

Greening Bovisa: Striking the balance in urban revitalization

Exploring citizens' perspectives in Milan's Bovisa district on green urban regeneration, gentrification, and the right to the city

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Master Thesis Series in Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science,
No 2024:033

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Lund University
International Master's Programme in Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science
(30hp/credits)



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Submitted May 12, 2024

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Abstract:

The city of Milan stands today as a prominent model of sustainable urban development. Yet, beneath its allure lies a paradox: the quest for 'green' and 'smart' development has exacerbated privatization and fueled debates on green gentrification, social equity, and urban accessibility. This research explores the emerging impacts of large-scale green urbanization intervention in the Bovisa district using the theory of urban environmental justice, green gentrification, and right to the city.

Through 17 semi-structured interviews, it clarifies citizens' perspectives on the social, economic, and environmental complexities of the redevelopment. The findings reveal a mismatch between developers' vision and the desires and needs of residents, raising significant questions about the right to the city, and access to and perceived value of green spaces. The prevalent concern that Bovisa will become an enclave of environmental privilege underscores the need for the Milan Model to integrate citizens' lived experiences into governance processes.

Keywords: Urban renewal, green amenities, green gentrification, access to green spaces, right to the city, citizen participation

Wordcount: 11948

Acknowledgements

The decision to explore this theme stemmed from the deep interest I have always had in the complex contradictions present in urban contexts and from the emotional bond that connects me to my hometown. Having lived in Milan all my life, and until I was eight years old in a neighborhood bordering Porta Nuova and Isola, I have had the opportunity to have been an indirect witness, though perhaps not fully aware at the time, of the social, economic and environmental changes that my city has gone through over time. For this reason, I would like to express my deepest thanks to my supervisor, Melissa García-Lamarca, for supporting my enthusiasm in exploring this topic for my thesis research and for being a great source of inspiration.

Now in Italian. Ringrazio anche tutte le persone che ho incontrato durante la mia ricerca sul campo. Un grazie particolare va ai cittadini e ai membri di BovisAttiva, Terrapreta e Isola Pepe Verde, che mi hanno permesso di raccontare Bovis e Milano sotto diverse prospettive. Inoltre, ringrazio Jacopo Targa e le persone del Comitato la Goccia che mi ha fatto sentire accolta dal principio, permettendomi di raccontare la loro storia e quella della foresta della Goccia.

Ringrazio i miei genitori, Micaela e Aldo, senza i quali difficilmente avrei intrapreso questo percorso a Lund, grazie per avermi spronato ad inseguire questo sogno. Grazie alle mie due nonne, Lucia e Rosalma, che nonostante siano ora distanti in maniere diverse sono sempre riuscite a fornirmi grandi parole di incoraggiamento. Grazie alla zia Silvia che ha sempre creduto in me fin dall'inizio e al resto della mia famiglia, che mi ha appoggiato nella scelta di trasferirmi all'estero. Grazie a mia sorella Sara, che a modo suo (letteralmente) è sempre riuscita a farmi capire il valore del nostro legame anche a distanza.

Back to English. Thanks to my friends, to those in Milan who every time I come back are ready to welcome me with open arms, and to those in Lund, who are now my second home. Thanks to all my fellow Lumes classmates and especially thanks to Xiaoyan, Sara, Amir, Brooke, Lisa, Saga, Julia, Bucur, Aleksas, Alice, Dianne, Asfa and Lau Vega...You are a constant source of inspiration and fun. You will always be invited to my dinners. Thanks also to Matti and Nadia who supported me all these months in writing my thesis. It was great to share this last challenge with you.

Thanks to KV for welcoming me with open arms and making me an honorary member of a unique and spectacular corridor. Thanks to Mari, Bori, Cimi, Dominik, Akash, Olof, Ragna, David, Mykie, Xying, Viktor, Evi, and Milan, *vi voglio bene*.

Thanks to my housemates: Chiara, Hannah, Lina and Anne. With your support and laughter in the garden you have made my days even more beautiful and allowed me to call LSG home. *Siete delle vere amiche*.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

RQ1	Research Question 1
RQ2	Research Question 2
TGP	Territorial Government Plan
UEJ	Urban Environmental Justice

1 Introduction

Today, urban contexts are emerging as crucial pivots for promoting ambitious climate goals and sustainable urban practices (C40 Cities, 2024). Numerous 'global cities', described by Sassen (2009) as dynamic centers of progress, are now encouraging a form of urban development that can be traced back to the rhetoric of green and competitive urbanism (Anguelovski & Connolly, 2021; Hollands, 2015; Taylor Buck & While, 2017). In the European context, many cities are promoting urban policies that endorse 'eco' and 'smart' city paradigms as the most reliable models of sustainable urban planning, due to their apparent multifaceted potential to promote economic innovation and environmental and social sustainability (Angelidou et al., 2017; Caprotti, 2014; Immergluck & Balan, 2017). In doing so, greening practices increasingly leverage environmental and health benefits to attract real estate investments, tourism and generate new economic opportunities.

Although this kind of green rhetoric is presented positively in urban development contexts and by part of the urban planning literature, not all green cities seem to bring similar ecological and social benefits (Anguelovski & Connolly, 2021). One city embracing a green discourse is Milan. Milan is one of the most populated cities in northern Italy and is also the most highly industrialized and avant-garde in terms of fashion, design, and tactical urbanism (Tozzi, 2023). This characteristic has influenced its development, making it one of the most attractive Italian cities for workers and tourists in recent decades (Semi, 2023; Tozzi, 2023). Nevertheless, its development trends have also made it a victim of its own success: to date it is one of the most polluted cities in Europe and has the highest level of overbuilding compared to the rest of Italy (ARPA, 2024; ISPRA, 2023; Pileri, 2022). Moreover, in aspiring to be an increasingly 'green' and 'smart' urban model, Milan has become increasingly unaffordable in terms of property prices and the cost of living (García-Lamarca et al., 2019; Semi, 2023; Tozzi, 2023). The prevailing discourse and material realities have led to a series of social and economic problems that still today have prompted public debate to center around issues such as green gentrification, social justice, and access to the city (Semi, 2015; Semi, 2023; Tozzi, 2023). Justifying its presence is the social and political friction that arose following the first large-scale green regeneration of a Milan neighborhood, Porta Nuova, which took place between 2004 and 2015 (Di Paola, 2019). The episode continues to echo in the Milanese landscape as the green rhetoric of the project exacerbated the privatization and displacement of numerous people, prompting forms of environmental protest and activism (Anguelovski & Connolly, 2021; Caselli & Ferreri, 2013; Di Paola, 2019).

1.1 Research Problem

Reflecting on the experience of Porta Nuova, this research aims to understand how green urbanization projects may positively or negatively impact the identity of the Bovisa neighborhood in Milan and what kind of social, economic, and environmental changes residents foresee. With insights from 17 semi-structured interviews with 22 residents and literature, the research seeks to offer a valuable perspective on how Bovisa residents experience and interpret green urban transformations in their local context, and how these processes may influence their sense of belonging and right to access in the green city.

1.2 Research Questions

Emerging from the aforementioned context, the research questions stem from the desire to analyze how urban regeneration processes labelled by developers as green and sustainable are perceived by the local population, with a particular focus on how the implementation of such projects is aligned with Bovisa's resident's needs, and their 'right to the city'.

1. RQ1: How is the urban greening intervention proposed for the revitalization of Bovisa district perceived by its residents?
2. RQ2: How does the revitalization impact residents' right to the city, in terms of meeting their needs, desires and uses of a green neighborhood?

1.3 Relevance to Sustainability Science

I believe that my thesis closely interconnects with the principles of sustainability science in the broad way that the latter is based on the complexities of social contexts and the interrelationships between people, environment, and values that we find within today's societies (Bansard et al., 2019; Jerneck et al., 2011).

My choice to analyze cities is not accidental but is dictated by the desire to analyze how these spaces, which are mainly responsible for 72% of CO₂ emissions and land consumption, can play a crucial role in promoting local actions, determining adaptation strategies, and urging a transition towards a more sustainable future (European Environment Agency, 2023). Understanding urban contexts today means analyzing their complexities, i.e., how environmental, political, economic, and social challenges intertwine or interplay in a city's development contexts. With my thesis, I aim to explore some of the principles set forth in SDG 11 'Sustainable Cities and Communities', analyzing how in urban regeneration contexts the goals of inclusive and sustainable urbanization (Targets 11.3 and 11.7)

coincide with the needs of the population and the environment (The Global Goals, 2022). Through the lens of right to the city, I dwell on the complexities that the dialectic on growth, innovation and urban transformation often entails and try to understand how citizens' opinions and visions can contribute to making cities concrete centers of social and environmental justice.

1.4 Thesis Roadmap

My thesis begins by providing a brief introduction on the evolution of the Milanese urban context with the aim of providing a general framework on how the city today is perceived as an emerging pole for smart and sustainable regeneration projects and how this aspect has brought issues of social and environmental justice to the surface. Following is a section on the chosen theory, specifically introducing the concepts of green gentrification and the right to the city within the broader framework of urban environmental justice (UEJ). Next, I provide a detailed description of the case study - the Bovisa neighborhood - to give an overview of its historical past and how it now finds itself at the center of ambitious urban regeneration endeavors. After the case study, the research methodology is introduced. In the analysis and discussion section, I analyze my results based on field observations and interviews, in conjunction with the chosen theoretical framework. The conclusion consolidates my research structure, reflecting on the key findings and suggesting future directions for research, all while considering their relevance to the field of Sustainability Science and their implications for the development of green, sustainable cities.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Smart Growth rhetoric behind Sustainable Urban Planning

In today's context, 'smart' cities are keen on promoting a city concept that is economically and energetically sustainable but also 'responsive' to the needs of its citizens according to the EU guidelines (Angelidou et al., 2017; European Commission, n.d.). In this regard, cities are using 'pro-environmental branding strategies' (García-Lamarca et al., 2019, p.93), certifications, labels, and awards to ameliorate their attractiveness as habitable cities and thus justifying the degree of competitiveness with which they face the international scene (Hollands, 2015).

Urban centers are therefore emerging as springboards for the advancement of 'green' growth strategies, with projects increasingly focusing on urban mobility, infrastructure development and the creation of sustainable, state-of-the-art neighborhoods (European Commission, 2023). But how far can this vision of smart and sustainable urban planning extend? Some believe that this 'imaginary', if left unmonitored, cannot go too far (Anguelovski & Connolly, 2021). In fact, it is no coincidence that these models can also lead to new forms of economic and social exclusion, thus calling into question the concept of accessibility to services and infrastructures by citizens. Taylor Buck & While (2016), for example, emphasizes how smart cities catalyst of forms of outsourcing and privatization in the provision of urban services and contribute to create forms of social polarization. So far, what is concerning is that the cases of 'urban entrepreneurialism' and the 'urban greening orthodoxy' (Anguelovski et al., 2018) that accompanies the current mainstream approach to urban regeneration projects and urban space consumption leave little space for the needs and role of citizens (Hollands, 2015, p. 66), consolidating issues of justice and social inclusion (Anguelovski et al., 2018; Azzimonti, 2023). For this very reason, the trend of competitive urbanism in recent times pushes for coherent alternatives that can reintroduce issues of the right to the city and social sustainability, whose related concepts I now turn to unpack in this section of the thesis.

2.2 Unpacking green urban renewal: urban environmental justice, green gentrification, and the right to the city

My theoretical framework chosen for the purpose of my thesis is rooted in the concepts of green gentrification and the right to the city, two concepts that, albeit developed in different periods of time, are consistent critical strands with respect to the contemporary urban development that cities are adopting today. Moreover, I embed this within the broader framework of urban environmental justice, from which green gentrification draws its origins and from which the right to the city finds affinities.

