

The “Mondeggi Bene Comune” farm: Energy from contradiction as a leavening agent for a bioregional territorial project

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Abstract

Bioregional projects are multiscalar and revolve around multiple centers of activity. The bioregional governance model draws its strength from this multiscalarity, relying on the modularity of community self-governance integrated with the support of networks connecting diverse types of local initiatives. Since 2014, the “Mondeggi Bene Comune” community has been distinguished by its opposition to the sale of a public agricultural estate, immediately experimenting with an alternative practice of community-based and proximity-oriented agriculture open to the local population. In 2022, after numerous failed attempts, the Florence Metropolitan City decided not to sell the estate, leveraging substantial funding from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) to invest in the area’s restoration. The community project was formally recognized, initiating a process of legalization and co-design. This article retraces the essential elements of Mondeggi’s past and recent history and examines, with both successes and challenges, the governance tools adopted.

Keywords: Urban Bioregion, Peasant Agriculture, Agroecology, Community, Urban Planning Governance

1. The bioregional dimension of the Mondeggi project

Although the “Mondeggi Bene Comune” farm project does not explicitly define itself as such, it is an intrinsically bioregional experience. It is grounded in relationships with the territory, ecological and social regeneration, community self-governance, and the construction of a pact between local collective subjectivities and public administration (Fanfani, Mataran Ruiz 2021; Magnaghi, 2023; Poli, 2024, 2025). It is a project born from the “energy of contradiction” (Magnaghi 2020) that inhabits the many “interstices” of social realities that have not adapted to the destructive settlement models produced by the neoliberal economic system (Pellizzoni, 2023). In just a few years, Mondeggi has become a national and international example of a peasant-led stewardship initiative, created to protect a public agricultural good from privatization, and capable of activating local and supra-local networks, reviving an abandoned site through a deliberate choice to reinhabit a place (Berg, 1978)¹.

¹ <https://mondeggibenecomune.org/>; <https://www.facebook.com/mondeggi.benecomune>

The story of “Mondeggi Bene Comune” begins in 2014, when a highly diverse project community (Poli, 2019) in the Florence area, farmers, artists, organic and biodynamic producers, members of solidarity purchasing groups (GAS), students, technicians, professionals, young graduates, and associations, came together under the movement “Terra Bene Comune” (Vannetiello, 2013) with the aim of defending the right of access to land and opposing the sale of public assets (Fig.1). The group’s proposal focused on granting the lands and buildings of the Mondeggi farm under a free loan agreement to young people and to those interested in practicing peasant agriculture². The movement established an initial occupation, reclaiming some buildings and restoring part of the abandoned land. Around the stable inhabitants, a large community then formed to manage the olive grove, vineyard, and gardens, involving at different stages more than one hundred people and creating opportunities for exchange and trust-building (Poli, 2017; Fiori, Harel, Poli, 2019; Ghelfi, 2025; Caramelli, 2025).



Fig.1 The Mondeggi Committee in front of the Municipality of Bagno a Ripoli (where the farm is located) to demand that the public asset not be sold (<https://mondeggibenecomune.org>)

Mondeggi can be described as a bioregional project from multiple perspectives.

- Ecological: it is a community grounded in peasant agriculture and agroecology, in a “dense” dimension that integrates technique, lifestyles, and politics (Ploeg, 2021);
- political: it opposed the sale of a public asset and practices self-governance through assembly-based decision-making grounded in the declaration of civic use;
- social: it embraces a broad notion of the *commons* in various fields (from knowledge to the economy) and operates as an open and inclusive “project community”;
- cultural: it deepens a sense of place through its close relationship with the land, the territory, and its inhabitants;
- economic: it practices a community-based and civil economy rooted in sharing, mutual exchange, and proximity;

² <https://mondeggibenecomune.org/la-storia/>

- reticular: over time it has built an extensive network of relationships, practices, and cultural and social exchange, at both local and supra-local levels.

The experience of the Mondeggi farm is thus one of many bioregional initiatives, in Italy and abroad, that assert the right to “another way of owning” (Grossi, 1977), of cultivating, and of being politically present, seeking to transition the management of public goods toward that of the commons (Ostrom, 2006; Hardt, Negri, 2010; Dardot, Laval, 2014; Belingardi, 2015; Lombardini, 2015).

