

Title:

Author:

**Occupy Climate
Change (OCC!)**
*Grassroots initiatives
entry*



FORMAS



LAGO BULLICANTE
Federico Nutricato
Published June 10,2025



The photo was taken by Federico Nutricato during the 2021 protests. In the spring of this year, the private speculator eradicated much of the vegetation that in 20 years of abandonment had grown in the still private part of the remains of the Snia Viscosa factory, thus going to undermine the great biodiversity to which Lake Bullicante had given rise. In May 1, 2021, the population decided to enter the private area in protest, at which time the photo was taken.

The photo was later exhibited at the Landscape Biennial held in Versailles in 2022 and curated by landscape architect Gilles Clement, as one of the world's ten examples of urban area renaturation.

-Where this grassroots initiative is implemented?

The initiative takes place in the Prenestino/Labicano district, located in the Eastern quadrant of the city of Rome. The Eastern quadrant of Rome is both the most populous and polluted, as well as the most multicultural. Over the years, gentrification processes have also turned the area into a highly popular tourist destination.

-Who are the promoters?

The official promoter is the Parco delle Energie Forum as a legal entity. However, the struggle began in 1995 after the occupation of the Ex-Snia social center, where social center militants and citizens mobilized to protect the park. To this day, the assembly responsible for the lake still operates in a public manner, opening participation to anyone interested. Therefore, the initiative is grassroots, undertaken by autonomous citizens engaging in horizontal assemblies.

-Who are the beneficiaries?

The beneficiaries of the presence of Lago Bullicante are the entire citizenry. The Eastern quadrant has always experienced a profound lack of green space, and the lake is one of the few in the area. Additionally, other beneficiaries of Lago Bullicante include all non-human species inhabiting it. In fact, it has been demonstrated that this is a crucial point for the migration of bird species, as it lies at the intersection of two other parks, namely, Parco della Caffarella and the Aniene Reserve, which are major migration hubs.

- How does this initiative engage with climate? Does it tackle with mitigation, adaptation, both or other dimension of climate change?

The presence of Lago Bullicante has significant implications for the climatic effects in the urban area. It has been demonstrated that despite the high levels of pollution in the surrounding area, the air near the lake is exceptionally clean. Furthermore, the ecosystem developed around it has a strong mitigating impact on temperatures. The lake water is also spring water, hence very clean. Additionally, during the summer, it is used as a water basin for supplying water to extinguish fires.

-What are the main objectives? What are the main values?

The main goal of the nearly thirty-year struggle is to obtain protection for the entire natural oasis of the Ex-Snia area. The lake indeed sits on the ruins of a viscose factory, which had a highly toxic production process. Over 29 years of abandonment, the presence of spring water has allowed for the growth of new ecosystem, both on the ground and among the factory ruins. This has significantly reduced the amount of toxic material inside the factory and has led to the growth of species protected by the European Union, such as the Aleppo Pine.

In 2019, the lake was recognized as a "Natural Monument," but the main objective of the mobilization is to see this protection extended to the entire Ex-Snia area.

-What is the timeline? Are there already visible effects?

The mobilization began in 1995, but it wasn't until 2014 that the entire citizenry was able to access the lake. From 2014 onwards, the lake was made publicly accessible, and in 2019, protection was obtained. The most visible effects include the constant mitigation capacity that the lake provides. Furthermore, the opportunity to utilize the area became crucial after the COVID-19 pandemic. In this case, a significant portion of the neighborhood residents flocked to the lakeside to finally spend time outdoors.

-Which limits does it encounter? Are any shortcomings or critical points visible? What other problematic issues can arise from his implementation?

The limits encountered by the struggle over the years are both private and institutional in nature. Parts of Ex-Snia factory remains privately owned. Currently, the citizens' demand focuses on the expropriation of the area, thus recognizing the ecosystem that has emerged as a public good. The institutional limit lies in the failure to recognize the immense value that the generated ecosystem would bring to the community, preferring the demolition of the factory for new construction. Critical points can be observed in the inability to appeal to environmental law. In 2021, the property initiated deforestation of the species in the area without seeking permission for the felling of tall trees, prompting inspections by experts. The forum decided to mobilize through legal avenues but received no response. The challenges arising from the implementation of the Lago Bullicante experience are practically nonexistent as it is difficult to speak of implementation. The forum emphasizes how what has been

created over the years has not had a human actor at its center. The spontaneity of the species grown there is one of the fundamental aspects of the mobilization, and recognizing non-human agency in what has been achieved so far is of paramount importance. It is hoped that more areas can be devoted to the spontaneity of non-human action.

-How would it be potentially replicable in other settings?

As mentioned, replicating the experience of Lago Bullicante is not a human affair. However, this has not stopped activists from finding connections with similar experiences. In 2022, the Marais Weils lake and Lago Bullicante formed a twinning of waters. Marais Weils is located in Brussels and shares a similar history to that of Lago Bullicante; many similarities can also be found in the anthropic geography that inhabits and surrounds the two lakes.

-Is this initiative conducive to broader changes ? If yes which?

Certainly, through the mobilizations that have led to the protection of the lake, changes have been experienced. The first, and perhaps the most important, is the ecological awareness of the territory. The assembly's action has often been aimed at engaging citizens and creating an awareness of the ecological problem among the population. This has been achieved through both mobilizations and assemblies, as well as through more targeted interventions in primary schools, creating integrated pathways within the school curriculum.

Another important change can be observed in scientific research. Indeed, the interest of research in an ecosystem of such complexity, evolved in one of the most polluted areas of the city, has grown year by year, with researchers from all over the world coming to study it. Recently, reforestation pathways are being initiated in the area adjacent to the lake, which also align with a different scientific assumption at the core.

References

Armiero, M., *L'era degli scarti, cronache dal wasteocene, la discarica globale*, Torino, Einaudi editore, 2021