The concept of environmental justice is a dynamic one that over time has moved from looking at distributions of environmental “bads” (toxic waste sites, contaminating industries) to consider notions of recognition justice and socio-spatial impacts to environmental amenities, referring for example to who benefits from the proximity to green spaces, parks, and urban forests (Bullard, 1994; Wang et al., 2021). More recently, studies such as those by Gould & Lewis (2016) have contributed to this theoretical strand by developing new concepts around the theme of distributive and participatory justice, emphasizing the importance of 'who' can access to renovated green spaces and who is excluded (de Sousa Silva et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Based on these assumptions, to date this theory serves as an umbrella for many other theoretical reformulations (de Sousa Silva et al., 2018). Among these, the emphasis in recent times on green access rights and urban gentrification issues highlights the interconnection with new paradigms of study, including the question: who has the right to the city.

2.3 Green gentrification

Within the broad discourse on environmental injustice and gentrification is the relatively new concept of green gentrification. Also referred to as 'environmental' or 'ecological' gentrification, the latter first appeared in Sieg et al. (2004) study on neighborhood's air quality improvements and has since become firmly rooted in the lexicon of critical urban theory (Blok, 2020; Pearsall, 2019). Emerging in the context of so-called sustainable urban development, this theory maintains a focus on the distributional impacts of gentrification while specifically examining the socio-material inequalities resulting from 'greening' practices and the "*appropriation of the economic values of an environmental resource from one class to another*" (Gould & Lewis, 2016, p.25; Blok, 2020).

In the prevailing urban discourse, green amenities – such as rail-to-trail parks, public gardens, greenways, or green streets - positively increase the quality of life and enhance neighborhood's desirability, even prior to their completion (Anguelovski et al., 2019; García-Lamarca et al., 2022; Haase

et al., 2017; Immergluck & Balan, 2017). However, they also contribute to rising housing prices, thereby exacerbating the effects of gentrification, and addressing greater social-spatial inequalities (Anguelovski et al., 2018; Blok, 2020; de Sousa Silva et al., 2018).

In other words, a greening intervention alone can contribute to generating distributional implications (Gould & Lewis, 2016). Likewise, gentrification alone can spur the introduction of new greening initiatives and further amplify the phenomenon (Gould & Lewis, 2016). Such implications include attracting wealthier categories of residents and city-users, including students, and displacing low-income or vulnerable groups to other parts of the city (Blok, 2020; Carvalho et al. 2019; Kenna & Murphy, 2021; Pearsall, 2018). Over time, this contributes to creating 'enclaves of environmental privilege' because the new standard of living and housing prices no longer allows low-income groups to reside in the neighborhood or give them a feeling of not belonging there (Anguelovski et al., 2019). Therefore, the uneven distribution of environmental benefits and privileges contributes to reproducing a condition of environmental injustice (de Sousa Silva et al., 2018) and it raises questions such as, for example, who is entitled to access to green facilities? Who is entitled to benefit from it? (Anguelovski et al., 2018, p.418; Anguelovski & Connolly, 2021).

"Beauty will save the world?" – Semi (2023, p.21).

As ironically stated by G. Semi (2023) in the sentence above, another theme that fits easily into this context of green gentrification is that of 'beautification'. This concept has emerged not only in some interviews under the name 'new aesthetics' but is commonly used in recent years to support the urban regeneration policies of private and public investors. The term itself refers to the cosmetic action with which urban planners propose new redevelopment plans to counter the degradation of neighborhoods (Semi, 2023). According to this language, phenomena such as gentrification appear necessary and function as vehicles for this aesthetic action (Kern, 2021; Semi, 2023). Much literature on the topic of green gentrification emphasizes how green redevelopment is often intentional and serves as a central 'pivot' of current urban development strategies (García-Lamarca et al., 2022; Haase et al., 2017; Immergluck & Balan, 2017). Indeed, the new 'green' and 'sustainable' ethic of urban planning is increasingly promoted by investors as a strategy to attract new commercial and real-estate investment (Anguelovski et al., 2019; Anguelovski & Connolly, 2021). Their win-win strategy, described as beneficial to all urban residents, is then used to fill the 'green gaps' while encouraging the development of so-called 'green rents' and making the neighborhood less diverse (Anguelovski et al., 2018; García-Lamarca et al., 2022). This in some cases has made greening interventions unwelcome from the perspective of marginalized neighborhoods, activists, and residents because of their contradictory impact (Anguelovski, 2015). Green LULUs, an acronym for 'Locally Unwanted Land Uses', are

themselves within a broader strand of criticism related to the concept of 'Urban greening orthodoxy' (Anguelovski, 2015; Anguelovski et al., 2018). This concept posits that such projects tend to exaggerate the beneficial effects of greening initiatives while neglecting to adequately address a democratic dialogue and the political, environmental, and social concerns of local population (Anguelovski et al., 2018; Rigolon & Németh, 2019). This aspect relates to the framework of environmental injustice, and it introduces another strand of interconnection with the concept of the right to the city.

2.4 Right to the city

The paradigm of the right to the city, initially introduced by the French scholar Lefebvre in 1968, remains relevant today in urban contexts as it readily fits within discourses of participatory, environmental, and social justice. Its explicit critique of the capitalist and neoliberal context in which cities have developed calls upon citizens to engage in claiming the right to the city, appropriation, and social inclusion, thus rejecting profit-oriented forms of urbanism still occurring today (Lefebvre, 1968; Purcell, 2013).

In other words, this concept recalls the need to restore centrality to the primary rights of citizens and communities, both those who cannot directly enjoy the benefits of urban life (namely *excluded*) and those who are only superficially included but *aspire* to properly belong to the urban context (Brenner et al., 2012). Hence, in today's urban context dictated by impulses of competitive urbanism and distributive injustices (Harvey, 2008; Hollands, 2015), the urgency of the right to the city arises as a slogan for many social movements to demand the accessibility to urban spaces and services provided (Brenner et al., 2012; Harvey, 2008). In other words, the right to housing, mobility, participation in decision-making processes and access to green spaces become central requirements to guarantee all inhabitants an inclusive citizenship seeking for diversity and social recognition (Robina, 2021; Soja, 2009). The emphasis that this framework places on the participatory approach guarantees the centrality of community planning to introduce a new form of collective power over the process of urbanization, to prevent future excesses and injustices (Robina, 2021). In doing so, it provides the appropriate point of view for understanding how recent processes of urbanization have contributed to accentuating the presence of social-environmental externalities and challenging citizens' own right to the city (Costes, 2011; Navas & Pérez, 2023). Figure 1 summarizes these theoretical frameworks, which I will deploy through a case study of Milan's Bovisa neighborhood.

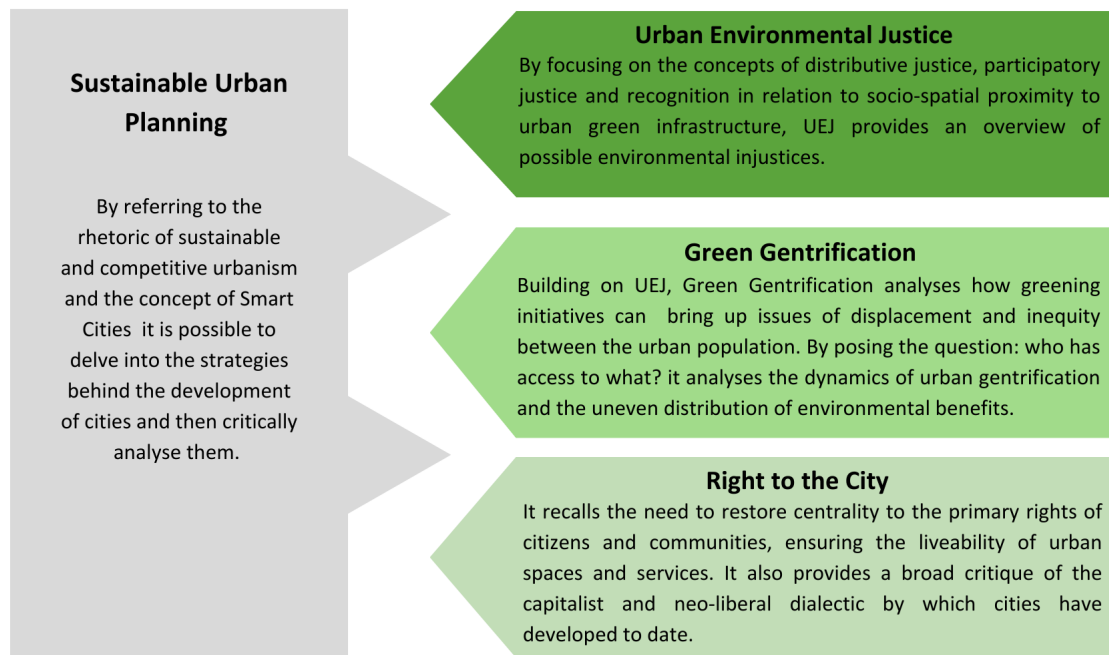


Figure 1. Summary of the chosen theoretical frameworks (own illustration).

Lastly, by referring to the broader framework of critical urban theory, my thesis assumes a critical realism perspective in understanding how reality is shaped and exists beyond the different perceptions of it (Gorski, 2013). I do this since my research analysis is built on citizens' perceptions of social reality that are in contrast with the general constructive discourse of green urban development and have real-world consequences.

3 Case Study

Since the success of the Expo media campaign in 2015, Milan has gained a reputation as a welcoming, young, vibrant and neo-liberal metropole, embracing the rhetoric of the smart city and of its own model 'Modello Milano' (Saibene, 2023; Tozzi, 2023). Therefore, the city seems to strive to remain at the forefront of global trends and to promote ambitious sustainable urban regeneration initiatives, while being seemingly successful at communicating its environmental and social inclusion priorities (Saibene, 2023; Comune di Milano, 2019). However, what lies behind these communication strategies is a reality of an increasingly less inclusive city that progressively relies on private-led investors and strong privatization policies for its development (Balzarotti et al., 2023; Savini & Aalbers, 2016; Tozzi, 2023). To date, this choice has often been criticized for negatively affecting the integrity of adaptation plans to climate challenges and of the accessibility of the services guaranteed to citizens (Azzimonti, 2023). For instance, Tozzi (2023) points out that Milan's urban plans were often drafted to fulfill 'picturesque' visions and allure new investors, often without adequately considering the social costs associated with green urbanization. Indeed, Milan has repeatedly been at the center of debates regarding green gentrification and social justice that have emerged in the course of extensive regeneration of neighborhoods, as was the case for Porta Nuova, City Life and more recently with NoLo (Anguelovski & Connolly, 2021; Caselli & Ferreri, 2013).

According to the latest objectives of the new city's Master Plan, Milan is actively participating in Reinventing Cities, a global competition promoted by C40 Cities to encourage a development plan for carbon-neutral and resilient urban regeneration through public-private cooperation (Comune di Milano, 2019; C40 Cities, 2024; Reinventing Cities, 2021). Nevertheless, this trajectory gives rise to numerous concerns, as most of these endeavors appear to be concentrated in outlying areas, often frequented by socioeconomically disadvantaged populations and susceptible to potential economic and infrastructural shifts (Balzarotti et al., 2023). One of the projects approved by the municipality and C40-Reinventing Cities is the Bovisa Node initiative, destined to play a central role in the overall revitalization of the district north of Milan (Park Associati, n.d.; Reinventing Cities, 2021).

3.1 Bovisa: evidence of a distant past and a future in the making

What makes Bovisa a unique neighborhood is the fact that for years it has produced "*more friction in Milan's gentrification processes*" (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024, p.7), despite its structural configuration making it a potential investment location. Indeed, the neighborhood, located in the north-west of Milan, is of strategic importance both for the presence of the Design and Engineering campuses of the

Milan Politecnico, the Mario Negri Research Institute, and for its location at two important railway junctions (Bovisa Station and Villapizzone) (Moro, 2017), as illustrated in Figure 2 and 5.

