



Fast Forests for Lisbon: Nature, Community, Connections

The pilot Renatura started in late 2021. Its main goal is to bring back biodiversity to urban spaces, while enhancing social inclusion. Fostering a unique private/public sector partnership, the NGO Urbem and the Lisbon City Council convert abandoned public land into Miyawaki-based Fast Forests. Local communities are actively involved through a participatory approach.



1st Miyawaki-based forest in a public space in Lisbon

700+ Volunteers
3800+ Trees

5x higher plant survival rate than to previous interventions on the site

Nature-based Solutions Benefits



Background

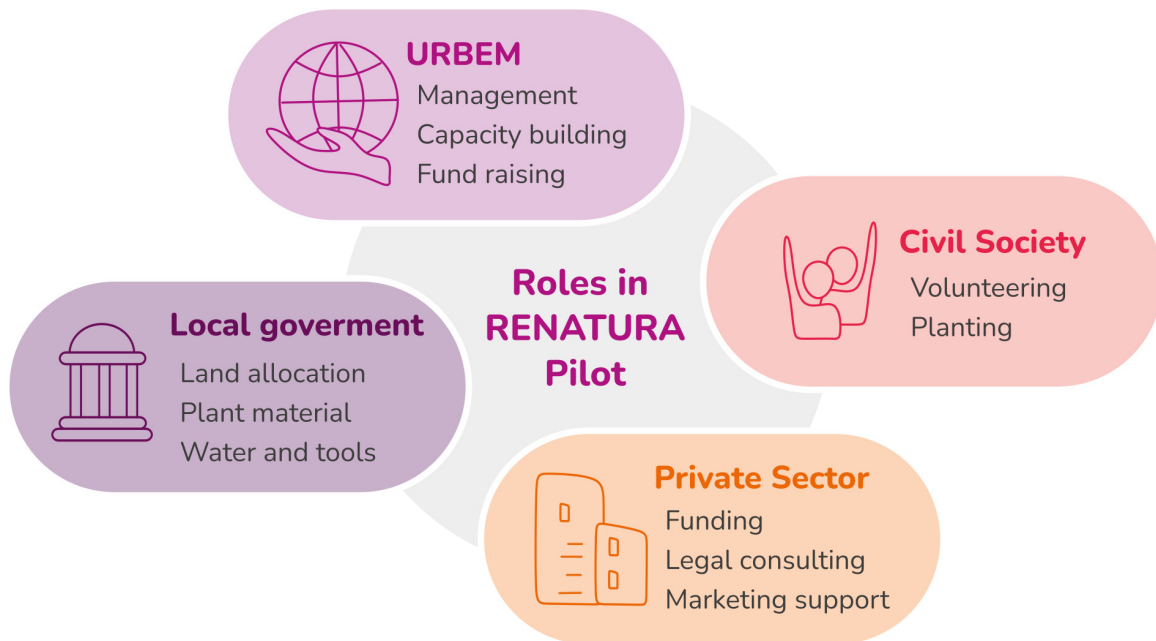
The Renatura pilot is situated at Bela Vista park in the Eastern Green Corridor of Lisbon. The neighborhoods surrounding the park are ethnically mixed and from diverse economic backgrounds. The park is currently under-utilized with most users running and cycling through it rather than staying due to a lack of shading by trees. Like many other cities in the present day, Lisbon is facing many challenges like a lack of biodiversity, urban loneliness, and climate change anxiety. By bringing back forests into the city with active public participation in implementation and maintenance, the Renatura pilot hopes to educate the community about nature, promote people’s personal well-being, and mitigate extreme climate events through tree planting.

Challenges

- Water scarcity
- Lack of funding and reliance on volunteers to commit long-term
- Securing the continuity of the Nature-based Solution implementation



Photos by Urbem



Pilot structure and funding approaches

Urbem manages the Renatura pilot and provides the know-how on the practical implementation of the Miyawaki forests, while the Lisbon City Council supports their work by allocating the land in the Bela Vista Park along with plant material, water for irrigation and tools. Through a private/public partnership, Urbem encourages private actors to engage and maintain the Nature-based Solutions on public land. Private organizations, like the local law firm PLMJ, also provide funding for administrative costs related to communication and assist the pilot with free services like legal consultancy and marketing support.

The Miyawaki method

The Miyawaki method focuses on dense planting of native trees and removal of invasive plants, with intense watering and adequate nutrients to speed up the growth of a quasi-natural forest in a short period. It requires minimal maintenance