The following text outlines the history of the Mondeggi farm, its recent developments, the Mondeggi Bene Comune collective, the current state of the pact-based project involving local realities and different levels of public administration and, finally, it highlights the potential for a fruitful dialogue with agreement territorial governance instruments, such as those of multifunctional agricultural parks, which are now well established across many national and international contexts (Poli, 2019).

2. The Agricultural History of the Mondeggi Farm

The name chosen by the movement, “Mondeggi Common Good. A Farm Without Masters” (*Mondeggi Bene Comune. Fattoria senza padroni*), encapsulates in just a few words this future project, one that derives meaning and value from its long historical duration (Passaniti, 2017).

The Mondeggi estate is located in the hilly area southeast of Florence, within the municipality of Bagno a Ripoli, and has been documented since the Middle Ages (Repetti, 1839). Over time, it developed the typical features of the sharecropping (*mezzadria*) farms of the central Tuscan hills, consisting of a main farmhouse and numerous farm units (*podere*) connected by a dense network of rural roads. “In its ‘classical’ sense, sharecropping thus entailed the formation of a dense network of *podere* (on average 5–10 hectares), cultivated by a peasant family, whose size was proportional to the extent of the estate” (Moroni, 2004, p. 107). In addition to their size, the productivity of each *podere* was fundamental: it had to ensure the subsistence of the peasant family, contractually obliged to give half (*mezzadria*) of all foodstuffs produced to the landowner, in a foundational exchange between city and countryside.

The *podere* was therefore a truly “autonomous unit of production,” sustained by the skill and initiative of the sharecroppers, who, beyond self-consumption, engaged in more or less limited market exchanges. The sharecroppers themselves carried out coordinated tasks within the farm and provided services to the wider community through the so-called *corvée*, which became the subject of numerous disputes in collective labour contracts during the twentieth century. It is thus clear that – despite both its lights and shadows – the farm was not merely an estate or landholding, but a capillary and modular socio-economic and territorial organization: a cohesive “mesh” spread across the countryside and integrated with the city, a complex structure that historically ensured sustainability, resilience, and beauty.

After providing a detailed account of the ownership transitions of the manor house, Emanuele Repetti reports that “the greatest number of *podere* belonging to the Mondeggi farm were assembled by Count Camillo, father of the current Count Guido [Della Gherardesca], who purchased most of them from those formerly belonging to the suppressed Abbey of Monte Scalari; thus, today they form an estate of 34 *podere* excellently cultivated, adorned with avenues, delightful groves, plantations, and equipped with every convenience necessary for the care of its provident owner” (Repetti, 1839, p. 177, translation by the author). This provides a clear description of the territory before the sweeping industrial and agro-industrial transformations that drastically altered territorial organization, but which, thanks to the well-known “inertia of the landscape” (Sereni, 1961), did not erase its traces, allowing them to be reintegrated into a future project.

For a brief period, the farm belonged to the *Spedale di Santa Maria Novella* (in 1488), after which it passed through various private owners³. Owned by the Province of Florence since the early 1960s, the Mondeggi farm is today managed by the Metropolitan City of Florence. In the last century, once it had returned to public ownership, plans were made to establish a hospital complex on the site, possibly a psychiatric institution. This plan could not be pursued due to the enactment of the Basaglia Law (Law 180/1978), which prohibited the use of such facilities (Pandolfini, 2021).

The estate currently covers about 170 hectares and includes approximately 12,000 olive trees; 22 hectares of vineyards, some of which require replanting; 60 hectares of arable land and pasture; six farmhouses (Cerreto, Rucciano, Sollicciano, Conte Ranieri, Pulizzano, and Cuculia); and a villa-farm complex with an attached historic

³ <http://san.beniculturali.it/web/san/dettaglio-soggetto-produttore?id=68587>

park of nineteenth-century origin. With the acquisition by the Province and the subsequent assignment of management to the agricultural company Mondeggi-Lappeggi s.r.l., the traditional *podere* organization was dismantled in favour of a reorganization aligned with the agro-industrial principles of the “Green Revolution” (Poli 2017), including various specialized experiments conducted in collaboration with the university and private actors. This shift, coupled with the growing detachment from the local community, led to significant debt accumulation and the abandonment of both cultivation areas and buildings.

