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Exploring urban gardening experiences in Europe and Asia: Rome vs. Tokyo

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Abstract

Nowadays the trend of urban gardening can be observed in many parts of the world. This phenomenon responds to the demand of rurality and the requalification of abandoned urban green areas expressed by city residents. Recently, many researchers have investigated about different types of urban gardening but mostly referring to English speaking developed countries (Guitart et al. 2012).

To grasp the worldwide trend of urban gardening, this paper aims to compare urban gardening experiences in Rome and Tokyo. In Italy, the analysis is conducted through a direct investigation while the Japanese experience has been analysed through secondary data. The study of these two quite different metropolitan contexts helps to understand: (i) motivations on why urban residents need to grow food by themselves; (ii) types of ecosystem services (i.e. safeguard of agricultural land, food culture, production system, leisure model, environmental education, social cohesion) provided to stakeholders (Langemeyer et al. 2018; Speak et al. 2015). By comparing the two areas in Europe and Asia, we found urban residents' interests in self-harvesting in common. Yet, there were differences in the form of urban gardening. Urban gardening in Rome is characterized by voluntary community activities, while Tokyo has commercial services to provide opportunities to not only those who have eagerness to grow vegetables, but also those who have less time and skills of growing plants.

Keywords: Urban gardening, European and Japanese urban agriculture experiences, Community food production, Urban green resilience

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