



CIVIC LAB

PROJECT TEAM

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0. General information:

Name	Area incolta (Wild area)
Address	Via Ostiense (altezza civ. 445-447-449) – 00146 Roma
Country	Italy
Current state	Wild, abandoned
Previous use	Illegal occupation
Type of property	Public (State property and Comune di Roma)
Involved area (square meters)	585 m ²

1. CONTEXT:

The area is in the North-West of Municipio VIII and covers an area of 47,292 km². The territorial regulatory plan (2008) of Rome defines this area as part of the historical city with the aim of promoting its morphological and environmental qualities.



Socio/economical/environmental aspects of the area involved:

The history of this quarter is very interesting. Since the mid of the 19th century this area has been mainly an agricultural one. The turning point has been the creation of the railway line converting it into an industrial zone. The most famous of the factories that appeared there, is the Alfa Romeo. Due to the economic crisis of the 70s, many of these factories were abandoned but during the years the area had seen a great population growth. Both the public and the private sector adapted to the new situation: many buildings were sold and converted. In particular, the Alfa Romeo's building was bought by the University of Rome 3 in 2001. This building is in front of the area of our project. It hosts the Faculty of Literature, philosophy and languages with classrooms, labs, a bar, a library, study rooms and offices. Nowadays the area has three "souls": the academic one; the commercial one (due to the shops that surround the area) and the residential one. Unfortunately they are not well mixed.

There are some touristic points: the Basilica San Paolo, the Gazometro and the quarters of Testaccio and Garbatella. However the area of the project does not attract tourists.

The development of the commercial activities in the area of the project is probably linked to the University as they were born almost at the same time.

In the quarter there are buildings of 5/8 floors with more or less 140/145 families (also many students) living in each one of them. There are not only Italians, but also foreigners.

From a social point of view we can say that the participation of the citizens is quite high. There are many cultural and voluntary associations, local committees, centres for the elders. In the area there is a project going on: *The Blindsight Project – onlus per disabili sensoriali*. The project aims at helping disadvantaged people. However these activities are far from the project area which, on the contrary, seems to have less associations and projects.

This Municipio is the less densely populated (131.054 inhabitants/47,29 km²) but it has a standard population density. It is the second oldest Municipio in Rome (46,9 years old). The foreigners' population is not that big (3,9% of the entire population): the majority of them are from Romania, Philippines, Ukraine, Moldavia. The majority of the inhabitants are living with their family (70%). The rate of education is not particularly high with the 50% of the population having at the most a high school formation. Families with an income lower than 25.000€ are very few.

There are green spots in the area but not very close to the area of the project: the best one in term of usability is Parco Schuster which 1,3km far. Other parks are Parco Albert Sabin (700m far), Giardino Alberto Oliva (350m), Parco Sbragia (800m). These areas have been at the center of some projects carried out by associations and citizens but due to the lack of maintenance and attention of the Public administration, are not in good conditions. The area of the project is overgrown with weeds and garbage (bottles, plastic, batteries, etc...) thus unusable and not safe.

The area is well served by different means of transportation: the Metro line B, Busses, also during the night. The problem is linked to the parking, especially since the university has opened.

The main dangers are:

- the railways: necessity of strong fencing;
- a narrow footpath;
- the traffic on Via Ostiense;
- pollution both from cars and railway;
- some illegal situations: a Rom family and one living in an abandoned roadman's house;
- some mugging episodes;
- the noise of the Metro B.

Specific needs of the population:

The majority of the interviewed would prefer the project area to remain a green one. However some of them would like to make a parking out of it (especially the shopkeepers). Students point out their need for common spaces to have lunch and relax, a library where they can exchange books or a place to do some physical activity.

The key actors:

-Public sector: Comune di Roma, Municipio VIII, public administration, university

-Private sector:

Citizen: associations and groups

economic actors: professional associations and companies

means providers: companies, associations, firms, artisans

materials providers: institutions, landfills, privates

communication actors: local newspapers, local radios, other

social media: handled by the project's responsible, the beneficiaries and the institutions.