After the liquidation of the company, the authorities began searching for potential tenants or buyers, listing the estate among the public assets eligible for disposal.

3. The Reclamation of the Peasant Way of Life

The Mondeggi activists identified with the national movement “Genuine Clandestine. Communities Fighting for Food Self-Determination” (*Genuino Clandestino. Comunità in lotta per l'autodeterminazione alimentare*)⁴, which since 2010 has gathered numerous social practices of peasant resistance and asserted the right to produce food in a fair and proper manner, even when the law does not yet fully recognize such practices. A 2009 flyer from *Campi Aperti* in Bologna asked: «Which is healthier: a loaf of bread produced in a large agro-industrial facility, or a loaf of organic wheat flour kneaded by hand by a trusted farmer?».

Genuino Clandestino's demands focus primarily on reinstating small-scale, home-based processing for small producers, as allowed by EU Regulation EC 852/2004, which permits those cultivating land for household self-consumption to process and package products in their home or in adjacent structures. This regulation has been only partially incorporated into certain regional laws⁵. Peasant agriculture – explicitly post-productivist, oriented toward diversified production and multifunctionality (cultivation, animal husbandry, processing, direct sales, educational activities, hospitality, etc.) – is primarily composed of very small and micro farms, often involving informal activities aimed first and foremost at self-consumption, self-management of life rhythms, and non-monetary exchange. These activities operate with low technological intensity, low capitalization, and high labour intensity, serving proximity markets through direct sales, while providing environmental and territorial stewardship and enhancing the social quality of places (Onorati, 2024; Pandolfi, 2024).

Drawing inspiration from international experiences, the movement began proposing forms of community investment such as that of the French association *Terre de Liens*⁶, which, through a system of social shareholding, purchases agricultural land in order to entrust it to farmers for the care and management of a common good. A comparable initiative was tested in Italy with the *GAT – Gruppi di Acquisto Terreni* (“Land Purchasing Groups”), although this model did not spread widely; only two farms – one in the province of Mantua and the other in the Grosseto area – were created through this form of popular shareholding⁷.

Peasant and proximity agriculture plays a central role in the bioregionalist approach because, beyond self-consumption, closed cycles, and self-sustainability, it has significant implications for settlement patterns (Poli, Butelli, 2021). Some have referred to this model as *Agripolis* or *Agropolis* (Mougeot, 2005; Donadieu, 2011; Schröder, 2011), highlighting its strong potential to reshape urban form as well (Pothukuchi, Kaufman, 1999; Donovan et al., 2011; Gorgolewski et al., 2012; Viljoen, Johannes, 2012).

In 2014, amid doubts and uncertainties – mostly due to the sheer size of the farm – the †@idea emerged to focus the movement’s efforts on the Mondeggi agricultural holding and to establish a form of stewardship through the presence of “peasant custodians”, maintaining an ongoing and dialectical dialogue between residents and participants in the movement.

One of the first activities was the recovery of existing crops, namely olives and vines, managed partly collectively through the MO.T.A. and MO.V.A. groups (see below), and integrated with new small-scale cultivation and processing activities such as herbalism, the cultivation of medicinal plants, saffron, vegetables, and mixed fruit

⁴ “Genuino Clandestino” is a radical movement that defines itself as a horizontal structure, without spokespersons or hierarchical organizations – a movement grounded in everyday practices and collectively united by a shared manifesto of principles. It is a collective movement of practices, more attentive to concrete actions than to the theoretical or ideological construction of a body of thought (Potito, Borghesi 2015). <https://genuinoclandestino.it/>

⁵ (Potito, Borghesi 2015, p. 37), Provincia di Bolzano, DPP 52/2008; Regione Abruzzo, L.R. 8/2008; Regione Emilia-Romagna, L.R. 19/2014 Toscana L. R. 21 marzo 2018, n. 12.

