

HYBRID PARKS

December 2014



At the Final Conference international speakers presented the unique resources of parks, the advantages of cooperation and the need to achieve additional economic, social and environmental benefits thanks to hybrid parks.

Presentations started with Katja Ecke, Finance Officer at the INTERREG IVC Joint Technical Secretariat, who reviewed the INTERREG IVC Programme and gave a short outlook on the new programme INTERREG Europe that will be operational in 2015.

“Parks and Gardens – More than nice pictures” was the title of the kick-off address by Philip Smith (UK), CEO International Garden Photographer of the Year. More than 20.000 contributions from 149 countries show both the great variety and the global interest in the values and the beauty of parks and gardens.

In the first section of a joint presentation Wolfgang Rembierz, State Chancellery of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), demonstrated the growth of settlement areas in NRW, the tradition of policies to safeguard green belts and new policies of sustainable cultural landscape development and of climate change mitigation. Evamaria Küppers-Ullrich, Ministry of Building, Housing, Urban Development and Transport of NRW, presented the successful ecological urban restructuring of brownfields, conversion areas, urban neighbourhoods and city centres. These actions help implementing the objectives postulated by the state government in the Green City Strategy and the Liveable City Scenario.

The importance of urban green in modern cities was the main topic of the presentation by Dr. Roland Bernecker, Secretary-General of the German Commission for UNESCO. For him parks are indispensable places for the people to slow down, to relax and to breathe. Economically, parks and gardens in cities are of emergent importance as locational factors and for tourism.

For Pawel Kojs, Director of the Silesian Botanical Garden in Mikolów (Poland), it was the Hybrid Parks project and its professional exchange that revealed the importance of communication with the visitors. Exhibitions and garden shows are as important for a sustainable environment as seed banks for local plants. Todd Forrest, Vice President for Horticulture and Living Collections at The New York Botanical Garden, discussed how this garden has continued to grow and evolve by embracing the principles promoted by Hybrid Parks: providing economic opportunities for its neighbours; broadening its audience through the creation of diverse programs; and increasing awareness of how

environmental change is impacting the living world around us through new gardens and displays.

Parks and gardens offer exceptional resources to connect people with each other and connect urban citizens with nature and culture, according to Cecilia Liljedahl, member of the management team for Göteborgs Lustgårdar 2016. Experiences show that urban gardening is a tool for user participation and responsible production and consumption. Michele Mellara, film producer and director from Italy, introduced his film "God Save The Green". It is a documentary that tells the stories of people who are regaining a sense of community through gardening while changing their lives and the places they live in.

Geoffroy de Longuemar, President of The Association of Parks and Gardens in Brittany (France), presented art as an important cultural aspect in gardens and as a donor for heritage protection. A garden is mainly made out of natural objects, but it is also made of ideas, of architecture, of a whole range of shapes and colours, which relate gardens to paintings and sculptures. This marriage of art and gardens is a very good example of a hybrid operation for parks and gardens.

Ed Bennis, former professor at Manchester Metropolitan University (UK), spoke about continuity and change of the garden patrimony. Hybrid Parks is about the role and diversity that parks can achieve with considered change that is sensitive, inventive and appropriate to today's society. But a key in any decision is that the actions taken are reversible.

Finally two joint lectures by Jens Spanjer, Board of the Schloss Dyck Foundation, and Christian Gruessen, project coordinator, analysed the project's findings and examined if there can be a Hybrid Parks Model that is applicable to a majority of parks and gardens in Europe.

Study tours in and around Cologne on both days completed the programme.

Most presentations are [ready for download](#).



The workshop started at GEOsfera in Jaworzno. This new geological park in a former quarry presents the typical flora and fauna of such sites. Exploitation of limestone revealed the numerous fossils and roughness of the bottom, showing the turbulent history of the place, dating back 260 million years. GEOsfera also provides an extensive sensory garden.

The group then visited the new section of the Silesian Botanical Garden with the buildings of the Centre of Ecological Education of Children and the new plant collections. At the main site of the Silesian Botanical Garden, a former missile station, other sections related to ecological and environmental education were visited. The workshop continued with a guest expert who presented the aims and activities of the European Earth Centre Foundation. In the courtyard, impressive large scale photos from the recent project "Arbores Vitae (Trees of Life)" taken at Bialowieza Primeval Forest were shown. This last European primeval forest is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and an EU Natura 2000 Special Area of Conservation.

