

On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue and repair our "world" so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all as which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.¹

“What gives me the right to cut away a piece of mountain to make a sculpture out of it?”

This thought suddenly took over all other thoughts one morning working in the marble workshop of the Accademia Albertina in Turin in my second year of my master’s degree in sculpture.

At that time, we were working on relatively small pieces of marble that we could find outside the classroom, stacked there over the years. They were, most likely working scraps salvaged by the different teachers from different quarries or coming directly from their ateliers. They came in all shapes, sizes and colours: pure white marble; red marble streaked with black veined throughout with white quartz; greenish and grey marble, with slight shades of pink. There was also a beautiful piece of Nero di Ormea.

It was my final year in the three-year program, where I had spent all of my time working with the stone. First with purely manual tools - hammer and chisel - and then moving on to electric and pneumatic tools, which made the process a lot more fun and far less tiring.

I’ve always enjoyed working with stone, although perhaps I should say working “the stone,” but this is something I’ve never been able to bring myself to say.

What I especially like is the moment when a point of contact is found with the material, the moment when we start talking to each other and the real conversation begins.

Obviously, I have my own ideas about what to do with the stone, but eventually I can’t help but give in to the dialogue of the relationship.

I could never understand my companions who spoke to me about the sense of domination of matter, of power over a material so hard that, when knowing how to touch it, suddenly becomes soft and ductile. I was always deeply convinced that I could never have done anything with that stone if it hadn’t let me. This thought crosses my mind every time I approach working with a material. All materials must be understood, observed, discussed, learned from.

But particularly stone.

If you break it, it’s over. When you crack a stone, you damage the work – it’s true. But to me, it always seemed, above all else, to break the relationship. I hadn’t listened to it enough, I didn’t know how to work with it, how to touch it. I had lost its trust and now it was all over.

That morning, I had found in the pile a beautiful stone, a white stone - a bit grayish - covered with moss on one side.

It was more of a “sasso” than a “pietra”*. Almost like a big, uneven egg. Or a giant swollen white mussel. The instructor, Fabio Viale - a Piedmontese sculptor - told me that it was most likely white marble, perhaps not completely pure but still white, maybe even

*The technical translations of “pietra” and “sasso” are both stone. But in Italian there is a difference between the two words: “Pietra”, in addition to indicating the stone material in general, is also used to describe the material used by sculptors; while “sasso,” in common usage, means a fragment of stone, almost a pebble, usually of little importance.

Carrara. He also told me that to truly find out, it had to be opened; at the very least, to break off a piece, polish it and take a closer look at the grain.

At that moment, it seemed absolutely impossible to touch it. It was too beautiful to be opened, polished. Instead, I photographed it. Then I left it on the pedestal. Sometimes I’d come back and look at it. I couldn’t understand why, but a kind of respect prevented me from working on it. The only thing I wanted was to show everyone how beautiful it was, to tell everyone that maybe it was white Carrara marble, the same one used to make important sculptures. I wanted everyone to see that white marble was beautiful even if no one sculpted a half-naked woman from it, even if no one modelled it into soft abstract shapes that meant who knows what, even if no one polished it. It had its own value, even without someone imposing one on it with the work of their hands. It had a meaning and a story, even without someone carving one into it and telling one upon on its surface. And it was there, in front of that stone, that those words first lined up into the thought that would never leave me again.

“What gives me the right to cut away a piece of mountain to make a sculpture out of it? Is it really necessary?”

Then one day, upon entering the classroom, I found a classmate of mine who was drawing spirals upon the surface the stone because he didn’t know what to do, and that seemed the best way to break his tedium.

He didn’t think that stone belonged to anyone. Res Nullius. But that’s how it works. Everything from Nature that is found by human beings outside of a private area can be taken and become the property of the person who finds it, who can then do what he wants with it. Like drawing spirals on it with a little electric Dremel. With no “why?”. And then abandon it again.

At that precise moment I realised how insignificant and vain that gesture was.

All of a sudden a memory came to me. It was a day in Carrara at the marble atelier where I had gone to work on a granite piece for my bachelor’s thesis. Before leaving to return to Turin, Mauro, the oldest person working in that atelier, said to me:

“Take all the pieces you want, you can go to the waste container and take away all the scraps that interest you. We don’t need them anymore anyway, they are just rejects. We’ll just throw them away.”

Suddenly I understood why at that moment, To hear the word “reject”, to feel that they would throw them away, instantly gave me the chills

What gives me the right to cut away a piece of mountain and then throw it away?

The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, which precede flowers and fruit,—not a fossil earth, but a living earth; compared with whose great central life all animal and vegetable life is merely parasitic. Its throes will heave our exuviae from their graves. You may melt your metals and cast them into the most beautiful moulds you can; they will never excite me like the forms which this molten earth flows out into. And not only it, but the institutions upon it, are plastic like clay in the hands of the potter.

Henry David Thoreau

Throw away a piece of mountain. Consider a piece of mountain a waste.

These thoughts are inscribed on an industrialised vision of the world, reflecting the idea that we – human beings – can use what we want at will, without worrying too much about the consequences of our actions and without asking anyone’s permission.

These thoughts reflect most perfectly with the idea that everything found in nature in a state of neglect or without belonging to anyone

(including animals) can legitimately become the property of those who find it (Res Nullius); that any piece of land over which no state explicitly exercises sovereignty can be legitimately occupied and even remodeled (Terra Nullius).

Or even that by working, by giving value through work, we can possess what surrounds us, without worrying too much about how and when. Without worrying too much about who we are taking it from, or at what expense.

“Res Nullius: literally ‘nobody’s thing.’ A Latin term derived from private Roman law, still used in legal language to indicate something that is not part of a patrimony, that is, no one has a right of ownership: res nullius can be acquired through occupation. Res Nullius exclusively means a movable property(...) real estate not belonging to anyone automatically becomes the property of the State². “The term Res Nullius also includes Res Derelictae (Abandoned property with the precise intention of relinquishing ownership) and animals that can be fished (Fish fauna)³.

“Terra Nullius: literally ‘land belonging to nobody’. (...) Defined as a territory that has never been subject to the sovereignty of any state, or on which any previous sovereign state has expressly or implicitly renounced sovereignty. The sovereignty of such territory may be obtained by occupation, although in some cases this may be in violation of international laws or treaties⁴.

According to John Locke, human beings are property acquiring animals, Our claims to property derives from our work (...) labour confers value, and it is the source of all value. The state of nature is a condition of communal ownership, the state of nature is given to all men in common and just parts of it become private property only when we add our labour on it. “Every man has property in his person, this nobody has any right to but himself, the labour of his body and the work of his hands, we may say our property is”⁵

Following the line of thought in this conception of human-nature relations, it seems perfectly legitimate to consider the mountain as something to cut, to shape (to give it a value that it would not otherwise have) and consider what can no longer be worked as a reject, and then throw it away. It seems perfectly legitimate, after having cut a mountain into slices, to crumble it into powder to be used to make toothpaste, paints, paper, medicines...