⁶ <http://www.terredeliens.org/> (01/16)

⁷ <https://bioradar.net/econews/gruppi-di-acquisto-terreni-gat-chi-sono/>

trees (around 300 plants), as well as pig and poultry farming⁸ (Fig. 2-3). These activities are situated around the rural houses and prioritize animal welfare by avoiding excessive concentration, ensuring ample grazing areas, and guaranteeing free access to food and water sources. Large areas of uncultivated arable land (about 15 hectares) were put back into production with the sowing of ancient grains in rotation with other species (especially fava beans) to maintain soil fertility (Fig.4).



Fig. 2 The collective olive harvest of the Mo.T.A. group (<https://mondeggibenecomune.org>)



Fig. 3 Moments of play and relaxation during the collective olive harvest of the Mo.T.A. group (<https://mondeggibenecomune.org>).

Additionally, new production chains were established, including beekeeping and honey production; hops and beer production; and grain and bread production using a wood-fired oven, with proceeds reinvested in the necessary tools and infrastructure. Mondeggi stimulated a powerful collective imaginary that offered strength and hope for the possibility of alternatives – for the feasibility, even in our latitudes, of “other worlds” (Calabria, 2025; Zibechi, 2023). This vision was further encouraged by the visit of the Zapatistas from Chiapas in 2021 during their European tour⁹.



Fig. 4 Preparation of the soil for wheat sowing (<https://mondeggibenecomune.org>).

⁸ The goal was to obtain different types of fruit across the spring–summer months, in order to produce jams and other processed goods. The planting layout, with about 10 meters between the rows, was designed to allow for intercropping with other plant species (vegetables, cereals, grain legumes).

⁹ <https://www.lacittafutura.it/esteri/gira-zapatista-un-viaggio-di-vita,-lotta-e-bellezza>

Articles and essays followed one another, accompanied by interviews, seminars, and conferences dedicated to Mondeggi's innovative practices. Many cultural figures visited the site, including Pierre Donadieu, agronomist and landscape architect at the École de Versailles. Numerous scholars and practitioners signed petitions urging public authorities to halt the sale of the estate and reopen dialogue with local administrations¹⁰.

The relationship with the institutions was troubled. From the outset, the Mondeggi Committee sought dialogue with the then-Province of Florence, with mediation by the Municipality of Bagno a Ripoli. During a widely attended open session of the municipal council, a motion was unanimously passed asking the Province not to proceed with the sale of the farm but to consider partial management of the property by the Mondeggi Bene Comune movement. A coordination table was established, including representatives from public institutions (technicians and administrators from the Province and Municipality), as well as members of local committees and stakeholders. Unfortunately, after a few meetings, negotiations stalled. Many public institutions remained reluctant to envision forms of commons-based management, which operate outside the traditional State-Market logic.

The launch of the peasant stewardship at Mondeggi, during the three-day event of 27–29 June 2014, led to the official indictment of seventeen individuals for “illegal occupation and theft of water and electricity.” The legal proceedings concluded in November 2019 with the full acquittal of all defendants¹¹.

Subsequently, several tenders were issued, first by the Province and later by the Metropolitan City, seeking to sell the estate. Fortunately, due to unsuccessful auctions and interrupted negotiations, the sale did not take place.

4. Key features of the Mondeggi experience

The “Mondeggi Bene Comune” experience has been shaped over time by three defining features that distinguish it and have sustained its endurance: openness to the local community, assembly-based governance, and the lived practice of commons.

The local population has always been a constant point of reference in the Committee's initiatives, starting with early efforts aimed at spreading knowledge about the site. Crowded “design walks” were organized, during which historical, technical, and agronomic information was shared, sparking reflections, desires, and opportunities.

With the aim of strengthening the relationship between the peasant custodians and the local community, in mid-2015 the *Mo.T.A.* project – *Mondeggi Terreni Autogestiti* (“Self-Managed Mondeggi Lands”) – was launched. This initiative involved “adopting” portions of the vegetable gardens and olive groves for those interested, thereby extending stewardship of the estate and making participants aware of Mondeggi's story through hands-on practice. This approach is formalized in the *Charter of Principles and Intentions*¹²: “dedicate parcels of arable land to social and shared gardens, assigned by the assemblies to groups of families or individuals who wish to engage in self-production of at least part of their food needs” (translation by the author).