The presence of the railway, although it seems to be only a physical feature, has always been a determining factor for the development of the neighborhood and today, it offers the possibility of connecting Bovisa to the city center in less than 8 minutes. Nevertheless, the neighborhood is often described as a city enclave, due to its degraded and sometimes inaccessible conditions (Moro, 2017). Open construction sites, a scarcity of services and spaces of social cohesion for citizens continue to be lacking and contribute to making Bovisa just a crossing point (Grazzini & Bordin, 2017).



Figure 2. Map of Bovisa Neighborhood and of its planned urban development. (Own illustration)

Map of Bovisa District and its planned urban development projects (in purple) according to field observations in date, 28th February to 12th of March 2024. The map also shows the location of the future Nodo Bovisa (Molecola project) and of La Goccia project area, including its planned buildings and the future distribution of green areas (existing, planned and removed).

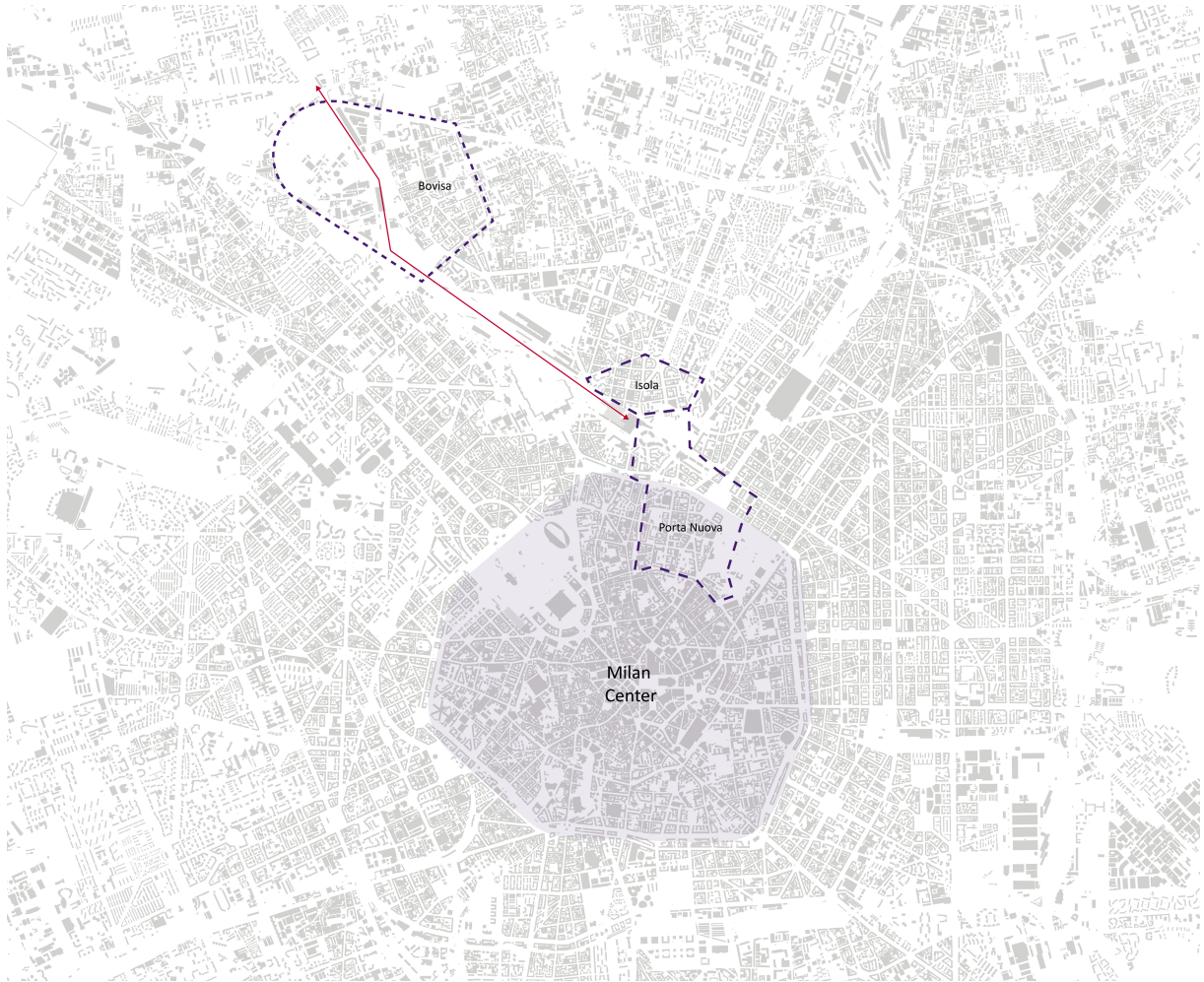


Figure 3. Map of Milan. (Own illustration).

Map of Milan, of its city center (in purple) and of the neighborhoods mentioned in the thesis. As can be seen, the Bovisa neighborhood is located on the same railway trajectory (in pink) as Isola and Porta Nuova neighborhoods.

Today Bovisa is visibly divided into several areas: the railway stands out from the rest of the district, almost creating a border. On the right of the station (see Figure 4) the large industrial sites along Via Candiani and Via Durando now give space to the Campus of Design and Architecture, hosting about 30.000 people (BuroMilan, 2022). Additionally, small service activities have developed near the residential area adjacent to the campus, such as copy shops, bakeries, food shops (Manconi et al., 2011). The district is then composed of a more historic and residential area, developed around two squares, Piazza Bausan and Piazza Schiavone, which remain the two main hubs of the district and host a historical network of associations and traditional crafts.



Figure 4. Right side of Bovisa seen from above. Adapted from Google Earth. (n.d.).

Right side of Bovisa district seen from above showing the Bovisa railway station, *Piazza Alfieri* (square in English) and the Bovisa Node (where the Molecola project will take place) and the University Campus of Via Durando. The image also shows the numerous ‘potholes’ later mentioned in the Results section. The picture was taken in 2023 (according to Google Earth data source) before the beginning of the construction sites.

On the left side of the station, another section of Bovisa can be reached and commonly referred to as the "drop" (in Italian *la goccia*) due to its distinctive drop-shaped configuration (See Figure 5). This area is primarily characterized by the presence of the La Masa Engineering Campus and the former gasometers’ park, and now has remained inaccessible for over three decades due to being sandwiched between two railway lines. With 14.147 residents, the social composition of the district appears today more uneven than the workers and popular of the past: in fact, alongside the historical inhabitants, roughly elderly, a growing immigrant community (approximately 4.840) but also new inhabitants such as students and young families have chosen Bovisa for the relatively low prices compared to the rest of the city (SSI, 2023).



Figure 5. Left side of Bovisa seen from above. Adapted from Google Earth. (n.d.).

Left side of Bovisa district showing both Villapizzone and Bovisa railways stations, the Engineering Campus La Masa and the Goccia area (picture taken in 2023 before construction work began).

3.1.1 From the Industrial Past to present time

The district's origins date back to the early 20th century, when Bovisa was recognized as Milan's industrial periphery par excellence and as a symbol of Lombardy's economic development (Manconi et al., 2011). Starting in the 1970s, with the onset of deindustrialization, the area underwent an inexorable decline and with the closure of the main factories, the district was largely abandoned. It is estimated that only with the arrival of the Milan Politecnico in the early 90s did the district undergo its first transformation. In fact, the university's decision to reuse former factories and warehouses to set up the Durando Campus (Department of Design) helped to requalify part of the area and reintroduce some services to its citizens (Manconi et al., 2011).

While it is evident that the presence of the Politecnico - supplemented by the recent addition of the La Masa Engineering Campus - has contributed significantly to the increased liveliness and foot traffic within the neighborhood, Bovisa continues to be characterized as a transient area (Caserini & Lonardo, 2022). Its attractiveness appears to be primarily contingent upon the periods when students are present on campus for academic activities. Indeed, at weekends it empties out, leaving only a few recreational centers - Lo Spirit de Milan or La Scighera - to dictate the pace on Saturday evenings (Grazzini & Bordin, 2017). This is not the first time that large urban redevelopment projects have attempted to land in Bovisa. Since the 1990s, many international architects and urban planners have proposed to partially redevelop the area, promising ambitious masterplans but only aiming to 'cement' as in the rest of the city (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024; Tozzi, 2023)¹. Nevertheless, the intensification of the current public debate on the state of abandonment of Bovisa, the absence of green and pedestrian spaces and the presence of unusable empty areas seems to have again now brought to the attention of the Milan City Council and urban planners (Grazzini & Bordin, 2017; Reinventing Cities, 2021; Tozzi, 2023). With the revised Territorial Government Plan TGP and the most recent competitions to which Milan has signed up, Bovisa seems to find itself in an important new chapter, with the Molecola and Politecnico projects managing its faith.

¹ In the early 2000s, the architect Rem Koolhaas suggested to requalify the area by building on the only green space still available in Bovisa, that is the former gasometers' park (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024).

3.2 The new Bovisa: Reinventing Cities and La Goccia Project

3.2.1 Molecola Project

Leading the plan for the redevelopment of the railway station and of the right side of the neighborhood is Molecola. The very name of the project - MoLeCoLa Project (Mobility, Learning, Community, Lab) - aims to mend the spaces divided by the railway network and create an innovative district with a specific focus on mobility and recreational spaces for citizens and students (Park Associati, n.d.). The project, which is estimated to cover 90,000 m² and to be finished by 2026, is therefore expected to redevelop the spaces around the station, in turn providing green areas and hosting co-working and housing spaces for students and new future residents (see Figure 6) (Park Associati, n.d.). As already mentioned, this project is part of a broader framework of competitions in which Milan has chosen to participate.



Figure 6. Nodo Bovisa (Comune di Milano, 2021).

Molecola Masterplan, according to the official renderings published on the Municipality website.

3.2.2 La Goccia Project and the Urban forest

On the opposite side of Molecola and of the train station, the new Politecnico project for the Goccia began construction at the end of 2023. Under the signature of star architect Renzo Piano² - aims to expand the university campus by creating a zero Co₂ emissions scientific and innovation hub that will involve:

“The construction of 20 new four-story buildings, each with a height 16 meters, for a total of about 105,000 m²; the creation of paved pedestrian and bike alleys; the establishment of a sport center accessible to both citizens and students and the preservation of 24 hectares of the la Goccia park” (Politecnico di Milano, 2022).

The new campus is planned to be developed within the former gasometers area, incorporating some of the existing industrial facilities while also introducing new ones to accommodate additional student residences (approximately 500 spots), civic schools and start-up spaces *“all in the name of an accessible, sustainable and innovative campus, open to the city and conducive to the exchange of ideas and functions”* (Politecnico di Milano, 2022). Although the urban intervention may seem advantageous in that it promises to redevelop a hitherto inaccessible area, it has in fact raised many concerns, especially from citizens who have long fought to protect the park adjacent to the gasometers area (Grazzini & Bordin, 2020). The main reason for this concern arises from the fact that the park, which to date is home to more than 2000 different species of trees and covers an area of 33 hectares, is a unique case of an urban forest (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024). For years, thanks to the support of a committee that has defended it, the area has been preserved from ongoing real estate speculations and attempts to designate it solely as 'urban void' and potential building site (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024). Today, the intervention of the Politecnico represents a challenge and raises doubts about the university's real commitment to preserve the area as a 'common good' since any type of neighboring intervention could jeopardize the integrity of the surrounding green site (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024).

² Renzo Piano is an internationally renowned Italian architect who has received numerous honors for his contribution to architecture, including the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1998, one of the most prestigious awards in the field (Architectuur, 2020).

