

EFUF 2013 Milan

Summary of findings by Clive Davies

EFUF 2013 started with a joint session of the Forum with COST action FP1204. Delegates were reminded by the introductory speakers of the important role Greenspace plays in the well being of urban dwellers and that this is a major factor why resources are attributed to this area of work.

Green infrastructure was described as the 'living skeleton' of a city region typified by that of Milan and Lombardia. The speakers noted that there is a very active discussion of Green Infrastructure (GI) at the present time hence it is important to address the role of urban forestry in this discussion. It was noted that GI and urban forestry were virtually indistinguishable in some respects for example in terms of approaches to governance, multi-functionality and citizen involvement. It was also observable that the role of urban forestry now included considerable activity in the realm of arboriculture and urban parks. With regards to urban parks their role in preserving veteran trees and as hubs in GI networks was noted.

Pia Bucella from the European Commission noted that of Europe's 500 million people 75% live in urban areas hence there is great interest in urban nature and health. She announced that there is now a small new department at the EC on activities linked to urban nature and there are links to this on the EC environment website. One of the matters of great interest is the potential of GI to make a big impact for very little money. An instance of this is that European health systems are under great financial pressure and that GI interventions could help reduce costs. The other big impact can be in climate mitigation notably the role of GI as an urban carbon store. However there is no statutory instrument for GI hence resources have to be argued for. Mention was made of agri-environment schemes, research funding and private sector funding (the latter in respect of delivering urban eco-ecosystem services) and the new European Forestry Strategy which will be adopted in late 2013.

The new COST action FP1204 GreenInUrbs launched on the 14th February 2013 had held its first meeting on the 6th May. The delegates had devised a work programme for the four year period of the COST Action. This was based on four working groups dealing with environmental services, social services, governance and dissemination. Progress of the COST action would be made available and updated regularly at www.greeninurbs.com. It had already been suggested that a COST Action meeting could be held back-to-back with EFUF 2014 to allow delegates to attend the next Forum. Delegates were strongly encouraged to use the GreenInUrbs web resource to help steer the discourse on GI over the next four years.

In his key note presentation Andy Kenney spoke about the stewardship of private sector GI and the critical role of the private citizen which is easily overlooked. He felt it important to note that stewardship is not 'just' tree planting but also taking care of green space in both the private and public domain. Indeed it was his opinion that taking care of the urban forest is the biggest issue as large mature trees provide the most benefit. He noted that Canadian and US cities are over 50% residential and considered that this was likely the same in Europe; hence private residential areas contribute at least half and probably more of a given city's carbon store. He described the situation in neighbourhoods as a 'reverse commons' situation as neighbours benefit from green infrastructure beyond the owners own boundary; he cited as examples urban nature, views and the visual landscape as the benefits which extend beyond and owners boundary. In planning

terms and to maximise the contribution of private landowners there is a need to focus on neighbourhood systems and active citizenship.

EFUF 2013 Field visits included an excursion to the EXPO 2015 site and the Peverelli Nursery; the principle theme for EXPO 2015 is feeding the planet - energy for life. Major sub-themes include food, agriculture, innovation, lifestyle and biodiversity and the event is seen as a platform to stimulate global debate. In design terms the site is based on a 'Decumanus' and 'Cardo' which form the world avenue and national avenue respectively. There will be a substantial number of mature and semi-mature trees planted at EXPO. Delegates then visited the nursery where these were being grown and prepared. The discussion was varied covering the technical, financial, benefits and disbenefits of planting large trees. There was a discussion that after EXPO much of the sites GI could be lost through post exhibition redevelopment.

The second field visit was to the Parco Nord Milano (PNM). PNM is part of a green park system. It all started back in 1967 with plans for a green lung for the city. The first plantations were created adhoc. PNM is spread across two sites separated by a hospital covering 350 + 200 hectares respectively. It features woodland blocks, wetlands, river corridor, allotment gardens and grasslands. There are seven path networks and a very successful programme of volunteer wardens. PNM has a budget of €3.8 million of which €400,000 is self generated. Delegates participated in a planning exercise the results of which were later shared between groups. Other visits were made including Boscocitta where there was great volunteer enthusiasm and the Ticino Valley a vital green corridor between the Apennines and the Alps.

In his key note presentation Terry Hartig discussed 'health pathways' noting that GI leads to physical, restorative and social interaction improvements; however these pathways are not independent. He noted that the restorative aspects of a given area informs people's preferences regarding where to engage in physical activities in urban areas and that the immediate benefits of physical activity depend on the restorative quality of the environment.

As in all previous EFUF the parallel sessions formed the main business of the Forum. The organisers had produced and circulated a book of abstracts of the sessions and the speakers PowerPoint presentations would be made available in due course on the website. The following is a selection of discussions arising from the presentations.

- 'Nudging' as a potential policy instrument to generate additional interest in urban forestry amongst policy makers.
- 'Meta-governance' as a concept for the steering of 'multiple networks'.
- The use of 'green' in place branding.
- How GI Stewardship is resourced in neoliberal times.
- The increasing use of GIS ('tell it on the map') as exemplified by the work in Helsinki and the work on social mapping of eco-system services taking place in Belgium.
- The need to think about 'radiant heat' when discussing the gathered benefits of urban trees on human thermal comfort.

- The loss of native trees can be masked by the arrival of exotics; this in turn presents threats and opportunities.
- The experience in China suggests that there is a non linear relationship between economic development and Urban Forestry cover. An 'N' curve appears to exist.
- Forest Schools have proven to be successful in promoting children's health.
- Residents, stakeholders and tourists all have different perceptions of landscape change.
- The Urban Heat Island effect is a particular issue for the Elderly (a silent killer of silent people)
- 'Cool spot mapping' which could determine where ecosystem services are least and where built development would have the least impact.

The poster session had grown significantly from previous years and it was recommended that more time should be allocated to this in future EFUF. The quality and diversity of the presentations was widely commented on by the delegates. It was agreed that PDF versions of the posters should be requested and made available on the website. In respect of the website Giovanni Sanesi on behalf of the organisers reported that he wanted to keep the site going until at least the next Forum.

The final session of EFUF featured the award of Urban Forestry Project 2013. Also made was the award of Young European Urban Forester of the Year 2013 (sponsored by MD2 Consulting Ltd) to Salman Qureshi, runner up Silvija Krajter, third place Jeroen Glissenaar. The Carta di Milano (Strategic Guidelines for Urban Forestry) was approved by the Forum and signed by delegates. The organisers were thanked for their organisation of EFUF 2013 which had involved many individuals and organisations. Special mention went to Giovanni Sanesi.

The final act of the Forum was to introduce the 2014 EFUF which will be held between the 3rd and 7th June 2014 in Lausanne, Switzerland.