

Reflections on Our Journey: How We Got Here and What We've Learned

The Urban Diary – Chapter 1

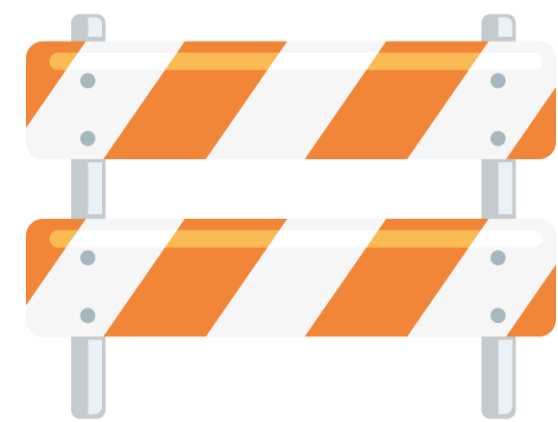


EUREKA moments

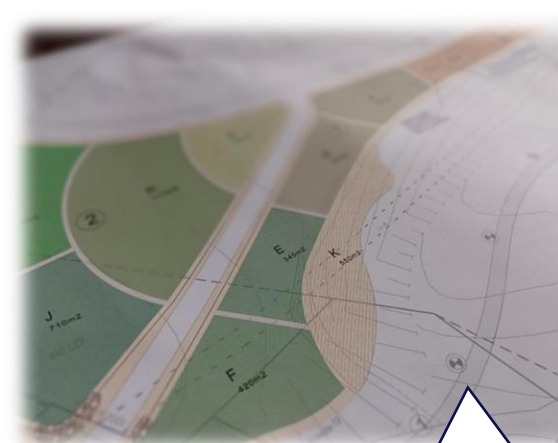
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SKANSSI BIODIVERSITY PARK AND PILOTING INNOVATIVE PRACTICES FOR ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY



Water trickles back into the Skanssi Park area
The original plan was to have a water element in the park. Due to a variety of reasons, there was a risk that this would not be possible. Eventually, water seems to have returned to the park. This is an important addition to our biodiversity efforts!



OPERATIONAL OBSTACLE moments



Staff changes
Johanna Salmela, a valued member of our team and our landscape design expert has left the project in autumn 2024. This hinders our ability to address any landscape design needs and issues.



Dog training area decision-making
It took us quite a long time to decide how to deal with ruins in the dog training area. „The right people“ needed to be involved in the discussion and decision-making process and it was not easy to identify them. Finally, it was decided that all ruins must be cleared.



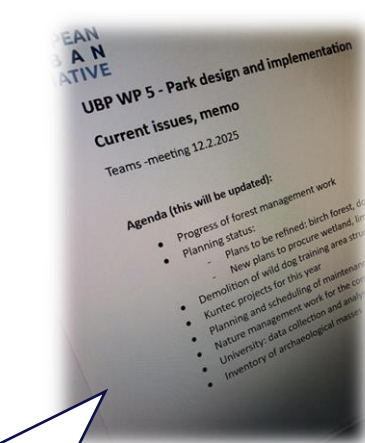
INVISIBLE VICTORY moments



Reallocation of a very rare species
The reallocation of a very rare moth (*Micrurapteryx gradatella*) in the Skanssi Park seems to have been a success! We'll find out if the moth survived winter months later this year.



REGRET moments



Coordination lacked resources
Overall coordination of the WP lacked resources in the first months. As a result, the life cycle planning of the project started a little too late. An investment does not happen by itself, but needs regular monitoring!



SHINING STAR moments



2 BioBlitz events
On 15. 6. 24 and 31. 8. 2024 two marvellous BioBlitz events were organized. Both gathered a large group of people, eager to learn more about biodiversity. Both events helped us to gain more valuable data about the biodiversity in Skanssi Park.



Sowing workshop
On 8. 11. 2024, the first sowing day of local nature plant seeds was organized at Skanssi Park seed accumulation area. The event was organized by Valonia, Villi vyöhyke nature experts and local volunteers.

