). Moreover, such regeneration processes focus on green areas in central city areas (*ibidem*), leaving suburbs deficient and contributing to socio-environmental inequalities.

Results from Section 3.2 highlighted various events from the Municipality and other organizations in the management of green areas. As pointed out by Langemeyer *et alii* (2018), fostering RV linked to stewardship and responsibility practices requires greater management autonomy to green spaces. Moreover, important information regarding participants involved in these initiatives is missing. Further analysis of the number and type of participants, as well as their perceptions of activities, could help urban planning to boost the stewardship of green areas. Indeed, only the expanded citizen involvement in the stewardship of urban parks can generate a real sense of social responsibility toward the environment (Frantzeskaki *et alii*, 2016), shaping the institution and identities of places (De Vos *et alii*, 2018).

Involvement in stewardship action and a major social responsibility can also motivate local communities or volunteers with several benefits, such as recreational and educational, but also with social cohesion and inclusion of disadvantaged groups (for example immigrants, people with disabilities, elderly people, etc.), as demonstrated by *Cascina Martesana's* experience (Section 3.3). As it is known, urban green areas do not only produce services but also disservices, defined as functions of ecosystems that are perceived as neg-

ative for human well-being (Lyytimäki, Sipilä, 2009). One disservice is the fear of dark green areas that are perceived as unsafe at night time. The case of *Cascina Martesana* shows the will of an association to reclaim an abandoned place, not considered for years by the stewardship of the local administration. The work made by ETC association allowed to give back a green space perceived by the local community as unsafe. Similar to the case study in the southern Milan area of Dal Borgo *et alii* (2023), these experiences developed with participatory and systemic approaches can defuse the critical dynamics of detachment from places in processes of abandonment and degradation.

The case of *Cascina Martesana* is an example of how a local community relates to its environment, and how a part of the city can be understood as a set of relations, by taking into account the temporality of every existence, process, and relation (Setten, Brown, 2013; Stenseke, 2018). The creation of a space for culture, art exhibitions, workshops, and meetings, favors social relations and cohesion among adults, children, and the entire multi-ethnic community of the area. Activities promoted by the association follow the principle of social inclusion in economic terms with a low membership fee and in practical ones, ensuring access and use of the area, even to the disabled, children, and elderly people. Furthermore, ETC association attempts to ensure, not only access to the green area, but also recognition of the local community's needs, and participation of members in green space management, within a broader framework of environmental justice of urban ES (Benetti, Langemeyer, 2021; Calderón-Argelich *et alii*, 2021).

The case study underlined mechanisms that generate different RV components can drive citizens' actions towards better care of green spaces, where care is not just a feeling, but a practice rooted in the relationships between people and environment, influenced by cultural, political, and social contexts (West *et alii*, 2018). However, in a city where the private sector focuses on property development and commercial attractiveness, such initiatives, while innovative, risk remaining episodic and isolated if not integrated into a systemic vision of the city. While projects as *Cascina Martesana* promote the place consciousness (Magnaghi, 2020), they require a systemic metropolitan coordination, which is currently not strong enough in the case of Milan.

5. Conclusions

The novelty of this research lies in the adoption of RV to analyse urban green spaces as social-ecological systems (Ernstson, 2013), moving beyond a purely functional or aesthetic view. This approach elevates ES theory to a social, cultural, and ethical dimension, challenging traditional ecological and economic frameworks. Methodologically, the quali-quantitative case study demonstrates how RV are not just theoretical constructs, but are actively practiced by local actors in everyday forms of care, participation, and co-management. The research also introduces a hybrid, multi-level model of urban green governance,

contrasting the top-down approach of municipal policies with the bottom-up initiatives of civic associations. However, the methodological perspective remains limited in its immersion in the lived experience of residents, suggesting a need for future research to verify the actual impact of projects like *Cascina Martesana* on community well-being and environmental justice. In particular, as Battisti (2022) argues, participatory mapping could enhance stakeholder engagement, capture perceptions of both benefits and disservices, and support more inclusive evaluation. Looking forward, it would be valuable to compare this case with experiences in more peripheral or underserved areas, where civic engagement is weaker or absent. Overall, framing urban green spaces through the lens of RV offers an original and promising contribution to geographical literature on ES, encouraging a more equitable, participatory, and culturally informed approach to urban planning, yet one that calls for broader and deeper investigation.

