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Reviving Urban Greening in Post-Industrial Landscapes: The Case of Turin

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Abstract: This paper explores the strategies for reviving urban greening in post-industrial landscapes through nature-based solutions (NbSs). The case of Turin was selected to investigate peri-urban farming practices at the old FIAT premises in the Mirafiori Sud area. Starting in the 2010s, the City of Turin launched new urban regeneration projects to transform degraded post-industrial landscapes into creative urban living labs (ULLs) for experimentation. The data were collected by reviewing the literature available from public sources, including project documents (deliverables, public reports, MOOC content, scientific articles, etc.). Interviews and focus groups with policymakers (municipality), volunteers (NGOs), and inhabitants were carried out to gather insights as primary sources. A qualitative thematic analysis was adopted to determine how NbS can be a force for enhancing multi-functionality in post-industrial areas by incorporating ULLs and green tourism as a co-creation model to connect with nature. The results showed that (1) Mirafiori Sud became a remarkable hub for co-creation projects to foster the transformation of brownfields into experimentation sites capable of hosting sustainable and inclusive solutions, (2) regenerative art practices in shared spaces play a crucial role in community engagement, (3) the support for urban agriculture initiatives could improve the ability of cities to provide alternative food (and cultural) networks. In sum, NbSs drive change in urban landscapes and promote green tourism via agricultural production.

Keywords: nature-based solutions; shrinking cities; urban living lab; urban farming; green tourism

Citation: Dogan, E.; Cuomo, F.; Battisti, L. Reviving Urban Greening in Post-Industrial Landscapes: The Case of Turin. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 12760. https://doi.org/10.3390/su151712760

Academic Editor: Thomas A. Clark

Received: 27 June 2023
Revised: 7 August 2023
Accepted: 10 August 2023
Published: 23 August 2023

1. Introduction

Industrialization paved the way for migration to cities from rural areas. Consequently, the increase in the urban population introduced new challenges for local self-reliance in terms of food. In addition to the environmental pollution caused by the heavy industries of the 20th century, the long-distance transportation of goods continues to produce emissions of harmful greenhouse gasses.

Developing urban green infrastructure through community-based farming has attracted attention from academia and policymakers as a viable solution to face the challenges of urban degradation and feeding the cities of the future. Urban farming is addressed as a tool for food access and security [1]. Urban greening has various benefits in reducing the urban heat island effect and economic leakage, creating jobs, and generating a sense of community [2]. Moreover, green tourism via urban farming supports the local economy and reduces urban poverty by increasing the involvement of local communities [3].

This paper discusses the case of peri-urban farming in Turin, where vacant post-industrial landscapes have been transformed into urban living labs (ULLs) for agriculture. It starts by presenting a conceptual framework based on nature-based solutions (NbSs) and their effects on urban landscapes in terms of urban farming and green tourism. From the

policy analysis viewpoint, NbSs are particularly interesting not only because they utilize natural processes to produce a broad set of environmental, economic, and social benefits for communities but also because they represent drivers capable of boosting long-term policies oriented towards urban regeneration, biodiversity protection, green tourism, and a circular economy. In fact, the literature has recently described several NbS case studies that have succeeded in proposing models of reuse, consumption reduction, and waste recovery in the production and consumption cycle of urban and peri-urban communities [4,5]. The case of Turin is explained by giving a brief historical background of the post-industrial city and current policies on advancing peri-urban farming through NbSs at the former industrial site in the Mirafiori Sud area. A qualitative thematic analysis was adopted to determine how NbSs can be a force for enhancing multi-functionality in peri-urban areas through incorporating ULLs as a co-creation model and green tourism as a vehicle for raising awareness to connect with nature. In this framework, the article focuses on NbSs as a goal for achieving ecosystem-based adaptation and community empowerment through agriculture. ULLs support this goal by providing a co-creation model and open innovative ecosystems. Green tourism is not the goal itself but the means of achieving this goal by creating awareness and community building. The sub-questions of the research can be formulated as follows: (1) How can urban agriculture implemented in ULLs be incorporated into NbSs to improve the condition and resilience of ecosystems? (2) How can green tourism contribute to connecting with culture and nature in these ecosystems?

1.1. Nature-Based Solutions Integrating ULLs and Green Tourism

Nature-based solutions (NbSs) present multifunctional and effective approaches to urban greening. Among the many definitions of NbSs, we would like to draw attention to the following definition in this context: "actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits" [6]. NbSs aim to incorporate ecosystem services into spatial planning policies and practices, with the goal of integrating ecological considerations and addressing contemporary societal challenges [7,8]. Public green spaces and NbSs are frequently cited by researchers as contributing to urban resilience by providing numerous ecosystem services [9–11].

The complexities of urban landscapes necessitate integrating multiple land uses through performance-based planning [12]. Balian et al. [13] suggested using nature to tackle climate change mitigation and adaptation, food security, water management, and green space management. Green roofs and walls are often designated as resource-efficient interventions to reduce temperature while improving air quality and energy consumption [14]. The IUCN suggests implementing NbSs in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the empowerment of stakeholders, economic development of residents, and adoption of environmentally friendly solutions to address the need for legislation and policy development [15].

Critics occasionally argue against NbSs due to their anthropocentric and utilitarian outlook, which disregards the innate values of nature and may result in its commodification and exploitative human–nature relationships [9,16]. Randrup et al. [17] advocated moving away from the anthropocentric NbS narrative in favor of a more nature-based approach to overcome this issue.

Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA), urban green infrastructure (UGI), and ecosystem services (ESs) are linked to NbSs (see Figure 1). Pauleit et al. [18] (p. 29) argued that NbSs are a recent and broader concept, "an umbrella term with a distinctive focus on the deployment of actions on the ground" that encompasses the aforementioned concepts.

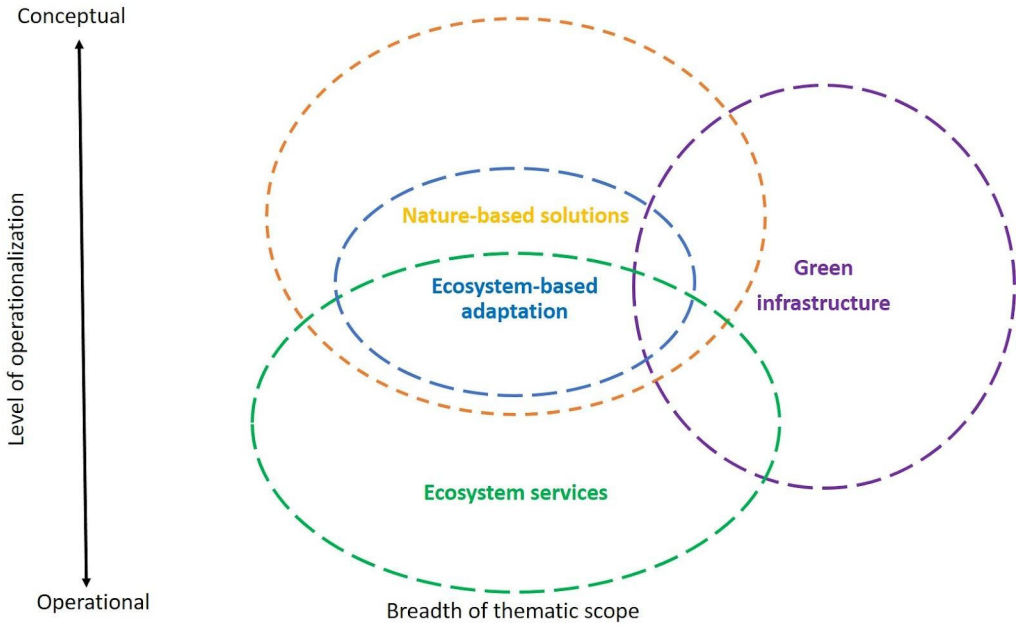

Figure 1. Thematic scope and operationalization of concepts. Adapted from [18].

EbA focuses on using nature for climate change adaptation, while UGI can be a planning tool for providing strategic guidance to develop multifunctional green space networks at various scales [19–21]. In this framework, ESs support policymaking to maximise benefits for stakeholders. According to Brink et al. [22], NbSs offer transformative potential based on social benefits and citizen engagement in urban environments with limited public space. Thus, social inclusion plays a significant role in EbA for creating green urban commons.

The research and innovation policy of the EU places importance on NbSs as innovation opportunities for operationalizing the concept of ecosystem services in real-world situations by promoting "transitions from a resource-intensive growth model towards a more resource efficient, inclusive and sustainable growth model" [23]. According to the Horizon 2020 Expert Group report on "Nature-based Solutions and Re-naturing Cities" [24], empowering communities and reconnecting them with nature deserve particular attention and can be operationalized by co-creation models in ULLs and green tourism supporting ecosystem services.

1.2. Green Tourism in Urban Environments

The concept of green tourism evolved in the 1980s parallel to the literature on ecological tourism; the two concepts were even used interchangeably [25]. The negative impacts caused by mass tourism brought the need to take action towards sustainable development [26]. Although governments first considered ecotourism in rural areas as a sustainable tourism development approach and marketing strategy, less attention was paid to its implications in urban environments [27]. The Green Tourism Association (GTA) of Toronto defines urban green tourism as:

> *"Travel and exploration within and around an urban area that offers visitor enjoyment and the appreciation of the city's natural areas and cultural resources while inspiring physically active, intellectually stimulating and socially interactive experiences; promotes the city's long-term ecological health by promoting walking, cycling, public transportation; promotes sustainable economic and local development and vitality; celebrates the local heritage and the arts; is accessible and equitable to all."* [28]

This definition combines environmental responsibility, local economic vitality, cultural sensitivity, and experiential richness [27]. In this respect, Gibson et al. [29] (p. 326) argued that people should make "green choices" and spread the principles of responsible tourism

outside the urban limits. Tourists and locals compete to use natural resources, leading to stakeholder conflicts [15]. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment [30], the problems in the ecosystem stemming from a loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and inadequate water quality regulation are closely linked to the loss of integrity in tourism sites as both a cause and effect. Therefore, the careful planning and assessment of tourism development in sensitive areas are vital interventions to protect the ecosystem [31]. In this context, green tourism plays a crucial role in safeguarding and promoting heritage and biodiversity.

Padma et al. [15] proposed NbSs as a viable strategy to support green tourism through the empowerment of stakeholders, monitoring the state of the natural environment, the economic development of residents, the adoption of environmentally friendly solutions, reconciliation between locals and visitors, and legislation and policy development. The innovative dimension of NbSs has been integrated into EU policies in the framework for research and innovation, while local knowledge and new approaches to existing ideas are also welcome [32]. As such, biodiversity and ecosystem services aligned with tourism development might offer sustainable transformation processes [33].

