

## Urban Forestry: Working Together for Green City Values

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Cities across the world are turning to urban green space as important contributors to quality of life and city competitiveness. There has been a recent boom in 'green city' competitions and various scholars have stressed the importance of high quality green environments for attracting talent and money. The 12th European Forum on Urban Forestry (EFUF), co-organized by IUFRO, focused on these and related issues. Host was Arnhem, recently awarded the accolade of 'Greenest City of the Netherlands'.

### Green city branding

Various speakers stressed the important role of green spaces for city competitiveness. The Swedish city of Växjö, for example, has managed to maintain and develop a large amount of forests and other green spaces. Together with a focus on saving energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, this resulted in recognition of its exceptional 'green profile' by, for example, the BBC. Urban forestry is an important element of Växjö's efforts. All of the city's forests are classified and managed according to their specific role and nearness to residential areas.

### Residents in focus

Other sessions at the EFUF stressed the importance of involving residents in urban forestry. Arnhem itself offered an excellent example. A volunteer group has e.g. been very active in preserving and managing the city's historical Sonsbeek woodland park. In various projects in the Netherlands, thinking 'out of the box' and building in an element of surprise has proven to be a good way of motivating people to take active part in planning and managing their local environment.

### Children and nature

Among urban residents, children are an important target group. Although research is still limited, it points at the importance of natural environments for children's learning and development. Denmark makes use of this important link. In so-called 'outdoor schools', lessons out in nature are part of the regular teaching program. Nearby local parks or green areas can thus become outdoor classrooms where learning is much more fun and stimulating.

### Strategies and innovation

For urban forestry to be successful, it needs to be strategic and innovative, connecting to the overall challenges dealt with by cities. Various speakers mentioned the links between human health and nature, with a large body of research now showing the positive impacts of using or viewing nature in terms of stress reduction, physical health, and so forth. Another important strategic 'hook' for urban forestry is climate change. Urban forests can help mitigate climate change, but their role is especially important in adaptation of cities to the effects of climate change, such as heat waves and floods.



Photo by Cecil Konijnendijk: The Sonsbeek park in the heart of Arnhem, the Netherlands, provided an appropriate setting for the 12th European Forum on Urban Forestry



Photo by Cecil Konijnendijk: On the highly interactive first day of the conference, participants were asked to develop a development plan for the Meinerswijk riparian green area.

### 12th EFUF

The Arnhem conference, attended by about 90 people from 13 countries, was the 12th edition of the annual European Forum on Urban Forestry. It was held during 27-30 May 2009. This event is co-organized by IUFRO 6.14.00 Urban Forestry. Local hosts included the city of Arnhem, Van Hall-Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, and the Dutch urban forestry core team. Next year's EFUF will be held in the Austrian city of Tulln.