

**CITIES TALK NATURE
Conference:**
Unlocking the potential
of underutilised
urban areas

11 -12 May 2023
Chemnitz, Germany





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INTERLACE is a project to restore nature in cities across Europe and Latin America. It is using nature-based solutions to help solve some of the challenges facing cities in relation to climate change, people's health and wellbeing, economic development, wildlife conservation and more. It provides an opportunity for city authorities, residents, organisations and businesses to work together in new and creative ways - towards a better future for everyone.

Introduction

The city of Chemnitz welcomed over 100 international participants from 11-12 May 2023 to the CITIES TALK NATURE Conference *'Unlocking the potential of underutilised urban areas.'* The conference was the third in-person event in the CITIES TALK NATURE series, providing space for learning, exchange and inspiration.

In his welcome address, Börries Butenop, Head of Chemnitz' City Planning Office, took the participants on a short journey through time. He highlighted that due to Chemnitz having been an industrial town for a long time, many brownfield sites exist which have been developed by the city since 1990. He invited everyone to come back to Chemnitz in 2025, when the city will be the European Capital of Culture.

Moderator McKenna Davis from Ecologic Institute then set the scene for the conference: Underutilised spaces such as brownfields or building roofs and facades offer a unique opportunity to increase the share of urban nature. This is urgently needed in order to reduce the impacts of climate change, such as heavy rainfall events and heatwaves. However, such transformations are often also associated with challenges. The conference aimed to tackle some of these challenges and discuss solutions – such as enabling policy and governance frameworks, identifying key actors within city administrations or fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, she concluded.





Plenary Session

Keynote 1:

Green space development in Chemnitz

Florian Etterer, Green Space Department, City of Chemnitz

Florian Etterer from the City of Chemnitz introduced the local situation regarding green space developments, touching on achievements as well as on challenges. The achievements include the development of a greener inner city area as well as a FSC-certified municipal forest. Among the challenges are lacking human resources and financial budget, competing interests of land use, as well as drought periods. In the summer of 2022, for example, 21.000 litres of water per day were used to water young trees. Presently, more trees are being lost than replanted.

Presentation: tinyurl.com/2vmh2vmm



Keynote 2:

Using building greenery to increase urban nature:

Rewilding our cities one wall and roof at a time

Dusty Gedge, President of the European Federation of Green Roof & Green Wall Associations

From the start, Dusty Gedge made his ambitions clear: to bring soil and vegetation into the cities. He argued that this is important to cool down areas, to handle stormwater, for the health and well-being of citizens and to increase biodiversity. Furthermore, he highlighted that solar and green roofs should not compete against each other, but can go together – for example in applying biosolar roofs that can lead to a greater biodiversity as well as to an increased solar production. He finished his keynote by presenting some best practice examples from London and Vienna.

Presentation: tinyurl.com/4un3dpcx

Keynote 3:

Using brownfield restoration to increase urban nature: the example of the Emscher Landschaftspark

Dr. Anne Budinger, Team Manager Project Development, (RVR)

Anne Budinger took the participants on a journey through the development of the Emscher Landschaftspark. Today, the park is the biggest regional park in Europe and comprises five core elements: different parks, landmarks and slag heaps as industrial heritage, places of industrial culture, water elements as well as pathways and bike trails. The core part of developing the park was the renaturation of brownfield sites to “new nature”. This led to an increase of biodiversity, offered a high potential to install renewable energies and attracted day trippers and tourists. Furthermore, she highlighted the role of former slag heaps in the development of green infrastructure. On a policy level, a Green Charta was drafted which all 53 involved municipalities committed to.





Cities Talk Nature

With CITIES TALK NATURE, the INTERLACE project is creating a community of practice dedicated to restoring degraded ecosystems in municipalities in Latin America, Europe and other parts of the world. CITIES TALK NATURE encompasses several activities such as webinars and in-person events to foster the exchange between practitioners, the scientific community, citizens and other interested stakeholders.

Hosted by Svenja Schuchmann from Climate Alliance, the CITIES TALK NATURE session included a signing ceremony in which new municipalities joined the CITIES TALK NATURE community, as well as a best practice pitch session on successful urban nature stories.

To find out more about CITIES TALK NATURE:
interlace-hub.com/cities-talk-nature

For CITIES TALK NATURE webinars:
interlace-hub.com/interlace-events-web

For CITIES TALK NATURE in-person events:
interlace-hub.com/interlace-events-engagement

Signing ceremony

In Chemnitz, CITIES TALK NATURE welcomed new members to its community of practice. The following municipalities signed the engagement letter and committed to participate in CITIES TALK NATURE's regional and global dialogues as well as to promote nature-based solutions in their territories:

- Municipality of Lleida (ES)
- W. Szafer Institute of Botany in Kraków (PL)
- Municipality of Niepołomice (PL)
- Municipality of Jiménez (CR)
- City of Kraków (PL)
- Municipalities Igolomia & Wawrzencyce (PL)
- Municipality of Zielonki (PL)
- Municipality of Skawina (PL)

With the new members, CITIES TALK NATURE has now grown to include 30 participating cities.