References

- ANGUELOVSKI I., BRAND A.L., CONNOLLY J.J.T., CORBERA E., KOTSILO P., STEIL J., GARCIA-LAMARCA M., TRIGUERO-MAS M., COLE H., BARÓ F., LANGEMEYER J., DEL PULGAR C. P., SHOKRY G., SEKULOVA F., ARGÜELLES RAMOS L., «Expanding the boundaries of justice in urban greening scholarship: toward an emancipatory, antisubordination, intersectional, and relational approach», in *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 110(6), 2020, pp. 1743-1769.
- ARIAS-ARÉVALO P., MARTÍN-LÓPEZ B., GÓMEZ-BAGGETHUN E., «Exploring intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values for sustainable management of social-ecological systems», in *Ecology and Society*, 22(4), 2017, pp. 1-15.
- AZZIMONTI O.L., «Urban green governance and mechanisms of generation of ecosystem services: Milan's green governance models», in *Environmental Sociology*, 10(1), 2024, pp. 73-88.
- BATTISTI L., «Il supporto alla gestione ambientale tramite la mappatura dei servizi ecosistemici culturali di un sito Natura 2000 di proprietà privata», in *Semestrale di studi e ricerche di geografia*, XXXV(2), 2023, pp. 7-20.
- BENETTI S., LANGEMEYER J., «Ecosystem services and justice of protected areas: the case of Circeo National Parke, Italy», in *Ecosystems and People*, 17, 2021, pp. 411-431.
- BRAUN B., «Environmental issues: writing a more-than-human urban geography», in *Progress in human geography*, 29(5), 2005, pp. 635-650.
- BROWN G., SCHEBELLA M.F., WEBER D., «Using participatory GIS to measure physical activity and urban park benefits», in *Landscape and urban planning*, 121, 2014, pp. 34-44.
- BRYMAN A., *Social research methods*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.
- BYRNE J., WOLCH J., «Nature, race, and parks: past research and future directions for geographic research», in *Progress in human geography*, 33(6), 2009, pp. 743-765.

- CALDERÓN-ARGELICH A., BENETTI S., ANGUELOVSKI I., CONNOLLY J.J.T., LANGEMEYER J., BARÓ F., «Tracing and building up environmental justice considerations in the urban ecosystem service literature: A systematic review», in *Landscape and urban planning*, 214, 104130, 2021, pp. 1-16.
- CAPOCEFALO V., LEUTI F., «The ecosystem services analytical framework in Italy. A human geography prospect», in *Annali del Dipartimento di metodi e modelli per l'economia, il territorio e la finanza*, 2024, pp. 161-172.
- CASTREE N., «Commodifying what nature?», in *Progress in human geography*, 27(3), 2003, pp. 273-297.
- CASTREE N., DEMERITT D., LIVERMAN D., RHOADS B. (Eds.), *A companion to environmental geography*, Oxford, John Wiley & Sons, 2016.
- CHAN K. M., BALVANERA P., BENESSAIAH K., CHAPMAN M., DÍAZ S., GÓMEZ-BAGGETHUN E., GOULD R., HANNAHS N., JAX K., KLAIN S., LUCK G. W., MARTÍN-LÓPEZ B., MURACA B., NORTON B., OTT K., PASCUAL U., SATTERFIELD T., TADAKI M., TAGGART J., TURNER N., «Why protect nature? Rethinking values and the environment», in *Proceedings of the national academy of sciences*, 113(6), 2016, pp. 1462-1465.
- CHAN K.M., GOULD R.K., PASCUAL U., «Editorial overview: relational values: what are they, and what's the fuss about?» in *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 35, 2018, pp. A1-A7.
- CLIFFORD N., COPE M., FRENCH S., GILLESPIE T. (Eds.), *Key methods in geography*, London, Sage, 2016.
- DAL BORGO A.G., CHIAFFARELLI G., CAPOCEFALO V., SCHIEVANO A., BOCCHI S., VAGGE I., «Agroforestry as a driver for the provisioning of peri-urban socio-ecological functions: A trans-disciplinary approach», in *Sustainability*, 15(14), 11020, 2023, pp. 1-30.
- DE VOS A., JOANA C.B., DIRK R., «Relational values about nature in protected area research», in *Current opinion in environmental sustainability*, 35, 2018, pp. 89-99.
- DÍAZ S., DEMISSEW S., ... ZLATANOVA D., «The IPBES Conceptual Framework-connecting nature and people», in *Current opinion in environmental sustainability*, 14, 2015, pp. 1-16.
- ELBAKIDZE M., SUROVÁ D., MUÑOZ-ROJAS J., PERSSON J.O., DAWSON L., PLIENINGER T., PINTO-CORREIA T., «Perceived benefits from agroforestry landscapes across North-Eastern Europe: What matters and for whom?», in *Landscape and urban planning*, 209, 104044, 2021, pp. 1-13.
- ERNSTSON H., «The social production of ecosystem services: A framework for studying environmental justice and ecological complexity in urbanized landscapes», in *Landscape and urban planning*, 109(1), 2013, pp. 7-17.
- FRANTZESKAKI N., KABISCH N., MCPHEARSON T., «Advancing urban environmental governance: Understanding theories, practices and processes shaping urban sustainability and resilience», in *Environmental Science & Policy*, 62, 2016, pp. 1-6.
- GÓMEZ-BAGGETHUN E., BARTON D.N., «Classifying and valuing ecosystem services for urban planning», in *Ecological economics*, 86, 2013, pp. 235-245.

