



## In-Between Community Gardens

### Jane's Walk Milano

11 May 2019

**Walk Team:**  
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Jane Jacobs was a firm believer that cities are capable of providing something for everybody only when they are created by and for everybody. In the increasing commodification of 21st century cities today, Jacobs' proclamation couldn't ring more true. In Milan today, community gardens stand in sharp opposition to hegemonic urban planning ideas and rise from the effort, the dreams and the collective powers of ordinary citizens, adamant on making a place for people and by the people in the city.

With the aim of exploring the extent of the word 'community' and what it means today, the Jane's Walk titled In-between Community Gardens was conceived. In essence, the short 2-km route was designed to connect two of the

oldest community gardens in Milan, namely Isola Pepe Verde and Lea Garofalo and learn about each with its rich history of urban activism. In between the two, the route passes through the new and much-talked-about Biblioteca Degli Alberi urban park, designed at the heart of the controversial Porta Nuova business district and representing a very different story of a shared open space.

It could be argued that both types of communal spaces are not in competition but are rather a representation of the diversity of cities and cater to a diverse set of needs. However, the walk and talks with members from both community gardens show that the battle to secure community-built spaces is an ongoing one and the history of the fight extends far longer than the presence of the gardens themselves.



**Isola Pepe Verde**  
community garden

1

2



**Biblioteca degli Alberi**  
public park

3



**Lea Garofalo**  
community garden



Unlike the Biblioteca Degli Alberi park, most participants attending this Jane's Walk -who represented a diverse mix of professionals, students and ordinary citizens of different backgrounds, ages and nationalities- hadn't known about the two community gardens (including older participants who had lived in Milan their whole lives). Even less was known of the immaculate stories behind the foundation of these gardens.

One of the main goals intended by the walk leaders was to make sure that the process was interactive and that participants were engaged in an active experience of observing and perceiving different facets of the city. To do so, we created a photo challenge through which each participant was given a concept, a phrase

or a perspective to adopt during the walk and to try to capture it with their phone cameras. By focusing on particular perspectives and intentionally looking for certain connections, the walkers were encouraged to see everyday urban scenes differently and to train the eye to capture elements that would normally be missed by the everyday user in the city.

In sum, we reflected on the value and role of community gardens, the viability of 'community' in cities today, and the strides that city councils must take in order to ensure that the small but powerful voice that ordinary citizens have is not muffled by the large-scale projections of the overwhelming public and private stakeholders that continue to hold the keys to transforming the city. (2994 characters with spaces)



## **Walk Team:**

Tuğçe is an architect, very curious about urban common grounds.  
Lamia is an urbanist with a special interest in gender equity in cities.  
They have in common a curious interest in discovering hidden public areas of the city and a fondness of Jane Jacobs' work.



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