

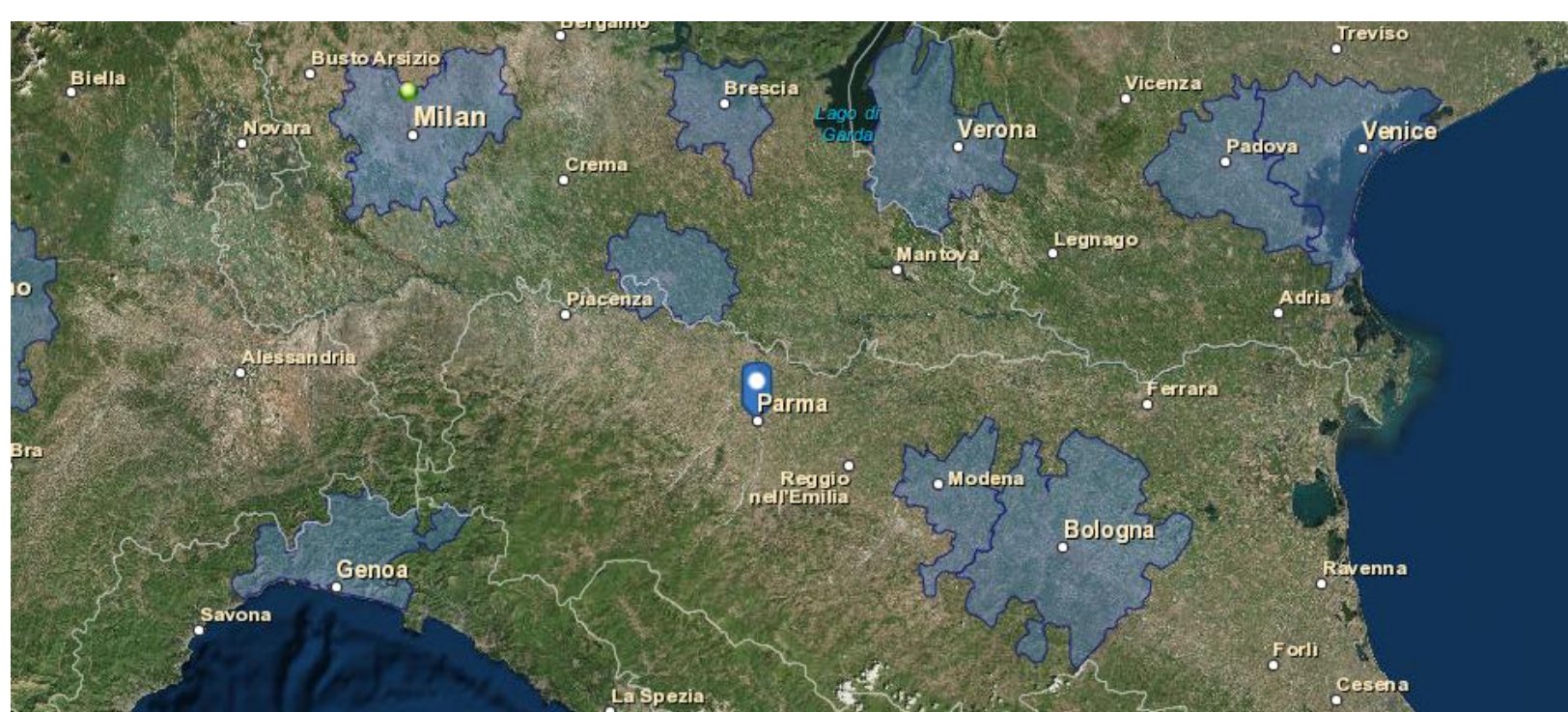
# URBAN AGRICULTURE IN THE FOOD VALLEY:

## PARMA CASE STUDY

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### Territorial context



Emilia Romagna Region

Population: 4,449,000 inhabitants

(Regione Emilia Romagna)