4 Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The design of my research fits the structure of the single case study as it is described in Flyvberg, (2011). This choice aligns with my intention to investigate in detail the impact of redevelopment projects implemented in a single neighborhood, Bovisa, thus focusing on its spatial limitations (Clark et al., 2021; Flyvbjerg, 2011). By doing so, I have therefore drawn a physical boundary to my context of analysis - corresponding to the very limits of the neighborhood - to focus on the current and future spaces of redevelopment (See Figure 2). Furthermore, I opted for this type of focus because it is more conducive to engage with the neighborhood's population to understand and map their opinions and perceptions on the case.

This also aligns with the qualitative study method I chose for my research (Clark et al., 2021). Through reviewing grey literature including official city plans, developers' projects, real estate prices and online public interviews, I have also gained a more general picture of the issue, working as well from what has happened previously in other nearby neighborhoods in Milan (Di Paola, 2019) and the gentrification trends that have been recorded at the urban level. However, I did so by considering the limitations of the individual case study as mentioned in Flyvberg (2011) and I made sure to maintain a certain kind of continuity with the case and the chosen theoretical framework but not generalizing it.

4.2 Research Method

The decision to center my analysis on the different citizen's perceptions significantly influenced both the choice of my research questions and the trajectory of my research strategy.

Initially, I conducted background research on urban developments in Milan and the latest projects sanctioned by the Municipality, aimed at fulfilling the 2030 objectives as outlined in the city's TGP (Comune di Milano, 2019). This preliminary investigation guided me to detect a specific area of interest and formulate the context for my first research question, focusing on the district of Bovisa. Wanting to know the perspectives of citizens, since they are considered as a crucial and indisputable legitimizing factor to the concept of right of the city (Ročak & Keinemans, 2023), I decided to focus on their perceptions of redevelopment projects. I felt it necessary to conduct field observations and interviews to obtain material not available online, also given the premature state of redevelopment projects. After confirming the feasibility of conducting a qualitative investigation into upcoming neighborhood changes, as supported by the announcement effect theory (Cho et al., 2020; Immergluck & Balan, 2017), I started gathering data on Bovisa and preparing for the subsequent phase of my research.

4.2.1 Announcement Effect

It has been shown that the mere announcement of urban green redevelopment projects can generate significant social and economic distresses within the nearby communities (Cho et al., 2020). Immergluck & Balan (2017) attest that in the early stages, a project can facilitate progressive gentrification and influencing services' prices. In particular, the "Announcement Effect" deriving from an urban green project itself, as described by Cho et al. (2020) and Anguelovski et al. (2019), increases the desirability of the area, helping to raise the value of neighboring properties and attract new social classes. These findings have thus provided a foundation for justifying my research context and contributed to refining my analysis of the above mentioned social and economic issues.

4.2.2 Data Collection

Desk-based research was used to collect much of the data on the industrial past and urban evolution of the Bovisa district, supplemented by photographs and local publications, media articles and books about Milan published only in Italian or by local organizations gathered during fieldwork. All data collected were used to learn about the history of the neighborhood and to properly structure the interviews.

Before reaching out for interviews, I mapped community actors based on a detailed analysis of the neighborhood, including the distribution of services and areas of interconnection. This process allowed me to identify the area of the university campus, the station, and public spaces (such as squares, libraries, and supermarkets) as the most relevant areas for my research and analysis. Initially, I adopted a purposive sampling strategy to select the community actors that I wanted to interview (Knott et al., 2022). I identified potential interviewees through previous research based on internet searches (especially on social media and maps) and reviews of local media articles, podcasts, and published books. Subsequently, I spent more than two weeks in March 2024 undertaking fieldwork in Bovisa, conducting 17 semi-structured interviews with several types of people: neighborhood and citywide residents, local shop-owners, students and professors from the nearby University, and representatives of community-based initiatives and associations. I also interviewed two residents and activists in the Isola district, members of the first community-led garden space in the city (named Isola Pepe Verde).

Most of the interviews were conducted in the Bovisa district, often in public places, and except for a few specific cases, most interviewees signed written consent for recording the interview. Thanks to the semi-structured interview model (Knott et al., 2022) it was possible to adapt the questions to the type of people interviewed, while maintaining a range of 12-14 questions and the same overarching structure. In most cases, the interviews were conducted individually or in groups of three and were all

held in Italian (see Appendix 2). Each interview included specific questions about the past present and future of the neighborhood, in particular emphasizing how citizens perceived urban developments in the neighborhood, the presence and access to green spaces, and future revitalization projects. In addition, questions on the development of new green infrastructure, changes in the social composition of the neighborhood, and issues of inclusion and social justice were considered. The fieldwork produced 17 interviews, all of which subsequently transcribed.

4.2.3 Data Analysis

To analyze the interviews, I opted to conduct a thematic analysis with the support of the analytical software Nvivo. This method was chosen to facilitate the categorization of interviews into specific themes, enabling the identification of potential interconnections between collected testimonies and the selected theoretical framework (Clark et al., 2021). The coding system was initially carried out following the same structure as the research questions and thus adopting a deductive type of analysis. Subsequently, as the initial responses were analyzed, additional codes were incorporated, leading to the adoption of an inductive approach (Knott et al., 2022) (See Appendix 3).

4.3 Positionality

I am aware of my positionality and of the biases that could potentially influence this research, in the people interviewed, the questions asked, the analysis of the results and the different choices made during my writing process. Prior to conducting my fieldwork, I took time to reflect on my own identity as a white, privileged woman with an environmentalist and anti-capitalist perspective. I also acknowledge that my Italian origins constituted an advantage in understanding the cultural context underling Bovisa, enabling me to delve into specific urban issues more deeply. When drafting the interview and during the conducting itself, I made sure that my questions left room for the interviewees to express themselves freely, without feeling restricted or overly guided. The very choice of using a semi-structured interview method I believe allowed me to tailor each encounter to the needs and positionality of the person I interviewed. Furthermore, I always tried to interview people in their neighborhood and possibly outdoors, precisely to avoid them feeling uncomfortable. This this research was conducted according to the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council. All interviews were conducted with respect for confidentiality and initials were used in the transcriptions to maintain interviewees' anonymity. All data were handled and stored with precaution in accordance with the guidelines provided.

4.4 Limitations

Before proceeding to the results section, it is worth examining the limitations encountered during this research in the context of the five months available to research and write the thesis. First, the focus of my thesis on a revitalization project still in the development phase prevented comprehensive coverage and discussion with all citizens regarding the possible impacts and consequences of such revitalization. In addition, there was the difficulty of interacting directly with the neighborhood's ethnic minorities, both due to their unavailability on the days I was on fieldwork and the language barriers encountered. During the only interview conducted with a foreign person, the language difficulties of the counterpart jeopardized the proper conduct of the semi-structured interview. It should therefore be emphasized that my conclusions - also regarding the limitations of the case study itself - cannot be generalized to the entire population of the neighborhood due to the limited sample size of the persons interviewed and the limited time in which my fieldwork was conducted.

5 Results

5.1 First RQ: Perceptions

RQ1: *How is the urban greening intervention proposed for the revitalization of Bovisa district perceived by its residents?*

The green urban intervention proposed for the redevelopment of Bovisa can be said to be perceived by most interviewees as an inevitable and necessary intervention. Some justify the inevitability of Bovisa's urban renewal by confirming that they are used to these changes, as it is nothing different from the development logic with which Milan has promoted other redevelopments of entire neighborhoods, such as Porta Nuova, Citylife or Nolo (J.T; L.V; B.Z; personal communication). However, concerns emerged in interviews regarding the potential negative consequences that this change could bring in terms of green gentrification, neighborhood's identity loss and additional soil consumption. The next sections outline these positive and negative perceptions according also to the Figure 7 here below.

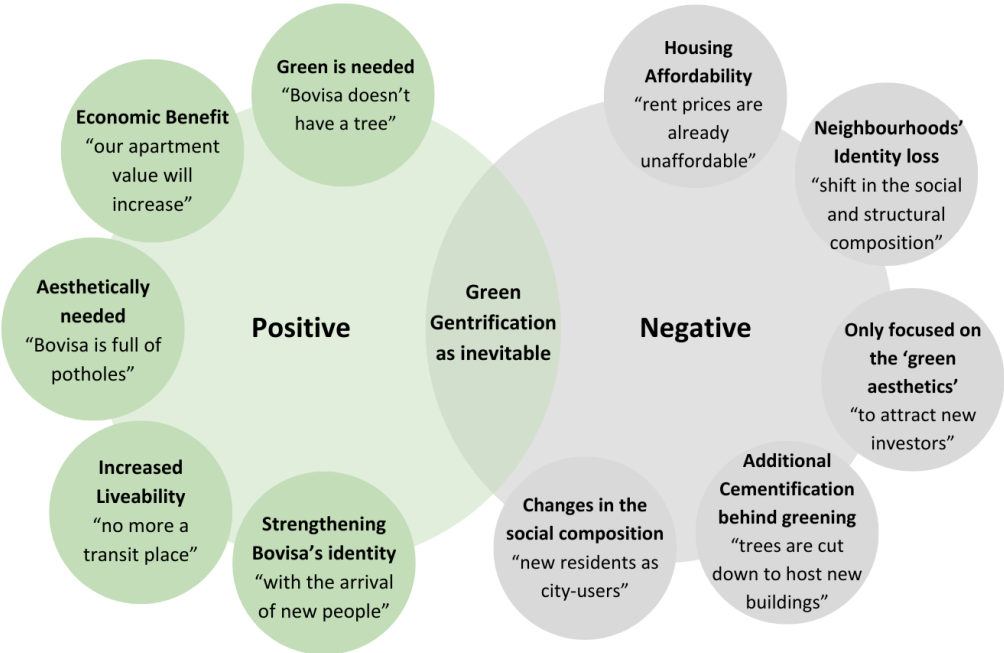


Figure 7. Visual representation of citizen’s perception in relation to RQ1 (own illustration).

5.1.1 Positive Perceptions: Restoring identity to a neighborhood where "there are no trees, only potholes"

In interviews, students and residents have admitted to enthusiastically perceiving the neighborhood redevelopment as they believe that Bovisa's current structural conditions are too precarious and non-functional to provide all the necessary services (B.Z., D.C., E.D., L.P., personal communication). In particular, many have emphasized how the change induced by the Molecola and Politecnico project could lead to aesthetic improvement and introduce greenery into a neighborhood where until now "there are only potholes" (B.Z., M.M., personal communication) (see Figure 4). Indeed, many comments have emerged from the conversations about the lack of green spaces and the presence of long-standing construction sites, which do not allow for outdoor recreational spaces to be created (see also Figure 5). With the Molecola project, for example, some residents hope that new recreational spaces will be provided near the station and that the addition of student housing will allow students to reside full-time in the neighborhood (L.V., G.R₍₁₎, personal communication).

Other residents, referring to the Goccia Project, are confident that the attention given to the planning of the new campus and the recovery of the forest area will highlight a part of Bovisa that is currently not frequented (G.R₍₂₎, E.D., L.P., personal communication). All this will provide the necessary 'initial push' to make the neighborhood more livable and strengthen the bond between students, new residents, and the rest of the neighborhood with green spaces (E.D., R3*, R1*, B.Z., personal communication). Many residents would hope that the redevelopment process could facilitate the formation of a new identity for the Bovisa neighborhood, which some believe has been lost or weakened over time (M.M., personal communication) (see Table 1). There is hope that the attractiveness of the new spaces will contribute to the arrival of new people and transform Bovisa from a mere transit location to an environment where people desire to settle and live (L.V., personal communication). However, faced with the prospect of green gentrification, some admit to seeing it as a completely natural (R1*, R2*, R4*, R5*, personal communication) and inevitable phenomenon, and those owning their homes admitted that they could benefit from it since the property value of their apartment could rise (N.B., L.V., personal communication). See Table 1 below for additional perceptions.