"In the last 2 decades (in the traditional decorative stone trade) a transversal commodity-related category has established itself: marble detritus. This is the processing waste that feeds the 'ravaneti', an example of which can be seen in the mining dumps of the Apuan Alps. The detritus is pulverized into calcium carbonate and used for the production of plastics; rubber; tyres; insulators; paints; glues; paper, chemical, pharmaceutical, cosmetic and building products. (...) The quantity of material, which is mainly debris comes from the quarries, is enormous. This is permitted because of the particular properties that the ornamental stone must have, namely that 75% of the extracted material is waste (Elaborato 2 del P.R.A.E.R.). The adoption of 'waste' as a primary product, and the consequent voraciousness of its extraction, is cast into a territorial context that does not see the quarries as an 'accessory' but as the characterised elements; (...) the Apuan Alps suffer from a quarry placed every 3 square kilometres and in the municipality of Carrara there is a surprising density of 7 quarries per square kilometre.

Using these numbers, the 'waste', would amount to no less than 100 million tons. These are colossal volumes and hold colossal interest from. Thus, the mining activity unquantifiably affects the geological, landscape, archaeological and naturalistic heritage of the area. The chain of the Apuan Alps, for its morphological characteristics, for its location in relation to the coast and other reliefs, represents a valuable unicum, characterised, amongst other things, by an exceptional biodiversity.⁶

To make it useful, i.e. productive, without much care of quantity, of time, of who lives life on the mountain, of what lives on that mountain or what will happen next. How perfectly legitimate it is to make a hole in the belly of the mountain, from one side to the other, to make a train pass, without wondering too much if, perhaps, we can't make it pass through somewhere else; if, perhaps, there really is no need.*

Where I come from, and where I have lived almost my entire life, the soil has always been considered a resource to use and often, but not always, to exploit. The whole Earth, as Stefano Mancuso explains, "is considered by human beings as a simple resource; to eat, to consume"⁷. To different degrees, of course, but always as something to benefit from. What is sometimes forgotten, or perhaps not known, is that soil is a non-renewable resource, that it takes hundreds of thousands of years for it to recover.

And we don't only forget that when we slice up a mountain, we also forget that when we pour litres of asphalt and concrete on our land.

But to whom does this land belong to?

Because the problem is that not only do we forget that the earth is a

non-renewable resource, but we also forget that we are not the only ones who are living on it, living with it.

To occupy it. Perhaps herein lies the point: occupare il suolo per occuparsi del suolo, occupare il suolo per prendersene cura** - occupy the soil to take care of the soil, occupy the soil to look after it

* Refer to the construction project of the Turin-Lyon railway line, known as the TAV - High Speed Train. Its potential impact, not only on the environment, but also economically and socially, led the citizens of the city of Turin, especially, those of Val di Susa, to set up a NO-TAV committee in opposition to the project.
See : <http://www.notavtorino.org/index.htm>

A non-renewable resource is a resource that takes longer to regenerate than a human life. They are resources that follow very long cycles of growth of a geological nature. From the point of view of human activities and with a secular vision of time, these resources must be considered fixed quantities. Every withdrawal or use implies an irreversible reduction in the stock of the natural resource.⁸

**The Italian verb "occupare" is translated into English as "occupy". In Italian, however, the same verb can be conjugated in the pronominal form, thus becoming "occuparsi (di)" and takes the meaning of "taking care of".

Occupying a piece of land means physically putting our bodies on it. It's a physical matter. Because "every single one of us has a body, we take up space, and so, we need sum room."¹⁰

Because, "existing is positioning oneself on a soil"¹¹

But when we occupy a piece of land, we inevitably find ourselves having to share it, having to understand and recognise who and what is next to us, those who share it with us. By moving our bodies on a piece of land we insert it into a pre-existing system.

Because "the space that we occupy is neither virgin, nor reserved for human beings alone"...¹² Although this system is not always "visible" (perceived, understood and lived), or at least we do not always want to see it, to consider it. There are those who tend to think that what surrounds us must be stripped of its state of being and brought within our own value system; that it must be tamed as useless in and of itself. There are those who also happen to think that one of our moral tasks is to give it a value, like a gift. We give it an aesthetic value, an affective value, a value of sacredness, an economic value. Typically through work.

"The subversive intent of Occupy is to convert public space into commons. A public space is both a space owned and kept open or closed by the state, it is a public thing. A common space, on the other hand, is kept open by those who occupy it, for example, by those who live and share it with others on the basis of their own rules. And this is why the first interventions in the occupation concerned domestic work: where do we sleep, eat, urinate, defecate, where do we wash? This is why the government and Wall Street hate occupations and have unleashed so much violence against them: because they prefigure another way of organizing society and create community relations. Parliaments are temples of absence while the Tahrir squares of the world are places where a general will has been embodied in action".⁹

The world was created in order to be cultivated and improved, it has being given for the benefit of the men, and for their greatest convenience. It cannot remain in common and uncultivated. God gave the world to the industrial and the rational.¹³

But what happens when the work of the hand is aimed at continuing, repairing and maintaining a portion of that world that we consider ours so that it can continue to live in the best possible way, and not us?

What happens when, in order to keep the world going so that it can live in the best possible way, we have to repair a damage that we have created by keeping it in a state of abandonment? Where does the word "ours" fit in here?

The Earth, conceived of and lived on as a resource, enters the capitalist system of exploitation through a process of domestication through which forms, times, lives and movements are disciplined in an attempt to maintain order.

In contrast to this movement of domestication, I would like to place the state of occupation in which the human being, occupying a piece of land, is physically involved in a process of acknowledging what surrounds him by entering into a system of reciprocity, first and foremost with the land. Because thinking about occupying the soil is *thinking-with* the ground, which goes in the direction of *doing-with* instead of *doing-to* or *making-from* and it is indispensable to try *living-with* and not only *living-on*. In this way, the human being can, yes, think of the soil as a resource, but at the same time find himself becoming a resource for the soil. Positioning himself as a part of a system of reciprocity that allows us to put the word *our* back into the discourse and redefines the idea of the common good, placing us within a community in which we are not the only components.

"Living is living-from. The transitivity of this verb not only signifies that our existence is inseparable from materiality. It also designates the original character of sensing, which is our life in and with things, and cannot be confused with a faculty(...) To sense is fundamentally to be in contact with things and to feel (...) To sense is to be with the world, to enjoy it sympathetically"¹⁴

"Lodge halfway between the 'public' and the 'private', but irreducible to either category, the idea of the commons expresses a broader conception of property, referring to social goods - lands, territories, forests, meadows and streams, or communicative spaces - that a community, not the state or any individual, collectively owns, manages, and controls."¹⁵

When I read Silvia Federici writings about the need to constitute oneself and recognise oneself as a community in the management of a common good, "because there can be no commons without community"¹⁶ I am reminded of Stefano Mancuso who, hypothesizing a constitutional charter written by plants, says: "At any level, from the microscopic to the macroscopic, it is communities, understood as relations between the living, that allow the persistence of life," and "Communities are the basis of life on earth".¹⁷

This does not seem to be the only similarity of thought between the formulation of Silvia Federici's commons and Stefano Mancuso's *Nazione delle Piante* (Nation of Plants). Federici, in fact, goes on to explain that "the commons require norms to establish how to use and care for the wealth to be produced and shared" and the principles on which these norms are based on: "fair access, reciprocity between what is given and what is taken, elaboration of collective decisions and power from below continuously distributed among different subjects according to the activities to be carried out".¹⁸

These principles are very similar to some of the articles of the constitution from the *Nazione delle Piante*. For example, Article 1 states: "The earth is the common home of life. Sovereignty belongs to every living being,"¹⁹ and Article 3 adds: "The nation of plants does not recognize animal hierarchies, based on command centers and concentrated functions, and instead favors widespread and decentralized plant democracies".²⁰

Regarding the respect for resources and especially for future generations: "The nation of plants universally respects the rights of present and future generations of living beings"²¹ (art.4) and "The consumption of any resource that cannot be reconstituted for future generations of living beings is forbidden" (art.6).²²

Both also dwell on the importance of abolishing private ownership (with specific reference to resources) and on the importance of symbiosis as one of the foundations of the relationship.