- GRUBERT E., «Relational values in environmental assessment: The social context of environmental impact», in *Current opinion in environmental sustainability*, 35, 2018, pp. 100-107.
- HEYNEN N., KAIKA M., SWYNGEDOUW E. (Eds.), *In the nature of cities: Urban political ecology and the politics of urban metabolism* (Vol. 3), London, Taylor & Francis, 2006.
- JAX K., CALESTANI M., CHAN K.M., ESER U., KEUNE H., MURACA B., O'BRIEN L., POTTHAST T., VOGET-KLESCHIN L., WITTMER H., «Caring for nature matters: a relational approach for understanding nature's contributions to human well-being», in *Current opinion in environmental sustainability*, 35, 2018, pp. 22-29.
- KENTER J.O., BRYCE R., CHRISTIE M., COOPER N., HOCKLEY N., IRVINE K. N., FAZEY I., O'BRIEN L., ORCHARD-WEBB J., RAVENSCROFT N., RAYMOND C.M., REED M. S., TETT P., WATSON V., «Shared values and deliberative valuation: Future directions», in *Ecosystem services*, 21, 2016, pp. 358-371.
- KLAIN S.C., OLSTED P., CHAN K.M., SATTERFIELD T., «Relational values resonate broadly and differently than intrinsic or instrumental values, or the New Ecological Paradigm», in *PloS one*, 12(8), e0183962, 2017, pp. 1-21.
- LANGEMEYER J., CAMPS-CALVET M., CALVET-MIR L., BARTHEL S., GÓMEZ-BAGGETHUN E., «Stewardship of urban ecosystem services: understanding the value(s) of urban gardens in Barcelona», in *Landscape and urban planning*, 170, 2018, pp. 79-89.
- LOUGHRAN K., «Urban parks and urban problems: An historical perspective on green space development as a cultural fix», in *Urban Studies*, 57(11), 2020, pp. 2321-2338.
- LYYTIMÄKI J., SIPILÄ M., «Hopping on one leg—The challenge of ecosystem dis-services for urban green management», in *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 8(4), 2009, pp. 309-315.
- MACCANNELL D., «The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America», in *Landscape Journal*, 3(1), 1984, pp. 77-78.
- MAGNAGHI A., *Il principio territoriale*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2020.
- MARTÍN-LÓPEZ B., PALOMO I., GARCÍA-LLORENTE M., INIESTA-ARANDIA I., CASTRO A.J., DEL AMO D.G., GÓMEZ-BAGGETHUN E., MONTES C., «Delineating boundaries of social-ecological systems for landscape planning: A comprehensive spatial approach», in *Land use policy*, 66, 2017, pp. 90-104.
- MOORE S.A., *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*, in *Urban Geography*, 28(2), 2007, pp. 206-208.
- OSTROM E., «A diagnostic approach for going beyond panaceas», in *Proceedings of the national Academy of sciences*, 104(39), 2007, pp. 15181-15187.
- PASCUAL U., BALVANERA P., ... YAGI, N., «Valuing nature's contributions to people: the IPBES approach», in *Current opinion in environmental sustainability*, 26, 2017, pp. 7-16.
- PETROSILLO I., ZACCARELLI N., ZURLINI G., «Multi-scale vulnerability of natural capital in a panarchy of social-ecological landscapes», in *Ecological Complexity*, 7(3), 2010, pp. 359-367.
- PINEDA-PINTO M., HERREROS-CANTIS P., MCPHEARSON T., FRANTZESKAKI N., WANG J., ZHOU W., «Examining ecological justice within the social-ecolog-