Table 1. Positive perceptions gathered during the interviews (own illustration).

	Positive Perceptions
R1*; R3*;R4*	"In Bovisa, there's really hardly anything"
R1*	"But I am very positive, in the sense that I have a very positive outlook on these future projects...we need them, especially here as there is very little in Bovisa at the moment. It's a necessary change"
R4*; R5*; R6*	"There are no green spaces here, none at all except for a few semi-asphalted gardens"
N.B.	"In my opinion, it's a positive thing [...] compared to today, Bovisa doesn't have... I mean, it doesn't have a tree" "We now see the site with the iron grate then with the weeds [...] we are happy. Then I can imagine that there are conflicting opinions but we are happy"
L.P.	"The redevelopment of the area seems to me to be [suitable] both in terms of building structures and aesthetics"
G.R ₍₁₎	"The integration of projects between the university and the surrounding area, in my opinion, would be essential"
L.V.	" [...] five six years ago they envisaged [Bovisa as] a bad place to come to study and live Today with the transformation [...] living here could create a new identity" " [with] the presence of low-cost housing, houses, offices, design and work places [...] perhaps a student instead of deciding to leave after three years [...] remain and thus [this will] create a new identity that is transformed from the past identity of those who worked inside the factories"

5.1.2 Negative Perceptions: a neighborhood revitalization, but at what cost?

Despite recognizing the need for revitalization, many of the interviewed individuals expressed concerns regarding the potential changes these projects could bring in terms of the social and housing composition in the neighborhood. According to some, Bovisa has already undergone significant changes in terms of housing due to the arrival of the Politecnico, which is already putting low-income families and students in difficulty in the area as "rent prices for apartments are already unaffordable, as you can't find a two-room apartment for less than 1000 euros a month [...] if you find one for 800, you're lucky" (L.B., personal communication). In the book by the Comitato la Goccia, it is commented: "While the scent of money unnecessarily spreads in the neighborhood, no one can find a single, double, or triple room at a decent price, neither for sale nor for rent" (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024). Over half are aware that the completion of the two projects could lead to a further increase in rents, thus fueling the ongoing gentrification process since "in the last four years, the property value has risen, I think, by 35%" (L.V., personal communication). According to D.C. and J.T., these 'green' projects will only push part of the resident population to other peripheral areas or to the province of Milan, "which means

that the city is emptying out and becoming a city of the rich who have more uninhabited houses because they are all rented to tourists". While according to B.Z., the redevelopment could lead to a further loss of local shops and of the neighborhood dimension.

This type of vision is further consolidated by skepticism towards the assurance that the added 'green' and sustainability of the projects themselves will only bring benefits to the neighborhood (L.B., F.G, E.S, J.T., personal communication). Especially with reference to the Goccia forest, there is a fear that the green space will effectively be used as a park for students and not as a forest (L.B., F.B., personal communication). L.B. adds that with Molecola, there will be nothing more than "trees on the balconies and that's it", ironically commenting on how the redevelopment is only focused on the aesthetics of greenery to attract new investors. Not by chance, the same investors, Hines, who led the controversial re-qualification of the Porta Nuova and Isola districts (Brizioli, 2015; Di Paola, 2019) are involved in the Molecola project and this raise concerns that the same problematic effects may occur.

5.1.2.1 City-users and students, but no citizens

According to J.T. and R1*, the international dimension, already made invisible by the student rhetoric of the neighborhood, is destined to change further. "If they want to build student housing, then maybe more students will stay, but I expect that new families of different social classes will also arrive, given [two areas³ adjacent to Bovisa] are already changing as well" (M.M., personal communication). With the offer of more student housing, more 'wealthy students' will stay or move to the area, but this will inevitably lead to more conflict with those who already resides there, especially in the innermost areas of the neighborhood (R1*, J.T., personal communication). With this gentrification hypothesis, according to J.T., soon there will be:

"a new population that is not a stationary population but transitory, which may stay maybe [...] for university or for a job opportunity that lasts for a certain period, and in fact, it is increasingly used in urban planning jargon [...] [as] an idea of city users who are those who do not have a strong attachment to the neighborhood because they live there little" (J.T., personal communication).

³ Referring to the Scalo Farini area, which is a former railway yard located between the Bovisa and Isola districts and currently subject of a major urban regeneration project (see Figure 3).

5.1.2.2 A grayer future instead of a green one

In addition to concerns regarding social changes in the area, worries were also expressed about its physical configuration. Besides being recently described as a neighborhood full of open construction sites, there is fear that the projects will lead to further soil consumption. Heading towards the Durando Campus, "for a couple of years they have dug a pit that has remained open [...] meanwhile, the trees that overlooked via Durando were cut down, like the others along via Andreoli" (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024, p.126). This perception is primarily consolidated by the Goccia Committee and the testimony of F.G., who recounts in the book the failed attempt to transform a dilapidated space with some trees in via Donadoni into a small community garden for residents. However, the permits obtained by Molecola led the Municipality to decide in 2022 to cut down the trees and allocate the land for sale for the construction of residential buildings intended for social purposes and issuing a call for tenders to allocate the land for a symbolic cost of one euro (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024).

To this paradox is added the episode of the clear-cutting of 50 trees for the construction of the Deng (Department of Energy) and the mission with which the Goccia Project aims to restore the abandoned gasometer area in a sustainable perspective, however, building "20 four-story buildings that will be taller than the trees themselves" and thus making 'a cement pour' (L.B., D.C., personal communication; Grazzini & Bordin, 2024). Finally, to consolidate this dialectic, there is the TGP which for years recognized the Goccia area only as a former industrial area, continuing to recognize it as a buildable land (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024). J.T. emphasizes how the Goccia forest is *already* an example of sustainable development as a place that has naturalized over time without human intervention. And he adds: "if you already have nature available but why do you have to say that you are going to redevelop [...]" (See Table 2).

Table 2. Negative perceptions gathered during the interviews (Own illustration).

	Negative Perceptions
L.B.	<p>“Molecola is Citylife number two...so go and see what Citylife is like and that's what Molecola will be like”</p> <p>“[Referring to the Molecola project] is only gonna have trees on the balconies [...] or surrounded with cement”</p>
D.C.	<p>“ [Referring to the greening intervention in Bovisa] the real estate values of houses are increasing, with all the social transformations [...] which means that the neighborhood is transformed, the population is changing, and people with more money tend to move in, so those who used to live here, perhaps on rent, are no longer able to afford it because everything has obviously increased [...]”</p> <p>“This means that the city empties out and becomes the city of the rich because [their houses] are all rented out to tourists, as is happening in many tourist cities around the world, where neighborhoods are no longer inhabited by citizens but by tourists”</p>
B.Z.	"We insist on building shopping centers and mega-cities, but we lose the neighborhood dimension".
J.T.	<p>"All these projects [are] aimed at changing the neighborhood, giving it a new voice, image, and that anyway depicts what is already there as something negative and what will come as the thing that will bring wealth..."</p> <p>“[Referring to the Goccia green area] “Why is there this need to redesign absolutely everything? When there is already natural space?”</p>
F.B.	“With these projects or with Molecola [they only] serve to attract other investment funds because it is very chic”

5.2. Second RQ: Right to the city

RQ2: *How does the revitalization impact residents’ right to the city, in terms of meeting their needs, desires and uses of a green neighborhood?*

Although citizens' opinions regarding the redevelopment of Bovisa are mixed, interviews reveal a common denominator concerning fundamental themes of the right to the city that reflect citizens' needs for accessible housing, democratic participation, access to green spaces, and, in a broader sense, a city model that inclusively promotes citizens' needs and desires. See Figure 8 below.

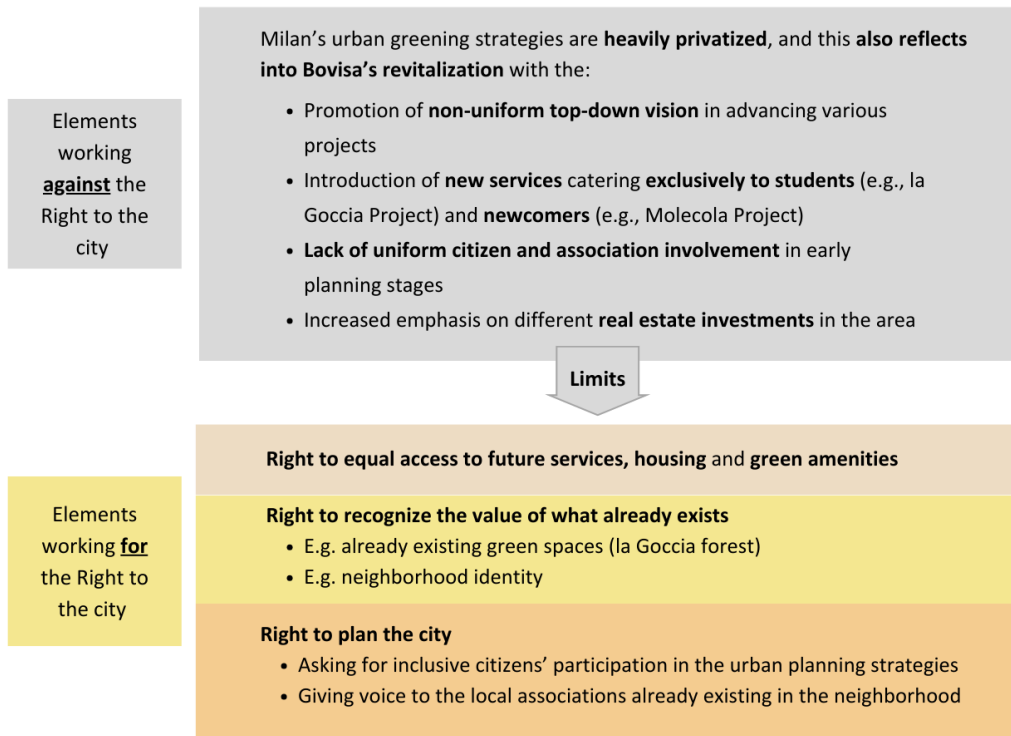


Figure 8. visual representation of the main findings related to RQ2 (own illustration).

5.2.1 Dreaming of rights to access services and green spaces

A recurring theme among the interviewees is the right to access services and especially the new green spaces "promised" with the redevelopment. Regardless of the type of opinion expressed about the projects, all citizens emphasize the need to have free access to the future services offered. However, there are skepticism and concerns expressed. For instance, F.B. states: "[...] the promised greenery will only be made available to the new residents". Or the fear that access to the new sports campus of the Politecnico may be too costly and prioritize students, reducing accessibility to the forest for other residents (See Appendix 1). Despite the emphasis put by the Politecnico and Renzo Piano's speech on the connection between residents and the university campus (BuroMilan, 2022; L.V., personal communication), L.B. draws the attention to the fact that the only library in the neighborhood is owned by the Politecnico and that one must pay 100 euros per year to access it. And adds: "talk about inclusive space [referring to the paddle courts and the underground swimming pool that will be introduced in the Goccia area] there's an untouched forest and instead, they're building an underground swimming pool".

Citizens share a vision of Bovisa as a sustainable neighborhood that guarantees access to all spaces and housing "without having to go elsewhere or rebuild them" (M.M., personal communication). Therefore, there is a reiterated need for citizens to want to live in an "area where in addition to studying, one can also live" (G.R₍₁₎, personal communication) and where in addition to the attention given to students, spaces for socializing, cinemas, theaters are provided without forcing citizens to take the car (See Appendix 1).

