

DOP

Diffuse Olive Park

Introduction

The territory of Bitonto is characterized by an iconic rural landscape with its identity strongly related to olive trees and olive oil production. High ecological values are present in the two naturalistic heritages of Lama Balice and the Alta Murgia Park. On the other hand, with 89% of the land destined to olive groves and 5% to almond trees and vineyards, this anthropic landscape reveals a low level of biodiversity.

Olive growing and oil production are characterized by a fragmented reality of small farms, often on a family scale, with less than 5% managed by growers under 40. With many farmers entering the retirement age and a scarcity of youngers to take their place, the phenomenon of the abandonment of the orchards in marginal areas is reaching alarming levels.

In this fragmented space, the hamlet of Palombaio and Mariotto suffer a lack of services and facilities, appearing disconnected in their surroundings. To face this reality, Bitonto is making an effort to connect with its territory and its hamlets, by promoting more sustainable tourism, slow mobility, and social interchanges.

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Strategy

To mitigate the effect of the fragmented landscape of the olive growing and oil production, new inclusive synergies among the different local actors are needed to enrich and diversify the potentiality of the territory.

We want to think of the olive orchards as an open-air museum, where farmers and the local community invite people to explore, experience, and learn.

The local character of the landscape is re-purposed in a new integrated and multifunctional equilibrium where the new network of slow mobility becomes the place where all the elements scattered in the landscape are preserved, protected, and re-connected.

The project will strengthen the ecological tissues in a new enriched biodiverse landscape where social and productive dimensions are supported by sustainable mobility and responsible tourism.

Oleotourism as 'innesto'

Some touristic and pilgrims routes are present in the landscape, such as the Via Francigena and the Borboni Ciclopath. Via Cela became the new spine by crossing and interconnecting the existing tracks, creating a network of slow mobility where different scenarios and experiences are offered to the visitors.

It represents the main path in the new Diffuse Olive Park that guides the visitors to discover what is hidden in this territory. For this purpose, a communication system combining vertical landmarks and horizontal milestones positioned in the most significant places will guide the visitors along the route. Rest areas, framed by traditional dry stone walls and equipped with picnic tables will guarantee some relaxation in the shade of trees.

The diversification of the tourism will develop a year-round program, with naturalistic hikes, archaeological and agro-food walks with visits to olive groves, oil mills and masserie, at the discovery of local culture of small and medium-sized growers and native olive varieties. This new and responsible tourism will activate the landscape and the hamlets, the orchard fields, and the squares combining existing heritage with functions like panorama view, bird watching, and rest areas. A system of activities that emphasizes the local identity, will form the foundation for sustainable and multifunctional use of the territory.

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A productive social landscape

In this context, some abandoned masserie and frantoi are proposed to be redeveloped as new socio-productive connectors for the territory. Focused on developing stronger connections between all the actors, these spaces provide possible solutions to the crisis of services by operating on the border between agriculture and social inclusivity and community networks.

Types of connectors:

Masseria Didattica is an educational center for both the local community and visitors, providing workshops and training programs for the professional integration of young people and specialized personnel in the agricultural and tourism sector; it creates a system of services to facilitate the generational shift needed in agriculture.

Frantoio Sociale will valorize the olive oil production, giving the tools to local producers to compete in a market that demands always more quality, tradition, and innovation. It is strategically positioned in between Palombaio and Mariotto, in the preexistent structure of Torre di Lerma. Here, local farmers can find support in the different phases of olive oil production, using machines and spaces to produce, experiment, and learn. Production tours and testing are also provided for curious and tourists too.

Agro ecologic island

To conclude the productive cycle, the waste from the different production processes will be collected and treated in an agricultural ecological island.

Wastewater from the olive washing is filtered and reused as irrigation water; olive and grape's pomace are treated and reinserted in the system as fertilizer biomass and livestock feeds.

Enrich biodiversity

An ecological corridor will connect the Lama Balice Park to the Alta Murgia Park, starting from Bitonto, passing through the olive groves and Palombaio and Mariotto.

Green infrastructure will run parallel to the mobility system, where a more diverse ecosystem would strengthen the whole. A row of native trees well positioned in the landscape (like Rovella, Leccio, and Acero Campestre) would help for wind protection of the olive orchards without blocking the view. Moreover, a new pattern consisting of a polyculture system and aromatic bushes such as lavender and rosemary in between the orchards and along the paths will help bees to repopulate the landscape. Totems with bird nests and insect hotels could be spread along the infrastructure to support the restoration of the local fauna.

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The plazas

Bitonto aims to transform its car-oriented city into a pedestrian/cyclist-oriented space. Vehicular access will be limited, and 30km/h zones established throughout the city.

Our design interventions consist of different public spaces that differ in shape, size, and character. The changes will structure the public space around slow mobility, increasing safety and coexistence between vehicular, cycle, and pedestrian mobility. The reduction of parking spots is in favor of shared mobility, bike-sharing, and electric bike charging stations.

In the squares, sensible adoption of traditional pavement materials prioritizes pedestrian users over cars. Sober design solutions in stone and water avoid a rigid and over-programmed approach by promoting informal and flexible public spaces. The use of materiality and patterns strategically blends the design of the three different places in a unique language, virtually connecting the squares.

Bitonto is the entrance to the new Diffuse Olive Park. Services as the new touristic center on Piazza Castello and bike-sharing and renting stations will support the fruition. Palombaio represents the crossing between urban and agro-rural landscape. Mariotto is the last peri-urban space and acts as the gate to the natural park of Alta Murgia.

Green corridors will connect the urban environment to the natural landscape stimulating sociality, sport, inclusion, and guaranteeing better climate mitigation for the urban environment.

Elements such as the Folies and water fountains perform as activators of the different spaces, designed as platforms that can welcome accidental visitors as well as programmed activities.