

NEWS

PROJECT

UPPER - Urban
Productive Parks for the
development of NBS
related technologies
and services

📍 Latina, Italy

TOPIC

Sustainable use of land
and nature based
solutions

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UPPER's first urban production park is underway

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The final project intervention for the construction of the first urban production park for UPPER project is underway with the development of technologies and services connected to solutions based on nature (NBS - Nature-Based Solutions).

After some slowdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic which prevented many of the co-planning meetings with citizens and the increase in the costs of construction materials in 2022 which forced to remodulate the objectives set in WP7 "Productive Parks construction Investment" of the UPPER project, on 30 March 2023 the Municipality of Latina approved the construction of the NBS production park in via Roccagorga (called PP2 - Production Park 2) with resolution no. 131/2023 of the Extraordinary Commissioner.

The park in via Roccagorga (PP2), preferred for immediate construction to the other two production parks planned in Campo Bario (PP1) and Via Massaro (PP3), is configured as the most suitable for the completion of all the objectives set by the project UPPER in areas of different nature: environmental, social and welfare, participation and work development, also with a view to including vulnerable people in the workplace.

Its location, in a strategic sector of the city that host both citizens and non-municipal users due to the multitude of public services present in the area such as the market area, school buildings, the Local Police Headquarters and the Episcopal Curia, makes it the most suitable intervention to develop a specific identity function for the active involvement of the population in the development and maintenance of NBS.

The executive construction phase of Production Park 2 includes a process of involvement of the various stakeholders identified in the planning phase, which has already obtained some of the results envisaged in the initial proposal.

OBJECTIVES ALREADY ACHIEVED BY THE UPPER PROJECT

Thanks to the work done together with the project partners, UPPER has already achieved the following objectives:

- CONSTITUTION OF A BANK OF GREEN AREAS

The Municipality of Latina with the participation of Labirinto Social Cooperative and the Circeo National Park has created the catalogue of public and private green areas in the city (courtyards, gardens, parks...) with the aim to promote and support the development of NBS through recreational activities based on nature and planting of species in accordance with the creation of the production parks under construction. In this way, it has been possible to increase the availability for citizens of safe and accessible green areas in an urban context, that has grown rapidly, and is therefore linked to unregulated land use, which has given rise to overcrowded neighbourhoods with insufficient green areas or in other to vast uncultivated wastelands.

- AWARENESS RAISING AND INVOLVEMENT OF CITIZENS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

All the design and management activities of the green areas of the Productive Parks have been done with the active participation of the citizens through the UPPER CITY LAB, co-design workshops on the territory organized by the project partner Tesseracte Urban Social Research with the participation of the neighbourhood associations and other stakeholders. The goal was to involve the local community to promote the understanding of some innovative tools, such as the use of NBS in urban areas, in order to promote their transformations. The participatory methodology has made it possible to bring out the needs of the neighbourhoods, ideas and suggestions to enrich the feasibility study drawn up by the administration planners.

All the work was then shared on the social channels through the UPPER STORIES to give greater dissemination to the proposals developed and to collect even more extensive feedback.

- INCREASING THE WELL-BEING OF CITIZENS

During the project, the Labirinto Social Cooperative in collaboration with the Municipality of Latina, some third sector bodies and neighbourhood associations gave life to the co-planning and implementation of the UPPER SEEDS, moments of aggregation of citizens to carry out playful activities, educational, sporting, social and cultural activities based on contact with urban nature and on the transformation and care of green spaces in the city. The monitoring and evaluation surveys of the activities found that most of the participants developed a greater sense of well-being deriving from contact with the greenery and a greater sense of belonging to the neighbourhood and the city, and promoting a more participatory and aware way of living the city.

- REDUCTION OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND THE RISK OF POVERTY FOR MARGINALIZED PEOPLE

The UPPER JOBS training and work programme, promoted by the Municipality of Latina in collaboration with the Labirinto Social Cooperative, the Roffredo Caetani Foundation and Latina Formazione Lavoro SRL, has made it possible to address a series of major socio-economic challenges for the city of Latina, which emerged during the analysis of the context, such as the high rate of youth unemployment, the illegal exploitation of migrants and the social exclusion of ethnic minorities or people with disabilities.