1.3. Urban Living Labs (ULLs)

The "living lab" definition of MIT inspired ULLs at an urban scale as participatory modes of urban regeneration, particularly in degraded post-industrial areas [34]. Multi-stakeholder engagement through the co-production of innovative solutions for challenges such as social consumption and erosion, food access, and social policies in real time is at the heart of this definition [35]. Accordingly, the traditional modes of consumption should be revised by promoting the reuse, recycling, and reducing principles of the circular economy [36]. Cohen-Shacham et al. [37] argued that testing reliability, scalability, and future sustainability are common to NbSs and circular economy principles. In this framework, ULLs can fit into urban policies to revive urban greening through a shared consensus among stakeholders.

Several local governments have promoted ULLs to regenerate post-industrial areas sustainably in the European context. In Amsterdam North, where many spaces were left vacant by the downturn of the ship-building sector, the municipality has supported the local community of Buiksloterham to experiment with co-housing, a circular economy, and community energy initiatives. In the Thessaloniki Smart Mobility Living Lab (Greece), the urban government, Hellenic Institute of Transport, and Centre for Research and Technology Hellas have turned a vast constellation of urban spaces into open-air laboratories for sustainable mobility and co-operative solutions. In Brussels (Belgium), a broad spectrum of public and private local stakeholders is supporting the 'Retrofit' project, which aims at generating ULLs dedicated to housing accessibility, low-impact construction pilots, and energy-saving experiments.

The Urban Agenda for the EU [38] aims to improve the quality of life in urban areas by addressing air quality, the circular economy, climate adaptation, culture and cultural heritage, digital transition, energy transition, housing, the inclusion of migrants and refugees, innovative and responsible public procurement, jobs and skills in the local economy, the sustainable use of land and NbSs, urban mobility, urban poverty, and security in public spaces. The New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative calls for architectural quality and design based on the three pillars of sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion [39]. According to the "New European Bauhaus Report" published by the European Commission [40], the initiative acts as "a catalyst for the European Green Deal transformation, ensuring social inclusion and participation". The NEB provides a platform for co-creation towards a quality built environment by connecting people and strengthening social cohesion coupled with innovation in spatial design and climate change adaptation [41]. In this respect, ULLs are expected to play a pivotal role in activating co-creation activities capable of triggering the creativity of local communities to test socially inclusive, sustainable, and innovative policy solutions. Nonetheless, the experimental model proposed by ULLs has drawbacks,

such as reproducing traditional urban balances of power and re-proposing established governance patterns without broadening the spectrum of actors involved in policy-making dynamics [42]. For this reason, case studies on ULLs dedicated to NbSs should take into account the implications for power distribution in order to understand their potential in terms of ecosystem resilience and the enhancement of culture and urban nature with a view to green tourism.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Case Study

Turin is located in the northwest of Italy and is the capital of the Piedmont region. The city of Turin is situated 239 m above sea level and has a strong industrial heritage, as well as being an important university center in Italy. In addition, there are numerous areas and buildings in the territory that are promoted and protected by UNESCO. Finally, the City of Turin is characterized by the presence of three main rivers, the Po, the Dora Riparia, and the Stura, as well as several other rivers, including the Sangone River.

Historically, Turin was renowned as the first capital of the Italian Kingdom in the 19th century following the independence movement of the "Risorgimento", and it became the residence of the Savoy family [43]. However, the history of the Savoys in Mirafiori Sud dates back to the end of 16th century and the construction of the Mirafiori Castle by Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy [44].

The first residential areas were formed around farms during this period. The castle was demolished in the 19th century, leaving ruins behind as traces of the past [45]. "Cascina Mirafiori" is a farmhouse, "once pertaining to the castle remains", which consisted of a rustic house, courtyard, and garden in the Gatti Land Register of 1820 [46]. The farmhouse is still in use for residential purposes and is also in a good state of conservation. The farmhouses in the area indicate the presence of farming before the transformation introduced by industrialization and raise historical environmental interest in the green area near the ruins of the castle.

Turin is also considered the industrial capital of Italy in the 20th century. Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino (FIAT) was one of the protagonists of industrialization, which also marked the transformation of Mirafiori from a rural to an urbanized area in the periphery of the city. Fouberg and Murphy [47] suggested that industrialization has characterized the changing urban patterns of Italian industrial cities by creating a division between urbanization and suburbanization.

Mirafiori saw a dramatic increase in the population and fast housing development to host workers in the aftermath of WWII between 1950 and 1970. The social life around the industrial areas transformed in parallel, with workers and their families enjoying the Sangone River for bathing and sailing [48]. Nevertheless, due to industrial pollution, the riverbanks eventually became wastelands. This period also saw social problems triggered by migration, poor working and living conditions, and a loss of greenery. The problems soared with the economic crisis and deindustrialization phase, leading to urban degradation, a lack of employment, and increasing poverty and crime rates, thus making Mirafiori a scene of urban decay. The deep economic downturn caused by deindustrialization in the area where the former FIAT enterprise was located pushed authorities to search for new economic and environmental solutions to transform brownfields into attractive areas through co-production and innovative processes [34,49].