REGENERATION OF SUBURBAN AREAS WITH URBAN ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY



Unexpected actors
Unexpected actors and remarkable individuals were able to mobilize people to join our activities. It is difficult to anticipate what works and what not in mobilizing people, even if you have a lot of experience, methods and literature to back up your choices.



Delayed start
The whole Work Package started a little bit late. The WP leader didn't start until 1. 7. 2024 and the previous project manager didn't have enough time to properly dive into this work package.



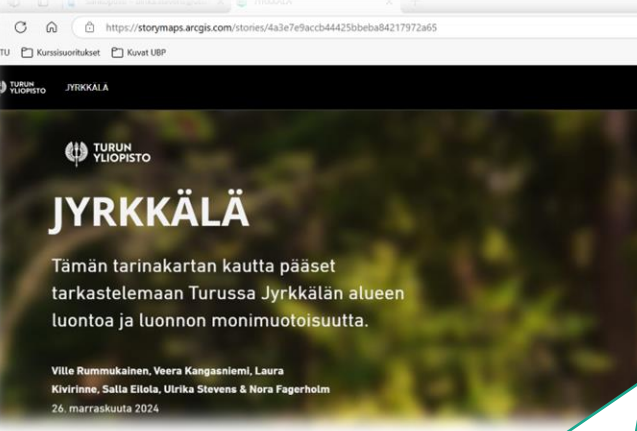
Survey response was not the best
The amount of effort put into reaching respondents for our survey was not balanced with the outcome. We really expected to reach more and a more diverse group of survey respondents.



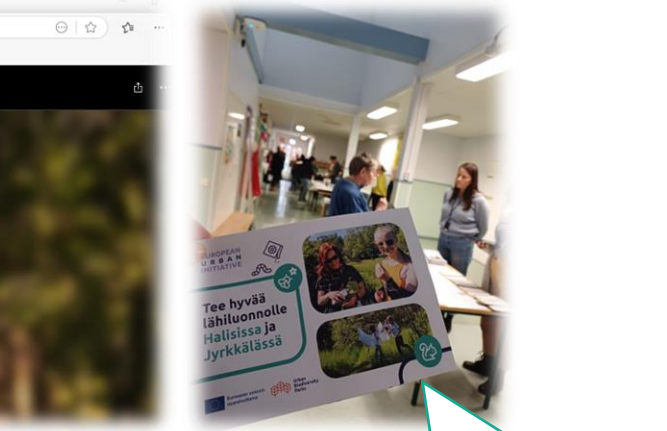
Students prove worthy
Students who joined the Community Reporting project are very engaged and show potential for successful information gathering.



The survey in Halinen neighbourhood
The survey had respondents from various linguistic backgrounds and enabled in-depth understanding of the pilot area. We were accepted and supported by many local associations.



Story-maps of pilot areas
Story-maps of pilot areas were developed with the help of geography students, a new and welcome additional resource for the project.



Residents' nature event
Residents' Nature event (Halinen, 8.10. 2024) successfully motivated people to spend time with nature themed activities and to participate to our survey.

BIODIVERSITY PARK AS AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



The value of a learning process
Understanding that the Skanssi biodiversity park is a very interesting learning environment for teachers, students and inhabitants. They want to participate from the beginning, they see the potential and learn along the way.



Two citizens in the park
They told how they used to live as kids on the top of the Skanssi hill. Nowadays they live near Helsinki, but they came to see the biodiversity park after reading about it in the media. There is a lot of interesting history in the area, and we should utilize it and learn from the seniors and their stories.



Staff changes
Quite a few staff changes occurred. People have silent knowledge, which in some cases can not be transferred so we had to start over. On the other hand, this forced us to reflect and discuss about the project again and again.



Community-based learning really works!
After citizen walks, the seniors who attended invited other seniors who couldn't attend and shared what they had learned during the walk. We have learned that the active seniors act as "informants" to others all the time and they speak good about the project.