Mo.T.A. proved highly successful, and today around 450 people contribute through their work to the care of over 5,000 olive trees and the creation of approximately 20 family gardens. Both the olive groves and gardens are directly managed by participants, who carry out all activities throughout the year, including pruning, suckering, olive harvesting, plowing, sowing, and watering.

Building on these principles, in 2016 the *MO.V.A.* project – *Mondeggi Vigneti Autogestiti* (“Self-Managed Mondeggi Vineyards”) – was launched. It manages and cares for vineyard rows over roughly 5 hectares, comprising a total of 100 rows, with about 200 participants involved. The strong social engagement and shared objectives of these projects testify to their success, highlighting the contemporary need for a renewed communal relationship with the land, echoing similar initiatives reported in this journal issue¹³.

From the outset, the experience was organized communally (Fig.5), following an assembly-based decision making model (Bookchin, 2023). All participants worked to identify a shared path, as articulated in the collectively signed *Charter of Principles and Intentions*, which outlined the values and criteria guiding the common project¹⁴. In 2017, after extensive discussion and reflection, the *Declaration of Civic Use* formalized Mondeggi's status and

¹⁰ <https://www.societadeiterritorialisti.it/2014/06/21/urgente-appello-per-il-mantenimento-della-proprietà-pubblica-a-mondeggi-scadenza-adesioni-24-giugno/> ; <https://www.italiachecambia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/appello-mondeggi.pdf>

¹¹ <https://mondeggibenecomune.org/la-storia/>; <https://www.terranuova.it/news/agricoltura/mondeggi-fattoria-senza-patroni-tutti-assolti-e-arriva-vandana-shiva>

¹² <https://mondeggibenecomune.org/carta-dei-principi-e-degli-intenti/>

¹³ <https://mondeggibenecomune.org/mo-t-a-mo-v-a/>

¹⁴ <https://mondeggibenecomune.org/carta-dei-principi-e-degli-intenti/>

management as a common good, establishing legal recognition as a foundation for dialogue with public institutions¹⁵.



Fig.5 Moments of discussion on the farm (<https://mondeggibenecomune.org>).

Decisions are made in assemblies, wherever possible using consensus, with both residents and local and supra-local activists participating. Two decision-making bodies were established: the Plenary Assembly, which discusses general guidelines and external political strategies and retains authority over political and strategic decisions while remaining anchored to practical activities, and the Technical or Second-Level Assemblies, which allow community groups to self-organize and facilitate the development of individual projects. At the time of the Declaration, active assemblies included the *Presidium Assembly*, overseeing daily life decisions; the *Agricultural Assembly*, managing agricultural work and agroecology-based crop plans; and the *Mo.T.A. Assembly*, overseeing the olive groves and garden plots entrusted to participants.

At Mondeggi, the “commons” permeates all aspects of public and private life: from assembly-based decision-making to online discussions, self-management of activities, shared living spaces and garden areas, communal meals, and the mutual exchange of agricultural labour. The Mondeggi community is primarily a community of practice: around these practices, seminars, discussions, and reflection groups have been organized, but action remains at the core.

Numerous free educational activities have been carried out, foremost among them the *Peasant School*, which annually involved over 500 participants, followed by educational workshops and summer camps for around 60 children, as well as initiatives promoting peasant products – such as the *Mosto di Firenze* project, which engaged 50 local producers over the years. Artistic and cultural initiatives, along with broader territorial animation activities, have collectively brought thousands of people to explore and experience the estate.

Revenue from direct sales markets and solidarity purchasing groups (GAS), combined with proceeds from festivals, catering, and sales of herbs and soaps, has allowed the community to build a wood-fired bread oven, a small brewery, and an herbalism and honey production workshop, as well as to purchase a tractor for agricultural activities.

¹⁵ <https://mondeggibenecomune.org/dichiarazione-di-gestione-civica-di-un-bene-comune/>

5. Latest challenges: the PNRR, the building of the pact, governance, and conflicts

This period of uncertainty and lack of recognition continued until the summer of 2020, when the mayor of the Metropolitan City and the city of Florence, Dario Nardella, publicly announced the intention to remove the Mondeggi Farm from the list of alienable public assets and to launch a comprehensive renovation of the buildings using European funds from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), amounting to over €57 million (Mission 5: Inclusion and Social Cohesion) for a project titled “Territorial Regeneration of the Mondeggi Estate” (*Rigenerazione territoriale della tenuta di Mondeggi*). The aim of this new vision was to promote social, agricultural, innovative, sports, and cultural potential, involving the Mondeggi Bene Comune Committee and recognizing their work through the formal legalization of their stewardship path.

