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The Urban Lab of Europe !

# The MAC project Journal N° 3

*Project led by the city of Pozzuoli*



**URBAN  
POVERTY**

# The MAC project

The **MAC** project seeks to reduce poverty in the Monteruscello neighbourhood, a large public housing district with 20,000 residents with low-income, a high level of unemployment, and characterised by large abandoned spaces. Thirty hectares of the neighbourhood's public green areas will be used in order to spearhead an economic process and development with urban agriculture as a means to combat poverty. The project will have three pillars: implementation of agriculture through innovative permaculture in the housing estate, improvement of the urban environment and encouragement of entrepreneurship and employment. Beyond the formal partnership, the main stakeholders involved will be local food companies benefiting from the agricultural production, the Hotel Management School, the local sports associations as well as the Archaeological Heritage association.

## **Partnership:**

- Comune di Pozzuoli
- Università degli Studi di Salerno - University
- Coldiretti Napoli - National Association
- Confagricoltura Napoli - National Association
- Agrocultura - Private Company
- L'iniziativa - Associazione di promozione sociale - NGO
- Fondazione FORMIT - Research Center

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# 1. Executive summary

The MAC partnership is currently at the beginning of its second year of activities. In the previous number of the Journal, it has been reported that the MAC engines were beginning to roll. Six months ago, many organizational and logistical challenges still needed to be addressed – in particular, there was a need to improve the collaboration among the project's partners, to implement and upgrade the mechanisms for keeping the day-to-day management actions under control, and the organizational measure in order to keep the pace with the implementation of activities.

At this point, towards the end of 2018, it can be said that the MAC project has reached the take-off speed. The project's partnership is starting to improve the capacity to integrate efforts in order to achieve the implementation of activities requiring the experience and capabilities of two or more partners. In other words, the partners learned to start playing as a team, or sub-teams, depending on the activities. The positive aspect here is that they finally reached consensus on the fact that a successful approach cannot be achieved without actively discussing with the others on how to better face obstacles and challenges to implementation. Moreover, they are understanding how important it is to be more present in the project area and have more contact with the second level partnership, the wide group of stakeholders and the local community.

At the beginning of the MAC project, this capability of mixing roles and asking for other partners to advise on the implementation of a partners' own activity was not considered. Each partner had fallen into its role and thought that it was the only one able to know how to implement their activities effectively and efficiently. The partnership, learning slowly to work together, is discovering that co-designing, co-working, having more and more frequent moments of confrontation, with itself and with other local actors, can more easily lead to achieve the expected results. This is what is happening on the three main lines of the MAC, namely:

1. the redevelopment and renewal of critical urban spaces of high symbolic value for Monterusciello,
2. the key action of training and professionalization of young residents in the agricultural sector of urban agriculture,
3. the preparation of land, the large-scale green public infrastructure, which will have to regenerate the landscape and the productive activities of Monterusciello.

## 2. The urban context: re-building for sharing

Let's start with the 1<sup>st</sup> pillar structuring the MAC action, which is the redevelopment and renewal of critical urban spaces. One of the most relevant issues in every sound action of urban regeneration is to demonstrate progress in results to the local community. The MAC project is addressing as a first key step of the regeneration process a key-area of Monterusciello: The Piazza Antonio de Curtis. This is the central market area, which in the intention of Agostino Renna, the main designer of Monterusciello's New Town, had to