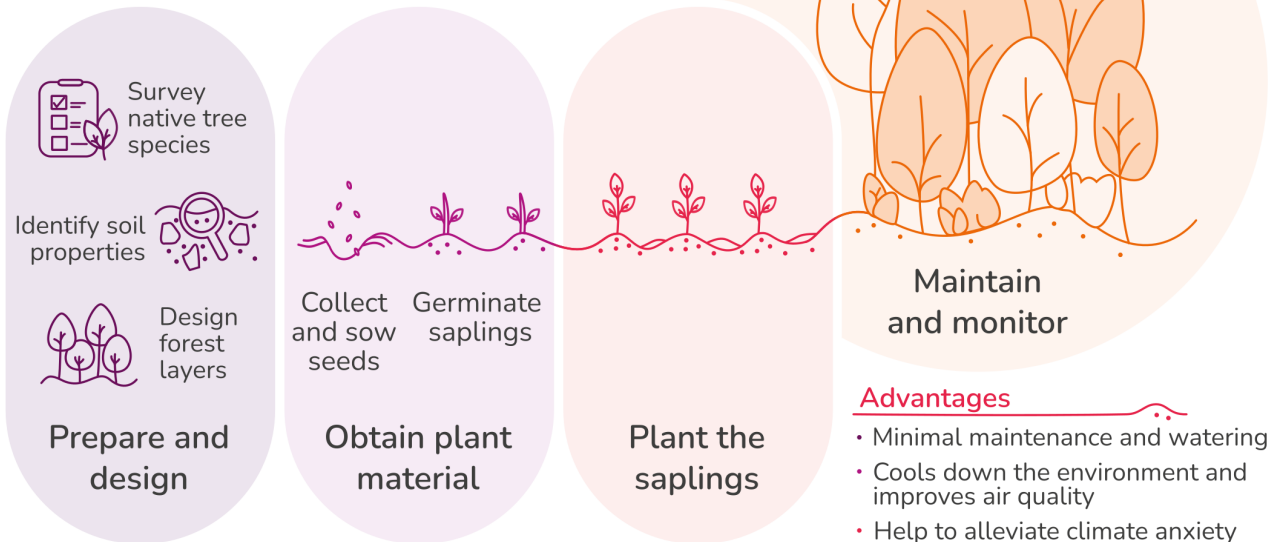
and no watering after 3 years. Urbem promotes this method as a cost-effective way to bring back biodiversity hotspots and local fauna as it can be adapted to any locality. The Mediterranean climate zone in Lisbon is characterized by low precipitation rates that have become even more pronounced due to climate change. In the Renatura pilot, lack of water was overcome with the help of organic mulching material from the local mushroom farm NAM, which helped to improve moisture retention to ensure the survival of the plants during the initial critical period.

Working with volunteers

A clear division of responsibilities and good communication with volunteers are essential for the success of an NBS implementation. To prevent volunteers from becoming overloaded with work and

We plant urban forests, but more importantly, we plant seeds of hope in local communities

The Miyawaki Fast Forest



eventually dropping out of the project, Urbem defined clear lines of responsibilities for volunteers as well as regular team meetings and brainstorming sessions. To date, more than 20 volunteers work in their core management team and over 700 volunteers help with the implementation. Initially, too many volunteers in the core team led to a breakdown in communication and effectiveness. Hence, Urbem re-organized themselves into four core teams (Forest, Community, Communications, Fundraising) with each team having a team lead and a group of volunteers.

Communication and dissemination strategy

A fundamental aspect of the communication strategy for the Renatura pilot is its promotion through social media, which helps secure more volunteers, get corporate help, and raise awareness within the local community. Urbem adopted a

storytelling strategy, calling out to volunteers to participate in their neighborhood and instilling a sense of positivity, whilst educating them on how they can make a difference. Environmental educational of underprivileged children and refugees at the plots strengthens the community connection to the Renatura pilot. The main modes of communication are Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Posters at the plot inform passersby how they can get

Collecting scientific data is important to...





1. Document quantifiable success rates to show sponsors and volunteers a tangible impact of Nature-based Solutions.
2. Enhance citizen science through data collection and monitoring by volunteers.
3. Generate new insights for the research on Miyawaki-based Fast Forests in the Mediterranean region.

involved, and this has proven to be useful to gain volunteers. Interviews and articles by local media outlets about the Renatura pilot also helped the project gain more visibility. All work at the pilot is backed by scientific monitoring and measures, as showing quantifiable results is considered key to highlighting the success of the implementation.

Securing the continuity of the Renatura pilot

To ensure bigger impact with more Fast Forests being developed in Lisbon, Urbem sets up a consultancy model with neighborhood associations. This model provides ideation and project management on how to plant Miyawaki forests with community support, which associations implement locally. In order to access urban land, Urbem also explores partnership models with churches, prisons, schools and other private entities. However, successful continuity of the project will also depend on having hired staff and funding. EU grants could become a valuable source of funding to secure the pilot's continuity in the future.

Related Projects

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-  1planet4all
<http://vida.org.pt/en/1planet4all/>
-  Lago Lugano CONEXUS Pilot
<https://www.conexusnbs.com/life-labs/project-four-cckhc>



References

- ALEXANDRE, A. & AVELAR, D. [Eds] 2023. Tiny Forests for Giant Lessons - A guide to integrate urban biodiversity into education. <http://vida.org.pt/en/guia-miniflorestas/>
- Urbem - Community, Nature, Connection. <https://www.urbem.co/en/>
- 2adapt - Serviços de Adaptação Climática. <https://2adapt.pt/>

Key messages



1. Utilize robust social media communications raise awareness.
2. Establish monitoring protocols to collect scientific data on results.
3. Draw a clear division of responsibilities and communications between volunteers.
4. Foster an internal culture of positivity, persistence and respect.



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City Partners