2. PARTICIPATIVE PROJECT'S PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Describe the participative approach and process actuated in your field practice for the development of the project idea

The sequence of steps in the participative process are:

- a) To inform: the work group begins by contacting the beneficiaries of the project through interview and questionnaires, informing them of the condition of the abandoned area and thus finding out how they would like to see the situation dealt with. Then the university associations and other interested parties (stakeholders) can in turn pass information on to other students and interested citizens.
- b) To raise awareness: as in the above.
- c) To involve: beneficiaries are involved, with the help of stakeholders, in public assemblies and events to find out what to achieve in the area
- d) Training and participation: using participatory training to involve all interested parties in the rezoning of the area.
- e) Communication: this would be achieved through meetings, social networks, fliers, and events.
- f) Monitoring: Once the above is achieved in the manner stated, the participants will continue to keep the area clean and available for use.

Specify if you have applied any specific participative methodology or if you are referring to any participation theoretical framework

A methodology is provided not just generically but specifically as follows:

- a) Presentation of the project "COMpass" and its aims, using interviews and questionnaires
- b) Communication campaign involving institutions, associations, local press, social networks, word of mouth, posters and fliers
- c) Involving local social groups (residents, students, businesses, associations, voluntary groups, etc).
- d) Active participation through events and workshops (tactical urbanism)
- e) Integration: facilitating communication among University students and citizens; participation of disadvantaged groups and minorities

What stakeholders did you meet? How did you involve them? What contribution did they give to the regeneration project idea development?

Private and public entities were involved at all stages of the drafting process thus:

- A) Meeting with local officials:
 - Municipality VIII (cultural and school councillor, environment councillor, ?)
 - Department of urban actualization projects which is well versed in the zoning process
 - The Urban infrastructure councillor of the Municipality of Rome.

Consultation with the above to see if the project could be integrated with past, never Realised or already existing ones.

The contribution of these institutions was:

- To identify three areas in need of rezoning
- To make available personnel of the public administration in order to get information and data
- To understand which steps need to be taken with the Public Administration in order to have the permit to start the project

B) Student groups (Rete della conoscenza, Associazione Link e Associazione UDS-Unione degli Studenti).

Students were involved to raise awareness of the aims of the project and to see if university projects could be integrated with this one.

The students contribution consisted mainly of:

- Interviews and compilation of questionnaires
- Opinions and ideas on the, as yet, unrealised project
- Availability to participate in tactical urbanism and to volunteer in realising the project
- Continuing to raise awareness of the project among student groups

C) Comitati di Quartiere ("l'Ostiense", "San Paolo")

They were contacted in order to:

- Communicate
- Gather information on problems and peoples expectations; suggestions
- Obtain useful contacts
- Acquire information on strategies used for similar projects in the past
- Evaluate ideas and their possible implications

Unfortunately their contribution has turned out to be of very little help due to their lack of local contacts.

D) Residents: Getting in touch with the residents has turned out to be essential for the rezoning of the area because they can take over the management of the area if the public entities cannot and likewise give due respect to the environment

E) Businesses: as in the above. Some businesses were opposed to it because it may result in stiffer competition for them but on the other hand many gave their full support.

F) Press: We contacted a local free newspaper in order to reach a wider audience?

How the project wants to address local needs identified in the context analysis section below?

In keeping with the small area available (a little less than 600 square metres) the project aims to rezone the abandoned area as:

- Local urban green space useful as a meeting space equipped with benches, garbage bins, flower beds, fountain and gym tools.
- Multifunctional space creatively developed and environmentally friendly with a low economic impact but with a high level of sustainable social and community values
- A motivation to empower and encourage the citizens to manage and care for the area on a long term basis

In order to address local needs the following steps will be taken:

A) A preliminary phase of analysis of the area: urban contest, environment and the connection with already existing urban green areas

- B) Project phase: possible uses and future developments of the area. Possible scientific/ educational use with the collaboration of the University (Roma tre)
- C) Evaluation phase: optimization of the space for the different project elements (limits, obstacles, experimentation); to facilitate the use of the area by disadvantaged categories of people (people with disabilities or in need of special assistance)
- D) Technical phase concerning the details of exactly how to facilitate sustainable recycling, water provision, energy use and accessibility to disadvantaged people.

3. TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE REGENERATION PROJECT:

This area can be defined an “urban gap” without a specific function, it is full of waste of every kind or rats indeed it seems as the urban planning has been interrupted. The cadastral registration of this area is agricolo-seminativo (rural - fit for seed), its property is divided between Roma Capitale and Demanio and it measures 585 mq. It is situated inside the Ambito di Valorizzazione of the historical city and it borders on the north/north-east with a building about fifteen mt high, on the east/south-east side with Metro B surface binaries, on the south/south-west with another building about twenty meters high and on the west with via Ostiense.

All the spaces around are private. It needs something more public.

To regenerate the open space with and for the common people, where they can be involved and participation and self-management are the pillars. The goal is planning a multipurpose place, a social-cultural didactical ideas and contents laboratory's where a network students test their abilities and try to get newer than before to start.

Common people become social actors when the process of maintenance and care starts and so communication on the social networks as substitute of the social relation finish. Citizens and users become informal and temporary leaders and they are able to give sense of use to the space.

Condition and term of use will be produced by this trading between this leaders. They will discuss about collective actions, cooperation and trust.

The goals of this project are, to:

- get better and combine the quarter services and activities for free time and sport with construction and self-construction of high quality urban furniture, and with the environmental quality of urban spaces and indicated into the “Piano di sviluppo di Roma Capitale - progetto Millennium 2010-2020;
- increase the green communal areas;
- realize routes, distinguishing between seeded ground and street furniture;
- warrant safety, integrated functions, safeguard and protection for all actors;
- develop activities to manage completely for harmonious and responsible development of the area, without gap, in respect of the energy efficiency, ecology, and climatic comfort (using i.e. sunny or windy natural corner like in permaculture principles);
- increase social cohesion, bottom-up participation and biodiversity in the culture through transparency in managing of the common space and information especially with the neighbor contacts and collaborations;
- underline the role of vegetation for the future of the cities to respond to pollution and cementification with trees and hedges, reuse, recycle, revalue all kind of waste materials;

There are some steps for the full implementation of the project that are based on research and analysis about the territory and receivers, a way to use human energy for energy consumption like in the sport.

Communications with associations and students or merchants or in general social networks, which it is possible to find collaborations in sustainable development, organizing events, lobbies and working team.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PURPOSES OF THE REGENERATION PROJECT

Describe the specific environmental, social and cultural purposes at the root of your regeneration project: what positive changes will it bring? Specify how these changes could be measured

The requalification project aims at giving new life to an uncultivated and abandoned area. The minimal area is not going to bring a requalification to an urban level but obviously to a local level. The area at issue is situated opposite the University ground of Roma Tre which despite its size is without a green area. The project was also born of a desire to bring together students and residents (beneficiaries of the project) who, while not sharing the same interests, can hopefully work together to manage a common multi-functional space.

The sudden influx of students has occurred without a concomitant increase in local services. To make matter worse it also resulted in extra competition for parking spaces between students and local residents. This situation underlined the already existing conflict between these two social groups.

However the interviews completed by residents and businesses pointed to a positive attitude towards students who are seen as a breath of fresh air and an advantage in terms of profit both for the businesses and the residents who are renting rooms.

Students feel the need of having a place to spend time during their break, their lunch or simply to relax. Some of them were favourable to a green area equipped with gym equipment, others to a book swap market, cinema meeting place which makes up for the University shortcomings.

The residents are principally interested in having a well-cared for green area rather than the degradation which currently exists in the area and in the city in general.

The area will be mostly utilised during the week by students and at weekends by residents and it will be done with mutual respect of the common public space. The construction of the furnishings (tables, benches etc.) will be done at very little expense. Recyclable materials will be used during sessions of tactical urbanism (DIY urban repairs and constructions in public spaces by citizens-activist). Workshops will be organised involving the whole community. The already planned collaboration with the University Roma Tre (for instance the Faculty of Engineering) is aimed at sustainable energy use and water provision.