Due to the high costs of land rehabilitation, it took many years to implement urban regeneration plans on the Sangone riverbanks. Since 1990, urban regeneration has gained momentum through the "urban recovery programs" [50]. The City of Turin launched the "Periferie" project (1997–2005) in the suburban areas aimed at improving social conditions and engaging the community. The social and economic inequalities analyzed by Harvey [51] in these suburbs were linked to the phenomena of segregation [52], when populations of different socio-territorial groups if not ethnic groups (in relation to immi-

gration) concentrate in specific areas of the city, generating the formation of ghettos and subsequently degraded neighbourhoods.

Nonetheless, the peripheries can represent places where new models of urban development are trialed [53,54] based on the active participation of citizens, the discovery and enhancement of the living environment, and the valorization of local resources. The urban voids created by abandoned industrial areas were the primary impetus behind this transformation, along with the motivation to reinvent the city's identity beyond it being a "one-company town" thanks to FIAT. Large-scale events, such as the 2006 Winter Olympics, were an opportunity for place branding strategies and reimaging Turin through culture and services in a more varied economy.

In this context, greening projects became part and parcel of regeneration plans directed at post-industrial sites in the urban periphery for improving sociality and transforming neglected areas into co-creation spaces [55]. Thus, the rationale for selecting the case study of Mirafiori Sud in Turin had an exploratory basis. We aimed to describe the modes and mechanisms of change that characterize many European cities similar to Turin in terms of social, political, and economic characteristics through the empirical analysis of local urban transformation phenomena.

Turin is commonly recognized as a typical case of a shrinking city of medium size. Such cities, widespread in the European context, are characterized by a strong industrial past and a population of between 500,000 and 1 million. Since their economies were focused on specific second-sector assets for decades, such cities had to cope with the decentralization of production sites, resulting in employment and population crises. From a geographical viewpoint, shrinking cities are considered interesting ecosystems for experimentation, as they offer a patchwork of spaces waiting to be recovered and regenerated. In this respect, the city of Turin is recognized as a shrinking city for three reasons. First, the city has been experiencing a progressive demographic decline since the 1970s, due in part to the birth rate crisis spread throughout Italy and in part to the displacement of inhabitants to neighboring municipalities. Second, its economy was heavily dependent on the automotive sector (specifically FIAT) and has experienced a profound crisis, which set the urban governance in motion to review its development strategies [55]. In recent years, the city has tried to redefine its economic assets, focusing on tourism, social innovation, and research and development. However, the transformation is not yet complete. Third, as a direct consequence of the demographic and economic crises, Turin has many post-industrial brownfields and sparsely populated areas awaiting reconversion or subject to uncontrolled reforestation. Starting from the distinctive characteristics of Turin as a shrinking city, this exploratory case study aimed to provide insights into 'how' and 'why' such cities might become extraordinary and disruptive ecosystems for reviving urban greening in post-industrial landscapes.

2.2. Methods and Data Collection

A qualitative case study methodology was employed to conduct an in-depth exploration of peri-urban farming in Turin. The two Horizon Europe projects, namely ProGireg and FUSILLI, provided insights into the implementation of NbSs in relation to ULLs and their role in enabling the transformation of the urban food system, encouraging social inclusion, and facilitating knowledge exchange about reviving the urban greening in community gardens.

The method of analysis chosen for this study took the deductive form of a thematic analysis by incorporating an a priori template of codes derived from theory and employing a constructionist approach [56]. Thus, the codebook was created concurrently based on the theory-driven a priori template by applying thematic analysis as an iterative and reflexive process. We adopted an overarching flexible framework rather than a linear procedure adapted from Swain [57].

The data collection was conducted through the triangulation of different methods. The secondary data were collected from the gray literature and material focused on ULLs,

NbSs, and green tourism available from public sources, including project documents (deliverables, public reports, MOOC content, scientific articles, etc.) (Figure 2). The participatory observations were a fundamental part of the data collection in order to develop an insightful approach to the dynamics of stakeholder relationships. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with different levels of stakeholders to investigate the operational process's difficulties and barriers. To dig into past experiences of ULLs and urban experimentation municipal strategies in Turin, 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted between December 2022 and January 2023. In selecting interviewees, we adopted a snowball approach, starting with municipal officials who had past experience with ULLs and then asking which actors were most active in urban experimentation and regeneration and had taken part in ULLs. Hence, to broaden the perspectives on ULLs, the interviews involved urban stakeholders with different backgrounds, namely twelve representatives of grassroots organizations and companies, six municipal officials, two responsible persons of citizen committees, and two academic experts from the University of Turin. Each interview lasted from 40 to 90 min and covered four main topics: the narration of one's experience within a ULL in Turin; the potential and limitations of ULLs; the role of the municipality in fostering experimentation; and the learning dynamics among actors. The interviews were audiotaped with the interviewees' consent and fully transcribed in written form for further analysis.