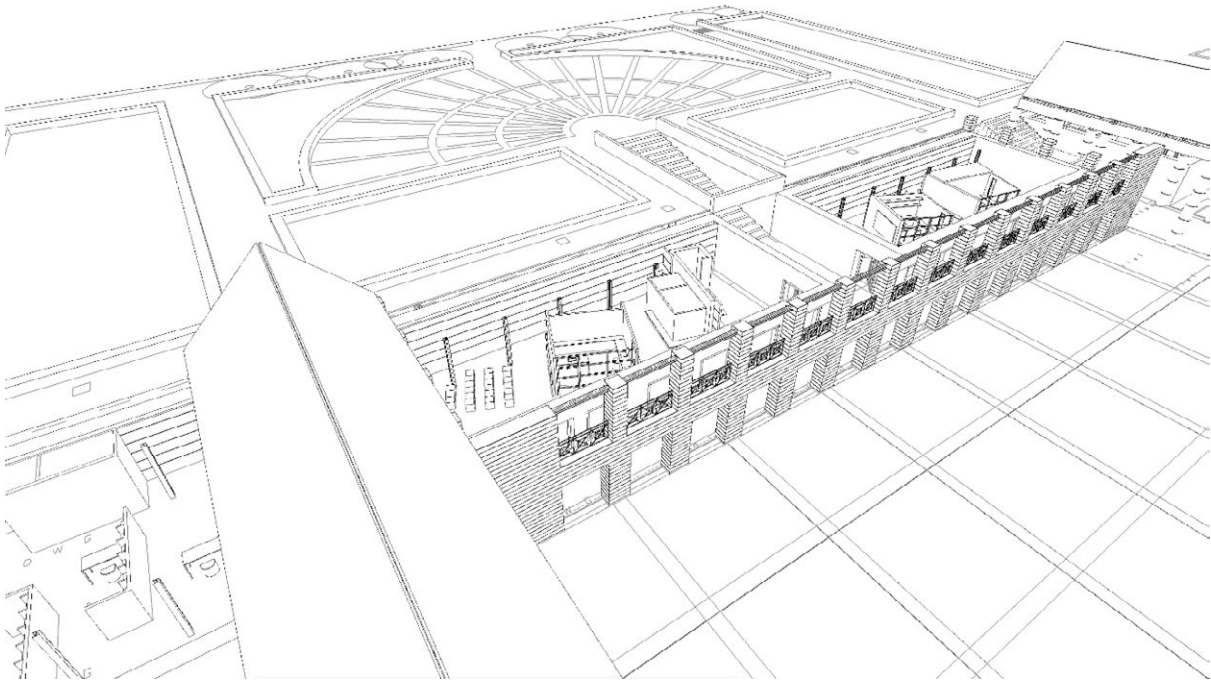
replace the role of an agora.<sup>1</sup> It is foreseen that in this place many critical functions are going to be placed, which will all will provide sustainability to the entire MAC planning process. Specifically, this renewed agora will host the Agro Urban Center, as an accessible place to link the MAC project to the local community. The Agro Urban Center is a key instrument for involving a wider group of stakeholders and initiate co-design and co-working activities with the residents.<sup>2</sup>



*Distribution of functions in the southern part of Piazza De Curtis*

<sup>1</sup> To understand more about the genesis of this place, see MAC Journal #1, chapter 2.2: [https://www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2017-12/FINAL%20VERSION\\_Pozzuoli.pdf](https://www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2017-12/FINAL%20VERSION_Pozzuoli.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> More information about the role of the Agro Urban center can be found in chapter 3 of the MAC Journal #2: [https://www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2018-05/Pozzuoli\\_01-540%20MAC\\_Pietro%20Elisei\\_Journal%202.pdf](https://www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2018-05/Pozzuoli_01-540%20MAC_Pietro%20Elisei_Journal%202.pdf)