Surface: 22,451 km<sup>2</sup>

Utilized agricultural area

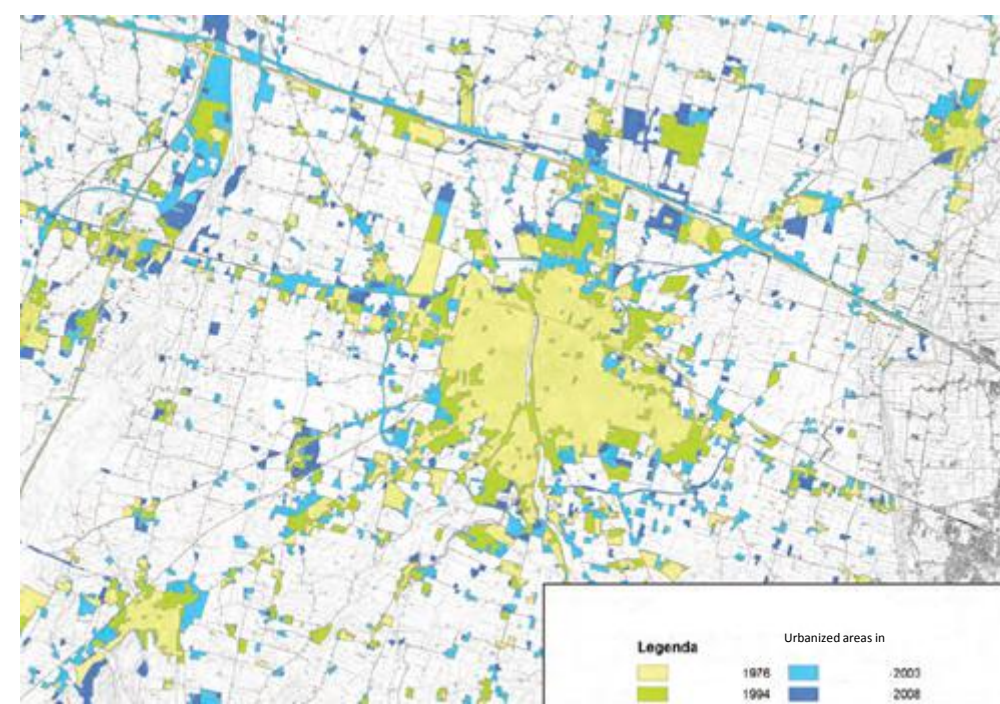
Parma Municipality

Population: 188.792 (2015)

inhabitants (Comune di Parma, 2015)

Surface: 260 km<sup>2</sup>

### Spatial Planning/history phenomenon



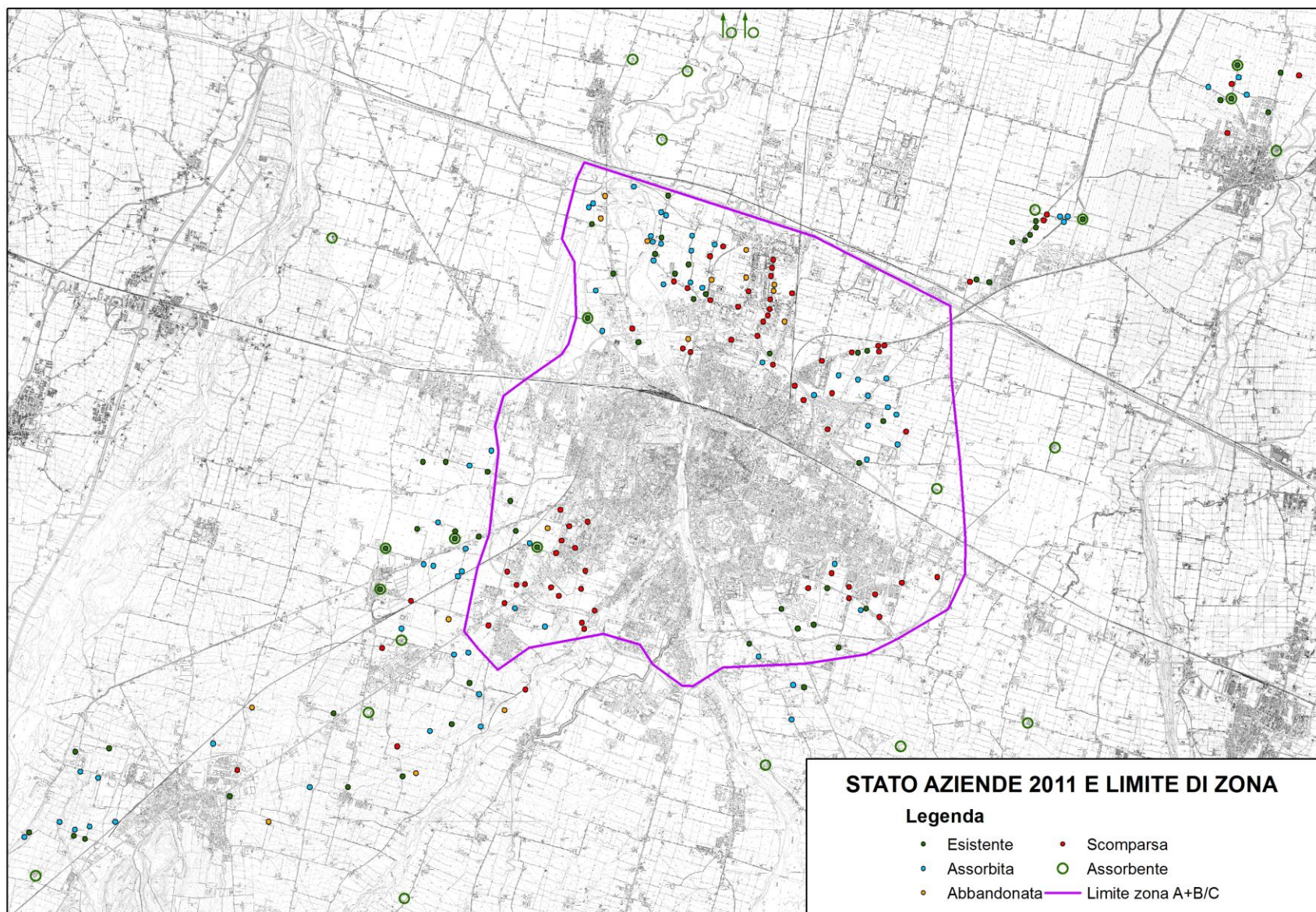
Its core has grown along the main roads that connected it with neighboring municipalities. In this development, tangential system became a limit to further urban development and surrounding rural areas conversion. Within this boundary, Parma grew, first in disorder, and then gradually going to occupy those empty spaces that previous interventions of urbanization had left free. Agricultural areas among urban settlement were not "protected" from further unchallenged and unchecked urban development. Only recently, those same empty spaces were filled by initiatives to promote urban and social agriculture.

