

Soil literacy and the challenge of integrating local soil knowledge into planning and design

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Abstract The presentation brings forward the preliminary findings of the research activities carried out at the Off Campus Cascina Nosedo, an offshoot of the Politecnico di Milano located in the south-eastern outskirts of Milan, serving as a laboratory for interdisciplinary research and pedagogy. Here, research is being conducted within the framework of Mission “A Soil Deal for Europe” to lead the transition to healthy soils by 2030, focusing on civic monitoring and soil literacy in society. Initial activities included interviews and co-creation round-tables with local stakeholders involved in the management of forestry and peri-urban agriculture. These discussions revealed widespread practical knowledge among these stakeholders regarding the legacy of soils compromised by past productive activities (such as terraforming, excavation, and backfilling). These soils prove highly heterogeneous, difficult to classify, and complex to manage both materially and in regulatory terms. The challenge remains to understand how to integrate this situated, site-specific knowledge into decision-making and planning visions for the Cascina Nosedo area. The research will seek to address this through further local exchanges and design experimental approaches.