Teachers' enthusiasm
Teachers in TSYK are very motivated and excited about the project. They have been taking high school students to the biodiversity park and integrating it into their studies. There is a lot going on in planning how to integrate the biodiversity park into school curriculum.



Delayed experimental learning environment
The discussion about the experimental learning environment started a little bit late. It is a complex subject, which needs good background research and planning.



Getting feedback
When in the end of the citizen engagement workshop one participant stuck a sticky note on me, saying "Big thanks for today's event. Quality, interesting and inspirational!" PRICELESS!!!



Bioblitz events
Two Bioblitz events organized in the last year attracted hundreds of people to learn more about biodiversity in the Skanssi Park.

INCREASING CAPACITIES OF PRIVATE ACTORS TO CONTRIBUTE IN BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION



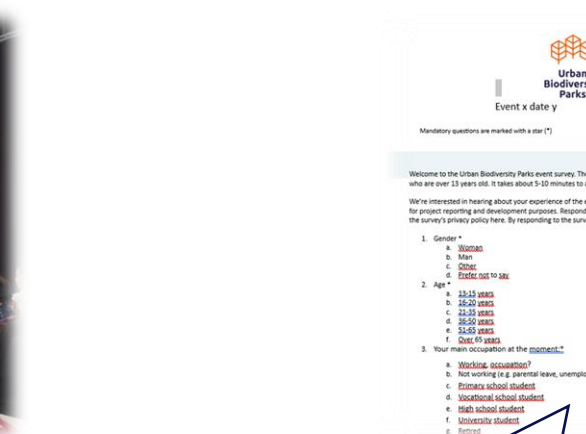
Biodiversity is important to private actors
Biodiversity is important to private actors, but current processes don't support its conservation. Construction projects, whether infrastructure or buildings, are complex and span many years. Biodiversity solutions often get lost during the various phases, from planning to completion. It's crucial to understand the process and key decisions, like procurements, to identify when biodiversity can be either supported or neglected.



Getting other private actors to participate
Getting companies and other private actors to participate in anything is always tricky. Especially, private companies working in the building sector and infrastructure development tend to opt out rather than attend anything that does not directly benefit their daily operations.



Private sector is interested in our topics
We managed to get a nice crowd of participants to our first market dialogue.



Gathering feedback
Gathering feedback after events seems to be an issue, which we really need to pay more attention to.



The construction of the VASO pilot site started
The construction of the VASO pilot site started, providing a good perspective on the concrete challenges companies face when trying to take biodiversity into account on actual building sites.

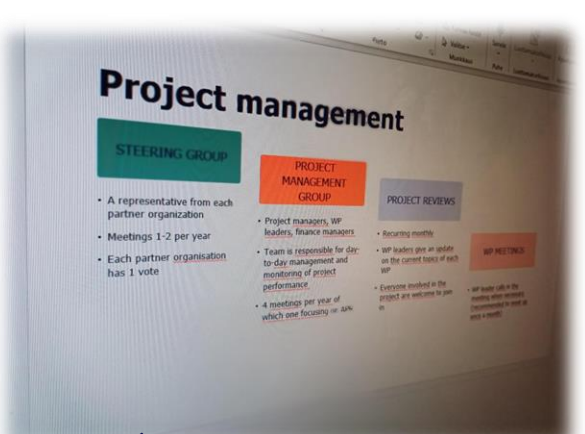


The first market dialogue was organized
The first market dialogue was organized, and the participants seemed to be very interested in the topic of how to enhance biodiversity in the construction sector.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT



Defining a way of working
The monthly project review has proven to be a good way of working to share information and have low-threshold discussions between the project team.



Staff changes
New project leader stepped in August. As a result, the day-to-day running of the project was only organized during autumn 2024.



Forming the steering group
Steering group was finally formed in autumn and first meeting took place just before Christmas.



Not enough time to stop and think
When MUAs current project team started work, the day-to-day running of the project had already begun, and they jumped on a moving train. There hasn't been much time or opportunity to stop and think things through.