Parma is a fringed city

Levels	Regional	Provincial	Municipalities
1960	Promotion of local development Support rural agricultural		Great urban expansion along traffic line inside the tangential system
1970	Implementation of an original programming system		Urbanization continue but local governments allow this process
1980	First interest for instruments of more sustainable territorial governance	Finding more efficient ways to communicate with the municipalities of the province on environmental issues	
1990			Doubling growth rates of urbanization since 1970
2000	Approval of Law 20/2000 which was the first (and so far only) defines the extent of peri-urban areas and gives importance to the territorial zoning		From 2003 onwards, the goal of urbanization projects concerned the development of new settlements scattered the partial occupation of vacant spaces. From 2008 onwards, the isolated agglomerations fell by much. However, this last urbanization rather than "filling the holes" creates further. It is also interesting to note that, if in a first phase, with increased urbanization corresponded to a population increase, since 1976 this report has noted because of demographic decline recorded mainly at the turn of the 70s and 80s.
2010	PTF (Regional Territorial Plan) assigned great attention to the territory as a container of economic development; Several laws passed for soil conservation and promotion of agriculture	Research activity about Dynamics of consumption of agricultural land in the plains	Strategic Plan «Parma»: una green city equilibrata e compatta (never implemented)
after	PTF revision: participation at several European projects about community urban gardens and soil protection	Organization of several events and congresses to sensitize local municipalities and people	Several project to promote urban agriculture and social agriculture (in the school and in recreative centers over all)

Due to the recent economic crisis and the resulting slowdown in housing and construction market, the lack of public financial resources have slowed this urbanization.