*Renewal of Piazza De Curtis, Perspective*

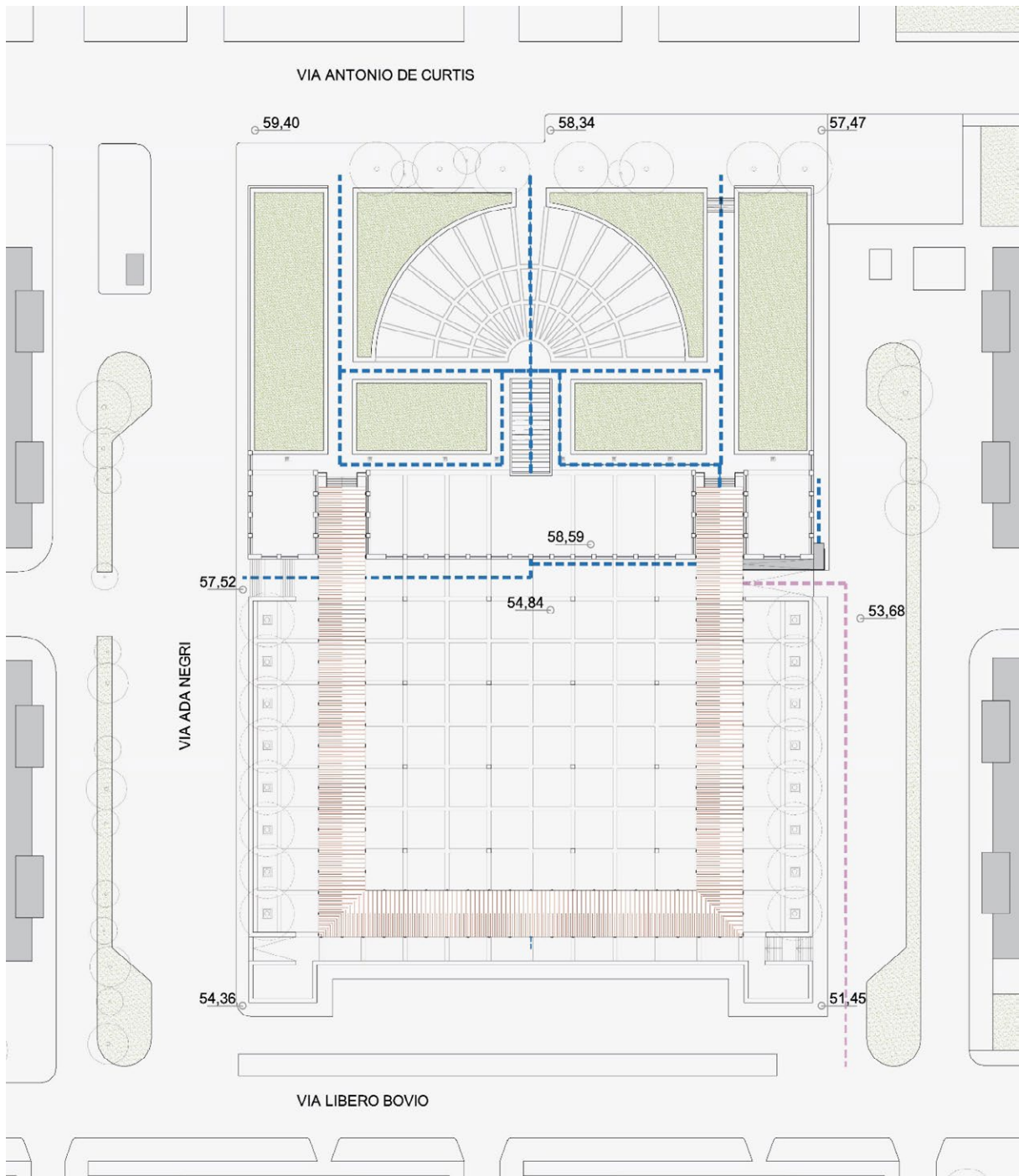
Moreover, this renewed agora will host important places for the exploitation of activities based on urban permaculture, such as a Business Incubator Centre, the Production Workshop, the Ethical Production Laboratory and the Mill Space.

Within Monterusciello's New Town, the Piazza De Curtis square was one of the pivotal public spaces around which the fabric of the neighbourhood was organised.

The square occupies a plot of about 110x140 m, located between two roads. Designed by the architect Dante Rabitti as "Piazza Mercato" in 1983-85, it was conceived as two public spaces set at about 4 m of difference in level: the garden

to the south, on the upper level, and the market square to the north, at the lower level. The garden is hedged by walls on three sides and overlooks the square below and its large paved area.

The Piazza De Curtis is currently in a state of serious abandonment: access through the staircases is dangerous due to broken paving areas; the gutters of the porticoes at the lower level of the square are partially detached; the exterior walls are damaged and covered with graffiti. The building was illegally occupied and new partitions, new openings and changes of floor levels were realised by the occupants.



*Piazza De Curtis Diagram*





*Piazza De Curtis, state of play.*

The project aims to interpret the public role of the planned spaces, with the goal of creating an operational centre of the MAC project with the characteristics and identity of a reference space for the borough. The initial choice of project

was therefore governed by the decision not to parcel the functional program in autonomous and independent parts, but to create an overall functional unity, which would express the identity of the centre.



*Scale reproduction of the interventions planned in Piazza De Curtis and the MAC Team*



Starting from this objective, the project responds to the different functional needs of the program within a single spatial vision. With the aim of obtaining the image of a single structure capable of dialoguing on the space of the square and the neighbourhood, it was decided not to divide the individual functional areas with internal partitions. The specific programs and needs have been addressed through the insertion of differentiated spaces within the areas, and a flexible and articulated concept of use. Finally, within the next steps, a further transformation will occur: the Piazza De Curtis will be connected

with a path which will take the visitors and the inhabitants through the green areas. The garden of Piazza De Curtis, in particular, will constitute one of the areas which will be used as an urban agriculture site. The new planned bike path will also go through the Piazza De Curtis. Furthermore, another new path will guide the people towards entering into the nearby archaeological site, which is nowadays hidden under an elevated road next to the plaza. The contemporary city will therefore find new connections with the past, the enlarged territory and the landscape, creating a new meaningful network.