5.2.1.1 Parco Sempione, an urban forest or Molecolas' little garden?

To consolidate the city's debate on the issue of access, there is a reference to the Goccia area. Among those who hope it could become an accessible park like Parco Sempione (B.Z, L.V., N.Z, personal communication), there are those who emphasize how this approach could jeopardize the biodiversity of the area and fail to highlight that it is a forest and not a typical park with "mown grass" (G.R₍₂₎, L.B., E.S, personal communication). F.B. expresses fear that the forest could become Molecola's 'giardinetto' (in English, little garden), contextualized within the aesthetic trends with which urban parks are currently being developed (Grazzini & Bordin). Beneath these debates lies a much broader issue, namely the lack of recognition for years of the Goccia space as an 'urban forest' and as an accessible area, as it was declared polluted (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024). In the interview, J.T. emphasizes how current urban development leads to perceiving spaces as belonging to humans and not nature, leading to the belief that "only what has been rebuilt has the right to exist, while what already exists (the forest) is not recognized as an existing right", as reflected in the photograph in Figure 9.



Figure 9. La Goccia area seen from outside. (Targa, 2024, personal communication).

Picture of one of the bordering walls around the Goccia's area. The inscription in yellow says "behind this wall there's the la Goccia forest", almost as if to alert citizens to the existence of the La Goccia's green space and indirectly remind them of its value.

5.2.2 Limited participation

Interviews with BovisAttiva and the la Goccia Committee suggest that citizen participation in the initial phase of the Bovisa redevelopment took place. However, some believe that it only happened strategically and that it did not occur in the case of the Molecola project (Interviews; Grazzini & Bordin, 2024). In 2015, during the initial design phase of the Goccia area, approximately 30 citizens, including members of the La Goccia Committee and BovisAttiva, were invited to participate in the '*Ascoltiamo Bovisa*' (translated as Listening Bovisa) workshop to engage in a visioning exercise on the future of the gasometer space. The common vision that emerged focused on the need to preserve the greenery of the area and respect its industrial identity, leading to construction only on existing platforms (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024). In the case of the Committee, the visioning also included the idea of introducing vegetable gardens, educational farms, and cultural spaces, and relocating the newly designed energy department (Deng) to an already cemented area. As mentioned earlier, despite there being an 'apparent' listening, the construction of the Deng led to the felling of 50 trees in lot 1A, demonstrating the ability of institutions and investors to "ungracefully slip past the opinions of us citizens" (F.B., personal communication).

Furthermore, both L.V. and L.B. emphasize the need to give more autonomy to Milan's district-municipalities, especially at the political-administrative level. L.V., for example, points out that in the current configuration of Milan, the district's municipalities have neither budget nor any power, even though they are decentralized poles and better able to represent citizens' needs (See Appendix 1). Adding to this, B.Z. suggests that greater autonomy in the areas of public decorum and green management would facilitate the overall revitalization process in the neighborhood.

5.2.3 The '*spezzatino*' of urban regeneration in Bovisa

During interviews with members of BovisAttiva, the La Goccia Committee, and some citizens, a common feeling of frustration arises regarding the difficulty residents face in making their voices heard in contexts where projects are promoted by private investors and seem detached from advancing the community's needs. The reference to the term '*spezzatino*', referring to the type of minced meat in Italian (L.B., personal communication) used by the La Goccia Committee for the Goccia area, precisely evokes this idea of division. M.M. emphasizes how in the case of Bovisa, there has never been a uniform top-down vision and that everyone does a bit of "what they want and based on their

interests". J.T. points out how this is nothing new compared to the development of Milan's model that has been promoting for some time and what happened in other neighborhoods like Isola or Nolo (K. M., B.C., personal communication). More and more areas in Bovisa are developing along this trend and, especially referring to social housing and student residences, this has led to "presenting private development as benefiting the public even though it's not really the case" (J.T., D.C., personal communication). This is because, as L.B. and D.C. say, by building social housing or services on green spaces, development rights are not consumed, and construction can continue elsewhere. The same applies to the case of the gasometer area since the Politecnico aims to build new buildings for civic schools (Politecnico di Milano, 2022).

"The regeneration projects also gain legitimacy in the common imagination because people say, well, they're building affordable housing for low-income people because that's what they're trying to communicate, but when you go and see the reality of the situation, it's not like that." (D.C., personal communication).

In the past year alone, the price of flats per m² in Bovisa and close by has increased by 5 %, at an average price of EUR 4.027 /m² (Immobiliare.it, 2024). G.R₍₂₎ from Terrapreta⁴ explains that urban regeneration today is only a matter of words because in the current model of the city, financial urbanism, the value of land depends on the value of real estate investment from which gain can be obtained. J.T. also adds that urban development is now "only thought of in terms of real estate income [...] Cities transform for this reason, not for people [...] but because they are increasingly attractive to investors". And G.R₍₂₎ adds that only when this value no longer has priority can communities and populations voice their own needs again (See Appendix 1).

5.2.4 Enacting the right to the city: citizen participation and bottom-up strategies

While neighborhood-level participation with institutions and private actors has been limited, citizens have emphasized the emergence of grassroots forms of active participation over the years, enabling the expression of these needs. The chance to carry out fieldwork has provided me with the opportunity to meet members of BovisAttiva, Terrapreta, Isola Pepe Verde and almost all the Comitato la Goccia in person, enabling me to explore their backgrounds and their outlooks on the future of Bovisa, the key elements of which are described in Table 3.

⁴ Terrapreta and Isola Pepe Verde are going to be introduced in the following table (Table 3).

Table 3. Mapping out citizen associations in Bovisa and Isola: their claims and actions (own illustration).

	Association	Action	Claim
BoviAttiva	<p>The neighborhood committee was formed in 2015.</p> <p>Approximately 40 members.</p>	<p>Organizing events and initiatives for residents, including Italian lessons for foreigners, and markets.</p> <p>Advocated to prevent further felling of trees for new supermarkets in the Bovisa area. E.g. BoviAttiva opposed the demolition of Villa Pogliani and its private garden and urged the intervention of institutions to transform it into a common good.</p>	<p>Providing a form of civic participation in the neighborhood.</p> <p>Acted as representatives for the neighborhoods' needs and as intermediaries with District-Municipality 9 and the Municipality of Milan.</p> <p>Ensuring community voices are heard in decision-making processes.</p>
Comitato La Goccia	<p>The committee was formed in 2012.</p> <p>Approximately 15 members.</p>	<p>Fought for 12 years to preserve La Goccia forest against speculation and development attempts.</p> <p>Organized meetings, protests and sculpture exhibitions to involve citizens in protection efforts.</p> <p>Blocked forest destruction proposal for two years and mobilized citizens to protect the forest's untouched nature.</p> <p>Wrote a book about the Comitato's commitment to defend the area.</p>	<p>Acted as the primary "legal" guardian of the urban forest, preventing "opaque urban planning agreements" and development proposals.</p> <p>Successfully influenced the Politecnico's Masterplan to preserve a portion of the forest.</p> <p>Strived for the preservation of the Goccia forest as a valuable cultural and environmental asset accessible to the entire community.</p>
Terrapreta	<p>The association was officially formed in 2021 by an informal group of architects and nature experts.</p> <p>Approximately 8 members.</p>	<p>Initiated sample mapping of the area of the Goccia forest to assess its value and ecosystem services and conducted tree census in 2023 involving citizens on biodiversity protection.</p> <p>Collaborated with the Politecnico to map out the area's path and mobility for gradual use.</p> <p>Established La Goccia Observatory, a platform to raise awareness and protect the area's biodiversity, aiming to transform it into an "open-air museum".</p>	<p>Advocate for natural-based solutions (NBS) and collaborate with grassroots organizations and institutions like Milan City Council and Politecnico to monitor, remediate, and propose protection of the area.</p> <p>Stress on the importance of managing biodiversity impacts gradually, making it gradually accessible to the public as a cultural and educational resource.</p>
Isola Pepe Verde (Isola neighborhood)	<p>Formed as a bottom-up association in 2010 during Porta Nuova redesigning phase.</p> <p>Approximately 300 volunteers.</p>	<p>Created the first community garden in Milan.</p> <p>Recognized as first example of shared community garden and in 2019 recognized as a green space by the Municipality.</p>	<p>Believes in fostering community cohesion through direct interaction with nature.</p> <p>Demonstrated the potential of shared public goods and community-driven initiatives during the neighborhood's redevelopment phase.</p>

6 Discussion

One of the most recurring arguments in my findings is that Bovisa's large-scale green intervention concretizes the exclusive model of urban development with which the city of Milan presents itself on the international stage. While this vision is supported by the developers and private investors involved in the redesign - the City Council, the Politecnico and Reinventing Cities - the citizens of Bovisa, according to RQ1, seem to hold contrasting visions regarding the benefits this revitalization could bring. Although the new face of the district is not yet fully completed, residents are already raising important questions about their right to participate in the city, access the new green spaces, and enjoy their neighborhood without feeling threatened by the processes of green gentrification and studentification (see Results RQ2). Because of limited space in the following sections, I will provide a detailed explanation of the five main findings presented in Figure 10 below in relation to my theoretical framework.

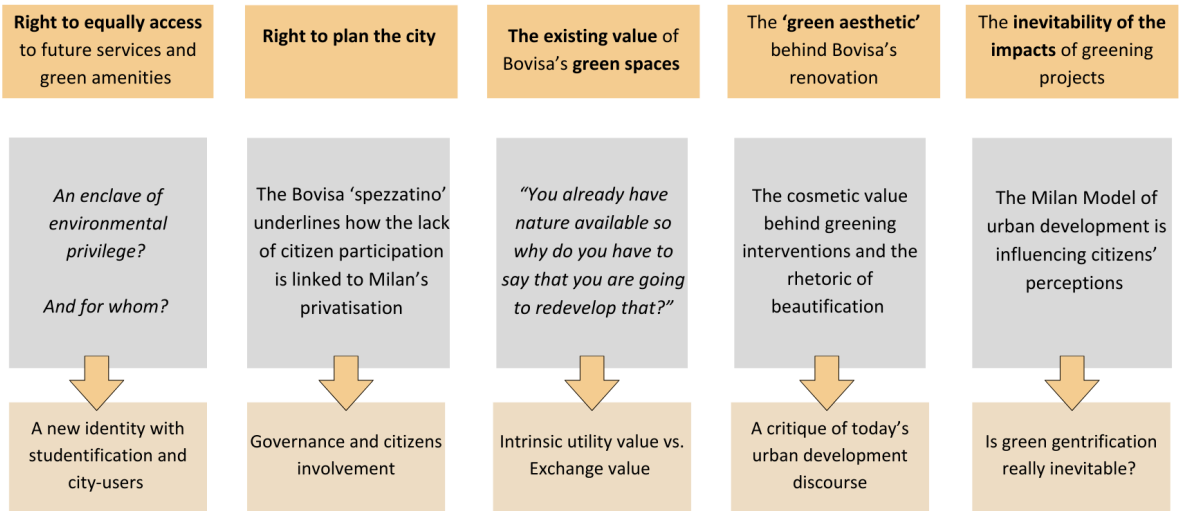


Figure 10. Visual representation of key findings explored in the discussion (own illustration).