### Urban Agriculture Types



In the map, the urban farms in Parma (2011). Source : Zappavigna P. (a cura di), L'agricoltura nelle aree periurbane - Dinamiche aziendali e processi di urbanizzazione nel territorio parmense

#### Farming level

##### Local food farms:

**Quantitative:** According to a survey from the University of Parma, of the 208 urban farms surveyed in 1986, 68 have disappeared, 65 were absorbed by other, 16 abandoned and then left uncultivated, 59 are still active.  
**d farms, 131 DOC or IGP production , 2 farmers' markets, 16 GAS**  
**Qualitative:** expanding (GAS), stable (DOC or IGP production), declining traditional farms

##### Leisure farms:

**Quantitative:** 8 agrotourisms  
**Qualitative:** expanding

##### Agri-environmental farms:

**Quantitative:** many urban farms that own equipment producing renewable energy thanks to regional funding  
**Qualitative:** expanding

##### Social farms:

**Quantitative:** 9 educational farms, but only in the province. In the Parma municipalities there are not any structured and equipped social farms.  
**Qualitative:** expanding

#### Gardening level

##### Allotment gardens

**Quantitative:** 2,7% municipal surface (one of the highest values in Italy)  
**Qualitative:** expanding

In the municipality of Parma, the number of farms or animal husbandry in recent years has decreased greatly. In about 30 years, the number is in fact halved.

Their size has decreased only by 12.4%. This means that companies cease surrendered land for commercial or industrial or other agricultural enterprises survivors then have been a significant increase in size. There are indeed many large companies and many small and medium enterprises. Large companies, in fact, are not only in the more remote and urban fringe, but also close to some urban settlements in the suburbs. Many of these farms are also multifunctional. However, their number remains very low. They are found mostly in the central areas of the urban area. Almost absent in other areas. The same can be done for the bio enterprises: they are very rare. The farmers' market are few; they do not have assigned spaces in which to settle permanently; rather, they assign them the temporary spaces where usually take place other forms of markets.

The preference for certified products is in slight decline to evidence that the sector pays the uncertainty in the protection policies and protection, especially abroad, and the lower profitability due to lower sales of branded products protected by consumers.

In addition to agriculture conducted with traditional methods, in Parma, urban gardens have great relevance. Alongside the agricultural professionals who cultivate large areas with intensive techniques and for commercial purposes, there are civic farmers or families, social cooperatives or schools that cultivate small plots of municipal lands or many different purposes. Some of them consider it as a hobby, an activity more useful to get cheaper and healthier food and others to combat loneliness or recover from severe psychomotor deficit. Their commitment is reflected in the environmental and ecological recovery of derelict land, but at the same time, it strengthens social relations among people by different extraction, training or culture.

All this takes place also in the municipality of Parma where human pressure is very strong and the use / abuse of soil are unsustainable, but also where community spirit and belonging to the community, and a sense of solidarity are very strong and rooted.

#### Fruttorti

**Types:** Urban food gardening  
**Year:** 2012

**ha :** 141 trees and 55 varieties

**Promoter:** Volunteers

**Actors:** Students, city-dwellers

**Functions:** cultural, social,

Educational

**Description:** It is a spontaneous and informal citizens group initiatives.

The purpose is to make useful and more accessible green spaces to all local residents, otherwise destined to decay. In these spaces, people can produce healthy food, relax, exchange experiences and share the fruits of the earth. The group is active in various projects and in various places in the city. For example, it promotes the creation and maintenance of Picasso Food Forest, a public open area of 4500 sq.m run by citizens, in which they were planted hundreds of trees and fruit bushes, aromatic and medicinal plants, on the basis of food forest model (forest edible) on a small scale. In addition, with Laboratorio Famiglia al Portico and Compagnia Instabile association, it creates a shared garden and an edible garden in permaculture. With the municipality of Parma and the Movimento per la Decrescita Felice, it realizes gardens in primary schools of Parma. Always with this movement, it is building an experimental garden with natural cultivation techniques in an area of about 100 sq. m. previously used for industrial agriculture.



#### Un orto di classe: curare la terra, nutrire la vita

**Type:** Educational gardens

**Year:** 2015

**Number of school involved:** 1.000 students in Parma and province

**Promoter:** Legambiente, schools

**Actors:** Students, teachers

**Functions:** cultural, social, educational

**Description:** Through this project, the students reflected on nutrition and sustainable agriculture. Many of them have made of the documents (drawings, models, posters, for example) and were rewarded; others were directly involved in the design and cultivation of vegetable gardens



#### La corte: dalla terra alla tavola

**Type:** Local food farm

**Year:** 2015

**Promoter:** Comune di Parma

**Actors:** Farmers, citizens

**Functions:** economic, supply-demand match



#### Orti sociali

**Type:** Allotment garden

**Year:** 1980

**mq:** 96.200

**Promoter:** Comune di Parma

**Actors:** Citizens (mostly retired people)

**Functions:** social

**Description:** Since 1980, the municipality of Parma has promoted projects of social horticulture by making available large wastelands. Recently, it has awarded 5 pc workstation in some allotments: in this way, the elderly could browse through it and cultivate. Parma responded well to this initiative. The calls for granting social gardens never went deserts.