*Elevation of the requalified facade in the southern part of the Piazza*

The regeneration of this central area in Monterusciello is relevant because many of the project's initiatives will have their visibility point and core activities place in this square. It means that it is a symbolic and physical convergence point for the MAC project. It will be the place hosting:

- The mill for the preparation and sale of ancient grains, and productions derived from these, grown in the regenerated lands in Monterusciello
- The incubator center of enterprises generated by the recovery of abandoned land
- The Agro Urban Center, as a meeting place for urban policies and urban development initiatives on a neighborhood scale, as well as a meeting place for the Agro Urban Forum ([get more at 1st MAC Zoom in](#)).
- The Permaculture Permanent Laboratory
- The ethical and supportive production laboratory
- The factory to experiment with innovative techniques and structures related to urban agriculture

In this phase great part of the design process has been approved. The main challenges standing in front of this preparatory phase can be resumed in these three following points:

**1. Finding the right balance within the MAC partnership**, knowing how to mediate the needs, the knowledge and the requests of the different partners and local actors. In this sense, the **University has had to go through a learning process that has led it to play not only the role of main designer, but also that of facilitator and mediator**. In this sense the MAC methodology and a participatory approach have modified and broadened the attitudes of this fundamental partner

**2. To solve the complex, and sometimes long, bureaucratic processes, mandatory steps in the Italian planning context, linked to the formal approval of the projects and the relative public procedures**. In this sense it should be noted that the partnership of the MAC has made the maximum effort to open **fast track dialogues** with the competent offices to obtain the necessary permits in a relatively limited time.

**3. Succeeding in opening a dialogue with the local community** to make the project understand, to make citizens collaborate with the MAC initiatives to make sure that there is a sense of ownership of this regenerative transformation. On this point **the work is in progress, but the partnership has yet to improve its approach** (the creation of a space for the Agro Urban Center will also facilitate the activities related to this last but important point).

### 3. The sphere of knowledge: training for making

In the design architecture of the MAC project the training phase assumes a very important value, in fact it constitutes, in a certain sense, the guarantee towards the sustainability of the urban regeneration initiative. This phase builds the professional skills that will have to take over the work initiated by the MAC project and build a business around the projects and initiatives initiated within this UIA experience. Consequently, training local people to provide practical knowledge to achieve and further developed the MAC project objectives constitute the 2<sup>nd</sup> key pillar of the Monterusciello's innovative action. The sustainability of the MAC project is depending on the capability of training local young professionals to work with urban agriculture related issues and to become confident with the permaculture methodology.<sup>3</sup> This **integrated action of training** has been launched in the last three months and is based upon a firm collaboration among the agriculture related partners (**Agrocoltura**, **Coldiretti** and **Confagricoltura**), **l'Iniziativa**<sup>4</sup> and the **Formit**<sup>5</sup>

The aim of this training phase is to provide trainees with the basic tools necessary to contribute to the activation of entrepreneurial activities within the territory, or to work in local companies. The professionals that the courses

aim to form will be able to collaborate with the participants/partners of the MAC project in setting up innovative start-ups and cooperative enterprises on issues related to permaculture, organic and regenerative agriculture, ethical/circular production, prototyping with sustainable materials, promotion through new technologies. Moreover, the training activities determine a concrete impact on the local community especially on selected trainees, many of young participants responding to the training courses calls are from Monterusciello. This is a relevant sign that the EU investment, through the MAC project, is activating constructive dynamism for the economic and social recovery of the area.

**“Innovation business and start-up entrepreneurship education”** represents a training course aimed at providing the theoretical and instrumental bases to understand the needs and requirements for starting an entrepreneurial activity which can combine traditional basic management with possible innovative aspects. The course is structured on two complementary, not alternative modules:

- 1) Innovation business path
- 2) Start-up management path

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<sup>3</sup> Chapter 3.2, MAC Journal #1, puts in evidence potentialities and risks connected to permaculture methodology: [https://www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2017-12/FINAL%20VERSION\\_Pozzuoli.pdf](https://www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2017-12/FINAL%20VERSION_Pozzuoli.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Association of social promotion whose purpose is to promote culture, the enhancement of the territory and a greater civic and social conscience of citizens, it primarily works in the field of information and communication and has at its base a direct contact with the territory, with its places and its social actors.