“Act as little as possible against nature and as much as possible with nature”.²³

This is the first fundamental of Gilles Clément’s Planetary Garden. The first rule for not hurting the Earth.

But how to *act with*?

It is Clement himself who answers this when speaking of the energy of a wasteland. He speaks of his movement towards this wasteland as always being an attempt to include himself in “(the terrain’s

A/N) imposing flow,” trying to orient himself towards it, without making it sterile.²⁵

When Clement talks about the need and the desire to not sterilise the fallow, he refers to the present biodiversity, with an approach based on the practice of observation as the first and most important moment of the work. The word *sterilise* here has a double meaning: reducing biodiversity and reducing soil fertility. The two are inevitably linked as reducing biodiversity is a way to decrease soil fertility; the complexity of the elements present in a soil is influenced by the diversity of vegetation present in it, and the heterogeneity of vegetation is directly proportional to the amount of nutrients present in the soil.

“The new gardener is the one who manages without degradation, allows diversity to resist, life to invent”²⁶

To do this in a way that does not sterilise the fallow, Clement suggests we try to include ourselves in the flow and direct it. Starting, precisely, from the observation of what we have around us as a way to learn from it and get to know it. His approach “is based (...) on the idea of the inclusion of Homo Sapiens in the biosphere, rather than on the

contrast of human beings against nature”.²⁷

Doing with, therefore, implies being included, *being with*, or *going with*; it implies recognising ourselves as part of the flow and being able to see and recognise what lives in the flow with us. Like a river, each flow has its own direction, and to include yourself in it is a matter of losing a certain amount of control, not unlike swimming *in* the river, and finding a certain closeness to the water. Proximity is an important aspect in this case.

But how to direct the flow, the river?

The Planetary Garden, as interpreted by Clement, is the whole Earth as one big garden: “The Planetary Garden does not lend itself to classical cartography. It is everywhere, it occupies the biosphere, its territory is as vast as the living. If the planet functions as an organism in its own right, limited by the boundaries of the biosphere, we are in fact in the conditions of a domestic garden (...)”²⁴

Sapiens never left the biosphere. It always was just a figure of thought, a philosophy (dualistic) that made some part of western thought think sapiens without acknowledging our fundamental and existential belonging to the biosphere.²⁸

Last summer I spent time in a river – literally, in the river – in one of three that passes nearby the village where I grew up and where my parents still live.

I spent a few days searching for gold: small, almost invisible, golden straws resting on the riverbed after having been swept along by the river itself.

I remained soaked in the river. With my feet, with my legs, and sometimes even with a part of my torso, depending on the depth of the water, I spent a fair amount of time in those conditions, hours upon hours, day after after day.

To look for gold in the river means to be immersed in the flow, but not to go with the flow, at least not with the body. Gold goes with the flow, flowing with the water, rolling with the stones.

After days spent with my legs in the water, I realised that finding gold in the river takes time - you need to be immersed for a while. You also need to spend a lot of time looking at and observing the river, because gold does not appear everywhere in the river, it is not simply found here and there. In order to find it, you need to understand how it ebbs and flows - not with the body, but with the mind. You have to understand how to read the river and to learn from the river. You have to think with the river.

It’s easy, isn’t it?

Thinking with the river means thinking with the water, with the fish, with the sand, with the stones, with the algae, with the grass, with the gold. But it’s also about thinking with the clouds, with the wind, with the birds, with the color of the sky. It’s impossible to do it just by looking at the river, you have to stand with your feet in it.

But back to the question of how to direct the flow...

I shared many days in the river with a couple of “old” gold hunters, who had more than 20 years of experience. What I learned from them is that to find gold, you have to learn how to direct the flow, (and yourself with it). Of course, it’s not so simple, because you also have to understand how to direct it and where. But this, as I said, is just a matter of spending a certain amount of time with your feet in the water.

Directing the flow of water means creating temporary and precarious landscape and architectural structures in the river, mainly using the stones there. But it is also a question of knowing that the day after, everything could potentially disappear if the river changes its mind. Then you have to start all over again, maybe a few metres further, because the riverbed is never the same every day. It always depends on the flow.

But how do we fit into the flow, then? How do we immerse ourselves in the flow so that we can direct with it?

What does it really mean to soak our feet in the water?

“Beings do not pre-exist their relatings,” says Donna Haraway.²⁹

“*Thinking with* is a relational way of thinking that contributes to Haraway’s commitment to a dynamic world of active agency in which everything participates, everything acts, in a continuous process of negotiation”.³⁰ explains Maria Puig de La Bellacasa.

In this way, *thinking with* is a way of thinking that recognises everything as an interlocutor and part of the conversation, instead of something that we think or for which we think about. It is a way of thinking that includes everything, or the “earth

others” (as coined by Val Plumwood),³¹ as part of the negotiation, recognising it as an active part in the world, in *our* world.

Thinking with can be a first step in the direction of *doing with*; it can be a first step in trying to understand how to direct oneself within the flow.

But who do we have to *think with*?

Returning to Gilles Clément’s suggestion, the first thing to do would seem to be to observe, to observe in order to know what we have around us and to learn from what surrounds us.

But, above all, to observe in order to be able to recognise, and to recognise not only the existence of something or someone, but also the movement of approach necessary to “examine carefully, to know”³⁷, and most importantly to “consider what is valid and operative, what to accept or to allow.”³⁸ In short: to legitimise.

So one could say that being in the flow is to recognise oneself in the “flow of the living”³⁹, or, in other words, to understand “human agencies as immersed in worlds made of heterogeneous but interdependent forms and processes of life and matter”⁴⁰ because “interdependency is not a contract, nor a moral idea, it is a condition”⁴¹.

The movement against this movement of thought seeks to objectify the more than human world and to see it only as part of the background (which is like thinking of fish as part of the landscape).^{*}³² Relegating the more than human world and treating it as an object prevents it from being included as narrating subject in the negotiation of roles; excluding it from the narration leads to an automatic negation of its moral identity.³³ This leads us to build hierarchies organised on a specific moral order, which then establish who is above, i.e. who makes the decisions and commands those below them. Those below can easily be instrumentalised so that those above can benefit from those decisions as exemplified in domestication processes (**).

