

# Conviviality in the Anthropocene: exploring interstices in urban environments

Dr Paolo Gruppuso, PhD  
Research Fellow, University of Gastronomic Sciences  
Honorary Research Fellow, University of Aberdeen

## RATIONALE

The Earth is becoming an urban planet. This increasing process defines the Anthropocene and it requires to rethink relations between urban and rural, natural and built, in order to understand how to turn our fragile cities into places where experimenting viable ways for life to prosper. Within this context, interstitial spaces between and at the edges of urban fabric play a key role by placing cities at the heart of the global water cycle, of the intercontinental routes of migratory animals, and by mitigating the effects of climate change. Beyond sustainability, with its burden of Western economic rationality, a convivial approach is needed that emphasises relatedness pushing us rethinking cities, through and within their interstices, in relation with the rest. This perspective asks for a shift in thinking food. Whereas sustainability envisions food as a resource to be managed through a technocratic and quantitative approach that addresses the question of ‘feeding cities’, conviviality thinks of food as ‘nourishment’, in terms of the quality of the relations we trace in our lives while responding to a more-than-human world and its inhabitants.

## BEYOND SUSTAINABILITY

Conviviality is not based on the imposition of techno-scientific approaches, but on the bottom-up embodied activities of urban communities.



- The convivial city emerges as an ongoing experiment of cohabitation between myriad organisms, human and other-than-human.
- A convivial approach acknowledges that the city is more-than-human and it emphasizes the multispecies multitude that inhabits and crosses the urban fabric.
- A convivial approach envisions the city as a common that unfolds through **abandoned areas, informal gardens, and interstitial spaces**.
- Conviviality emphasizes relatedness and interdependency between urban and rural environments, and it pushes us to rethink and to overcome these categories.

The convivial city pre-exists and it is not dependent upon top-down urban planning.



## GIFTS IN EXCHANGE FOR CARE



Interstitial areas, vernal pools, and informal gardens foster conviviality in the city.

- They are not ‘green areas’ built from a blueprint, they grow along with the life and the embodied activities of those who inhabit or cross them.
- They do not provide ‘services’ for humans; they offer gifts such as **climate regulation, food, and opportunities for recreation and for multispecies encounters**, in exchange for **care**.
- They emerge between and at the edges of the urban fabric as anarchic places of freedom from neoliberal time and spaces.
- They remind us that life is unruly and that it always finds its way to thrive by generating unexpected phenomena.



Interstitial areas exceed the naturalist and colonial idioms of urban regeneration, urban agriculture, and nature conservation.

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