The 150-hour training course followed by a 6-month professional internship allowed two groups of 25 participants from very heterogeneous target groups in terms of place of origin, personal abilities, age and school education, to form new multidisciplinary skills within a protected context.

The "operators of urban production parks" therefore assume a double value for the social incubator, on the one hand to reduce the level of inactivity, unemployment and the risk of poverty for vulnerable groups and on the other, to train new skills in the field of care and management of the greenery and production parks for the city of Latina.

- STRENGTHENING OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

The agreements for the expansion of the green areas, as well as the co-planning and co-design workshops with associations and citizens, or even the seminars with the business sector to define shared strategies for investments in NBS, have made it possible to increase the capacity of local administrators to create multi-level partnerships (People-Private-Public-Partnership) to improve, manage and guarantee the long-term sustainability of the green and blue infrastructures of the city of Latina.

The Production Park 2 of Via Roccagorga, which intends to integrate the production area of plant species with the spaces dedicated to cultural, social and recreational activities in contact with nature, will give continuity to the objectives already launched by the UPPER initiatives.

PP2 – IDENTIFICATION OF THE AREA FOR THE PRODUCTION PARK



The choice of the area arises above all from the need to recover and inhabit spaces in the city that are currently underused. For this reason, a space included in a residential context was identified, suitable for mending the distance between the participation of citizens and the concrete creation of a livable environment.

The PP2 area is located south-east of the city centre, bounded to the north by the school complexes of the "Giuseppe Giuliano" comprehensive institute (Infancy, Primary and 1st grade secondary), to the west by via Sezze, east from Via Minturno and from Piazzale dei Mercanti where the historic "American Market" takes place on Tuesdays on a weekly basis, to the south from Via Roccagorga and a short distance from the local police headquarters and the Episcopal Curia, which makes it a green space at the service of an important catchment area.

The park covers approximately 15,100 m² and is visually divided into two zones.

The first, to the west, of about 6,700 square meters where you can see: public play areas (there is a 275 square meter skating rink which over time has suffered a disruption in the walking surface); a garden with ornamental trees in a precarious state; a net of paths and hedges in a state of severe deterioration which today constitute an obstacle to sight and fruition; a basin that originally housed a fountain and which has been filled over time and today looks like a large flowerbed; in the centre a small kiosk surrounded by a wooden portico which serves as a refreshment point.

To the east then there is another area of 8,400 square meters which looks like a plot of land in a complete state of abandonment, equipped with an artesian well for water supply.

All the activities designed for the area is free from planning constraints because the area object of the intervention does not fall among those of archaeological interest identified by the PTPR (Regional Territorial Landscape Plan) since it belongs to an area included in the regulatory plan of Littoria of 1932 as a "panoramic area", characterized by large areas of uncovered land and therefore little affected by the human action of agriculture or urbanization. Still in the new Piccinato regulatory plan of 1972 it is embryonic urbanized.

In any case, constant communication will be activated with the Territorial Superintendency to maintain an open dialogue with the offices that follow the excavation works.

CONFIGURATION OF THE NEW AREA - STRUCTURAL INTERVENTIONS AND PROJECT PHILOSOPHY



The project involves the creation of areas with different functions, managed by different subjects, but which can communicate with each other through controlled accesses.

In the east area, in the currently uncultivated part, a nursery dedicated to the production of plant species will be built with a fence, canopy and sales point. To delimit this area, in the part communicating with the recreational area, a linear hedge will be set up, in accordance with the philosophy of adopting NBS edge solutions instead of metal or masonry boundaries.

To the west, the area dedicated to recreational and socio-cultural activities will be renewed with the creation of play areas, recreational and sports equipment, urban gardens, pedestrian paths and the restructuring of the kiosk as a refreshment point. In this area the existing buildings will be recovered for saving time, resources and materials and all the new structures that will be installed to meet the needs that emerged during the co-design phase, will be built with techniques that minimize the environmental impact and the consumption of non-renewable resources. The materials used will have eco-compatibility characteristics with the Life Cycle Assessment certificate. In particular, in redefining the space of the kiosk, the identity character of the structure will be kept in mind by adapting the existing systems and toilets. The wooden roof of the kiosk will then be expanded and set up for a perimeter closure in order to make the structure accessible even in winter.