Combined with the risk of objectification and instrumentalisation of the “other”, not recognising the world as an active agent in the conversation and giving its role to someone else who does the thinking for it, can lead to the danger of appropriation of the “other”

Since the non-human sphere is thought to have no agency of its own and to be empty of purpose, it is thought appropriate that the human colonizer impose his own purposes. Human-centred ethics views nature as possessing meaning and value only when it is made to serve the human/colonizer as a means to his or her ends. Thus, we get the split characteristic of modernity in which ethical considerations apply to the human sphere but not to the non-human sphere. Since nature itself is thought to be outside of the ethical sphere, imposing no moral limits on human action, we can deal with nature as an instrumental sphere, provided we do not injure other humans in doing so. Instrumental outlooks distort our sensitivity to, and knowledge of, nature, blocking humility, wonder and openness in approaching the more-than-human, and producing narrow types of understanding that reduce nature to raw materials for human projects.³⁴

*The colonizing framework’s exclusion of the non-human from subject status and from intentionality marginalizes the non-human as narra-

tive subject and agent, and pushes the more-than-human sphere into a background role as a mere context for human thought and life

** By domestication we mean the process through which an animal or vegetable species is made domestic, that is, dependent on the cohabitation with man and on the control by the latter. For many species, domestication has led to considerable changes in behaviour, in the biological cycle and even in physiology. Normally evolutionary changes result from natural selection, in response to environmental, climatic and other conditions, associated with reproductive isolation. In domestic species, on the other hand, changes also take place through artificial selection by humans; as for reproductive isolation, rather than geographical barriers, it is maintained by anthropogenic factors. Domestication is understood as a process that man consciously implements to pursue his own purposes (thus excluding, for example, cases of symbiosis or other unwanted relationships for man, such as that with parasites or viruses).³⁵

The inability or unwillingness to pay attention to what surrounds us and to learn about it often leads to disasters that could be avoided. See, for example, the case of the Vajont Disaster which, beyond all the mistakes made in the lack of maintenance of the infrastructure etc., was mainly due to the fact that the superstructures were built on Mount Toc, a mountain most likely named for its well-known landslides, since the whole slope above was essentially a gully. The origin of the toponym, in fact, comes from the local dialect. In most of the Triveneto, the root “Toc” means “piece”, but in the Friulian language it also means “broken”, “damaged”, “unmade”, sharing the same etymology as the adjective “Patoc”, which also means “soaked” or “rotten”.³⁶

This means that nobody is out of “the complex, life sustaining web,”⁴² which Joan Tronto referred to while speaking about the world we care for, because there is no possibility of life for an heterotrophic being out of the web.”⁴³ Also because we - all of us - are the result of an always continuous evolution, and according to Isabelle Stengers and Pierre Sonigo, “Evolution is a theory of interactions. Natural selection transforms a fortuitous encounter into a relationship”⁴⁵ and “(...) the subject is not an isolated individual, but heterogeneous populations of agents with tangled interests, interdependent and always at risk”.⁴⁶

*Heterotrophy (from the Greek *ἕτερος*, *héteros*, ‘different’, and *τρέφω*, *tréphō*, ‘I eat’) is the nutritional condition of a living organism that is not able to synthesize all its organic molecules autonomously from other inorganic molecules, such as using carbon dioxide. For survival it must therefore refer to organic compounds previously synthesized by other organisms, which are instead called autotrophs, such as all plants that possess chlorophyll.

In ecology, heterotrophic beings are also called consumers; primary when they feed on autotrophs (e.g. herbivores), of a higher order when they feed on other heterotrophs (e.g. carnivores).⁴⁴

To recognise ourselves in the flow is to recognise ourselves in relationship; our “becoming in time” is a *becoming with*, a becoming together through the encounter. Recognising ourselves as part of a relationship is also the basis of our need and ability to create relationships of belonging with what we call *our world*, the world that belongs to us, which is the same world to which we belong. And recognising ourselves as belonging to a world helps us to understand ourselves as part of an “us” in which, inevitably, we are not alone.

Belonging as a relationship, and not as a need to possess someone or something, but as a thinking of and recognising of ourselves as a part. Part of a world in which we occupy a space, thus sharing it with what occupies it with us.

Following the lines of this discourse, we could say that living (convivere) is always a form of *co-living*, a *living with* (con-vivere); and that, perhaps, being with our feet in the water, means simply recognising ourselves in the act of *living with*. This is a way of *being-with-the-world*, a way of recognising a “world that is not a resistance to my action - a ‘non-me’ - but rather the presence of the other”⁴⁷

Our physical occupation of a space, a land, with our body, is actually a temporary and inevitably shared occupation. In the end, perhaps, it is just a question of position, a question of how we position ourselves within the relationship. It is not a question of

standing in front of each other, but rather standing next to each other, heading in the same direction. The same flow.

Perhaps, being with your feet in the water means learning to go into the flow, with the flow.

Because we are living from, as Corinne Pelluchon suggest us “Living is living from. The transitivity of this verb not only signifies that our existence is inseparable from materiality. It also designates the original character of sensing, which is our life in and with things, and cannot be confused with a faculty. (...) To sense is fundamentally to be in contact with things and to feel (...) To sense is to be with the world, to enjoy it sympathetically.”⁴⁸

Like the grass in the cracks of the urban pavement, challenging the hegemony of capital and the state; because in a context where development means violence and institutional policy is increasingly irrelevant to the majority of the population, recognizing our essential interdependence and strengthening our capacity for cooperation is the only way to survive.

Silvia Federici

A disobedient garden is a garden that grows free and spontaneous where, perhaps, it should not grow. It is a garden that makes organic disorder its method of growth

A disobedient garden is a garden that welcomes, that does not choose, that gives everyone the chance to try. It is a garden where nothing is regulated and nothing is directed, and everything is subject to organic and dynamic power relations.

A disobedient garden is a garden that, in order to exist, must destroy what is above and regain possession of what is below. That must interrupt the soloist to continue in polyphony.

A disobedient garden doesn't ask permission, doesn't fill in forms and doesn't pay rent, but occupies what has been abandoned to keep itself alive.

A disobedient garden is not one but many

A garden.
Is this a garden?
But, what is a garden?
A garden is...
Can a garden simply happen?
Or do you have to call it one for it to be one?
Maybe it's enough to just say it: this is a garden!
But what is a garden really?
Well, a garden is a place because you can see it and can go there.
Even if it's just in your mind?
You can go back there, in your mind
You can walk around it, in your mind.

(silence)

To be a garden, it has to belong to someone, doesn't it?
At least to the person who calls it that
So the garden belongs to the mouth...

(silence)

Can a garden just happen?
Without the hand?
Yes. Can a garden exist without the hand?

(silence)

The eye, the mouth, the hand.
The garden is a space between the eye, the mouth and the hand.”

(silence)

The garden is a space of exclusion...
What do you mean the garden is a space of exclusion?”

It means there are those who can be inside and those who can't. There are those who will never enter.

And where is the one who will never enter?

Outside. Or in another garden.

And who decides that?

The hand decides.

Says who?

Says the mouth.

And who chooses?

The eye chooses...

(silence)

The eye that chooses, the mouth that names, the hand that watches.

The hand that watches...

Or the hand that takes care?

How can a hand that watches, take care?

(silence)

A hand that feeds, a hand that eradicates.

Can the hand that feeds, eradicate?

How can the hand enter?

Perhaps, for the hand to enter, the eye should simply observe.

And the mouth?

(silence)

“The first garden was that of the man who decided to suspend his roaming. (...) The first garden was food. The garden for fruit and vegetables was the first garden. (...) The first garden was an enclosure.”⁴⁹

The word garden comes from the Hebrew word GAN: protect and defend and ODEN or eden: pleasure, delight.