The following phases will be aimed at strengthening bonds and promoting the sense of belonging to the same project in the same area. The positive changes in the foreseeable future are:

- Developing a sense of well-being and satisfaction among the users
- Involving associations, voluntary groups and organizations
- Improving relationships between citizens and students
- Developing a better active collaboration with the Institutions
- Developing a social space bringing people together
- Involving University students and allowing them to have a communal place
- Strengthening cooperation among different groups (Institutions, residents, businesses, students, associations, etc)
- Promoting the transfer of knowledge and information
- Making the project an example of social cohesion and integration
- Raising awareness of fundamental themes of the project (environment and community)

- Attracting artisans and workforce in the activities both at a planning stage and after, for the already planned activities
- Attracting citizens to collaborate by directly participating, lending and donating materials and tools in order to realise the project
- Creating a network with the surrounding areas
- Involving associations able to deal with disadvantaged categories

Describe what future use and users of space are foreseen. How does it address the 3 pillars of sustainability (environmental, social, economic)? If possible specify quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Qualitative features:

- The area is well attended therefore is well kept and protected
- The relationship between citizens and the Public Administration improves
- The area is protected from degradation
- A relationship of trust and respect is created between the main beneficiaries and other users with improved integration and space-sharing
- A space to promote bio-diversity
- The locals are made aware of environmental problems
- The locals are made aware that if you want it you can do it
- Social cohesion increases (a group of very different people put together to work on the same project will accomplish a wider social aim)
- A Circular Economy rather than a conventional one is going to be promoted. This energises and motivates people to ponder and be more creative
- A new kind of management of public spaces, more in tune with socio-economic and environmental requirements, is promoted

Quantitative features:

The success of this project could be evaluated and measured through:

- Whether the area is well attended
- Use of the services provided
- Level of appreciation measured by questionnaires and interviews
- Level of development of interactions between residents and students
- Level of conservation and upkeep by the users

We believe that the qualitative features are far more relevant than the quantitative ones; given that our goal is more focused on qualitative issues rather than mere statistics. The most important part of this research/project is to have had positive feedback from people, an increased socio-environmental awareness and replicability of this model.

Specify the eventual participative aspects foreseen for the phase of the proposal's implementation and for future activities planned once the space is regenerated.

The intervention planned in order to implement active participation are:

- To involve the gipsy community (who are situated close to the area) who can do some repairs and provide some recyclable materials
- Picnics and sport events
- Swap market for little items and gardening tools
- Organisation of days for green-area activist and some brief environmental awareness talks
- “Dipingo nel verde”, days set aside for children in collaboration with primary schools
- “Ti passo il mio sapere”, days when elderly and young people meet to exchange knowledge (i.e. how to do small repairs, wood and leather processing, how to deal with electronic technologies
- Sessions on tactical urbanism concerning the upkeep of the space and the introduction of new equipment, bringing new ideas and creativity

5. RISKS AND EXTERNALITIES

Provide an evaluation of risks and potential externalities of your project in economical, environmental and social terms and possible solutions to address them.

The project analysed and identified several risks and externalities that could negatively affect the implementation of the project and/or that of future activities as follows:

- *External economic risks:* actual economic deficits (insufficient financing from donations or money coming from activities foreseen by the project), material or human input more expensive than planned thus not in line with budget, insufficient assistance by public administration or need to restock materials due to contingencies of different nature; increase of costs;
- *External environmental risks:* climatic contingencies (droughts, dramatic raining, fire, wind, etc.), unexpected underground situation, quality of green supplied or difficulty in rooting or development, but also negative impact by humans (vandalism, thieves), insects or animals, no watering is made available by the Municipality, etc.
- *External social risks:* no or little interest in the project by beneficiaries; decrease of affection towards the project area due to inefficient caring by the Municipality driving to lost of appeal of the place, misuse by vandals, use of the area by home-less etc., rowing against the implementation of activities by specific social groups, no interest in activities foreseen to build the area thus also to self-financing other operations; no suitable stakeholders to take over the mission once the project is over; no interest in taking care of the area after the closing of the project, but also and on the contrary the over exploitation of the area, leading to an early degeneration of materials and plants.