The substantial funding from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), awarded to the Metropolitan City, offered the “Mondeggi Bene Comune” Committee a significant opportunity, but also created internal tensions. Some participants left the project, feeling that the mediation choices made were not consistent with the founding principles of the Mondeggi experience¹⁶, while those who chose to trust the process set in motion by the Metropolitan City are instead betting on the potential to make the emerging project across the entire estate both effective and widely shared, through the renovation of the villa, farmhouses, and various service and road infrastructures. The project has thus entered a more complex phase, which, if well managed, could bring benefits to the entire community.

Negotiations with the Metropolitan City, following the decision not to sell the estate and to renovate the buildings with PNRR funds, led to the establishment of a new multi-stakeholder governance structure and to the legal recognition of the Mondeggi Committee within the framework of third-sector legislation, similar to the case of the former *Asilo Filangeri* in Naples (Vittoria, Mazzeola, 2021). A broad project has been outlined, addressing multiple aspects, with its general features defined through commissions assigned to departments of the University of Florence (Biggeri et al., 2023). Each farmhouse is designed to be integrated with its surrounding land to close resource cycles, with specific functions allocated to the ground and first floors, combining residential units (permanent or temporary) with shared areas¹⁷. The entire built and agricultural complex is envisioned as fully connected through an IoT network – an Internet of Things system linking walls, plants, machinery, and human activity (Parascandolo et al., 2023). Sensors are planned throughout the farm to support precision agriculture. The villa and its annexes (excluding the gardener’s house) will be entrusted separately to a qualified entity and will host cultural, educational, and local product promotion functions, along with hospitality and catering services. The villa is also intended to include offices, laboratories, and classrooms to host spin-offs and start-ups in social cohesion and agritech 4.0. Excluding the villa, the rest of the project has been incorporated under the Third Sector Code (DL 117/2017)¹⁸.

¹⁶ The disagreements concern not so much the decision to seek forms of legalization, but rather the choice to take part in a project funded by PNRR resources that pursues goals far removed from those of the movement. In particular, the group that left contends that the assemblies abandoned the search for consensus in decision-making, lost a vision centered on peasant agriculture, supported forms of individual protagonism, accepted hi-tech agriculture, failed to clearly define the non-negotiable values in the dialogue with the Metropolitan City, and much more. Their well-articulated arguments can be found in this document: *Mondeggi bene comunque? La fine della fattoria senza padroni* (“Mondeggi Anyway? The End of the Farm Without Masters”). <https://mondeggibenecomunque.noblogs.org/>

¹⁷ Cerreto, designated for initiatives against gender-based violence and for the reception of vulnerable individuals; Sollicciano, intended for activities aimed at people with disabilities and for residential or semi-residential services; Rucciano, oriented toward socio-health services and educational workshops; Pulizzano, dedicated to the sale and processing of agricultural products and to social purposes; Conte Ranieri, for projects of hospitality and inclusion of migrants and people experiencing marginalisation; Cuculia, designated for training and job-placement pathways through agriculture and craftsmanship.

¹⁸ The title of the call for proposals may create confusion. Based on the title, it might appear that the call will select actors with whom to collectively construct the project – as required by the Third Sector Code – thus giving continuity to what had previously been developed through the co-programming process. In reality, however, the project has already been defined by the university research group. The selected actors will therefore refine and detail what has already been drafted. See the call: <https://www.cittametropolitana.fi.it/avviso-di-co-progettazione-per-lideazione-di-un-sistema-integrato-a-rete-di-servizi-alla-persona-attraverso-lutilizzo-delle-strutture-e-degli-spazi-aperti-della-tenuta-di-mo/>. In this first phase, the renovation of the farmhouses is envisaged through a selection procedure issued by the Metropolitan City (deadline: 28 November 2025), entitled “Call for co-design for the creation of an integrated networked system of personal services through the use of the buildings and open spaces of the ‘Mondeggi Estate’.” The

To manage the project, the Metropolitan City established the foundation *Mondeggi Sostenibile*, of which it is the sole founding member, to implement the sustainable recovery plan funded by the PNRR. The aim is to transform the Mondeggi Estate into a “next-generation shared platform”, primarily creating socio-occupational opportunities for young people and socially or materially vulnerable groups while promoting sustainable production, diversifying outputs and services, and maintaining the estate’s traditional focus on vine and olive cultivation.

