

**THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “IN THE CANOPIES” ON TREE CANOPY COVER HELD IN MILAN, ORGANIZED BY FORESTAMI WITH PRADA GROUP AS PART OF FORESTAMI ACADEMY**

*From satellite data to digital twins, trees become urban infrastructure. Europe is demanding a new approach from cities: it is no longer enough to count trees; what matters now is measuring the urban area covered by their crowns (Tree Canopy Cover).*

*The new educational project of Forestami Academy with Prada Group, dedicated to 100 4th and 5th grade classes across the metropolitan City of Milan, was also presented.*

**Milan, 19 March 2026 – Why is Tree Canopy Cover such a prominent topic today? And how is the role of trees changing within urban policies and institutional decision-making?**

Europe’s perspective on cities is changing: **trees are no longer seen as simple urban decoration, but as true urban infrastructure, measured through Tree Canopy Cover**, the indicator that quantifies how much of the urban surface is covered by tree crowns and, consequently, how much nature is integrated into built environments. In line with the Nature Restoration Law (European Union Regulation 2024/1991 on nature restoration), which sets binding targets for ecosystem restoration by 2030 and identifies 2027 as a crucial intermediate milestone for the implementation of concrete actions, **trees become structural indicators of ecological quality, comparable to existing urban planning standards, introducing a new “grammar” in which the canopy becomes an objective and measurable environmental parameter.** Within this framework sits the *3 Billion Trees Challenge*, the EU commitment to planting at least three billion trees by 2030, based on the principle of planting and growing “the right tree, in the right place, for the right purpose.”

**Several leading international experts** provided an overview of these topics at the “**In the Canopies**” conference, organized in Milan (at the Museo Poldi Pezzoli) by **Forestami** (the project aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change and improving the liveability of neighbourhoods by increasing urban greenery in the Metropolitan City of Milan through the expansion of tree canopies and the planting of 3 million trees) **within the framework of Forestami Academy**, the **educational program** dedicated to urban green spaces, now in its fourth year with a new edition **developed in partnership with Prada Group.**

The conference, curated by **Maria Chiara Pastore**, **Scientific Director of Forestami**, was attended by: **Benjamin Rolles** for the European Commission (Policy Officer); **Phillip Harwood** for the European Space Agency – ESA (Project Manager for the ESA Stakeholder Engagement Facility); **Ana Macías Palomo** for Rey Juan Carlos University in Madrid (PhD Forestry Engineer, Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture, Engineering School of Fuenlabrada); **Gherardo Chirici** for the University of Florence (Full Professor of Urban Ecology and Remote Sensing); and **Paola Viganò** for the Municipality of Milan (Director of the Green Areas Department).

In line with the objectives of Forestami Academy, their contributions aimed to build a

discussion capable of going beyond specialist boundaries and reaching a broader audience for dissemination purposes, by **promoting an urban culture that recognizes the central role of trees in climate-adaptation and nature-restoration policies.**

Closing remarks were also delivered by **Stefano Boeri**, President of the Steering Committee of the Forestami Foundation.

In the panel of the conference dedicated to the European framework and the “view from space”, **Benjamin Rolles** (European Commission) outlined the role of the Nature Restoration Law and the use of Tree Canopy Cover data to monitor urban green areas; **Phillip Harwood** (ESA) showed how satellite observation supports projects on ecosystems and biodiversity, opening a discussion with Forestami on “green seen from space”; **Gherardo Chirici** (University of Florence) highlighted the importance of integrating remote-sensing data with on-the-ground surveys and developing “digital twins” of trees to evaluate the benefits of urban greenery on climate and health. In the panel dedicated to cities, **Ana Macías Palomo** (Rey Juan Carlos University) explained how the Nature Restoration Law makes canopy cover a simple and scalable metric to guide the planning of urban forests in Spanish municipalities, while **Paola Viganò** (Municipality of Milan) described the evolution of Milan’s green policies and the experimental use of the digital twin for improving the management of urban greenery.