- ical-technological system of New York City, USA», in *Landscape and urban planning*, 215, 104228, 2021, pp. 1-18.
- SCHOLTE S.S.K., VAN TEEFFELLEN A.J.A., VERBURG, P.H., «Integrating socio-cultural perspectives into ecosystem service valuation: A review of concepts and methods», in *Ecological Economics*, 114, 2015, pp. 67-78.
- SETTEN G., BROWN K.M., «Landscape and social justice», in HOWARD P., THOMPSON I., WATERTON E. (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to landscape studies*, London, Routledge, 2013, pp. 243-252.
- STENSEKE M., «Connecting 'relational values' and relational landscape approaches», in *Current opinion in environmental sustainability*, 35, 2018, pp. 82-88.
- TAVANO BLESSI G., GROSSI E., PIERETTI G., FERILLI G., LANDI A., «Cities, the Urban Green Environment, and Individual Subjective Well-Being: The Case of Milan, Italy», in *Urban studies research*, 2015(1), 137027, 2015, pp. 1-13.
- TAYLOR L., HOCHULI D.F., «Defining greenspace: Multiple uses across multiple disciplines», in *Landscape and urban planning*, 158, 2017, pp. 25-38.
- WEST S., HAIDER L.J., MASTERSON V., ENQVIST J.P., SVEDIN U., TENGÖ M., «Stewardship, care and relational values», in *Current opinion in environmental sustainability*, 35, 2018, pp. 30-38.
- WOLCH J.R., BYRNE J., NEWELL J.P., «Urban green space, public health, and environmental justice: The challenge of making cities 'just green enough'», in *Landscape and urban planning*, 125, 2014, pp. 234-244.

Case study references

- BENETTI S., SEBASTIANI M.R., «Verde urbano e sviluppo sostenibile in Italia», in AMATO F., AMATO V., DE FALCO S., LA FORESTA D., SIMONETTI L. (Eds.), *Catene/Chains, Memorie geografiche* 21, Firenze, Società di Studi Geografici, 2022, pp. 445-458.
- CM – CASCINA MARTESANA, *Home*, <https://www.cascinamartesana.com/>, 2022 (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CM, *Photos on Facebook*, <https://www.facebook.com/cascinamartesana/photos>, 2022a (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CM, *Photos on Instagram*, <https://www.instagram.com/cascinamartesana/>, 2022b (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CENTRO DI FORESTAZIONE URBANA, *Home*. <http://www.cfu.it/>, 2022 (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CIRCOLO LEGAMBIENTE RETEAMBIENTE MILANO, *Home*, <https://reteambientemilano.wordpress.com/>, 2022 (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM – COMUNE DI MILANO, *Popolazione residente*, <https://www.casamuseoboschidistefano.it/it/web/guest/aree-tematiche/dati-statistici/pubblicazioni/popolazione-residente-a-milano>, 2022a (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM, *La manutenzione programmata delle aree a verde pubblico*, <https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/verde/manutenzione-progettazione/manutenzione-programmata>, 2022b (Last access 30/11/2022).

