

HOW URBAN AGRICULTURE IS SHAPING THE IDEA OF THE CITY

Italian exploration of tactical architecture

Urban agriculture is a global phenomenon. Ethnographic studies try to understand the anthropological aspect of this practice within small communities, ethnicities or gender. Quantitative studies measure the efficiency of urban agriculture in terms of ecological footprint or sustainable urban possibility. However, as designers, we need to understand what urban agriculture signifies for the idea of the city and how architecture contributes to this signification. The aim of this research is to investigate the role of urban agriculture projects in the production of space for the post-industrial city of the 21st century, focusing on the cultural boundary of the Italian architectural tradition.

I will present urban agriculture through the lens of Italian designers creating tactical projects for the city of tomorrow, which are likely to be challenged by ecological and social problems. First, I will briefly contextualize my research introducing the history of urban agriculture in Italy describing the Roman domestic garden and the Italian enclosed garden. Second, I will analyze the milestone project “Agronica” (1995) by leading Italian architect and scholar Andrea Branzi through literature and excerpts of an interview with Branzi I conducted in May 2017. Third, I will present three contemporary Italian design firms: Studiomobile, Conceptual Devices and GravalosDiMonte Arquitectos and their different approaches to the question of what is a city, their architectural designs and the cultural role of agriculture in this exploration.

Finally, I will describe the future development of this research that involves the analysis of drawings and sketches of these case studies to explore how the “segno” (the sign) can reveal the architectural vision of the city.

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