Finally, to the north there will be a border area between the public area of the park and the school complex of the "Giuseppe Giuliano" comprehensive school: a greenhouse with the function of entrance, classroom, space for laboratories and place of food production. The covered space of the greenhouse/educational is designed to allow the collection of rainwater. A system that can be extended to the school area in a possible future collaboration to allow the reuse of water for irrigation of the site and crops.

A draining concrete pavement will cross the entire area from west to east to become a dynamic central route around which to organize socio-cultural activities. Starting from this central axis, some secondary pedestrian walkways will branch off to reach other areas of the park where you can take advantage of the various play and sport facilities or the free lawn areas.

In this way, the original network of trees, hedges and paths is modified to harmonize the liveability of the area from a visual and fruition point of view.

In this process of redevelopment of the entire area, the signage, the video surveillance system and the lighting system will also be rethought, with the replacement of the existing lampposts with elements powered by solar energy. Furthermore, the external walkway will be improved by extending the sidewalks and improving the access system (both pedestrian and vehicular) to the area.

NBS URBAN PRODUCTION PARK: THE CHALLENGES BETWEEN PRODUCTION AND RENATURING

The PP2 park is located in one of the highest points of the city of Latina, at 21-23 m above the sea, in that primordial area of foundation of the city which was the Scopeto Grande, sheltered from water invasions, but not far from the hydraulic facilities.

The same artesian well based within the cultivation area has a great influence on the hydrogeological structure of the area and much attention will be paid to the degree of uptake from the groundwater, in order to be able to count on a sustainable withdrawal for irrigation that does not damage neighbouring withdrawals and the natural recharge of the intercepted groundwater body.

As far as the vegetation present inside the park is concerned, typical specimens of anthropized environments for recreational use can be observed: ornamental plants such as low palms, aromatic species such as rosemary or fruit-bearing species such as pomegranate.

Some specimens in decline will be eliminated, the vital elements will be repositioned and to them will be added 16 new trees including Holm oaks, English oaks and Cerri attributable to the Mediterranean oak woods system.

Also, the Productive Park project aims to standardize the layout of the vegetation, creating a renaturalization system that covers the entire area of the park.

The elements present and the new specimens that will replace the decaying plants will be harmonized in such a way as to: not negatively affect the growth of the other; guarantee the development of the commercial plant essences; respect the chemical composition of the soil; create a visual and usable path for those who frequent the park; do not generate shade on the crops of urban gardens. In this way the whole green area will have a unitary identity while providing for complementary areas designed for different functions.



The idea is to rethink a territory and the renaturalization interventions to be carried out on it, in order to allow fragile ecosystems to recover their self-regulation functionality in view of the increasingly climate change impacts.

In particular, native plants selected to face multiple challenges for the Latina area will be grown in the nursery of

Production Park 2: combating soil and water pollution; stem the hydrogeological instability of the canals; lower the level of air pollution; mitigate the heat island effect (a direct intervention will be tested close to PP2 area, in an experimental site in Piazzale dei Mercanti).

CONCLUSIONS AND NEW OBJECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PRODUCTION PARK

RENATURE – ENJOY – PRODUCE

We could summarize with these three watchwords the objectives that underlie the creation of the Production Park with NBS in via Roccagorga.

NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS as an innovative solution to multiple environmental, socio-economic and governance challenges of the urban context, are the best results achieved by the UPPER project.

In accordance with the objectives of various United Nations conventions and in particular with goal n.11 of the 2030 Agenda on sustainable cities, the Productive Park becomes the point of arrival and realization of a path aiming at "making the city and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", to manage a human settlement that is participatory and integrated, with particular attention to the needs of the most vulnerable inhabitants.

In continuity with what has already been achieved in the co-design phase, the Productive Park will represent a new reference community space to create to an equal exchange between citizens, institutions and businesses, for the development of bottom-up initiatives and new practices for urban and social regeneration.

Likewise, it will become a place for research and technological development not only in the field of nature, with innovative solutions for tackling climate change and protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, but for experimenting with new forms of business and multi-actor management (People-Private-Public-Partnership - PPPP) for promoting the sustainability of the process in the long term.

The last challenge for the full functionality of the project is its long-term sustainability, being able to manage all the areas and users of the Park in a shared way according to the PPPP governance model, as well as being able to create a circuit for the exploitation of the NBS market which will make it possible to generate positive effects on the entire surrounding urban social and economic context.

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