<sup>5</sup> As part of the MAC project, the Foundation mainly operates through the Research & Innovation (R & I) area, which carries out research, international cooperation and technology transfer on issues of innovation, safety and new technologies, and through the Training and Communication area.

## Synoptic table of in progress training courses

Title of the course	Main objectives of the course	Duration (hours)	Number of teachers/ experts involved	Number of trainees involved	Target group/s
<i>Innovation business and start-up</i>	Providing theoretic and instrumental knowledge base for understanding needs and requisites for starting up an entrepreneurial activity combining traditional way of management with innovative aspects	250	20	18	Under-30 unemployed with a secondary diploma degree
<i>Permaculture</i>	Training on the main phases of intensive organic agriculture production and on the implementation of an agricultural company	356	17	10	Under-30 unemployed with a secondary diploma degree
<i>Ethical Production and Rural Marketing</i>	Training on adoption and experimentation of new sustainable models of production and consumption; stimulate the raise of new economies and local services to support entrepreneurship and art craft with the adoption of new digital technologies; Training on how to protect rural areas and how to value their “bottom up” approach at the market.	350	4	10	Under-30 unemployed with a secondary diploma degree

The ultimate goal is to provide tools to increase the volume of entrepreneurial activities and the success capacity of start-ups. The focus will be on acquiring knowledge with respect to developing a start-up, increasing awareness of business risks and of actions to reduce or mitigate them.

The teaching structure of **the Course in Permaculture** is conceived as a path for tutoring and training on the field and in the fields, inspired by the philosophy of learning by doing closely linked to the moments of production and implementation of the future agricultural enterprise. The introductory lectures will be preliminary to addressing those issues which will be explored with the workshop activities and in the field. The workshops, carried out in the fields, will be a practical literacy, as deepened during the lectures, about the life cycle and the care of the agricultural land.

**The Ethical Production Course** is based on the objective of providing training that stimulates the adoption and testing of new production and consumption models which are more aware of the limited capacity of the environment to dispose of waste and the pollution produced by urban metabolism. In other words, that of stimulating the emergence of new economies and local services, supporting entrepreneurship and traditional craftsmanship in the challenge with the new technological professions. This is accompanied by **the Rural Marketing** with the aim of protecting the economic value of the bottom up practice typical of rural areas and in the case of Monterusciello it is also a rediscovery of a resource capable of generating profit. The MAC advertising campaign slogan will be: ***Commit to growing the community.***



*Launch event for training courses, Monterusciello*



**The three activated courses form the trainees in such a way as to have a knowledge that can immediately be spent on the free market, but above all invested on site to give continuity to the processes activated by the MAC project.**

As an example, the course on BUSINESS INNOVATION prepare the young trainees to become entrepreneurs in the realm of urban agriculture, but, at the same time, it structures them in order to acquire a knowledge related to creation and management of a company. The course teaches participants to become entrepreneurs of themselves, in this way **proceeds to an empowerment action that leads these young trainees to have a different mental attitude**, not wait for someone's work, but become protagonists of their personal and professional development path, vital approach in urban regeneration. The students are prepared for:

- **Understanding and managing the innovation environment** (identifying existing tools and understanding the political, economic, social, technological and legal basic trends that may represent risks and opportunities in the development of entrepreneurial ideas and in innovative processes)
- What a company consists of and how it is innovated
- The economic and financial aspects related to manage a company
- The "planning and management" aspects of the activities hypothesized ad hoc for some types of enterprises, with a focus of course on agricultural businesses.

**The course on permaculture** prepare the trainees to assess the many ways of the urban agriculture, it provides them with know-how related to all organic and regenerative form of production, moreover, technologies and techniques for concretely grow the organic crops are thought to participants. Finally, the knowledge related to harvesting, but even to the reproduction of plants are part of the course. At the end of the course, the trainee is prepared to face all phases for managing the organic regeneration of agriculture land, that is:

- **Understanding the qualities of available agricultural land** and making a decision on the best production to start in a specific plot
- To choose the best species of plants suitable for that terrain
- **To be capable to sustainably grow them up without using damaging chemicals** and to reproduce them using effective and efficient techniques.
- To prepare the harvest in the best way to reach the market under best conditions and to promote km0 deals.