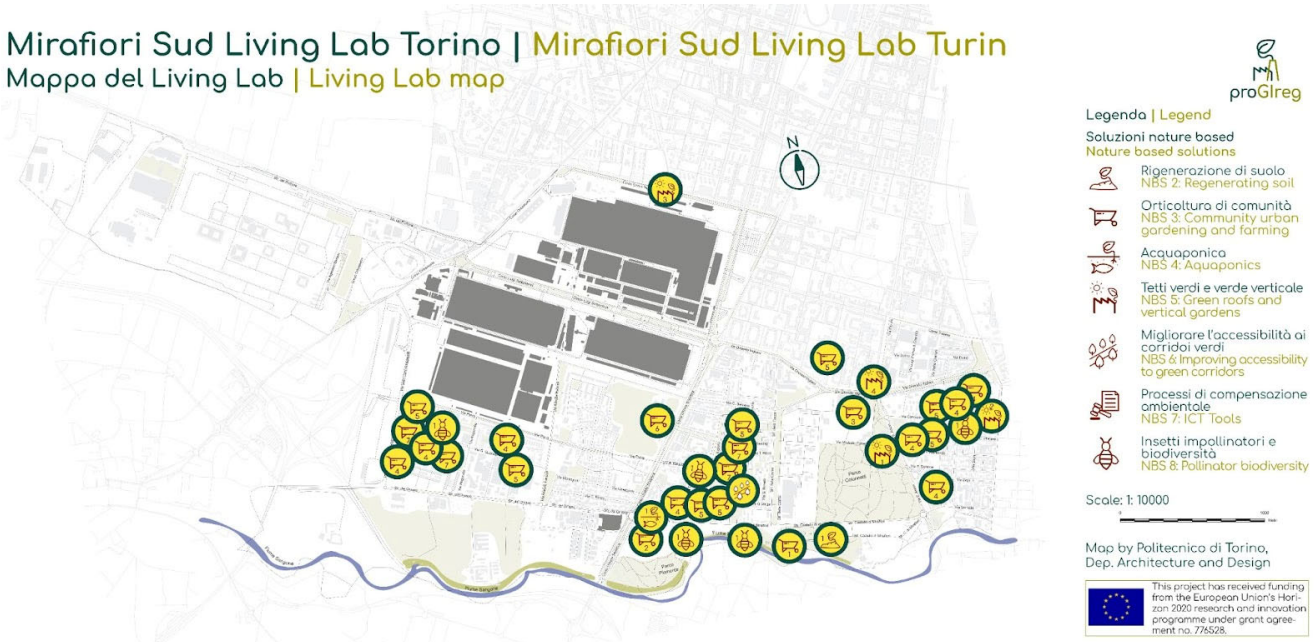

Figure 2. Examples of NbS implementation in Mirafiori Sud—proGIreg project (map by Politecnico di Torino, Dep. Architecture and Design).

To explore further issues in the implementation and legacy of the projects, an online roundtable discussion was conducted on 28 April 2023 and recorded for transcription with the permission of the participants. The focus group involved five people (three from academia, one from the municipality, and one from Fondazione Mirafiori NGO) representing different stakeholders and members of the consortium for the ProGireg and FUSILLI projects, who assessed the opportunities for reviving urban greening in Mirafiori Sud.

3. Results

3.1. Inclusive Strategies for Greening the Brownfields

In Italy, Turin is widely recognized as one of the most active cities in adopting ULLs to revitalize former industrial neighborhoods and brownfield spaces [58]. The policy strategy focused on turning former industrial spaces into attractive spots open to host innovative

solutions has two main roots, strictly intertwined with the socio-geographical specificity of Turin [58].

In December 2020, the City of Turin developed a Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan [59], comprising ten sections that cover various aspects, such as green management and the quantification of ESs. However, this plan did not explicitly refer to NbSs or propose any particular interventions with NbSs in the city. Nevertheless, European projects focusing on NbSs are underway in Turin (e.g., proGIreg and CONEXUS), which may yield promising results for implementing NbSs in urban environments. It is noteworthy that although NbSs can simultaneously fulfil SDGs and meet urban government challenges and objectives, it is a relatively new topic in public policy and urban planning in Italy.

In this context, Ascione et al. [34] presented a case study testing "New Soil" as one of the most promising NbSs, capable of providing multiple environmental benefits, at the ULLs promoted by the City of Turin (Italy) in Mirafiori Sud. From the food production and social inclusion perspective, the various NbSs related to horticultural spaces in the ground or in boxes, such as Orti Generali and Spazio WOW [58], play a fundamental role in this district.

Furthermore, Fondazione Mirafiori is co-designing the inclusion of public art (together with professionals, the City of Turin, and the 'Parco d'Arte Vivente'), attempting to define the character that a work of art in a green space should have. This action is essential if the artwork will be placed in a space where an NbS has been implemented, such as the New Soil [34]. In addition, like many H2020 projects, the scale-up and scale-out of NbSs is an action to be undertaken during or shortly after the project's term [60]. The design of new NbSs, which may have artistic value or contain a work of art, could be a way to improve the environmental and economic conditions of a place, stimulating art-related tourism. Regenerative art practices in shared spaces play a crucial role in community engagement. Art, therefore, becomes an integral part of the transformation. In this regard, a researcher from the University of Turin involved in proGIreg best explained how Turin is trying to draw on other experiences to combine art and nature in post-industrial areas:

> *"It might be interesting to take a cue from some already existing realities, such as the Arte Sella park in Trentino, where art and nature are well blended. In addition, throughout the area affected by storm Vaia in north-eastern Italy, many felled plants have been transformed into works of art and placed in reforestation areas."*

Festivals are also crucial for gathering the public and creating collective experiences around artistic practices in urban greening. This spilled over in a constructive way into the idea of launching a 'Landscape Festival' at regular intervals, which intended to redevelop (in each iteration) a specific portion of the neighborhood. This could be small in size but fundamental for triggering a structured transformation of the neighborhood.