To participate in the selection process, the Committee established the APS Association *Mondeggi Bene Comune*. Together with ten other social organizations aligned with the Mondeggi Charter of Principles, the association submitted a proposal requesting unified management of the six farmhouses. Alongside numerous other local associations and cooperatives, the APS submitted a request to the Tuscany Region to establish a “Collaboration Pact” between APS, the Metropolitan City, the Municipality of Bagno a Ripoli, and other stakeholders, under L.R. 71/2020, “Collaborative Governance of Commons and Territory for the Promotion of Social Subsidiarity.” For the time being, and until 2026, the APS has free-use custody of the land, but the proposed project is far more ambitious, intending to use the pact “to plan and design, cooperatively between active citizens and public entities, on a non-profit basis, the care, collaborative management, and regeneration of a common good, for a sufficiently long period – not less than twenty years – appropriate to an experience of solidarity and sharing based on the care and cultivation of the land, in accordance with agroecological principles”¹⁹.

During a dense assembly, attended by the author of this text, the project submitted to the Metropolitan City selection process was presented (Fig.6). The proposal gives life to what had previously only appeared in books or in the tender documentation, emphasizing the need for strong coordination among the activities of the various farmhouses, which should operate synergistically and collaboratively to mutually reinforce each other. The centrality of agricultural – specifically agroecological – activity is reaffirmed, extending even to social initiatives: “Agroecology is the core, the social aspect serves the community, and the commons – or another possible world – is the explicit goal”. The network with the ten other associative organizations ensures a significant social presence, which will be integrated with agricultural activities, processing laboratories, the peasant shop, the community canteen, the guesthouse, and cultural, artistic, and sporting events. Assembly-based governance remains central, operating both for individual farmhouses and in collective gatherings, following methods of consensus and assent supported by facilitation techniques.



Fig. 6 Public presentation of the Mondeggi project at the Casa del Popolo in Grassina – 7 November 2025 (<https://mondeggibenecomune.org>).

call concerns the assignment, reserved for Third Sector entities, of the six renovated farmhouses, which will be granted under a free loan-of-use agreement for eight years, without the possibility of direct renewal. The procedure is structured into three phases, managed by the Metropolitan City: selection of partners; shared co-design with the selected partners; and the signing of agreements, expected by 31 December 2026.

¹⁹ <https://comune-info.net/un-patto-per-mondeggi/>

6. Conclusions and prospects for the Mondeggi farm

The “Mondeggi Bene Comune” community represents a significant and innovative experience within the national and international landscape of peasant agriculture, initially born to resist the sale of public agricultural property. It was a decidedly insurgent practice, driven by a powerful and engaging “energy of contradiction,” which not only mobilized to assert a principle but also demonstrated possible alternatives for the communal management of land. Through the peasant stewardship and the extensive support of local, national, and international communities, Mondeggi maintained a meaningful connection with the academic and scientific world, which engaged on multiple occasions through seminars, articles, and appeals addressed to public administrations. This was a conflictual project operating within a hostile administrative context, with the Province of Florence first and the Metropolitan City later repeatedly attempting to sell the estate, never fully accepting dialogue with either the movement or the broad scientific community that supported it.