#### GASParma.org

**Types:** Local food farm

**Year:** 2013

**Number:** 14

**Promoter:** GAS

**Actors:** Citizens, small urban farmers

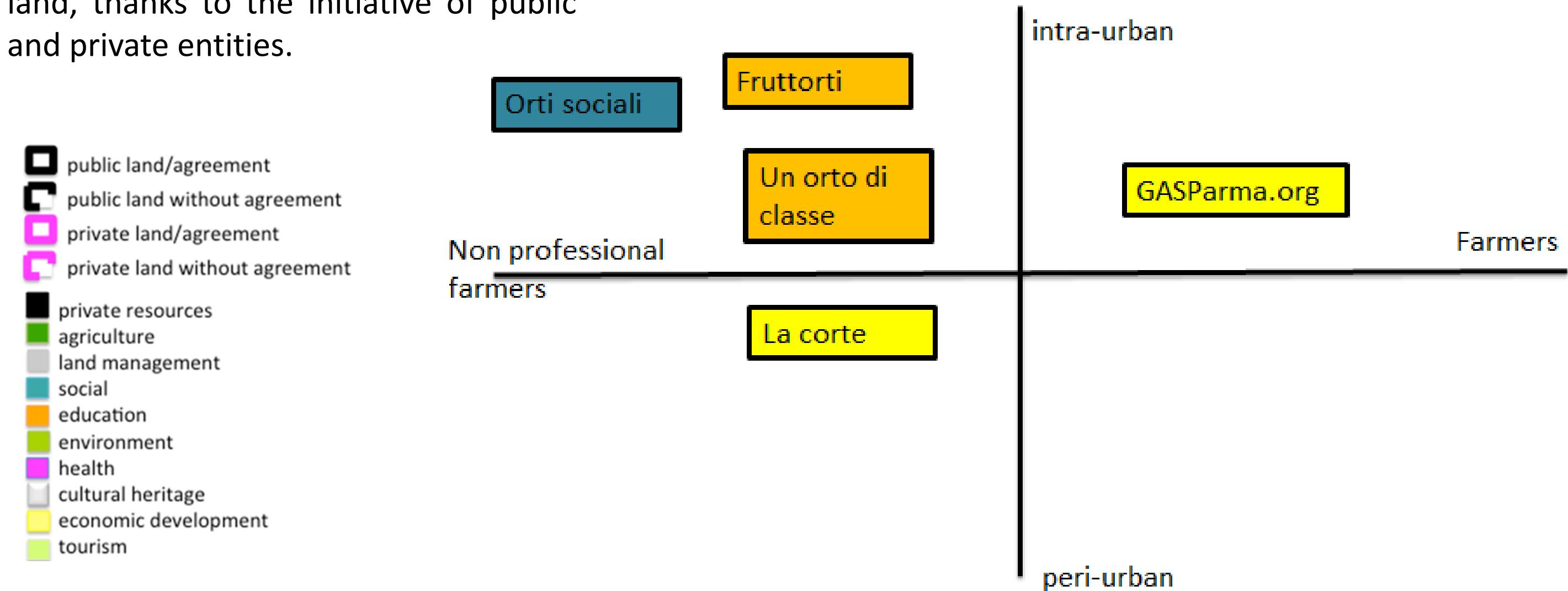
**Functions:** social, economics

**Description:** GAS networked and created a website where you