The garden was therefore considered a fenced and protected place to enjoy leisure and pleasure.⁵⁰

The first western gardens were the hortus conclusus - closed gardens inside the medieval abbeys made with a sophisticated formal and symbolic composition to represent the godly order of the world.⁵¹

The word Paradise comes from a word in ancient Persian, Pairi-dae'-za, which literally means enclosed park. Paradise was, in fact, a closed place to which only a few, the most deserving, had access, while those who were unworthy of it were driven out...⁵²

I often find myself walking through the streets of Turin, the city where I live, with Nina, the dog who lives with me. Nina is a stray, picked up off the streets almost five years ago, and by nature, often slips into places where people normally don't slip into during these city excursions.

This also happens because I follow her lead in these explorations, always hoping to find a peaceful corner in which to escape from the chaos that surrounds me. It is a chance to spend a few moments away from the greyness of the concrete that suffocates the city, perhaps in the company of the weeds and bits of grass that try to grow here and there, challenging the asphalt.

These types of places - abandoned spaces often hidden from the sight of passers-by, who are more than happy to not have to see them - are mostly characterized by cracked asphalt, because no one has ever bothered to resurface them. Defiant plants and grasses that have been at work for months, if not years, to destroy and break that black and asphyxiating crust that someone decided to pour over their vital soil. Because plants, in spite of everything, know how to do that. They even know how to grow on soil that has been killed by suppression.

(...) the plant world follows the simple rule of growing as long as it is possible to do so, according to the amount of resources available. In other words, when means are scarce, growth is reduced. (...) For plants, one of the main adaptations of being rooted in the ground is the ability to rely (...) on the only nutrients available in the volume of soil that can be searched for through the roots. (...) In conditions of nutrient or water scarcity, they are able to substantially transform their anatomy and adapt to changing conditions".⁵³

On one such city wandering this summer, melting under the scorching July sun and marvelling at the amount of suffocating asphalt and cement that surrounded me, I stopped to look at a small plant growing in the gap between the wall of a house and the sidewalk. I immediately realised that this plant was not alone, but that practically everywhere I looked, my gaze

would cross one of these little "attacks on order and civil plans".

Not that I hadn't ever noticed plants and grass sprouting up here and there throughout the city in every possible inch where there was nowhere to hide from water, but at that moment I recognised the subversive force of those creatures and the absolute futility of all the asphalt and concrete that surrounded them. And I asked myself, "What would happen if we removed all this grey matter and let the earth breathe a little bit?"

"Tell me about grass. I don't understand grass. It's everywhere, insidious and rebellious," said Thomas. What do all those intertwined pieces of grass do, stacked on top of each other, tucked in bulk down to the smallest crack in the pavement, at the foot of my roses and sometimes even in the walls? I would like you to enlighten me on the abusive behaviour of the grass."⁵⁴

I was, as I often find myself, in a semi-abandoned area of the neighborhood - a place where all that asphalt was not really needed. Almost no one walked on those sidewalks anymore; the buildings were almost all in a state of disuse and many no longer usable due to prolonged abandonment. It was one of those areas of the city where it seems that everyone has been evacuated suddenly, even if all around it, life flowed with its usual alternating, frenetic rhythms of cars and people in the constant daily bustle. These were not entire abandoned blocks, but only empty sections surrounded by full throttle commotion. It's in these places where I often find myself walking with Nina, because they are less frequented and quieter. Sometimes they are hidden, other times people simply don't see them anymore, because they have become part of the background, no longer in use.

The "uselessness" of these places is just one of the reasons why people do not often pass through them anymore. Considered "dirty" and "dangerous," one of the main reasons they are little frequented is that the concrete and asphalt on the sidewalks and roads are in a ruinous state, making it difficult to walk through them without careful attention. These are places that, even if no longer in use, should be kept clean, tidy and safe. At the very least, the asphalt should be repaired.

REPAIR: In Italian: RIPARARE, from the Latin *reparare*, composed of *re*: again – against, and *parare*: set, arrange.

Put something broken, worn or worn out back in good condition; restore, settle, repair, fix.

To defend against or prior to⁵⁵ correcting or limiting an error by atoning, compensating, apologising.⁵⁶

Repair a damage - damage repair

How can I repair the damage we are doing to the city soil?
Is it possible, instead of repairing the damage to the asphalt, to repair the asphalt damage?

ASPHALT: Natural or artificial mixture of bitumen and inert mineral materials. Its physical and technological characteristics differ according to the type and quantity of rock and bitumen that make it up. The bitumen content, which is of animal or vegetable origin, or derives from oil by oxidation, distillation or cracking, can reach up to 30%; it is determined by extracting it, with carbon sulphide or other organic solvents, from the pulverized rock. The most important use of the a. is in road paving. It is also used for waterproofing floors and terraces, for making waterproof cardboard boxes, etc..

Asphalting is the surface treatment of roadbeds, with the application of asphaltic rock dust. On the ballast, at first thoroughly cleaned and sprinkled with mineral oil, the asphaltic dust is spread over the roadbed, followed by a layer of oiled grit, or a mixture of the two. Then an accurate displacement is carried out. This surface application is often also used on pre-existing floors of other types, in order to adapt, for example, their characteristics to the needs of fast traffic. The term is also commonly used, but less properly, with reference to bituminous pavements, which consist of a thick layer of bituminous conglomerate and asphaltic dust, or their mixtures.

Currently, for the construction of the surface layers of the road pavement, the term "asphalt" is used to refer to artificial bituminous conglomerate ⁵⁷

EXCUSE: from the Latin ex – cusare for which it is necessary to go back to the etymology given to ACCUSE, or to attribute to others the cause of something. While to excuse is to remove -ex- any cause -causa- of something.⁵⁸

Is it possible, instead of repairing the damage to the asphalt, to repair the asphalt damage?

Repair: 1. Put something broken, worn or worn out back in good condition; restore, settle, repair, fix.

It, therefore, seems that the first thing to do is to observe the damage.

In our case, we have a hole or a crack in the asphalt; sometimes a little plant comes out of this crack, sometimes you can simply glimpse the ground below. Once the situation has been inspected, it is necessary to understand what the damage consists of: what has been broken, wasted or worn out. And consequently, what needs to be restored, accommodated, repaired. We need to choose the aspect in which we will direct our attention.

And here we have two possibilities. We must decide if damage has been inflicted upon the asphalt, and, therefore, what we must repair is the asphalt itself; or we decide that what has been damaged is the soil, and, therefore, what must be repaired is the damage as caused by the asphalt.

2. To defend against or prior to: to prevent, to defend from attacks, to protect from a dangerous thing by opposing an obstacle.

Another meaning of the word repair suggests that we adopt a defensive attitude: repair as to parry, to protect. Or an attitude of prevention: how, and with what, can we repair the object of our attention before it is damaged?

In this case, however, the damage has already been inflicted. We will return to this point later, once the damage has been repaired, when we look at how to ensure that it does not happen again.

3. Correcting or limiting an error by atoning, compensating, apologising

It's getting harder here. How can we atone, compensate? And who do we apologise to? Perhaps, rather than worrying about having to apologise, the emphasis should be about having to remove the damage we caused, we could think about the material cause of the damage and how we can compensate for it.

4. Doing what is necessary

What is necessary to repair the asphalt damage? What can we do?