Nevertheless, in some cases, the implementation of NbSs triggered a conflict regarding the management of space. In particular, such conflicts concerned the management of the irrigation of the boxes containing plants placed along the route. A public official of the city of Turin argued as follows:

> *"The Green Corridor was conceived in conjunction with a sort of enhancement of that urban stretch, as a valorisation of the heritage and the place, also for the purpose of tourism or usability. Unfortunately, the plants were planted last year, before the drought, and the plants died. Now they will be replaced. But the problem is: what will happen next? The Mirafiori Foundation acts as a community glue, but it does not want to take over the irrigation activity, which is a very simple activity, where citizens could be better involved."*

Conversely, an employee of the Mirafiori Foundation pointed out that:

> *"ProGIreg also envisaged the green corridor that suffered great damage precisely with vandalism, plants have been uprooted several times, several times they have been taken away. In my opinion, the problem is that citizens have not understood the meaning and sense of a green corridor close to home in the city. Moreover, the green corridor*

> *has suffered a lot from drought. Why not provide an irrigation system for such green solutions during the design phase? We who are now in charge of maintenance, this is a critical issue. Because you cannot operate with a watering can as you can on your balcony... so even for the volunteers who are dedicated, this is a critical issue."*

The critical point is that redevelopment, which can occur through implementing NbSs, involves professionals and citizens. This point is particularly important since the implementation of NbSs must be tailor-made to the specific territorial and social reality [8,61]. In any case, going beyond the discussions between municipalities and foundations operating in the area, the 'Green Line' highlighted the importance of an urban link from a central area of Turin to the suburbs and in particular to a river park connecting different municipalities.

3.2. Co-Creation and Experimentation in a Circular Economy

The case of Mirafiori shows that ULLs can help a municipality to trigger co-creation and experimental activities for greening brownfields. From the micro point of view, the ULLs in Mirafiori have demonstrated their ability to activate experiments capable of transforming specific sites in the neighborhood that have gone from degraded and disused places to hot spots attracting several categories of citizens, particularly appreciated by local communities. The volunteers of Orti Generali took steps to clean up the areas, such as Parco Piemonte, and a community garden was established in the formerly degraded area, attracting gardeners from different districts of Turin [48]. To this extent, place-based grassroots organizations and NGOs, namely Orti Generali and Mirafiori Foundation, turned out to be capable of bridging long-lasting projects, such as the Grand Galà of Mirafiori, which attracted many young people from other districts, or "Being elderly in Mirafiori Sud", a project that led 500 elderly people to rediscover the neighborhood and take care of the green areas, with ULLs. A public official from the Municipality of Turin said:

> *"Mirafiori has a creative energy capable of attracting communities of various kinds and generating co-responsibility dynamics, where everyone is committed to caring for the commons. This energy was very helpful to co-design more consistent ULLs aimed at regenerating the district."*

Food is an integral part of living heritage, collective memory, and experiences. Typical food is offered as a territorial policy to promote local products through the FUSILLI project. Spazio WOW, with the kitchen garden of Locanda nel Parco, promotes circular cuisine and urban food policies. Orti Generali, with its circular kiosk, offers seasonal dishes made from the products cultivated in the garden. The circular kiosk and Locanda nel Parco can be thought of as a "social circular space" initiated by a grassroots organization, as described in Hobson's [62] (p. 100) work about small stories for "locally based ways of living, sharing and creating". The City of Turin implemented the idea of the "circular pizza" ("*pizza circolare*") following the proposal of the University of Gastronomic Sciences (UNISG) and the Pollenza Food Lab, in collaboration with Mirafiori Community Foundation, the University of Turin, and Orti Generali at Locanda nel Parco managed by Mirafiori Social Cooperative. "*Quattro Stagioni*" (Four Seasons) was the first type of circular pizza made by ingredients including seasonal vegetables and typical cheese labeled "Slow Food Presidium" and herbs from the kitchen garden. Moreover, it was cooked in an energy-saving oven made with refractory material. Prof. Fassio [63] explained the innovative concept behind the circular pizza by the 3Cs (capital, cyclity, and co-evolution) of the 'Circular Economy for Food' (CEFF) principles:

> *"The Circular Economy for Food is that systemic way of thinking and acting, which starts from placing the protection and regeneration of natural capital to which the human, cultural and economic capital is associated at the centre of every decision-making process, respecting planetary limits and offering at the same time a fair space for civil society. The first step is trying to avoid compromising relations with the best raw material supplier known to mankind, i.e., nature, to then think about the enhancement of any surplus,*

> *social inclusion, the full use of ingredients, the recovery of know-how in the kitchen and so on."*

The drive towards urban horticulture, food production, and the circular economy, key elements of the FUSILLI project and foundational to the objectives of Orti Generali, has emerged and reappeared strongly in recent years. Cuomo and Ravazzi [64] pointed out the effect of the pandemic and climate change on raising sensitivity to and interest in food accessibility. Furthermore, a university researcher stated that:

> *"FUSILLI's ULL has proved to be an excellent vehicle to create awareness linked to the circular transformation of the food system. This derives in part from the growing interest that the ULL of Mirafiori Sud has acquired in the scientific community interested in the issues of sustainability and circular economy and in part from the fact that ecosystems for experimentation have been created within the district that is open to hosting ideas and initiatives from various categories of citizens."*

The living labs in Mirafiori Sud created synergy towards a model for innovative solutions with the aim of civic engagement and social inclusiveness. Grounded in the co-responsibility dynamics generated by long-lasting projects in the districts, at their early stages, proGIreg and FUSILLI proposed co-creation activities capable of turning the creativity of local communities into practical experimentation. For instance, the proGIreg co-ordination team decided to engage a vast array of citizens to co-design experiments, such as the planning of community gardens in brownfield areas, before launching the testing stage.