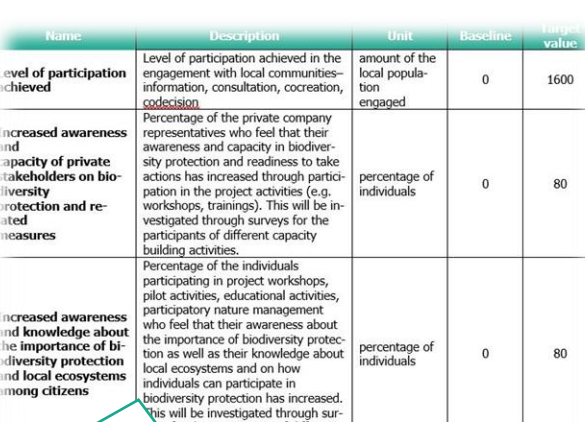


Consortium meeting organized in a hurry
The partner days (for national partners) had to be organized on a tight schedule. The consortium did not have much time to prepare, calendar reservations were booked on a last minute.



Positive feedback
The MUA project team has received spontaneous positive feedback from various parties on the way of working!

MONITORING AND EVALUATION



Wisely chosen indicators
The indicators chosen for the project define the methods we use for stakeholder evaluation (event feedback & co-evaluation). We can also use additional data gathering methods to gather data depending on the needs of the WPs. All of these feed into the final evaluation report.



Finding synergies
Finding synergies between monitoring activities in Skanssi and the pilot areas requires careful thinking.



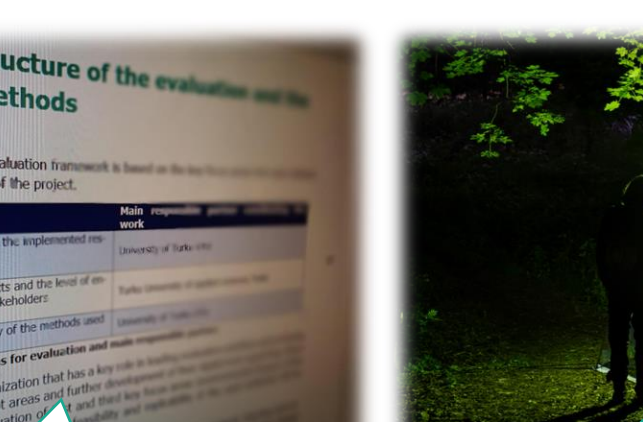
Stakeholder evaluation
Stakeholder evaluation is not a simple exercise and does require careful planning



Knowledge growth
Seeing how the knowledge grows during the project enables us to make a more detailed project evaluation plan.



Environmental impacts
Discussion on environmental impacts of the restoration work took a while, but we figured it out!



Hard work pays off
The start with evaluation plan was not so straightforward, but in the end, everything came together nicely.

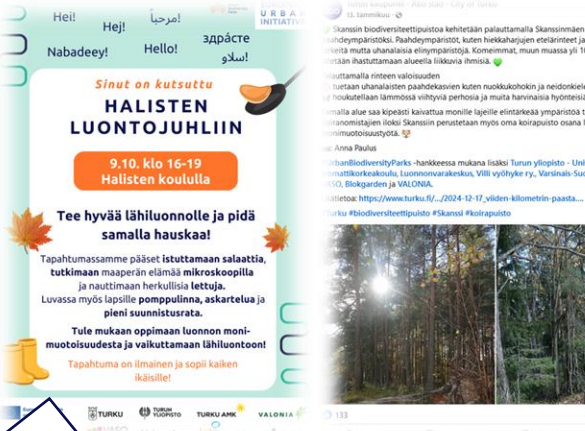


Exploring the biodiversity park area
Baseline data collection and two Bioblitz events gathered a lot of important data.