To repair the asphalt damage, it seems the first thing to do would be to destroy and remove the asphalt itself. To allow the ground to breathe.

In order to repair our damage, the first thing to do, then, is to destroy...

Destroy to repair the damage, destroy to do damage repair.

Waterproofing or soil sealing means covering the soil with impermeable materials that partially or totally inhibit the soil's ability to perform its own vital functions. Soil sealing creates a vertical barrier between the pedosphere, the atmosphere and the hydrosphere. It has a negative influence on the exchange of water and air flows by substantially changing the relationships between the pedosphere and the biosphere.⁵⁹

Soil health is defined as "the continued ability of the soil to function as a living and viable system within the boundaries of the ecosystem and land use, to sustain biological productivity, air quality and aquatic environments and maintain the health of plants, animals and humans."⁶⁰

It seems that there are plants, practically all those with roots that develop horizontally instead of vertically, that can break stones and, consequently, asphalt. There is one in particular, the common Hackberry (*Celtis Australis* L.), also known as the *stone breaker*, that for a long time was used to decorate the streets of cities worldwide, but then its destructive effects on the road surface and on the pipes were soon realised.

There is also an herb called Rustyback (*Asplenium Cetarach* L.), a small fern with rounded leaves that grows between rocks, splitting and crushing them.

It seems that its ability to destroy minerals is not limited to the stones of the walls on which it lives, but also to stones in the urinary tract; in phytotherapy it is used as the main remedy for gallstones.⁶¹

DESTROY. In Italian DISTRUGGERE: from the Latin *destruere*, composed of the particle *de* which is held contrary to or deprived of *struere*. To pile, to manufacture.

To destroy: to demolish, to reduce to nothing, to undo totally, to consume.⁶²

Destroy the asphalt to let the ground breathe. Destroy it and then remove it. To do this, try using a hammer and chisel, chisel away the asphalt from above the ground.

Who knows, maybe it's possible that the tools that have always helped me to shape material, this time can help me free it from the shape that was imposed on it. Who knows what would happen if all the sculptors were to chisel away the asphalt from where it is no longer needed. The cities would become huge asphalt quarries.

Or maybe I should follow Pablo Georgieff's example and use a pickaxe and crowbar directly...

“In the city, nature is made with a pickaxe.”⁶³

The pickaxe: the same tool used by miners in mines, the same tool used to make holes in the bellies of mountains, to extract stone, coal, mineral material.

The procedure is roughly the same:

split open to build - split open to create - split open to repair

And the tools are roughly the same:

hammer, chisel, pickaxe.

Only here the work of destruction is aimed at repairing damage, it is aimed at healing.

So, destruction as the first curative action.

Destroy to repair.

While I think about how to remove the asphalt I ask myself, ‘Who am I in doing the work? The homo faber or the animal laborans?’

“Where the animal laborans fixates on the question, ‘How?’”

homo faber asks, “Why?”⁶⁴

But is there really a hierarchy between those who do, create and those who dedicate themselves to the “activity of forming a communal life”? Is there really a separation between the two? Richard Sennet clearly explains the distinction highlighted by Hannah Arendt: “Homo faber and Animal laborans are two figures of the human being at work. (...) Animal Laborans is the human being similar to a beast of burden, the person who struggles condemned to routine. (...) In the act of making one thing work, nothing else matters. For Animal Laborans the world is an end in itself. (...) On the contrary, the homo faber is, for Hannah Arendt, the figure of the man and woman who do another kind of work - the activity of building a life in common. (...) Homo faber is the judge of work and material practices; not a colleague of animal laborans, but a superior. (...) So, according to Hannah Arendt, we human beings live in two dimensions. In one we manufacture things; in this condition we are amoral, immersed in the task at hand. But we also have within us another, higher way of life, in which we cease to produce and begin to discuss and judge, all together”.⁶⁵

Can a garden just happen?
Without the hand, eye and mouth?
Yes
I think so
Even if the mouth doesn't call it that?
Even if the eye doesn't choose it?
Maybe without the mouth and the eye a garden can't happen.

(silence)

The mouth that says what is best?
Best for whom?
For the eye
How can the eye choose between infinity?
One piece at a time

(silence)

And the hand?
The hand that watches?
Yeah, what if it's not watching?
What if it doesn't eradicate?
What if it doesn't eradicate
What if it doesn't sow?

(silence)

And the hand, how can the hand fit in?
Can the hand simply create the conditions for it to happen?

(silence)

But what happens by destroying, smashing and removing asphalt?

The ground remains, naked, dead.

I recently discovered that the soil under Turin is fertile, very fertile*. The most fertile type of soil. But not anymore, at least not where it has been asphalted over.

Most of the land on which the city of Turin has been built upon is classified as an area of soil capability 1, i.e. an area whose soil is extremely fertile, because it has no restrictions on its use, therefore suitable for a wide range of agricultural crops⁶⁶. This is not news that should surprise us as "the comparison between urbanization and Land Capability Classification shows that urban expansion typically takes place in areas with high productive potential".⁶⁷

But what does it mean for the hand, insert itself by destroying?

Destroying the asphalt is not only a necessary operation to try to repair the ground, it is also a first action necessary to interrupt a state of affairs as we know it. It is a necessary action so that something that was previously interrupted can continue.

INTERRUPT: in italian INTERROMPERE from the Latin *interrumpere*, composed of *inter*, between, in between and *rumpere*, break, or figurative, disturb.

To break in between, to prevent the continuation of one thing, to omit to wait for another. Reflective: suspend one's own speech.⁶⁸

Interrupt:

- To prevent, suspend, stop, in a more or less sudden way, the continuation of a motion, of an action, of an operation already started, either temporarily for an indefinite time, or definitively.
- Suddenly cease, stop (mostly temporarily) the continuation of the motion or action.
- Break the material continuity of something.⁶⁹

But what do we really interrupt when we interrupt the flow of asphalt under my feet with a clean break? Undoubtedly, we break the material continuity of the asphalt, but we also prevent the continuation of a damaged condition by preventing the asphalt from continuing to suffocate the ground.

We suspend a discourse that, perhaps, we could do without. Even though we are an asphalt society as Georgieff suggests⁷⁰...

We suspend a discourse that talks about speed and mobility, that considers decontamination and impermeability, that tells us about practicality and usability.

We suspend one of our discourses, one of those, among many, which involves us and leaves us alone to talk. And then what? Will we be able to stay and listen?

Every time we suspend one speech, we give way and space for another to begin.

Interrupt your own speech to allow someone else to continue it.

Be interrupted to let it continue

Interrupt to continue

CONTINUE. In Italian CONTINUARE: derived from *continuous* from the Latin *continuus*: combined with something else, from *continere*: to keep together. Composed of *con* = *cum*: with, together; and *tenere*: keep.⁷¹

What continues? What's is being held together?

Without soil we wouldn't have the garden. Or, perhaps in this case, you could say that without a garden we would have no soil. At least, not vital soil.