3.3. Reconnecting with Culture and Nature

For rediscovering places with a high historical and naturalistic value, the ULLs in Mirafiori succeeded in gathering a significant number of researchers, project managers, and students from all over the countries involved in the European projects and with high-technical capacities in brownfield regeneration. This phenomenon brought into the district experts eager to take part in the experimentation and help local communities to build a scientifically consistent narrative around urban regeneration in the district. Many interviewees pointed out that the gathering of experts in the district led to producing not only highly technical reports and project deliverables but also a positive narrative that succeeded in revaluing the historical, natural, and cultural heritage of the district. To this extent, a Professor from the University of Turin who took part in both proGIreg and FUSILLI said:

> *"There is tourism that starts from the conferences, linked to the European projects, linked to the narrative, which has made the network of these projects discover and appreciate Mirafiori. Those tourists are academics, students, project managers and city officials interested in sustainability and regeneration topics. They walk around Mirafiori and appreciate its wonderful combination of historic buildings, natural areas and post-industrial heritage."*

Also of particular interest from a tourism point of view is the redevelopment of the Mirafiori Castle ruins. In particular, an interview with a public official of the city of Turin revealed the following:

> *"Works were carried out to enhance historical parts of the castle ruins. Hedges were planted, and around the perimeter of the castle, ten roses were planted, matched with ten Italian women writers chosen by library readers. These were modest and punctual works, but to which citizens living in the Mirafiori district are particularly attached because they perceive a historical and cultural belonging to the ancient phase of the district, which even derived its name."*

The Iperurbana (Hyperurban) project of Fondazione Mirafiori is seen as a way to promote sustainable tourism on the Sangone riverbanks, where the former FIAT enterprise flourished. It offers thematic tours such as "Green Mirafiori", "The workers' Mirafiori",

and "Historical Mirafiori", narrating the traces of the agricultural and industrial past of the district and interpreting the urban and social transformations along the route by walking or by bike [65]. One of the ideas emerging from the focus group was to organize an exhibition about the lives of the workers that tells the story of the industrial past of the city.

Turin was chosen as "the touristic city focused on media and broadcast use" for the EU project "5G Tours—Smart mobility, media and e-health for tourists and citizens", in which the Municipality of Turin [66] is a consortium partner in collaboration with the Turin Museums Foundation (Fondazione Torino Musei). This gained new momentum through VR/AR technologies and robotics, serving to improve and enrich the educational offering and interactivity of museums through the fifth generation of mobile internet connectivity. Such technologies help to revoke the memory of spaces and connect past to present. From the focus group, it emerged that one possibility for publicizing and disseminating the story of Mirafiori Sud might be the use of augmented reality to inform visitors about the architectural peculiarities of the 'Mausoleo della Bela Rusina' and the 'Castello di Mirafiori'. To this extent, one public official from the municipality of Turin explained:

> *"In other European projects, I had seen how augmented reality could help revalue the artistic and cultural heritage of post-industrial neighbourhoods. At first, the local community was sceptical about the potential of augmented reality but, at the end of the day, they were happy because they realised they could contribute with their input to spread knowledge related to their history."*

The main point of discussion among the focus group with respect to tourism was the "type of tourism". Although the primary objective and function of the ULLs in Mirafiori Sud do not directly target tourism, the legacy of the project touches upon different aspects of green tourism. Green corridors play a vital role in natural and cultural heritage by improving environmental quality and offering eco-friendly routes for visitors. A field trip themed "Green Line" connecting urban gardens through a food route was organized as part of the Open Living Lab Days in 2022. The green corridor connected the residential area with Mirafiori Castle and Piemonte Park. The ProGireg-Green Tour in Mirafiori Sud, organized by the City of Turin, Mirovolante, and Fondazione Mirafiori with the support of District 2, was a free and guided tour by bike.

Feeling part of a transformation fuels one's will to care for, protect, and promote it. This statement stems from the fact that schools in the neighborhood contact 'Fondazione Mirafiori', so that students can develop tourist routes. This could increase the tourist offer in and around the neighborhood.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This article examined many aspects of reviving urban greening in post-industrial landscapes through nature-based solutions (NbSs) by addressing social inclusion through civic engagement, community building, co-production, participatory procedures, and justice for repurposing abandoned and degraded areas into urban commons. ULLs activate urban stakeholders in unconventional ways, pushing them to go beyond traditional modes of working on experimenting with innovative solutions for complex problems, such as environmental degradation and marginalization, through the engagement of local communities. Calling on stakeholders to think about how to find alternative solutions, ULLs can lead to interpreting and readapting urban spaces by finding new functions.

