



Low Line Competition

London

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Completion Year : 2019

The project proposes to transform the entirety of the Low-Line system in a Performative Landscape, a walkable natural/mechanical Sustainable-Drainage-System, a Public Rainwater-Park. While constructing a new sequence of public spaces - a “necklace”- in a new urban continuity, the project intends to adapt the urban tissue to rainwater floods and “heat island” effects.

The Park is many things: a public space tied to an essential monument of engineering and collective memory (the Public/Civic Space), a diffused water management system (the Machine) and a legal framework for the physical and performative improvement of the low-line itself (the Process). All functions are interconnected.

The Machine: The SUDS system not only collects the water from within its (blurred) boundaries, but reaches out to increase its catchment area by welcoming neighbouring buildings and open spaces, and to actively manage the water flows to maximise performance. Water management is mainly achieved through gravity and design: a blue network for water management (rills, swales, canals) is the backbone of this system, ensuring continuity and interconnectedness. This network, initially managing the water collected from the viaduct, will also incorporate the surrounding open spaces, which will work as retention and infiltration devices: filter drains, basins and ponds. In a dense and complex urban environment, a gravity conveyancing mechanism will need to be integrated with solar-activated pumps, flying playful gutters, sprinklers, and water features to increase efficiency and react to climate conditions.

The Public/Civic Space: reconnecting different urban tissues, the Park constructs a remarkable urban continuity, a walkable space relating existing and new public spaces along the low-line and towards the river. As a park, it actively transforms itself to improve its performances in terms of walkability, physical and thermal comfort, wildlife and biodiversity enhancement. Gradually, and tactically the existing network of smallest open, soft landscapes will be enhanced and connected, the mineral will be replaced by soft surfaces, cars will leave space to the bicycles, pedestrians, insects and trees.

The Process: The project will be activated through a number of parallel strategies/phases.

In the first phase, a thorough survey of “brick and nature” entailing a number of workshops with stakeholders, will be proposed. Among the first elements of negotiation will be the introduction of a system of rills and swales along plot boundaries (least intrusive). The rill or swale, albeit paired with fences and walls will be the first trace of the future Low-Line Park: it will slowly enhance the almost invisible green traces, pavements and soft surfaces.

In the second phase, through negotiation and private investment, the plots will gradually open to wider swales and paths. The redesign road system along the “lowlife” will reclaim minor roads into the park and reduce traffic load. In the third phase, the physical transformation of key areas and landmarks will help unlock the vision of a continuous low-line. Through the different phases, the first traces evolve to become a network of canals, rain gardens, new, soft pedestrian paths that have strategically replaced roads, water features.