The soil is an ecosystem that lies between the lithosphere, the hydrosphere and the atmosphere. It is a very complex system of biotic (microorganisms, animals, plants) and abiotic (air, water, minerals and organic substances) components and constitutes a natural body capable of supporting plant life. But that's not all. In the soil are "the biogeochemical cycles of the elements that constitute the fundamental building blocks of life: carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus and sulphur". The organic substance present in the most superficial layer of the soil "is at the basis of the biodiversity of the soil and of the food chains originating from the decomposing micro-organisms, and is able to retain the mineral nutrients essential for the development of plants, to modulate the capacity to retain water, to adsorb or transform toxic substances, preventing them from reaching the water table or the roots of plants, and to prevent soil erosion".⁷²

Soil is also necessary to "sustain biological productivity, air quality and aquatic environments and maintain the health of plants, animals and humans".⁷³

How can the hand just fit in?
Guided by the directions of the mouth”
Then it’s the mouth that chooses!”
The mouth that designates?
No, the mouth that indicates
The mouth that directs?
The mouth that suggests
And who is it directing?
Well, it’s the eye that directs
The eye that chooses?
No, the eye that searches
What about the hand?

(silence)

How can the hand just fit in?
In what capacity?

(silence)

What happens to the ground after I remove the asphalt?

What can I do to prevent the asphalt damage from continuing after removal?

In conversation with Anca⁷⁴

- Once I've removed the asphalt, I'm left with the ground, naked. What's the first thing to do if I want to try and regenerate it?

- The first thing to do would be to perform a laboratory survey to understand if there are pollutants, which ones and in what percentages.

Possible soil pollution is a not only a problem, for the obvious reasons, if you want to sow edible plants. It is also a problem because, as long as the soil was covered with

asphalt, and therefore had no interaction with the atmosphere and the hydrosphere, everything has remained in a state of immobility, i.e. the possible pollutants have stayed roughly where they are. By exposing the soil to interaction with external agents, everything begins to move inside it again, including the pollutants. These could migrate deeper into the soil and contaminate other portions or even penetrate further into the groundwater. It always depends on the type of pollutants present and their percentage.

"The main impacts resulting from the spread of pollutants to the soil are the accumulation of nutrients, heavy metals and persistent organic matter. In some cases, the diffusion of contaminated soils can be virtually irreversible(...) Many of these (pollutants) are released into the atmosphere by emissions from industry and traffic and can be transported from the air and released into the soil through the natural process of atmospheric deposition".⁷⁵

- If, through analysis, I find that there are pollutants in the soil, what should I do?

- There are plants that are capable of absorbing certain pollutants and, therefore, could improve the affected part of the soil. Otherwise, you would have to proceed with traditional means, which are much more invasive and require the use of a laboratory to decontaminate the soil, the costs of which are unsustainable. It always depends on what kind of pollutants you find.

- And what if I find that part of the soil is not polluted?

- If there are no pollutants, an additional test can be done on the composition of the soil. The purpose of this operation is to allow you to carry out as balanced of an intervention as possible. Based on the soil components you will be able to see which plants are best suited to grow in those particular conditions. For example, if your soil is characterised by a large amount of sand, which does not retain moisture and allows the water to drain too quickly, it will be better suited for plants that are compatible for drier environments. If your soil also has a good amount of clay and silty material present, you can choose plants that need a more humid environment. Both of these materials aid in water retention and allows the soil to have a more versatile and easily usable structure by plants. If there is a higher percentage of clay, however, it will retain too much water, so you will have to choose plants that do not suffer from water stagnation. The best environment in this specific case is a soil in which the percentages of sand, silt and clay are properly balanced.

- So, all I know for now is that that ground has been paved for a fairly long period of time.

- That soil will most likely be free of organic matter. There may be something left, but it would still be a very low percentage. An example being the presence of some animals that may have shifted under the crust during the period in which it has been asphalted, thus providing a form of organic material, albeit minimal. It also depends on where the land is and what's around it. If you are in an area within a city that has been paved for several years and there is only more asphalt in the surrounding areas, that soil will essentially be sand.

- And in this case, what can I do?

- Either you remove the degraded material and replace it with something else or, after making sure there are no pollutants present, you can salvage the denatured material yourself. You can do this by introducing organic matter, for example compost, and mix it in with the sand presents. The best thing in this case would also be to add some other substances, i.e. other soils. If you really only have almost all sand there, the best thing would be to add some clay or silty material in with the compost.

- And this intervention would be enough? Meaning, if after adding organic matter and I don't do anything else, what will happen?

- In principle, it could be enough. There will definitely be seeds in your compost and, with the wind and small animals passing through, other seeds will be introduced to the soil. Little by little, they will begin to germinate and, through the course of their life cycle, will bring more and more organic material to the soil. However, you must take into account that if there is nothing around the area you have uncovered except asphalt, there will be nothing to protect the soil from wind erosion. Furthermore, if the surrounding soil has been sealed from rain permeating it, all the water will flow into the recuperated area, and the little organic substance present will be pushed further down into the soil, not allowing them to develop roots.

In my opinion, an additional action to take, after letting the soil rest a little, would be to start planting in a strategic way that would allow the roots to protect the soil from the erosive action of the wind and help maintain the organic substances and moisture. Explained in an extremely simplified way: at the level of the rhizosphere, which is the part that is around their roots, the plants create an exchange system with the soil to keep the organic substance in circulation. This also creates a tissue that protects it from the erosive actions of both wind and water.

If the soil is on a flat and smooth surface, because it is surrounded by asphalt, it is very easy for it to continue to degrade, because there is nothing to protect it from the weather.

Rain, as I explained before, can be a problem when no roots are present to retain moisture, because all the organic matter will tend to be transported deep down into the soil, not to mention the fact that significant stagnations could be created that could lead to fermentation. The part of the soil which is usually more fertile is called humus and is found in the first twenty centimetres; it is important that the majority of nutrients remain in this area

- And what plants would you advise me to plant?

- Personally, I would choose perennial plants. With their long life cycle, they can continue to add organic material to the soil, thus increasing its fertility. I would also pick plants which are not too demanding in terms of nutrient requirements, but which are able to live in so-called "poor soils" and could deliver as many nutrients as possible to the soil itself.

- Like beans?

- Yeah, well, beans are a good example. Like all Fabaceae, they have a fairly rapid life cycle, are able to flower two or three times a year, do not require particularly rich soils and provide a good amount of nitrogen.

"Fabaceae Family of Dicotyledonous plants, also called Papilionaceae, with a characteristic pod fruit, called legume. (...) According to the current classification, the F., called in the past Leguminosae, includes three subfamilies: Cesalpinoideae (e.g. carob, tamarind), Mimosoideae (e.g. acacia, mimosa), Papilioideae (e.g. bean, broad bean, pea, wisteria). (...) The most important characteristic of the F. is their ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen, i.e. return the nitrogen to the soil that is dispersed in the metabolic cycles of the organisms. This is thanks to the presence of the nitrogen-fixing bacteria (Rhizobium), located inside the root tubercles, that live in symbiosis with the plant. For this reason, in agriculture F. crops are alternated with those of other families to enrich the soil with nitrogen".⁷⁶

Obviously, you have to pay attention to the animals in the city, which can be of great help because, as already mentioned, they bring organic material and can carry other seeds. However, there are also animals who deliver the opposite effect. Pigeons, if present in large numbers, will plough all the soil and make it very difficult for something to grow there. The "best ideal solution" would be to choose a place far away from important sources of food for these animals, so that they can pass through, but not invade it continuously.

However, I still think perennials are the best choice because with their continuous life cycles, they are constantly dropping organic material, such as leaves, petals, etc.