The cultural and political horizon of the current administration appears largely distant from the philosophy of the Mondeggi community, evident in several ways. Notably, semantic shifts are significant: in tenders, publications, and scientific reports arising from Metropolitan City commissions, the term “farm” (*fattoria*) is almost entirely absent beyond historical references, seemingly sidelined as a relic, closely associated with the “farm without owners” identity once embraced by the committee. It has been replaced with “estate” (*tenuta*), a term emphasizing property and landholding rather than the organization and agricultural activity implied by the etymology of “fattoria” (from medieval Latin *factoria*, deriving from classical Latin *facere*, “to make, produce, realize”). Promoting an estate in the Chianti landscape emphasizes exclusivity and charm, diverging from the idea of a contemporary farm focused on work, livestock, and active agriculture. Furthermore, Mondeggi is frequently described in official documents as “a platform”²⁰, highlighting the perspective of high connectivity via the Internet of Things across the territory, in contrast with the agroecological logic of peasant farming – a contrast strongly critiqued by collectives such as Atelier Paysan (2023), who emphasize the foundational differences between peasant rurality and industrialized fields, advocating for a community-centered, autonomous, and productive economy that restores fertility, biodiversity, and agency.

Despite these challenges, the Mondeggi community can claim a major victory: the farm is no longer for sale. While the absence of buyers contributed to this outcome, the Metropolitan City has also directed PNRR funds toward the “territorial regeneration of Mondeggi”, leveraging a local project that has taken root in the community and enjoys broad support. Today, the project is ongoing, with many challenges to face and uncertainties to resolve as activities progress.

A surprising aspect of governance is the choice to frame activities under third-sector legislation through a “collaboration pact” between third-sector entities and the public administration – a path not mandated by external factors, as the villa itself will not be governed this way. Such procedures are typically designed for socio-sanitary or welfare entities, which indeed represent most of the project’s planned activities. The collaboration pact is a relatively lightweight tool, without profit-oriented economic provisions, and its weakness risks leaving the complex Mondeggi project legally fragile, unable to safeguard its innovative and regenerative ambitions, where the economy is integral. It might have been more effective to use forms of “civic concession” that would operationalize Mondeggi’s Declaration of Civic Use or other public land lease and management models, key instruments for fostering innovative approaches through specific criteria (e.g., agroecology, education, social agriculture, organic production, direct sales). Numerous examples exist nationally and internationally, from the Parco Agricolo Sud and Fondazione Ga’ Granda in Milan, which lease land to multifunctional agricultural enterprises, to Land Trust practices in the U.S. and Canada, urban agriculture in Cuba, and multifunctional public land projects in France, such as the 400-hectare peri-urban agro-landscape park of Deûle and the Vacherie de Blanquefort in the Bordeaux metropolitan area, a restored farm for organic horticulture and livestock, open to the public and educational activities. Such examples provide models for governance capable of preserving the centrality of agriculture, as requested by the committee, without marginalizing community self-management or reducing it to hobby farming.

²⁰ A term that is, moreover, already present in the Metropolitan Territorial Plan of Florence, which identifies various “metropolitan platforms” associated with the need to strengthen the ecosystem, infrastructural networks, the regeneration of built environments, and the agricultural system – referring in the Strategic Plan to the metaphor of the “engine,” which stands in stark contrast to an approach that interprets the territory as a living organism.

The weakest element of the project appears to be governance, correctly framed as pact-based (De Bonis, 2025, Belingardi, 2025), but not clearly designed to support the specific type of multifunctional, community-oriented agriculture that Mondeggi embodies. The project could have adopted the model of multifunctional agricultural parks, with a public/private social/third-sector governance structure, prioritising the multifunctional role of agriculture, while above all seeking to preserve the radical and innovative character of the experience, that has assumed a leading role across multiple contexts, from the scientific community to political, social, and community spheres. The project is anyway ongoing, a high-stakes venture that can still succeed: success depends on the effectiveness of co-programming and co-design among the eleven associations expected to win the tender, maintaining and strengthening territorial connections, and progressively reinforcing the centrality of agriculture. Equally, it depends on whether the Metropolitan City and the Municipality of Bagno a Ripoli are truly committed to investing in a major innovation capable of repositioning the Florentine territory on the international stage, as Medici farms did during the Renaissance, as centres of work, delight, and experimentation. The “commons” reopen the socio-economic gap compressed by the modern State and Market; it is hoped that institutions recognize and support these “interstices” (Pellizzoni, 2023), nurturing their autonomy and multi-level network capacity to shape a bioregional governance architecture, which remains possible today (Poli, Luciani, 2024).

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