Finally, **the ethical production and the rural marketing**, complete the constellations of professional figures necessary to keep up the path started by the MAC Project. This course explains how agriculture does not produce only food, but can be an input for the production of alternative materials (e.g. paper, bioplastic, composite and bio-composite materials, solutions for green building and energy efficient and so on). In addition, the participants are prepared for certification and product promotion processes through notions and practical exercises related to rural marketing, strategic marketing, the behavior of the agri-food consumer, the life cycle of the product/service public policies for e-marketing, certification of crops and food, branding and territorial marketing.

This component of training within the MAC project is running quite smoothly. The only moments that caused some difficulties were related to the respect of start-up times, difficulties related to procedural lengthy and to the launch of calls, but everything was resolved within a reasonable time. The courses are regularly attended by scholarship holders and there are many expectations related to this component both in terms of future employment and further development of the activities started in the MAC project, and in terms of impact on the local community at this time of implementation. In fact, these are first tangible results for the citizens of Monterusciello, through the courses the project begins a real interaction with young participants, almost all coming from the local context.

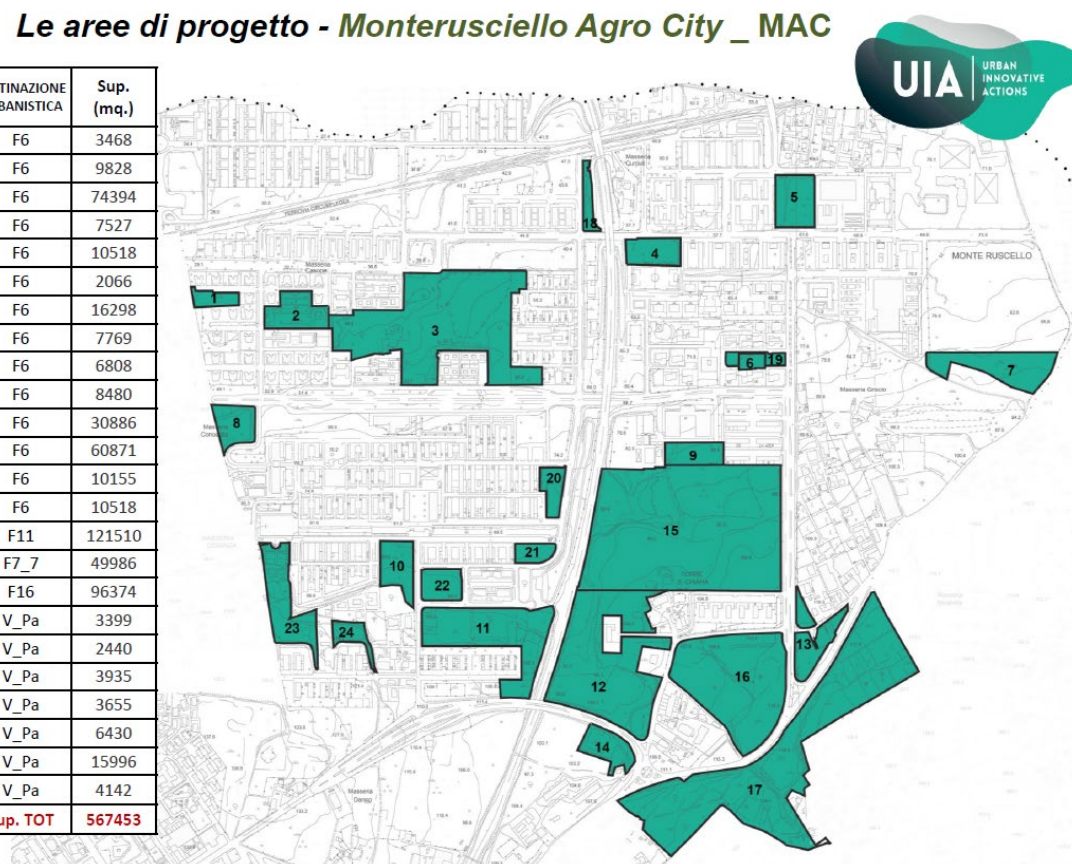
## 4. The green infrastructure: preparing for regenerating

The third pillar of the MAC action is the transformation through urban agriculture activities of the currently abandoned urban areas, better described as urban voids; through its implementation, they will become productive areas, totalling around 50 hectares which will be brought back to production. This action requires a concerted integrated planning action involving all partners, but in the front line of design are the agriculture-related partners ([Agrocoltura](#), [Coldiretti](#) and [Confagricoltura](#)) and the [University of Salerno](#).

