

Land conflict

Keywords

- > Pigneto Lake
- > SNIA
- > Swimming World Championship of 2009
- > Prenestino

Introduction

Pigneto lake (Figure 1) is the only natural lake in Rome, Italy. It lies in the district of Pigneto and is formed from mineral water sources (acqua bullicante). Pigneto is one of the most populated neighborhoods in the city and also one of the poorest, with one of the highest crime rates. The discovery of the lake and the creation of a public park around it was an important development for this area and its inhabitants, providing a safe and healthy environment for outdoor activities. Today the lake is home to numerous species of protected wildlife. The neighborhood committees are working to have the area recognised as a public park.

Background

The area where the lake lies was in the past home to a large textile factory, SNIA Viscosa, The company closed in 1954 when the Italian economy shifted from textile to chemical production, leaving the factory abandoned.

During the 1970s the former site of SNIA was bought by Antonio Pulcini, a property tycoon, in order to build a shopping mall. The project was delayed for a short time when the area was designated as a possible site for the construction of new ministerial buildings for the central government. Pulcini chose to ignore the order not to build on the site and in 1990, construction of the mall began. These actions were recognized as illegal, and some engineers that had been working on the project were arrested. A short time later however, the classification of the former SNIA area was suspiciously changed to "suitable for providing services", and construction resumed. Then in 1992, during excavation works for the foundations of the giant center, a mineral water spring was fractured, submerging the entire area, and creating a lake of about 10 000 m², some 6 metres deep.



Figure 1: The people's lake (Photo: Ex SNIA)

Mobilization

While the local administration, together with the owner of the land decided what to do with the lake, local groups of residents began to ask for use this new park as a leisure space. In December 1994 the municipality of Rome approved the landscaping of the public part of the area occupied by the former SNIA factory. The Park of Energy was inaugurated in 1997. In that period, another area called "Ad duas lauros" (another section of the former SNIA) was declared an area of archaeological interest by the Ministry for Cultural Heritage.

In 2000, the Lazio region expropriated the former factory area (corresponding to the Energy Park that had opened in 1997) This expropriation became final in 2004 with the Order of the Mayor no. 194, which decreed the final expropriation of the area located between the lake and Portonaccio, for the realization of Prenestino Park.

In 2007 the Committee of Energy was founded (later to be renamed the Forum of Energy). The Committee was committed to the protection of the park and two structures inside: "The Square" and "The House of the Park." These facilities are used as cultural spaces. In mid-2008 the Permanent Territorial Forum of the Park of Energies was then established.

Towards the end of 2008, rumours began to spread among residents and the committees of Pigneto - Prenestino, that a pool for the Swimming World



Figure 2:
Citizen march for the lake
<https://lagoexsnia.wordpress.com/gallery/>



Figure 3: Former SNIA complex
<https://lagoexsnia.wordpress.com/gallery/>



Figure 4: The lake
<https://lagoexsnia.wordpress.com/gallery/>



Figure 5: Citizen march for public park and lake
<https://lagoexsnia.wordpress.com/gallery/>

Championship of 2009 would be built in the area around the lake. These rumours led to protests by early 2009, by residents who had pushed for years for the incorporation of the park and the lake, as a public park.

After a series of demonstrations by the committees, the municipality of Rome revoked the grant to the sports company for the construction of the pool. To monitor the preservation of the park and the lake, the WWF Committee of Pigneto – Prenestino was created in 2011. Its activities covered the Park of Energies and other green areas of the district.

In 2012 and later in 2013 there were two speculation attempts on the former SNIA area. One was by the La Sapienza University for the construction of student dormitories, and another for a 55,000 m³ building project. The latter project, contemplated covering the lake and building four 100 m tall towers.

At the end of 2013, The Permanent Territorial Forum of Park of Energies send a first formal notice to the owner of the area, following the excavation of a side of the hill on which stands the historic pine forest, protected from environmental constraints.

In mid-February 2014, The City Council of Rome approved a motion that partially reflected demands made by the Forum of the Regional Park of Energy for the protection of the lake, the completion of expropriation and the declaration of the open spaces around the lake as public. In June 2014 The Permanent Territorial Forum submitted a request to the Superintendent for Architectural Heritage and Landscape of the City of Rome to designate the area a protected one. After years of struggle by the committees on August, 6 2014 the park was not only declared public and suitable to be self-managed by the

committees, but also definitively expropriated from the owner. Soon after, €500 000 euro was allocated by the municipality of Rome for works to make the park and lake accessible to all citizens.

Outcome

The lake and its surroundings are an important and valuable resource for the neighborhood and for the city. Today the lake offers a home to numerous species of protected wildlife in the centre of Rome. The committees now offer guided historical-naturalistic tours of the site once a month.

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Timeline

- 1954
closing of SNIA Viscosa factory
- 1970s
former SNIA factory area bought by Antonio Pulcini
- 1990
work starts on the shopping mall project
- 1992
during excavation work for the shopping center, a branch of mineral water breaks, submerging the entire area, and creating Pigneto Lake
- 1994
landscaping for the Park of Energies
- 1997
inauguration of the Park of Energies
- 2000
Lazio region expropriates the area of the Park of Energies
- 2004
expropriation becomes final
- 2007
establishment of the committee of energies
- 2008
Permanent Territorial Forum of the Park of Energies is established
- 2009
Swimming World Championship of 2009 scandal
- 2011
WWF Committee of Pigneto –Prenestino is created
- 2012-2013
two attempts at speculation on the area of SNIA
- Feb. 2014 Rome City Council approves some measures of protection of the park

June 2014
Permanent Territorial Forum submits request to create a protected area

Aug 2014
park declared public and suitable to be self-managed by the committees, definitively expropriated from the owner.

More on this case

In English

- Mackay, Jamie. 2014. Rome's rebel lake is a parable of the contemporary commons. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/jamie-mackay/rome%E2%80%99s-rebel-lake-is-parable-of-contemporary-commons>

In Italian

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