can submit orders



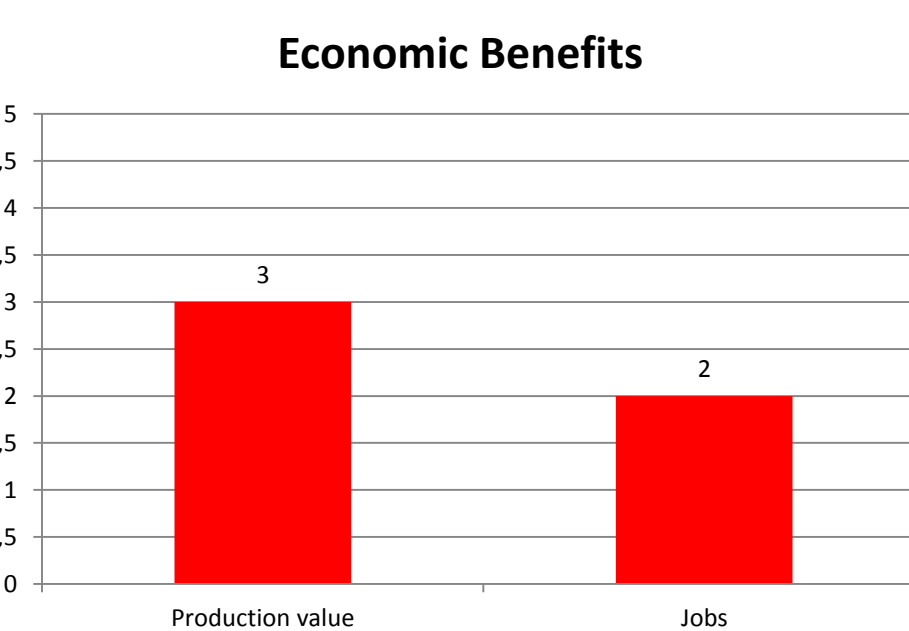
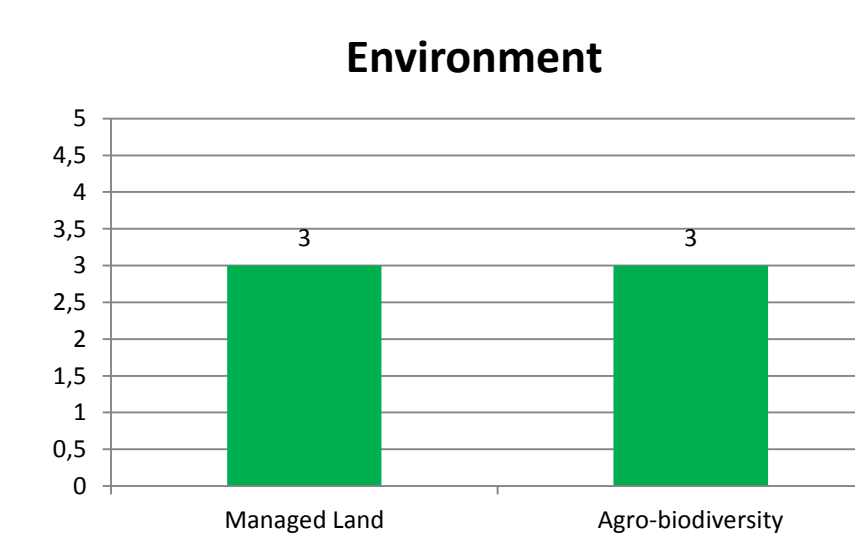
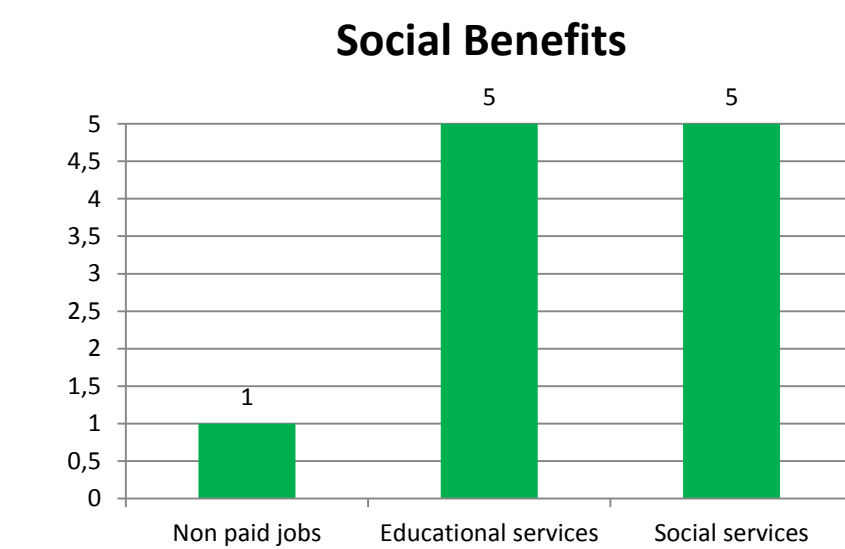
### Actors and Public Policies

Most of the projects are built on public land, thanks to the initiative of public and private entities.

