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THE ROLE OF DESIGN IN ENHANCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

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ABSTRACT

An immeasurable acceleration characterises our contemporary society: the industrial global food systems, for example, relate progress with accelerating their productions and controlling global trade. Consequently, the progress we evidence, it is also a progress related to a myriad of social, environmental and economic challenges.

Having said that, this research is based on two main discourses that are interrelated. On the one hand, community gardens, where people are organising themselves generating self-sufficient networks, collaborations, and organisations around food. On the other hand, design, with the rising of new approaches such as Design for Social Innovation aiming to contribute at social change. These two discourses encompass two different situations that are now more interrelated than ever: on one side non-designers aiming to respond to global food systems challenges by designing and organising community gardens, and on the other side, designers aiming to apply their skills and methods in order to support and enhance the development of these bottom-up approaches.

Taking into account the two discourses defined, the following question arises: what is the role of design in enhancing the development of urban community gardens? Through literature review, case studies and experts interview, the document examines the conditions of the community gardens related to the transformation of the space; collaborative practices; food production and consumption; and governance; as well as the principles of design in a context of social innovation concerning the enabling of open-ended co-design processes rooted in specific contexts. The findings allow a discussion about the different roles designers are playing in the community gardens as gardeners immersed in this context, triggers of creative processes, enablers of new conversations and storytellers of hidden realities. The report finishes with the recipe for enhancing the development of community gardens through design.