6.1 An enclave of environmental privilege

Having already witnessed a rapid process of gentrification in recent years, residents emphasize the Lefebvrerian need to actively participate in the construction of the neighborhood's new face, without the redevelopment entailing a drastic change in its social and structural composition. In answering RQ2, the mention of the risks that urban transformation could pose to Bovisa's identity, for example by creating spaces of housing and environmental privilege, raises important questions of distributive justice and the right to the city as described by Gould & Lewis (2016) and Harvey (2008). In fact, some

citizens look at the greening intervention of the Molecola project as aesthetically projected to serve a new class of more wealthy residents and an overly “chic” and exclusive neighborhood idea that does not coincide with the one currently present in Bovisa. Upon observing the distribution of greening interventions in the district (see Figure 2) it becomes evident that these efforts predominantly target the proximity surrounding the station and the University Campus. Notably, the innermost areas of Bovisa - where different families and ethnic groups reside – lack direct access to these newly established spaces. As Haase et al. (2017) advance this factor contributes to exacerbating the risks of future green gentrification, leading to further unequal socio-spatial distributions (de Sousa Silva et al., 2018). The apprehensions articulated by the Comitato la Goccia regarding the prospective conversion of la Goccia forest into Molecola's private garden implicitly raises concerns over the likelihood of exclusive access being granted solely to future residents, residing in the upscale apartments built as part of the Piazza Alfieri project. Moreover, the increase in real estate value following the announcement of the Masterplan indicates how urban greenery also in the case of Bovisa is interpreted as added value and used in the form of 'green rent' to facilitate the appropriation of exclusive rents by investors and wealthier segments of the population (Anguelovski et al., 2018). The potential exclusivity of the new amenities raises serious questions about who will be able to benefit from such spaces in the future and reflects the theories with which Anguelovski et al. (2018), de Sousa Silva et al. (2018), Gould & Lewis (2016), Immergluck & Balan (2017) expose the risks of today's green urbanization practices.

6.1.1 Studentification and city-users

The concern of witnessing the emergence of an enclave of environmental privilege (Gould & Lewis, 2016) leads to a reflection on the future social landscape of the neighborhood. While answering to RQ1 and RQ2 some interviewees already confirm that the presence of students partly obscures the international dimension present in the neighborhood, with the realization of new university services and student accommodations, it is believed that this will further accentuate inequalities. Additionally, in the interviews it is emphasized that the presence of students already affects Bovisa's identity by dictating transit times and opening hours for shops, and distinctly separating the student area from the internal one⁵, which is often frequented by different ethnic groups. However, behind this observation lies a much more complex dynamic.

⁵ The student area is the one around the two campuses while the innermost part runs around Piazza Bausan and the parts bordering the adjacent neighbourhood, Dergano (see Figure 2 and 4 as a reference).

Students, in fact, are the main investment vehicle for new projects in Bovisa and contribute to the rhetoric used by investors to disguise their development interests (J.T., personal communication; Prada, 2019). This accounts for the greater number of private planned students' accommodations compared to public housing options and the predominance of sports facilities and amenities adjacent to the future campus intended mainly for student use. Hence, the services' exclusiveness provided to students reflects the broader European trends, where student housing is seen as an attractive real estate investment opportunity since it is affordable at a wide range of scales (Kenna & Murphy, 2021; Sanderson & Özogul, 2021; Smith et al., 2014). As described by J.T., the studentification of Bovisa is linked to the concept of the transient nature of students and the newcomers, referring to the fast-growing number of wealthy city-users who will use the new services but only for a limited time (e.g., for the study period). According to Carvalho et al. (2019) this new category can alter the neighborhood's diversity and lead the areas' redevelopment to stimulate a selective form of urban renewal, as it invests in a part of the population that already acts as young gentrifiers (Prada, 2019). In this regard, the impossibility of interviewing working-class immigrant residents in the interviews imposes a limitation on the above consideration, as it restricts the analysis of possible negative social changes already undergoing within the neighborhood. Consequently, it doesn't fully allow to analyze the entire distributive spectrum (Gould & Lewis, 2016) and leaves open the question of whether all the citizens of Bovisa can be the true recipients of this revitalization.

6.2 Participation, Privatization, and Governance

Highlighting the critical opinion on the outcomes of the regeneration of Bovisa is the limited citizen participation that took place in the planning phase of the neighborhood and only to legitimize planners' visions (see Results RQ2). As the Comitato la Goccia points out, the hope that the very name of the workshop 'Listening Bovisa' would result in direct communication between citizens, institutions and urban planners was dashed shortly afterwards (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024). Therefore, the loss of confidence in these forms of blurred participatory processes brought out an important governance theme in the findings. Residents explain how the lack of attention on citizen participation is strongly linked to the issue of privatization of urban projects and the loss of influence of institutions on them (See Appendix 1). Indeed, privatization can affect local governance, as the transfer of the management of public services and resources to private entities can create the 'spezzatino' and affect transparency, fairness, and citizen participation. As Azzimonti (2024) and Conte & Anselmi (2022) point out, the level of public coordination of Milan's municipality is weak, especially because the tendency to follow a strategy of 'planning by projects' does not contribute to provide homogeneity in the planning and management of the green city. Consequently, this contributes to making urban planning appear very

expensive, jeopardized and only suitable for maintaining a high return on investment (Conte & Anselmi, 2022). This form of governance, according to the interviewed residents but also according to Azzimonti (2024) and Rigolon & Németh (2019) contributes to gentrification processes and does not help to provide a comprehensive view of the social and environmental needs of the inhabitants.

In this regard, the interviewees emphasize how the lack of an intermediary pole to take on the views of the neighborhood has made grassroots attempts precarious, especially in matters of urban planning (see RQ2). In this regard, both BovisAttiva and the Comitato la Goccia, despite having different visions, believe it is necessary to grant more autonomy to the district municipalities, which have long been relegated to carrying out bureaucratic activities without having the financial means to be the spokespersons for the neighborhood's needs (see Appendix 1). This not only highlights the absence of a city governance model proper, but also fails to guarantee a form of inclusive and participatory citizenship proper to the theory of the right to the city (Costes, 2011; Harvey, 2008; Navas & Pérez, 2023).

Thus, while urban policies may not seem to offer inclusive participatory models, entities like BovisAttiva, the Comitato la Goccia and Terrapreta emerge as grassroots examples of active citizenship and entities claiming the right to the city through their actions. In accordance with the principles of UEJ (de Sousa Silva et al., 2018), each association promote an idea of sustainability that is more inclined to social than economic values, while also advocating for bottom-up participation and ecological resilience (see Table 3). By doing so, they interpose themselves in the context of Bovisa's highly privatized urban development by defending their own visions for the future. Their efforts fall within the framework of Azzimonti (2023), which argues that the current challenge for urban development in Milan is to find a governance model capable of fostering direct collaboration with active citizens on various operational scales especially in peripheral areas where the economic and administrative resources of public offices are quite limited.

6.3 Bovisa's green spaces: the value and right to exist

"You already have nature available so why do you have to say that you are going to redevelop that?" (J.T., personal communication)

A prominent finding that emerged from the interviews and from the results section for both research questions, is the different interpretation among residents regarding green spaces and their value. While on one hand all believe that the addition of greenery adds value to the neighborhood, on the other hand conflicting opinions emerge about the only existing green space, namely the forest of la

Goccia. In various interviews, both students and residents pointed out how in the collective imagination of Bovisa, la Goccia has often been associated with the idea of a contaminated space, in need of remediation to make it usable and eventually valuable. Underlying this assessment lies the fact that the area has remained inaccessible for over 30 years and privately managed. This partly explains how many view the Politecnico intervention favorably (see Table 1), as the redevelopment promises to beautify the area and, in the mayor's own words, 'modernize' the green area in accordance with contemporary urban development principles (Targa, 2022).

However, not everyone shares this view. The members of the Comitato la Goccia emphasize that the forest already has an *intrinsic* value and identity, having naturalized spontaneously over time without human intervention. For them, therefore, the forest is an example of sustainable development and should be preserved as such (see Figure 9). This justifies the very story behind the Comitato's public engagement for its protection against speculation and for making the land available as a public space, without any form of remediation. This reasoning explains how for decades the green area of the Goccia has been defined as urban void, without questioning the value that citizens may already have or not in this regard. The same term 'requalification' used in official documents suggests wanting to add quality to the space, almost imposing a different hierarchy of values than the existing one, in which only commonly intended parks are considered as true green spaces while spontaneous ones are not. From a theoretical standpoint, the case of la Goccia exposes the top-down rhetoric with which investors and the public-private sector appropriate the value of a non-revitalized environmental resource to make it profitable (Gould & Lewis, 2016; Anguelovski, 2015). It also mirrors the contradiction of using private green infrastructure to replace potential public green area (Anguelovski & Connolly, 2021). Lastly, according to Purcell (2013), this underlines the core distinction between the intrinsic use value of urban spaces, as proposed by the right to the city, and the exchange value prioritized in the neoliberal urban context.

6.4 The green aesthetic behind Bovisa's new identity

Among the positive perceptions gathered in relation to RQ1, emphasis is placed on how Bovisa needs beautification, as it is full of potholes and excessively grey (See Table 1). This tendency to associate neighborhood regeneration with cosmetic action mirrors the very rhetoric critiqued by Semi (2023) and Anguelovski et al. (2018) of today's urban development model. The same words 'revitalize', and 'regenerate' used in newspapers and official master plans for Bovisa (Arsuffi, 2022; Politecnico di Milano, 2022), suggest that the intervention will 'revive' or 'retrieve' the neighborhood as if to emphasize how the current state - including people - must necessarily be changed (See Table 2). The

concept also extends to the terms 'community and lab' - further emphasized by the English name - with which the Molecola project marries the regeneration of Bovisa and aims at branding its own image (García-Lamarca et al., 2019).

In this context, the greening strategy employed in Bovisa aligns with the common discourse of 'beautification,' as described by Anguelovski et al. (2018), wherein even the "*most socially and environmentally deprived areas*" (p.431) are transformed into landscapes of visual pleasure, albeit in a controlled and exclusive way or not akin to the needs of the population, with the forest of la Goccia being a case in point. Some citizens justify this intervention as necessary, as if 'greening' could finally increase the attractiveness of the area, making it a permanent option for students and citizens (see Table 1 and Appendix 1). Others, on the other hand, emphasize the disadvantages, pointing out how this greening strategy is nothing more than one of the many forms of Milanese urban development, with which investors aim to capitalize on the green areas already existing (La Goccia forest) and neighborhood (Grazzini & Bordin, 2024). Although it is anticipated that the green area of the Goccia will not be designed according to the same aesthetic criteria as other parks in Milan, the redevelopment of the forest itself aims to impose a specific aesthetic, thereby eradicating the 30-year-old wild character of the space.

6.5 Urban regeneration and green gentrification: an inevitable change?

A final aspect that resonated deeply in the interviews is the pressing need for both structural and aesthetic transformations within the neighborhood. As highlighted in the results to RQ1, this inclination prompts residents to accept and almost justify the inevitability of the social and economic changes associated with urban greening amenities. Nearly unanimously, Bovisa residents seem to accept this inevitability, attributing it to the rapid evolution of the city of Milan and its unique model of urban growth. Indeed, evidence from Isola Pepe Verde activists confirm that the regeneration in Bovisa is not very different from the green rhetoric and top-down privatization strategy already implemented in their neighborhood in the past (K.M., C.B., personal communication). The phenomenon of gentrification, if placed within this perception, thus seems almost justifiable as 'inevitable' as it has silently echoed for years in the district, particularly with the arrival of the university. From a theoretical standpoint, Kern (2021) emphasizes how inevitability is an often recurring perception in the city's common imagination, that leads the latter to understand gentrification as a natural and positive process, as a reflection of the fast-growing development of cities and of their tactical urbanism. Tozzi (2023) also points out that this can be further emphasized by forced optimism with which the Milan Model promotes its vision, thus fading the contradictions of

the city. Terms like 'modernization', '*riqualificazione*' (requalification in English), and 'opportunity' all contribute to shaping citizens' perceptions and as previously noted, the same conception of aesthetic intervention (Semi, 2015).