After a visit to Ogrody Pokazowe Kapias, a plant nursery with a huge variety of perfectly maintained show gardens in Goczałkowice, the second day was continued in Pszczyna with a visit of the historic castle park and the near-by wisent enclosure and study centre. The protection of the wild living wisent also is the focus at the Centre of Wisent Breeding and Forest Education in Jankowice, visited in the afternoon.

Presentations by partners opened the last day of the workshop: about the benefits of regional and European networking for the (economic) revitalisation of historic parks, about a project of planting old plant varieties and about the outcomes of the study on the "consideration of climate change in the design of parks and open spaces" ([English version](#) - [German version](#)) commissioned by Hybrid Parks. Local experts informed the group about the Silesia Park and about the Silesian Botanical Garden in Radzionków. These two sites, as well as the historic park in Świerklaniec, were visited in the afternoon. The structures, the variety and the history of the huge Silesia Park, started in the 1950s on a former coal mining site, make it a unique example of a pre-industrial recreational and educational park. Finally, on the grounds of the Silesian Botanical Garden in Radzionków, the group explored the successful transfer of biotopes from a building site at Katowice airport to this new and protected location.



3rd Open Conference, Rhodes (Greece), 26th-28th June 2014

During the last decades, the economic development of Rhodes centred on tourism with the mild climate, the sea and the beaches and some of the exceptional heritage sites as main assets. The interest of the tourists and many inhabitants alike did not encompass the rich biodiversity, natural landscapes, parks and gardens on the island. As a positive effect, natural spots of high quality, flora and fauna remained almost untouched. On the other hand, many public parks and gardens and open spaces were neglected. Today, there is an increasing interest to develop those sites, by the politicians and other officials, by tourism experts and by the local population. Those who manage parks, areas of natural beauty or rich biodiversity are keen to employ sustainable development schemes increasing

the social contributions and economic benefits of their sites too.

On the first day of the conference presentations showed the wide range of assets for sustainable development policies, the enhancement of the environment and for hybrid parks. Presentations by guest experts included: "The Regional Nursery of South Aegean and the Botanical Garden of Rhodes: Sustainable development and their environmental, social, educational aspects", "The role of parks in the South Aegean Region", "Wild growing and endemic flora – potentialities of exploitation", "How can cities use green spaces for climate change management", "The Valley of Butterflies: The protection of a unique biotope", "The new plan for the Municipal Flower Garden of Rimini Square", "Sustainable exploitation of wild growing plants: The strategy of the Balkan Botanic Garden of Koussia" and "The contribution of parks to environmental awareness".

Partners presented "The European Vocational Competition for Young Gardeners", "Ecological maintaining of public and touristic used parks" and "The European Garden Association". Finally the outcomes of the study ([download here](#)) to investigate the possibility of identifying an economic value for parks were presented with Northwich Woodlands as the pilot site, but also as a methodology and a model to be used elsewhere.

Study visits in the city of Rhodes included the reconstruction of the Municipal Flower Garden of Rimini Square, the fortifications around the medieval town and the garden of the Marc de Montalembert Foundation, which is a modern reconstruction of a historic garden combining medieval, Ottoman and Arabic elements. Also visited were the Regional Nursery of the South Aegean where the Botanical Garden of Rhodes with its Path of Biodiversity is under construction and Kallithea Springs and Garden, known from ancient times for its healthy sources.

The next day started with a workshop at Rodini Park that stretches along a green and shady bed of a stream not far away from the city centre. Participants discussed how the accessibility and use of this park with its unique features and qualities might be improved. After a stop at the Museum of Natural History of the Bee, a private investment of increasing environmental, economic and tourism relevance, the trip continued to the Valley of Butterflies. The valley is the only natural forest of Liquidambar orientalis (Oriental Sweetgum trees) in Europe, and a resting point for the Jersey tiger (*Panaxia Quadripunctaria*), a nocturnal moth.

The presentations given on the conference are available on the [project's website](#).



The next edition of the newsletter will summarize the outcomes of the project (Final Report), inform about local and regional implementation activities in 2015 and highlight some options for cooperation in future (funded) projects.

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND ALL THE BEST FOR 2015!

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