This component is advancing at a slower pace, also because of technical problems due to the belatedness in the delivery of some of the technical surveys and soil analysis. It is not possible to implement a simultaneous action on all 50 hectares available, but the MAC partnership is focused on progressing step by step, putting into production those areas that are easier to manage and for which the analyses are already available.

**Le aree di progetto - Monterusciello Agro City \_ MAC**

N°	DESTINAZIONE URBANISTICA	Sup. (mq.)
1	F6	3468
2	F6	9828
3	F6	74394
4	F6	7527
5	F6	10518
6	F6	2066
7	F6	16298
8	F6	7769
9	F6	6808
10	F6	8480
11	F6	30886
12	F6	60871
13	F6	10155
14	F6	10518
15	F11	121510
16	F7_7	49986
17	F16	96374
18	V_Pa	3399
19	V_Pa	2440
20	V_Pa	3935
21	V_Pa	3655
22	V_Pa	6430
23	V_Pa	15996
24	V_Pa	4142
	<b>Sup. TOT</b>	<b>567453</b>



*MAC's urban voids, to be regenerated through Urban Agriculture*

With regard to this delicate third pillar of the MAC, the planning process presents significant complexities. The interventions in this component of the MAC aim to integrate agriculture with urban spaces, so that the architecture and the cultivated areas can together build a new agro-urban landscape for leisure time, recreation, educational activities and enhancement of the territory. It is necessary to integrate the planning of the agricultural production cycle, the permaculture methodology, but also a plan of the rural landscape in an urban environment, which presents many delicate points that can only be synthesized through a close collaboration between agricultural partners and Universities. Clearly, this collaboration must be based on the active involvement of the local community, *in primis*, and must be able to introduce slowly into the productive context the scholarship holders prepared through the training courses – a collaboration that will have to make the most of the tools already activated such as the Agro Urban Center and the Consulta Agro Urbana.<sup>6</sup>



Area 1, Via Matilde Serao

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<sup>6</sup> More details about the Consulta Agro Urbana are in chapter 3, MAC Journal #2: [https://www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2018-05/Pozzuoli\\_01-540%20MAC\\_Pietro%20Elisei\\_Journal%202.pdf](https://www.uia-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2018-05/Pozzuoli_01-540%20MAC_Pietro%20Elisei_Journal%202.pdf)





*Area 15, Via Salvatore di Giacomo*



*Area 7, Via Quarto*

The construction of the new landscape will have to become a form of visual appropriation and use of the large green areas of the neighborhood, where the inhabitants can recognize and can walk through it and consciously feel as the protagonists and main users of the urban space, finding traces of the places and of history through agriculture.

In the last three months, even this essential component of the MAC is moving onwards, and the first concrete results are expected for the beginning of 2019. This new agro-urban landscape is conceived to be a practiced space, a place that is lived and that can become a reference - in its covered spaces and outdoors –

for the neighborhood activities, and ultimately for creating new opportunities for Monterusciello's inhabitants.

As can be inferred from what has been written so far in this paragraph, there are many challenges for this third structural component of the MAC project, even if at this stage some of them are not yet completely outlined. However, they can be explained by the following points:

- To complete the design phase for the first plots to transform keeping into account several items, at least establishing the terms of an active dialogue between agricultural partners and university designers.



- To taking into account suggestions from local stakeholders (agro urban forum) and directly from the local community.
- To find a way in the local administration to facilitate/fast-tracking the many bureaucratic procedures to be accomplished.
- To sharply plan even the prioritization of the farming activities and the selection of the crops in such a way as to start as soon as possible to introduce the products generated by this regenerative process on the local and near-proximity markets.

# Thanks for this 3rd issue of the mac journal

A special thanks to Prof. Alessandra Como (University of Salerno). She is coordinating the design of the renewal of Piazza Antonio De Curtis and put at disposal her design work to be shown in this issue. A special thanks to Formit and all three Agri-partners for providing both for the training phase and design of the Green Infrastructure.

Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.

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