- CdM, *Parchi Cittadini*, <https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/verde/verde-pubblico/parchi-cittadini>, 2022c (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM, *Parchi Agricoli*, <https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/verde/verde-pubblico/parchi-agricoli>, 2022d (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM, *Visione del Verde*, <https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/verde/milano-verde/visione-del-verde>, 2022e (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM, *Nuovi Alberi 2020 - 2021*, <https://www.casamuseoboschidistefano.it/it/web/guest/aree-tematiche/verde/manutenzione-progettazione/nuovi-alberi-2020-2021>, 2022f (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM, *Geoportale Patrimonio del Verde*, <https://geoportale.comune.milano.it/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3fbcdc3d3e6449918f73a3840d519798>, 2022g (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM, *Itinerari nel verde*, <https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/verde/verde-pubblico/itinerari-nel-verde>, 2022h (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM, *Alberi Monumentali*, <https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/verde/manutenzione-progettazione/alberi-monumentali>, 2022i (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM, *Milano Green Week*, <https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/verde/milano-green-week-2022>, 2022j (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM, *Forum Ambiente*, <https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/ambiente/campagne-e-iniziative/forum-ambiente>, 2022k (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM, *Parco Martiri della Libertà Iracheni Vittime del Terrorismo ex Parco della Martesana*, <https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/verde/verde-pubblico/parchi-cittadini/parco-martiri-della-liberta-iracheni-vittime-del-terrorismo-ex-parco-della-martesana>, 2022l (Last access 30/11/2022).
- CdM, *Allegati sulla popolazione residente al 31 dicembre 2022*, <https://www.comune.milano.it/aree-tematiche/dati-statistici/pubblicazioni/popolazione-residente-a-milano>, 2023a (Last access 31/07/2023).
- CdM, *Mappa dei quartieri* [dataset], <https://dati.comune.milano.it/mappaquartieri>, 2023b (Last access 31/07/2023).
- ETC – ECOLOGIA TURISMO CULTURA, *Home*, <http://www.ecologiaturismocultura.org/>, 2022 (Last access 30/11/2022).
- ETC, *Statuto*, <http://www.ecologiaturismocultura.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/StatutoETC2023.pdf>, 2023 (Last access 31/07/2023).
- FONDAZIONE CARIPLO, *Home*, <https://www.fondazionecariplo.it/it/index.html>, 2022 (Last access 30/11/2022).
- GAMBINO D., MANFREDINI F., LONGO A., *Mappatura degli orti urbani nella Città Metropolitana di Milano* [dataset], <https://zenodo.org/records/3635463>, 2020 (Last access 31/07/2023).
- GIACCHE VERDI, *Home*, <http://www.giaccheverdi.it/>, 2022a (Last access 30/11/2022).
- GIACCHE VERDI (2022b), *Home*, <http://www.giaccheverdi.it/lombardia/>, 2022b (Last access 30/11/2022).
- GNEI – GIARDINO NASCOSTO “ELDA IANNONE”, *Facebook*, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1231610070264302>, 2022 (Last access 30/11/2022).
- GU – GAZZETTA UFFICIALE, *Legge 113/1992 “Obbligo per il comune di residenza di porre a dimora un albero per ogni neonato, a seguito della registrazione ana-*

grafica”, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/1992/02/18/40/sg/pdf>, 1992 (Last access 30/11/2022).

GU, *Legge 10/2013 “Norme per lo sviluppo degli spazi verdi urbani”*, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2013/02/01/13G00031/sg>, 2013 (Last access 30/11/2022).

ILLARIETTI D., *Cascina Martesana, da casolare abbandonato a centro polifunzionale* (in Milano Corriere), https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/14_settembre_30/cascina-martesana-casolare-abbandonato-centro-polifunzionale-0f9068de-4886-11e4-a045-76c292c97dcc.shtml, 2014 (Last access 31/07/2023).

ISTAT – ISTITUTO NAZIONALE DI STATISTICA, *Verde e altri dati ambientali* [dataset], http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV_AMBURB, 2021 (Last access 30/11/2022).

ITALIA NOSTRA, *Home*, <https://www.italianostra.org/>, 2022a (Last access 30/11/2022).

