

# A 'research-embedded-in-action' framework to foster agroecology

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# I assume we agree on urgency of radical change





Revolution  
not cosmetics

# I define my semantics

*(paying heed to Wezel et al 2009)*

- More than 'adopting some agroecological practices'
- Whole-system re-design: reference, **permaculture**



# Beyond labels

*(...yet be clear on what I mean by agroecology)*

- Plants, animal, people →  
food, fibre, fuel, etc.
- All env.<sup>tal</sup> & human aspects
- Favour natural processes



# Civiltà dell'Orto

## Natural horticulture: principles & techniques

### Natural horticulture:

- mimics ecological processes & structures;
- avoids tillage and soil disturbance;
- favours coexistence of spontaneous & cultivated plants (no 'weed' to eradicate);
- achieves natural pest-predator equilibrium;



### Techniques

- Spontaneous vegetation trampled over for soil preparation, then as needed;
- Min. 10 cm of hay or other dry, carbon-rich mulch is applied & maintained;
- A hole or "nest" is made to plant seeds or seedlings;
- Irrigation is quasi-inexistent, limited to minimum amounts at time of planting;
- Labour is either non-mechanised, or specific adapted machinery is used;



### Practical applications: agroecology-based social movements

These techniques have been applied in community gardens across Italy in the last decade. These vegetable gardens are managed by loose intentional communities, ecovillages, or lean neighbourhoods.

In Angera and Osnato, N Italy, and elsewhere, volunteers provide all the work force and collect as much produce as they need for themselves.

They also organise distribution of excess produce, e.g. to poorer families.



### Angera (case study)

Yield: 3 - 5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>

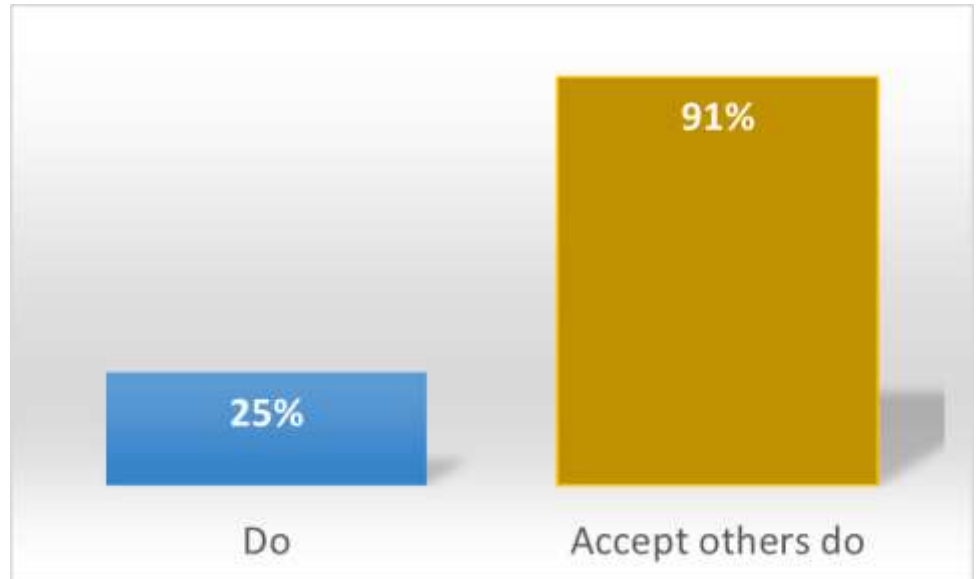
(Venice province average in 2000-2011: 1.4 - 2 kg/m<sup>2</sup>)

210 m<sup>2</sup> have fed 1 person 1 day of work / week

Reference: Cappello, Gian Carlo, 2013, 'La Civiltà dell'Orto. L'Orto Naturale di Angera, ed. easterpop' (in Italian), [http://www.naturalhorto.it/wordpress/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=101](http://www.naturalhorto.it/wordpress/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=101)



# Grower participation in research



Warner, 2006

# Develop agroecology through the praxis

- Abandoned land, abandoned buildings
- Pleading for an integrated approach





## Abandoned land & buildings (an example)



7.2 ha (arable land), sale price € 750.000  
Estimated cost of refurbishment € 1 million  
1050 m<sup>2</sup> of buildings



# I have a dream...



# What framework?



1. Steering group, e.g. for
  - business plans
  - farmers' involvement
  - legal framework & advice.
2. Catalyst.

**To recap...**











# A new mind for novel solutions





# Collect data while we do ALL that we do!





Try not!  
**DO or DO NOT,**  
There is no try.

# Stay in touch



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