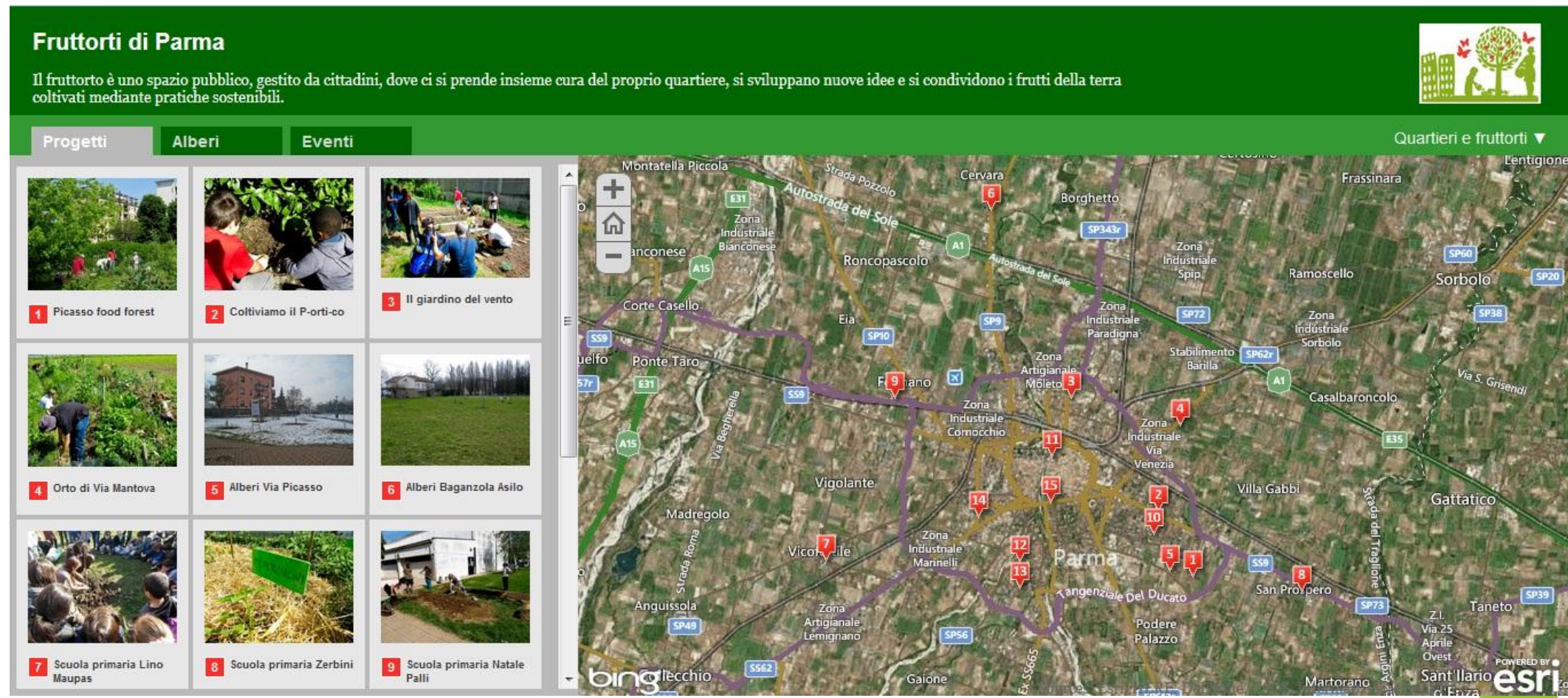


### Social Benefits

Considering all the analyzed cases, on average their impacts are:



### Spatial effects



### Urban Agriculture Metabolism

#### Nutrients sovereignty:

Diverting urban waste from the city: **YES**, (but with the exception of La Corte e il grano di Parma).

- The allotment associations do not use any products to fertilise the soil
- All citizens try to exchange any natural agricultural practices
- Only, the experience "Un orto di classe" is characterized by initiative of horticulture education

Establishing closed loops within the gardens: **Yes**, (but with the exception of La Corte e il grano di Parma).

- Rain water collection system, to be used for irrigation.
- Composting their own green waste
- Some plot holders make their own nematodes to control slugs infestation

#### Nutrition sovereignty:

**5/6**

- All allotment holders produce food at least in any season (with the exception of "Un orto di classe" (only in autumn/ spring))

I would like to thank Angelo Balboni for the kind revision