Starting in the 2010s, the City of Turin launched new urban regeneration projects to transform degraded post-industrial landscapes into creative urban living labs (ULLs) for experimentation. There has been a shift from traditional hierarchies of cultural landscapes to more fluid, decentered practices. Based on a growing interest in this area, Mirafiori Sud became a remarkable hub for co-creation projects to foster the transformation of brownfields into experimentation sites capable of hosting sustainable and inclusive solutions. The ULLs succeeded in combining highly technical and place-based expertise coming from both the global research community and residents with long-lasting experience to turn brownfields into open-air ecosystems of sustainable experimentation.

So far, the literature on public policy has only indirectly dealt with the potential of ULLs in terms of green tourism. The Mirafiori Sud area is mainly known and visited by locals. The people from the periphery, other cities, and other countries should be attracted. To achieve this, the infrastructure should be improved to overcome problems of connection. This can be attained by developing bicycle lanes and providing affordable, accessible, eco-friendly modes of transportation.

Awareness raising is necessary to better integrate NbSs in the planning and management tools of the City of Turin. Attracting young people to the area has great importance for awareness raising. Nevertheless, as the city is inevitably transforming and the new population is settling down, the high rental prices are pushing away students and old inhabitants. The community and territory should come first in order to mitigate resistance from citizens. Therefore, it should be ensured that the local problems are adequately addressed. In this respect, it is also stressed that any tourism activity should respect the environment and not disturb the locals.

Dealing with urban complexities necessitates urban experimentation, for which ULLs are essential to provide frameworks for co-creation and driving the urban transition. Support for urban agriculture initiatives could improve the ability of cities to provide alternative food (and cultural) networks in the short term. In this context, governmental plans for urban regeneration, developing sustainable food systems, and greening tourism must align with EU policies for the Green Deal.

This article focused on Turin as an exploratory case study. What we observed locally in Turin has also been observed in other urban realities. The urban green infrastructure attracts visitors from neighboring countries for leisure activities and cultural exploration, which could be an asset for regional tourism development [67]. There is a need for the involvement of local and regional authorities in the planning, management, and promotion of urban green infrastructure as part of the tourism offering. This requires collaboration among various local entities, including institutions, associations, cooperatives, businesses, and users, to define development policies in line with a sustainable strategic vision of the territory and the needs of local communities [68].

Nevertheless, the potential negative effects arising from the planning of new green infrastructures for environmental and tourism purposes and the implications of a circular transition at a city scale should be taken into consideration [69]. Angelovski et al. [70] discussed how experimental initiatives towards the circular economy and climate mitigation may have negative effects in terms of social justice. In some cases, experimentation may in fact lead to exclusive dynamics of environmental gentrification, where certain categories of citizens remain excluded from the process of sustainable transition [71]. A notable case is the "Cinturón Verde" project in Medellín (Colombia), where the implementation witnessed an uneven application of land use regulations, transfers, and evictions. These measures were justified in the name of environmental risk management, growth control, and climate adaptation. Unfortunately, this approach prioritized the preservation and expansion of affluent formal settlements while displacing and relocating residents from impoverished informal communities. Consequently, the discussions and interventions surrounding green spaces, sustainability, and resilience in Medellín have collectively resulted in social and physical isolation, cultural and economic displacement, and physical and emotional discomfort for vulnerable urban residents. This highlights the necessity of embracing inclusive and equitable approaches in green infrastructure planning to prevent the exacerbation of social inequalities and the marginalization of communities [72].

To this extent, taking into account the critique raised by Savini [42] about ULLs reproducing patterns of governance and power distribution, in the case of proGIreg, other beneficiaries (generally not involved in ULLs) have been reached by such policies and dynamics, expanding the pool of people who directly and indirectly receive benefits, in particular ESs. For example, pollinator monitoring involves the inclusion of a 'disadvantaged' community that is actively involved in citizen science activities in addition to monitoring and needing to acquire knowledge and skills over time. Moreover, NbSs implemented

in night shelters also bring numerous benefits, in terms of mental well-being and social inclusion, to homeless people. Furthermore, an interesting and promising future research direction would be to consider how the NbSs tiraled in Mirafiori Sud may have positive environmental impacts in terms of mitigating urban heat island effects and carbon emissions through biological carbon sequestration processes.

In summary, this research underscores the importance of NbSs as a force for enhancing multi-functionality in post-industrial areas by incorporating ULLs and green tourism as a co-creation model to connect with nature, highlighting the need for thoughtful planning and management to maximize benefits while considering potential negative consequences. As a result, NbSs act as the driver of change in urban landscapes through co-creation and experimentation and promote green tourism.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, E.D., F.C. and L.B.; Methodology, E.D., F.C. and L.B.; Validation, F.C. and L.B.; Formal analysis, E.D., F.C. and L.B.; Investigation, E.D., F.C. and L.B.; Resources, E.D., F.C. and L.B.; Data curation, F.C. and L.B.; Writing—original draft, E.D., F.C. and L.B.; Writing—review & editing, E.D., F.C. and L.B.; Visualization, E.D. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by Boğaziçi University Research Fund [Grant Number 19356] and European Union's Horizon 2020 innovation action program [Grant Agreement no. 776528 and Grant Agreement no. 101000717]. The APC was funded by MDPI.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board of BOGAZICI UNIVERSITY (protocol code: E-84391427-050.01.04-127600 and date of approval: 18.05.2023).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments: We thank Laura Ribotta and Egidio Dansero for connecting us with relevant stakeholders.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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