COMMUNICATION AND CAPITALISATION



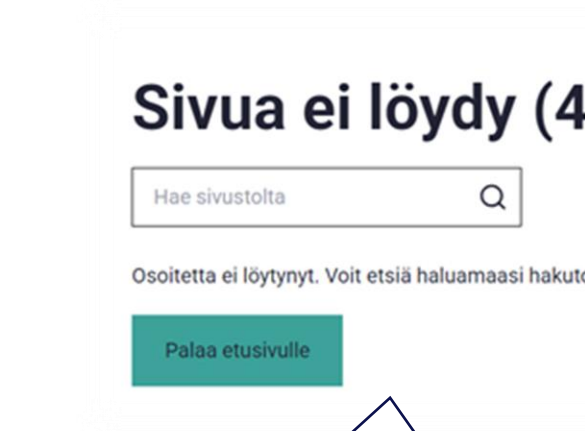
Cooperation with RESIST project
We planned together a communication campaign for residents to encourage them to increase biodiversity in their own gardens. Social media campaign with influencer starts in April.



Linguistic limitations
Without numerous translations it is impossible to reach many foreign citizen.



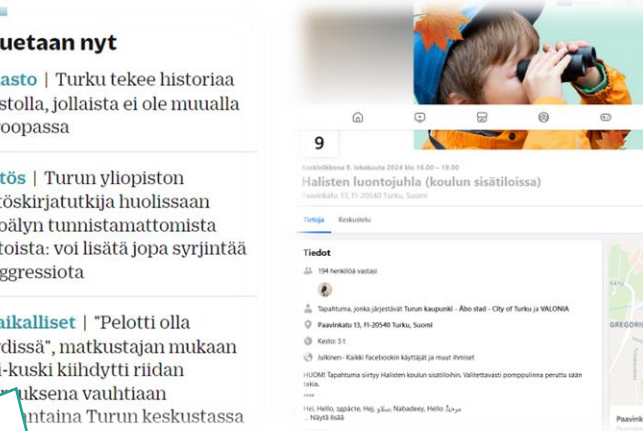
Own social media
The project does not have its own social media (LinkedIn, etc.). City of Turku does not set up new accounts for any project.



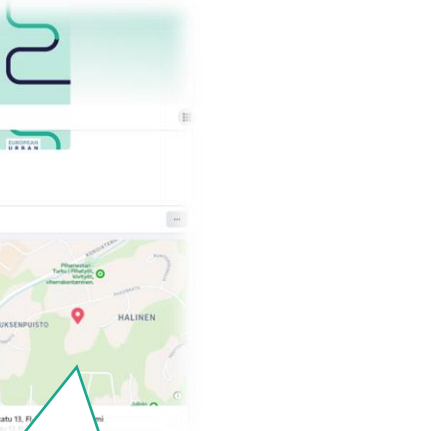
Cooperation with the Finnish Association of Landscape Industries
The association can reach numerous of people working with our topics.



Website is down
All the links and news what we have published in our website, vanished for a while.



Media presence
The most read article in Turun Sanomat on 9. 9. 2024. The media release was headlined "Turku makes history with a park like no other in Europe" and for a while it was the most read story on the newspaper's website.



Facebook marketing
The nature party-event on Facebook had a wide outreach.

TRANSFER



We completed our WP Transfer
Based on inputs from all Transfer Cities and under guidance of our Transfer Expert, we finalized our WP Transfer and kicked-off its implementation.



Transfer Partners understood the Innovative Solution
After an intense 2 days of presentations, visits, discussions and exchanges the three transfer partners (Košice, Malmö and Neapoli-Sykies) had a EUREKA moment! The concept of the Urban Biodiversity Parks was so much clearer having had the opportunity to actually see and hear what was planned at the Opening site visit in August 2024.



Neapoli-Sykies shines
The project partner from Greece undertook a very thorough consultation process to produce an excellent SWOT analysis report. The report has been transformed into a good practice example for other Transfer Partners in EU projects!



Author:
Klemen Strmšnik, EIU Innovative Actions Expert (ZaVita d.o.o.)
klemen@zavita.si / www.zavita.si / [my LinkedIn profile](https://www.linkedin.com/in/klemen-strmsnik)
Based on contribution of all Urban Biodiversity Parks project partners.

EUROPEAN
URBAN
INITIATIVE



Co-funded by
the European Union