You also have to make sure that the animals can reach it.

- Okay, so once you've done all this?

- Well, it will continue on its own. You let the soil breathe at this point and it will continue - thanks to the

interventions you've done to provide nutrients and to protect the soil from erosive agents - to regenerate. It's a long process. It always depends on what needs to benefit from the soil. If you have to grow things like food, it will take a long time before you can

do that with this procedure. But if you are only interested in the soil becoming revitalised, so that plants can start living on it again, then just a small amount of nutrients is enough, and everything will start again on its own. There must also be water, of course. To restore the soil to the state it was in before it was asphalted can take hundreds of years for just one centimetre. Always remember that soil is a non-renewable resource.

Another factor that we have not considered so far is heat. Asphalt tends to absorb and retain a high percentage of heat, so there is a risk that the surrounding area will overheat and this could compromise the life of the plants, maybe even burn them. The best thing would be to choose an area that is not completely paved, ideally not in full sunlight, and remove more asphalt than conceptually needed, so as to leave a "buffer" zone between the first plants you sow and the asphalt around them. Then, as the plants grow, they will lower the temperature and provide shade, also protecting the soil from direct sunlight.

- One last question, if I dig up a piece of land and leave it alone, is there any chance that it will recover on its own, without organic material and without planting anything?

- Absolutely, yes. Unless the land itself is in a so-called "at risk" area (highly polluted or very close to desertification). It will take longer, but after a while, something will start to grow on it and start the cycle of refertilisation.

Soil is a limited resource: its depletion and subsequent degradation cannot be recovered in the course of a lifetime.⁷⁷

How do you keep it going? How do I keep it alive, fertile?

A garden is a balance
Is it the hand that maintains the balance?
It's the eye that is in balance.

(silence)

And the hand?

MAINTAIN. In Italian MANTENERE: from the Latin *manutenere* = hold in hand/
manu = hand; *tenere* = hold. Hold in hand. Hold firm and fixed; figuratively: hold in
the same state.

Hold something so that it lasts for a long time, remains in place and efficient.⁷⁸

Maintain

- Keeping something in a certain condition
- Keep alive, providing the means of sustenance
- Defend against the enemy, keep in your own hands

If we give a quick look to the Collins dictionary, under “maintain” we find this first explanation:⁷⁹- If you maintain something, you continue to have it, and do not let it stop

or grow weaker

- If you maintain a road, building, vehicle, or machine, you keep it in good condition by regularly checking it and repairing it when necessary.
- If you maintain someone, you provide them with money and other

Again, maintain in good condition:

- all the operations that must be carried out in order to keep things in proper functional efficiency, in accordance with the purposes for which they were built.
- In charge of conservation and good use, also executing repairs.
- (in legal language) to maintain or re-establish the possession of a property or a right on a property = maintenance action (property)

It seems that the word maintain contains the words: continue, leave, keep, repair, supply, provide, possess, defend...

They are all verbs that suggest the presence of two entities, except “to continue” which, as we have seen before, indicates an action that can happen in solitude. But in the case of “maintain”, there is someone who acts so that something or someone continues.

They are also verbs that suggest a duration in time: the actions indicated can happen in a punctual way, but what matters is their long-term effect, the duration of their effect in time, as a matter of fact.

“Maintain” is something that happens and lasts thanks to an action that happened at a precise moment. So, maybe we can say that “maintaining” is not something that you can really do, but it is something that happens as a consequence of another action. It is something that needs something else to be done in order to be done.

“Maintaining” is synonymous with “preserving”, but it emphasises intention and means. If something can be preserved by itself, how can it be maintained by itself? Unless it’s a person, of course. And even then, in the reflexive case, when a person maintains herself, it is as if she double up, it is as if she become two: one maintains the other. Who then is herself. I’m reminded of a funny image of someone holding herself up with her own hand, or holding hands with herself.

To maintain something or someone the presence of the hand seems inevitable. It is the hand that holds, in some way. Even just a figurative hand. But how can I maintain the garden?

Something must be done so that the hand can continue to hold.
The hand has to do something so that it can keep holding.
The hand has to do something so that something can continue.

What can we do so that the soil recovers its vital capacities and maintains them over time?

How can the words “maintain” and “leave” converse?

maintain a trace, a memory - leave a trace

maintaining a state, things in a determined state –
leave things in a determined state

leave things to stay in a specific state

And the hand?
The hand that leaves...

(Silence)

A type of soil maintenance work has been going on for several years now along the Canale Regio Parco (Royal Park Canals)

Several actors are contributing to this work

Among them we can identify: - weeds

- brushwood

- briars

- pests (including purple berries)

The brambles, especially, are among the most active and important. They also contribute to the work of hiding, concealment and protection of the place.

What is the relationship between maintaining and protecting?

Maintaining being hidden from view can be an act of protection.

MAINTAIN. In Italian MANTENERE

Man-Tenere (hand-holding)

hold with your hand, grab and do not let go

Canal Regio Parco is maintained with roots. Narrow narrow

By brambles, weeds, infestations.

They just don't seem to want to let go

A hand-kept (man-tenuto) place protected by plants that are hand-keeping

(man-tengono) it fertile and hand-keeping (man-tengono) its memory, maintaining

being hidden

maintain the memory

keep in memory

Maintained in a state of abandonment, by those who, alone, can preserve its nature and fertility.

In a continuous work of maintenance

manutenzione (maintenance)

manu-attenzione (hand-attention)

Be careful with your hand

However, maintenance work on the canal is often complicated by those who pass by and throw garbage

Pollute

Contaminate

Even if it hinders the maintenance work, yet, perhaps this work of dumping contributes to the maintenance of the place and its state of abandonment.

Abandon to maintain

Abandon to maintain

ABBANDON. In Italian ABBANDONARE: from the Latin *abandonum* = from Provençal and French *bandon*: bid, in the sense of selling by public auction. Release, give in mercy. Or *ab*= from, in the sense of separation and detachment; and *bandum* = flag. The detachment from the flag, the deserter of the flag.
Or *ab-handen*, from the German: out of hand, put out of hand = stop holding it, let it go⁸⁰

We will call it garden because it is born from the work of the human hand, which, however, abandons it immediately after starting it.

We will call it garden because it is born from a precise will and is the result of a decision.

We will call it garden even if its boundaries are only temporary and there is no one to watch over it.

We will call it garden even if it has no owner and no rule can ever be imposed on it.

We will call it garden even if there is no work and there is no direction, but it only creates the conditions for it to happen.

We'll call it garden even if it's just the beginning.

We'll call it garden and then we'll forget about it.

And we won't call it anymore.

MANIFESTO

A non-garden garden is a garden whose sole purpose is to repair an initial condition that has been damaged. Often this means not only repairing the damage, but, above all, repairing the damage that has been inflicted upon it.

A non-garden garden is born in a place where the soil has been damaged, or even killed by the work of a man, and its ultimate goal is to restore the soil to a condition of fertility and life.

A non-garden garden is a place where the work of the hand intervenes not to “work” the soil neither for productive purposes, nor to create value or capital. The work of the hand intervenes to create the conditions for the garden to take place.

A non-garden garden is a garden that is born in a space without asking permission, that occupies a space illegally, because it makes use of the active disobedience of civil plans in order to exist.

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