What emerges from the key findings explored in the discussion (see Figure 10) is that greening strategies are not themselves socially inclusive if they only rely on the discourse and greening orthodoxy of those who plan them (Anguelovski et al., 2018; Haase et al., 2017). To make socio-spatial inequities 'avoidable' it is therefore necessary to transform the greening discourse and re-consider citizen's role and participation at the core of their development strategies. As expressed in thesis title, the case of Bovisa underscores the need of *striking the balance* within the chosen greening agenda, considering that in urban contexts the key actors are citizens and their right to the city.

7 Conclusion

To date, the public debate on Milan's model of tactical urbanism focuses on the inherent paradox between its green and smart rhetoric and the evidence that urban greening initiatives are severely impacting neighborhood livelihoods in terms of cost of living, social exclusion, and green gentrification.

By focusing on the urban transformation of Milan's Bovisa district, my research aims to analyze the impacts that urban greening projects can have on the lives, needs and desires of citizens, highlighting the complex socio-economic and environmental dynamics involved. The results reveal that behind the optimism shared by the urban developers lie conflicting opinions about the benefits that structural green change could bring to the neighbourhood, fuelling instead issues of social exclusion, green gentrification and studentification. Indeed, while revitalization is perceived as aesthetically necessary by the majority of Bovisa's citizens, concerns emerge about its potential to blur the current social composition by favouring the arrival of new city-users and exacerbating the exclusion of ethnic groups already difficult to identify in the conduct of my fieldwork. In other words, concerns exist over who this new green neighborhood is for and who will benefit from it. Moreover, the risk of Bovisa becoming an enclave of environmental privilege is compounded by the fear that the projects may impact the value scale with which residents themselves perceive their rights to access to the green city. Residents' testimonies suggest that Bovisa masterplan is perceived as another top-down privatisation strategy, focused on maximising profits rather than guaranteeing full citizen participation and their right to the city.

Overall, this thesis contributes to the international debate on sustainability science by reflecting on the opportunities and complexities of large-scale green urban revitalizations in the construction of sustainable and inclusive urban living scenarios. It highlights how greening policies in the Milanese context alone lack empirical evidence of being 'socially just', if they are not accompanied by a governance model that meaningfully integrates local citizen participation as one component of ensuring their right to the green city. Further research can explore how the implementation of the project unfolds on the ground; how working-class immigrant residents are being impacted and which solutions can be adopted to avoid residents' displacement. All in all, this case highlights the need for future research to bring greater empirical rigour to the evaluation of the impacts of urban policies, and greater consideration of the voices of residents and local communities.

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9 Appendices

Appendix 1 Testimonies collected in response to RQ2.

	Right to the city
	Dreaming of the right to access services and green spaces
L.P.	<p>"For a structure like this [referring to the new university's masterplan] the Politecnico will always have an interest in not making it accessible to everyone but to focus on students"</p> <p>"Having a green space near the university anyway [in] a place of work where you study all day [...] I think is almost necessary"</p>
L.B.	<p>"There's no cinema, there's no theatre, there's not even a place, a public municipal hall, call it as you want, where people can meet"</p> <p>"They sell us that everything they are going to do in the gasometer will be open to the public...meanwhile the Politecnico's library which by the way is already inside the Gocia...is open to the public if you pay"</p> <p>"Access to free green space could be granted. The possibility of going for example [to the city center] on foot or by bicycle [...] so that you are not obliged to take [...] the car [...] if there were also like say social places, [...] or other things in the area".</p>
D.C.	<p>"[...] if they don't make it public [the space of La Goccia] they will push more and more people outside and dedicate it only to students"</p> <p>"[Referring to how residents perceive La Goccia forest] finally there's a park to go to now instead it's all fenced off and so you say that it's worth zero to me now"</p>
M.M.	<p>"I imagine a neighborhood where there can actually be services without having to go too far and where you can access the spaces you already have, including green spaces, without having to go elsewhere or without having to rebuild them"</p>
J.T.	<p>"[Referring to the Goccia forest] there is the fact that [only what] is rebuilt has a right to exist and this [La Goccia] is something that is still not recognized"</p> <p>"When you read the various urban planning projects they all say [...] that you still have to support the community of the neighborhood... the sense of community ...but this is not reflected in the policies because these processes break up the community"</p> <p>"[it is necessary] to propose a different vision for that space, a vision that in any case enhances the existing renaturalization process that has taken place [referring to La Goccia forest]...try to make it a green space that is innovative compared to the classic park [...] that is, built [on purpose] and with grass cut"</p> <p>"In my opinion, it will continue to become more and more a university district because of the Politecnico...but also not, that is to say, it will be interesting to understand what composition even students will have. Because like the Milan campus, they say they're building student accommodations for students but if you actually look at the housing that's being built, they're for a certain class target, certainly not affordable. So they are for those who can afford them. And also maybe a more international composition but of people who can afford it"</p>

F.B.	"There is a risk that all the green space provided will only be made available as parkland for the residents. So you understand what I mean? I say that we still don't know whether [the Goccia space], i.e. green space as properly understood, will really be made available or therefore accessible to the rest of the population, i.e. not only to those who live near us but to all of us"
	Limited participation
G.R. ₍₂₎	"A change will be possible when the value scale, and especially the presence of communities in decision-making or in establishing what the value scale is for individual territories, is more important than economic returns"
E.S.	"The capacity for public intervention is zero. In the Drop project, the road system within the green area is not even specified"
F.B.	"Not to mention the role we citizens have in all this: nil. And also the contrast there is with the institutions and investors in their ability to slip inelegantly over the opinions of us citizens"
L.B.	"We need the individual municipalities to be able to have the autonomy, including financial autonomy, to manage things in the area otherwise the municipalities are useless"
L.V.	"[There is a need for] a municipality that does well [...] more decentralized and that knows better what the needs are. But the city hall currently, the way Milan is configured, has no power, no budget, and no answers in common"
B.Z.	"It is necessary for the municipalities to have economic power"
	Privatization
J.T.	"[Referring to the case of the la Goccia Project] even there it joins a transformation of the university towards privatization because even the spaces they want to create [if you think of the canteen] which they actually call 'food court' because in English because it is cooler in English"
L.B. F.B.	"They're going to do the famous 'spezzatino' since there is no implementation urban plan for these projects"
D.C.	"That is, the fact of nullifying the difference between public and private and also making a private development appear as benefiting the public and then [...] nullifying it in the case of social housing"

Appendix 2 Semi-structured Interviews Questions

Questions for residents; Questions for activists and active members* . Questions varied slightly from the original transcript according to the person interviewed and according to the conduction of semi-structured interviews.

<p>Generic questions</p>	<p>1. What is your role within the association/committee and how long have you been involved in advocacy and civic engagement in the Bovisa district?*</p> <p>2. How long have you lived in the Bovisa neighborhood and what are the main reasons that led you to choose to live here?</p>
<p>Questions about the neighborhood: past and present</p>	<p>3. What kinds of economic, environmental, and social changes do you think Bovisa neighborhood has gone through over time? Can you give some examples?</p>
<p>Questions on the revitalization of Bovisa</p>	<p>[Based on what will be mentioned above, <i>'I am sure you are aware of the series of redevelopment projects that are currently taking place in the neighborhood...</i> These include the MoLeCoLa project and the project promoted by the Politecnico for La Goccia di Bovisa, both of which are currently under construction and scheduled to be completed by 2026].</p> <p>4. When did you first hear about the redevelopment of the neighborhood? How did you react to that news?</p> <p>5. Do you think that the implementation process of the two projects is meeting the needs of the neighborhood [<i>in terms of providing access to services, green spaces, social inclusion, and housing</i>]? And if so, who do you think is benefiting or will benefit most after the project is completed?</p> <p>6. Were you involved or do you know if anyone was involved in the participation process indicated by the project?</p> <p>7. As a citizen/activist/association member, did you find any barriers or obstacles in expressing your opinion about the project?</p>
<p>Question on future changes</p>	<p>8. Do you think the implementation of these projects will affect the identity of your neighborhood? If so, how?</p> <p>9. Based on the experiences of redevelopment in other Milanese neighborhoods (e.g. Isola and Porta Nuova), how do you think the quality of life for residents in Bovisa will change after completion of the project?</p>

	<p>10. Do you think the profile of Bovisa residents will change once the redevelopment is complete, for example in terms of age, income, gender, nationality, and occupation?</p> <p>11. [based on the answer above] Studies in Europe and North America show that urban green development can lead to residential exclusion... In your opinion, what could be done to address the risks of gentrification and/or social exclusion resulting from the redevelopment?</p> <p>12. [based on the above] How do you imagine living in a sustainable neighborhood today and what aspects do you think are crucial to achieving this?</p> <p>13. Lastly, what does living in a neighborhood such as Bovisa mean to you?</p> <p>14. Is there anything else you would like to add? Did these questions leave out anything important?</p>
	Thank you for taking part in this interview.

Appendix 3 Coding

Visual representation of my deductive and inductive coding analysis used with the software NVIVO.

DEDUCTIVE

Bovisa Neighborhood Observations		
Past changes		
	Social composition	
	Structural composition	
Present changes		
	Social composition	
	Structural composition	
RQ1	Future changes	
	Positive Perceptions	
		Added green spaces
		Social changes
		Housing affordability
	Negative Perceptions	
		Added green spaces
		Social changes
		Housing affordability
RQ2	Right to the city	
	Access to services	
	Access to green spaces	
	Participation	

INDUCTIVE

RQ1		
	Inevitability	
	Green aesthetic	
	Needed	Not needed
	Identity	
	Gain	Loss
		Studentification
		City-users
	Value of green spaces	
	Already Existing	Future
	Soil consumption	
	Green Gentrification	
	Economic Benefit	Economic Loss
RQ2		
	For the Right to the City	Against the Right to the city
	Voice to Local Associations	Milan's Model
	Bottom-up initiatives	Bovisa Spezzatino (<i>privatization</i>)
	Recognizing Existing green	Exclusivity of the new services
	Equal access demand	Real estate investments

Appendix 4 Respondents information

Grid providing concise information on the interviewees (met before or during my fieldwork in Italy). The second column highlights the interviewees' roles and organizations, relevant to my research. Some interviewees' names have an asterisk (*) indicating that the interview was not recorded.

17 interviews; with a total of 22 interviewees.

Name initials	Role of the Respondent
K.M. B.C.	Members and Activists of <i>Isola Pepe Verde</i> (Isola neighborhood)
J.T.	Research fellow in Sociology of Environment and Territory at Università degli Studi di Padova. Member of <i>Comitato la Goccia</i>
L.B.	Member and Activist of <i>Comitato la Goccia</i> as well as Bovisa resident. Co-writer of the book "Più grigio che Verde" (2024)
D.C.	Member of <i>Comitato la Goccia</i> and Bovisa resident
F. G.	Activist, journalist, and member of <i>Comitato la Goccia</i> and Bovisa Resident. Co-writer of the book "Più grigio che Verde" (2024)
E.S. *	Member of <i>Comitato la Goccia</i>
M.M.*	Bovisa photographer and resident
O. L. A.*	Researcher in Environmental and Urban Sociology at <i>Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca</i>
F.B.*	Dr. in Sociology and Methodology of Social Research at <i>Università di Torino</i>
E.D.	PhD Student at <i>Politecnico di Milano, Campus La Masa</i> (Bovisa)
G.R ₍₁₎	Researcher of the Energy Department at <i>Politecnico di Milano, Campus La Masa</i> (Bovisa)
L.P.	Student at <i>Politecnico di Milano, Campus La Masa</i> (Bovisa)
R1*, R2*, R3*, R4*, R5*, R6*, R7*	Residents Bovisa
N. B.	Resident and active member of <i>Bovisa Attiva's</i> committee
B.Z. L. V.	Residents and members of <i>BovisAttiva</i>
G.R ₍₂₎	Co-founder of Terrapreta