ITALIA NOSTRA, *Home*, <https://www.italianostramilano.org/>, 2022b (Last access 30/11/2022).

MILANO GREEN WEEK, *Network*, https://milanogreenweek.eu/files/2023/Network_MGW23.pdf, 2023 (Last access 21/08/2023).

MILANODAVEDERE, *Cascina Martesana, el bagnin de Gorla*, <https://www.milanodavedere.it/palazzi/cascina-martesana/>, 2020 (Last access 31/07/2023).

MILANOTODAY, *Incendio al giardino nascosto di cascina Martesana*, <https://www.milanotoday.it/cronaca/incendio-giardino-nascosto.html> 2018 (Last access 31/07/2023).

PRIMALAMARTESANA, *Incendio doloso a Cascina Martesana*, <https://primalamar-tesana.it/cronaca/incendio-doloso-a-cascina-martesana-foto/>, 2018 (Last access 31/07/2023).

SISI – SISTEMA STATISTICO INTEGRATO, *Ambiente, aree verdi 2011-2020* [dataset], <http://sisi.comune.milano.it/>, 2021 (Last access 30/11/2022).

SPERONI M., *Estate in cascina: verde, mostre, aperitivo e biliardino sulla Martesana* (in Milano Corriere), https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/14_luglio_31/estate-cascina-verde-mostre-aperitivo-biliardino-martesana-6396900a-1890-11e4-a9c7-0cafd9bb784c.shtml, 2014 (Last access 31/07/2023).

Urban sustainability and relational values of green spaces in Milan

The study investigates the role of urban green spaces as social-ecological systems through the lens of relational values. Adopting a mixed-method case study approach, the research seeks to illuminate the mechanisms through which relational values are generated within green spaces in Milan (Italy). These values are examined in terms of stewardship practices, social responsibility initiatives, and dynamics of social relations, cohesion, inclusion, and justice, focusing in particular on *Cascina Martesana*, a civic initiative that has transformed an abandoned site into a hub of inclusion, culture, and ecological awareness. Moving beyond purely functional or aesthetic perspectives, the study underscores how relational values contribute to urban sustainability, while also highlighting some critical issues within the context of Milan.

Sostenibilità urbana e valori relazionali degli spazi verdi a Milano

Il presente studio indaga il ruolo degli spazi verdi urbani come sistemi socio-ecologici attraverso la lente dei valori relazionali. Adottando un approccio con metodi misti ad un caso di studio, la ricerca cerca di mettere in luce i meccanismi attraverso cui i valori relazionali sono generati negli spazi verdi di Milano (Italia). Tali valori sono esaminati in termini di pratiche di gestione, iniziative di responsabilità sociale e dinamiche di relazioni sociali, coesione, inclusione e giustizia, con un particolare focus sulla *Cascina Martesana*, un'iniziativa civica che ha trasformato un sito abbandonato in un centro di inclusione, cultura e consapevolezza ecologica. Andando oltre le prospettive puramente funzionali o estetiche, lo studio sottolinea come i valori relazionali contribuiscano alla sostenibilità urbana, evidenziando anche alcune criticità nel contesto di Milano.

Durabilité urbaine et valeurs relationnelles des espaces verts à Milan

Cette étude examine le rôle des espaces verts urbains en tant que systèmes socio-écologiques sous l'angle des valeurs relationnelles. En adoptant une approche de méthodes mixtes pour une étude de cas, la recherche cherche à mettre en lumière les mécanismes par lesquels les valeurs relationnelles sont générées dans les espaces verts de Milan (Italie). Ces valeurs sont examinées en termes de pratiques de gestion, d'initiatives de responsabilité sociale et de dynamiques de relations sociales, de cohésion, d'inclusion et de justice, avec un accent particulier sur *Cascina Martesana*, une initiative civique qui a transformé un site abandonné en un centre d'inclusion, de culture et de conscience écologique. Allant au-delà des perspectives purement fonctionnelles ou esthétiques, l'étude souligne la façon dont les valeurs relationnelles contribuent à la durabilité urbaine, tout en mettant en évidence certaines questions critiques dans le contexte milanais.

