

Urban Woods for People

& 7th IUFRO European Forum of Urban Forestry

“He who plants trees loves others
besides himself”

Thomas Fuller; Gnomologia, 1732



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SCALE

Urban woodland area is growing for example 300,000 hectares of urban woodland in Sweden.

In less wooded countries such as England and the Netherlands major urban reforestation taking place.

Urban woods are a major contribution to sustainable development especially when it is linked to education and urban agriculture.

Urban Forestry now a pan-European issue as witnessed by the wide representation at the conference.



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USEFUL SOUNDBITES

- Urban wood for urban good
- Woods make people happy and healthy
- Why choose Hollywood if you can have Urbanwood
- Open for business 24/7
- Its about entertainment and excitement

RAINBOW NATIONS

European countries are now rainbow nations but urban forestry is still orientated to the indigenous citizen.

No barrier can be too high if we are to create access for all, we must address issues of race, gender and disablement vigorously.



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DELEGATION OF POWER

Do foresters really like submitting plans to participants who have no technical knowledge?

Change management is needed for foresters to prepare them to be facilitators of people's wishes. This is a key role for education establishments training urban foresters in social sciences as much as natural sciences.

KIDZ R US

Children can be our creativity managers, they have 'spot vision' – look at small places and see the potential.

Professionals have acquired 'overview vision'.

Urban woods created by children are not more beautiful but they are more interesting and young dense woodlands are best.



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THE LIFETIME OF THE URBAN FOREST

- Plant a tree for birth
- Playground as a child
- Adventure to the teenager
- Courting ground for the adolescent
- Recreation ground for families
- Tranquillity for old age
- Spread the ashes in the mature forest.

WHERE DO THE FORESTS END

The area of the Forest is bigger than the area of the forest.
The footprint extends for many kilometres beyond.



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PARTICIPATION IS MORE THAN CONSULTATION

There is a hierarchy of public participation and we need examples of good practice at all levels.

FOREST WEB

The Internet offers exciting possibilities for the future however a characteristic of society is that the multiply deprived are also the 'information poor'.

Furthermore the Internet should be more than a one way information tool it should be a multi-user communication tool



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ZONING

Take care when zoning as this can destroy the 'democracy' that urban woodlands uniquely provide as urban green space.

Noise alone is too narrow a measure for zoning, but the potential exists for multiple indices for example including air quality and dark skies

RESPECT

We should respect different interest groups equally, identify potential conflicts beforehand and undertake a risk analysis prior to public participation.



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A SHOPPING LIST OF SOCIAL VALUES

- Untouched mystery (undisturbed places – wild silent and pristine)
- Woodland harmony (multi-sensory)
- Open views and open landscapes
- Biodiversity and lessons from nature
- Cultural history and living rural environments
- Activity and challenge
- Facilities and meeting places



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SMALL (BUDGETS) IS BEAUTIFUL

Urban Forests are cheap ways to create green areas and maintenance is cheaper too.

It takes 1 min 23sec of time to maintain 1sq metre of lawn a year; 5min 32sec of time to maintain shrubs a year, annual flowers 26min 40sec of time to maintain annual flowers per year.

We MUST know soon how long it takes to maintain urban forests and then we should talk about 'life cycle costing'.



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THE URBAN IN THE FOREST

We should look to the Forests through the lens of urban living in addition to considering Urban Forests as a land-use.

This could provide us with different answers to some key questions.

(REAL) ACCESS FOR ALL

Requires a mind shift in thinking for all professionals and a reminder that “no barrier can be too high if we are to create access for all”.



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CONSUMER GOODS

Urban Forests are not just 'consumer goods'. They have deeper spiritual qualities and deserve to be protected and cherished.

Public views can be contradictory e.g. consultation may show that people understand wildness but when visiting the Forest they can prefer tidiness.

MANAGED LANDSCAPES.

Forests are managed (not natural) landscapes, as such they can be compared with agriculture.

Agri-environment schemes now pay farmers to maintain the farmed landscape, foresters deserve an equal deal to maintain the forested landscape.



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THE NEW MAJOR DISEASES

Largely stress and autonomy dysfunction related and this points to a greater role for Urban Forests in the future than in the past.

We need concise information to challenge accepted medical norms and advocates in the medical world who recognise what Forest can do to overcome stress and autonomy dysfunction diseases.

DISTANCE TO BENEFIT

Compelling evidence now available that the benefits of urban woodland decreases rapidly with distance from residential areas.

Usually 1,000 metres or less, it is proximity that is important not the size of the woodland.



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GREENSTART

We need children to have a 'greenstart' if they are to benefit most from exploratory play, this can set the tone for future years and may avoid ADHD and other disruptive childhood illness in later years.

THE NATURE OF SPACE

Tree height gives Urban Forests, **uniquely**, another dimension - it gives them volume and creates a different space close by the city.

CAPITAL VALUES

Community Forestry is practiced in urban forests, this is a summation of environmental capital **PLUS** community capital, the latter being created by one generation for the benefit of the next.



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DEMOCRATIC PLACES

Woods are intrinsically democratic places as no one group can lay claim to a part. However we should take care in zoning policies as this inevitably reduces democracy in woodland perhaps to the extent seen in other forms of green spaces such as public parks.

FOLLOWING THE TRACK FROM SILVER HILL OVER BUFFALO MEADOW TO THE CROCODILE MARSH.

- Learn from users and especially the connoisseurs (regular users)
- Build bridges between professionals and politicians
- Respect local identity, sense of place and landscape
- Understand that Urban Forest managers are also 'people' and help them come out of the shadows so they can be urban heroes.



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SOCIAL VALUES

Research has shown that for adults the most important values of Urban Forests:-

- (1) beautiful landscape then
- (2) peace and quietness.

Next we must understand what the most important values for children and teenagers are.

LAND VALUE CONFLICT

In extreme cases the value of development land over urban woodland can be 180:1.

We must have strong planning controls in our toolkit to protect what we have, extend it and create new woodland in the urban context.



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HOUSE PRICES

Work in Drastrup (Denmark) has shown that new urban afforestation has pushed up house prices by 20% creating a net present value of 100Mn DKr compared to neighbouring areas not within the footprint of the new forest, for a public investment of 30Mn DKr.

Nevertheless in Drastrup the most potent political argument is the protection of groundwater not recreation or biodiversity.

OUR AMBITIONS

- We must have ambitions but they must be credible
- We must address social exclusion in all its forms
- We should believe that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole
- We should communicate that our **URBAN FORESTS ARE FOR THE MIND, BODY AND SOUL**



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