*“Tree Canopy Cover will increasingly become a central tool for understanding and governing the ecological transformation of cities - explained **Maria Chiara Pastore**, Scientific Director of Forestami - “It is not only a matter of counting trees, but of reading the city through its canopies, which become structural indicators of urban ecological quality, comparable to current urban-planning standards, and which make it possible to plan interventions, foster shared responsibility between the public and private sectors, and align local policies with Europe’s nature-restoration objectives.”*

*“European cities are entering a new phase in which nature is once again becoming a structural component of urban space. European Union directives on ecosystem restoration clearly point in this direction: it is no longer enough to simply count trees; we must increase the actual presence of their canopies in cities and recognize green spaces as essential infrastructure for people’s health and well-being. In this context, Forestami has acted as a pioneering laboratory, launching projects that, from the outset, embodied an innovative approach to urban forestry and demonstrated that planting trees means making cities more livable and resilient. Today, we are part of an increasingly broad international dialogue and are entering a new phase that calls for greater involvement from citizens, schools, businesses, and local communities, because the ecological transformation of cities will only be possible if those who live in them become active participants in this change”* said **Stefano Boeri**, President of the Steering Committee of the Forestami Foundation.

**During the conference, the new educational project of Forestami Academy with Prada Group was also presented.** Developed in collaboration with La Fabbrica and aimed at 100 4th and 5th grade classes across the metropolitan City of Milan, the project places trees, and in particular their canopies, at the centre of an urban environmental education pathway that describes them as natural infrastructure essential for providing protection from sun and wind, improving air quality, fostering biodiversity, and making cities more resilient. **At the heart of the project is a personalized student diary that will accompany students throughout the 2026–2027 school year**, featuring observations, creative activities, and writing spaces;

a dedicated teacher's guide; and a series of experiential workshops - both scientific and artistic-urban - which will be presented **during an immersive day at Parco Nord Milano**, transforming trees into open-air classrooms and allowing children, families, and citizens to directly experience the value of Tree Canopy Cover for the quality of life in cities.

*“For Prada Group, education is a priority and a key element of the vision behind the partnership with Forestami and the Forestami Academy project. With the launch of this new cycle, dedicated to exploring the essential role of tree canopies in the urban context, we reaffirm our commitment to placing education at the centre, through a pathway designed to involve families and, in particular, the children of Milan’s schools,”* said **Lorenzo Bertelli**, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility of Prada Group.

### **Prada Group**

Prada Group is socially engaged to contribute to the sustainable development of the communities and stimulate the cultural debate in all its forms of expression. The Group partners with recognized players and international entities to develop educational and training programs, value talent, support scientific research, foster women's empowerment, and promote local culture and artistic heritage. Prada Group operates in the luxury sector through the Prada, Miu Miu, Church's, Car Shoe, Versace, Marchesi 1824 and Luna Rossa brands.

### **Forestami**

Forestami was born from an initiative by architect Stefano Boeri, based on research conducted by the Politecnico di Milano, supported by Fondazione Falck and FS Sistemi Urbani, on the potential and benefits of urban forestry in the metropolitan area of Milan. It later evolved into a project promoted by the Municipality of Milan, the Metropolitan City of Milan, the Lombardy Region, Parco Nord Milano, Parco Agricolo Sud Milano, ERSAF, Fondazione Cariplo, Fondazione di Comunità Milano together with Fondazione Comunitaria Nord Milano and Fondazione Comunitaria Ticino Olona, as well as the Milanese universities Politecnico, Statale and Bicocca. The project aims to plant 3 million trees by 2030, enhance the natural capital of the urban and peri-urban fabric, help reduce air pollution and improve the quality of life in Greater Milan while also combating the effects of climate change. In April 2025, the Forestami Foundation was established, becoming the Third Sector Entity (ETS) responsible for implementing and developing the Forestami project. The new Foundation continues its work thanks to collected donations and can also develop additional projects both within the Metropolitan City of Milan and on a national scale to help improve the environment.

**For more information**

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