

Forest Products – From Tradition to Innovation

Report from the World Wood Day (WWD) Symposium and 2nd IUFRO Forest Products Culture Research Group Colloquium in Stübing, Austria, 21-23 March 2019, IUFRO RG 5.15.00

<https://www.iufro.org/science/divisions/division-5/50000/51500/>

“Wood is good”, this was the main message of the 2019 World Wood Day celebrations that took place on 20-24 March 2019 in the Austrian open-air museum of Stübing near Graz. The 7th World Wood Day event attracted more than 500 artists, educators, scientists, students, hobbyists, and industries from all over the world to share their experiences, skills and passions for wood, and certainly was a crowd puller. The event was jointly organized by the World Wood Day Foundation (WWDF) and the International Wood Culture Society (IWCS) to explore the theme “Change”.

Find more information, photos and videos here:
<http://www.worldwoodday.org/2019/news/69;>
[http://www.worldwoodday.at/;](http://www.worldwoodday.at/) and on Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/worldwoodday/?ref=hl>

One of the cornerstones of the event was the scientific symposium held together with the 2nd IUFRO Forest Products Culture Research Group Colloquium. In the course of the more than 60 presentations (51 oral and 12 poster presentations) the simple statement of “wood is good” was put to the test by addressing questions such as “How do we know if our wood comes from good sources?”, “Which wood is good for which purpose and how can we make it better?”, and “Is our education system good enough to ensure forest sustainability and sustainable wood utilization?”

Renowned keynote speakers set the scene for each of the six thematic sessions:

- *Gerald Koch* of Thuenen Institute, Hamburg
- *Paolo Cerrutti* of CIFOR, Nairobi, and IUFRO-GFEP author, focused on methods of wood identification to combat illegal logging.
- *Gerhard Schickhofer* of the Technical University of Graz delivered a status report from the CLT (cross-laminated timber) hot spot in Europe/Austria.
- *Iris Bermaud* of CNRS, Montpellier, introduced the topic of wood-based musical instruments, art and design.
- *Sandra Rodriguez Pineros* of Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua and IUFRO Task Force Coordinator talked about forest education and the need to create adequate learning environments for a greener future.
- *Anthony Cunningham* of the University of KwaZulu Natal highlighted the importance of non-timber forest products.
- *Alfred Teischinger* of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, delivered the academy lecture in a Special Session of the International Association of Wood Anatomists (IAWA) and the International Academy of Wood Science (IAWS).

According to the overall motto “CHANGE”, the well-attended symposium (about 80 registered participants from almost 30 countries) looked into changes of techniques and technologies of wood use from tradition to innovation. Thus, archeological discoveries of wooden musical instruments were presented along with innovative macroscopic and microscopic methods of wood identification and the use of “smart wood for smart buildings”.



Michael Grabner, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, and Deputy Coordinator of IUFRO 5.15.00 - Forest Products Culture welcomes WWD participants. Photo by IUFRO

In fact, many presentations revolved around wooden architecture and buildings in the past, the present and the future. For these talks, the venue of the open-air museum with its variety of historic wooden houses from rural Austria was extremely fitting. Therefore, one of the special features of the entire World Wood Day event was certainly the reconstruction of a historical watermill called “Stockmühle” - the oldest type of a watermill in Austria to grind grain - on the premises of the museum. This exciting WWD Grant project was presented at the symposium by *Michael Grabner* of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, one of the main WWD 2019 organizers and Deputy Coordinator of the IUFRO Forest Products Culture Research Group.

In modern times, new engineered wood material, innovative construction practices and growing consumer concern regarding green alternatives have generated new opportunities for wood-based buildings and triggered a kind of renaissance of mass timber construction. A major contribution to this development, especially to the expansion of multi-storey wood buildings in the world, has been made by the Austrian researcher *Gerhard Schickhofer* of the Institute of Timber Engineering and Wood Technology at Graz University of Technology. It was certainly the highlight of the entire WWD symposium when participants witnessed the announcement of his selection as the 2019 Marcus Wallenberg Prize winner.

IUFRO Division 5 Forest Products has always participated actively in celebrating WWD thanks mainly to *Howard Rosen*, Vice President of IWCS and Coordinator of IUFRO Research Group 5.15.00 – Forest Products Culture, and many other officeholders, also from other Divisions. With IUFRO Headquarters being located in Austria, the WWD celebration in Stübing offered a unique opportunity for IUFRO to get involved more strongly in the 2019 event.

8th World Wood Day celebration will take place from 16-22 March 2020 in Tokyo, Japan, under the motto of “Legacy”: http://www.worldwoodday.org/2020dev/regions_programs/Japan