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FROM ORCHARD TO URBAN GARDEN: COMMUNICATING THE VALUE OF FRUIT TREES IN PUBLIC SPACE

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Abstract:

In recent years, urban landscapes have witnessed a renewed interest in integrating fruit trees into public spaces, redefining the boundaries between nature, culture, and community well-being. This study explores how the symbolic and ecological values of fruit trees are communicated in urban environments, transitioning from their traditional role in agricultural orchards to new functions in city gardens and community parks. Through a multidisciplinary approach combining environmental communication, landscape design, and urban sociology, the paper examines how fruit trees foster a dialogue between humans and nature, serving as both aesthetic and educational instruments.

• Introduction

In many parts of Romania, fruit trees are traditionally confined to private orchards or commercial plantations, serving purposes of food production, income generation, and family subsistence. These orchards, often located on the outskirts of cities or in rural areas, are typically utilitarian spaces designed primarily for personal consumption or the production of goods intended for sale. In contrast, public green spaces and urban gardens are imagined and designed with leisure in mind. They offer citizens places to take walks, walk their dogs, or admire carefully curated flower arrangements. However, these ornamental spaces often come with significant costs. Many rely heavily on non-native annual flowers that require frequent replanting, intensive maintenance, and substantial public funding, quickly draining municipal budgets.

• Material and method

By analyzing case studies from European urban projects, the paper demonstrates that the presence of fruit trees in public spaces is not merely a matter of design, but a medium of communication one that connects environmental identity, collective memory, and the pursuit of a more resilient urban ecosystem.

• Results and discussions

The dichotomy raises important questions: what if fruit trees could be reimagined not just as agricultural assets confined to private or commercial spaces, but as integral elements of urban design? Could fruit trees combine the practical benefits of orchards with the social and aesthetic functions of urban gardens, offering a more sustainable, productive, and community-oriented alternative in public spaces? To make this shift possible, communication plays a vital role. Public perception must evolve to embrace the idea that fruit-bearing trees can belong in parks, squares, and sidewalks, not just in backyards or rural fields. Through effective communication strategies, community engagement, and participatory urban planning, the concept of the urban orchard can move from an unfamiliar idea to a valuable part of everyday city life.

Conclusions

- The research highlights how public awareness campaigns, participatory design, and green communication strategies contribute to a deeper understanding of biodiversity, sustainability, and food heritage within cities.