Find out more:

tinyurl.com/3d95zfk2

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Urban nature stories

Six speakers showcased inspiring stories in a three-minute pep talk on how to bring back nature into cities by employing underutilised spaces:

- **Rudzki Tract in Ruda Śląska:**
Anna Kurianowicz, Silesian University of Technology, Gliwice, Poland.
- **Chemnitz is flourishing:**
Melanie Hartwig, Municipality of Chemnitz, Germany.
Presentation: tinyurl.com/596xju6t
- **Nature goes back to school:**
Esther Fanlo Grasa, from Lleida City Council, Spain.
Presentation: tinyurl.com/2j4un8mm
- **Błonia Niepołomickie:**
Adam Twardowski and Maciej Maderak, Municipality of Niepołomice, Poland.
Presentation: tinyurl.com/2s49xhuz
- **Redevelopment of the Marghera Fortress, Venice:**
Federico Camerin, Universidad of Valladolid, Spain.
Presentation: tinyurl.com/448jy4m9
- **Felines spark cooperation in 5 municipalities:**
Agustin Gutierrez, Municipality of Envigado, Colombia.

After the presentations, the audience was asked for their vote. The municipality of Niepołomice came in third place. Second place went to the city of Envigado and the winner came from the city of Lleida

Workshops

Workshop A: Ecosystem service assessment

The workshop addressed a method for assessing nature based solutions using the INTERLACE Nature-based Solutions Assessment Framework. During the workshop, the participants developed a deliberative exercise for evaluation criteria weighting. Real examples from three INTERLACE cities, which are implementing different modules of the Assessment Framework, were used: Spatial Prioritization (Metropolia Krakowska), Monitoring (Envigado), and Design Solutions (Granollers). Each group performed the criteria weighting exercise and discussed the results and method, with emphasis on the participatory approach.

Main findings:

- It is important to speak to different stakeholders to make better choices.
- Ideally, the criteria weighting method is applied when scientific knowledge is already available.
- One strength of the method is that it requires interactions with other stakeholders and individuals in order to get one's point across.



Key Message:

Participation matters.
Multiple perspectives matter.
Knowledge matters.



Key Message:

Be persistent, act before the flood comes, expand public transport, include people in the process.

Workshop B: Turning parking spaces into parks

Roads and car parks occupy large amounts of urban space. Yet, in the context of the climate crisis, it will be increasingly necessary to reduce motorised private transport. In this workshop, representatives from the city of Chemnitz and the city of Granollers presented how they convert(ed) a parking space into a park. Afterwards, participants deepened the discussions in small groups

Main findings:

- A car takes up as much space as a children's room or an office. In Germany, the car fleet needs at least to be halved by 2035, in order for Germany to have a chance to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.
- In the case of Granollers, the renaturation of the inner-city river will lead to the removal of 900 parking spaces. This is generally very positively assessed by the citizens, maybe also because there is only little resident parking involved. Experience shows that closing down roads has not been detrimental to shops etc. A participatory approach is very important.
- In the case of Chemnitz, the city council decided in 2004 to uncover an overbuilt part of the Chemnitz River in order to establish a park on the shore of the river and thus increasing natural flood protection. About 200 parking spaces had to be removed, yet these were no residents' parking spaces and therefore there was no real conflict. Many different city departments needed to be involved, a lot of patience and many years were needed to prepare implementation. A flood event "helped" to push the project forward, since the cover of the river was "loose" afterwards and had to be removed due to safety reasons.

Workshop C: Silo busting with nature-based solutions

Sustainable and climate adaptive urban planning is a matter of teamwork of different departments within a municipality, the local politicians as well as external professionals. The workshop used the method of a business simulation game combined with the lego serious play method. The workshop participants were asked to act within their given roles in order to redesign a given city scenario built with lego bricks. Before the redesign, the group had to find a consensus about what and how the scenario should be rebuilt with the overall task in mind that the redesign should contribute to a climate-adapted urban development.

Main findings:

- The method of the business simulation game was helpful to outline the different tasks and obstacles that the representatives of the different departments of a municipality have to fulfil and overcome. The game makes clear how versatile urban planning is and how many perspectives have to be considered.
- The discussion within the groups to find a consensus took most of the time. All groups did reach a consensus on what to build and how to develop, taking into account the different interests and regulatory frameworks.



Key Message:

Communication amongst departments is a must. Have a broader vision beyond single projects.



Workshop D: What does nature mean to us?

Participants in the workshop experienced The Sarajevo Pathway – an arts-based co-creation process that draws on the methods of memory work, body-mapping, embodied reflection, and immersion with nature, as a means to connect to and reflect on our relationship to nature and the natural world.

Main findings:

- Participants reflected on the effectiveness of the workshop to ‘slow them down’ to reflect in a meaningful manner about their lived experiences related to nature. Many were surprised, in a positive way, about how quickly they were able to move into a space where they shared deeply important and meaningful experiences from their lives with others.
- Participants appreciated the combination of methods used to draw out lived experiences; being able to express both text-based and visual aspects of the lived experience provided a natural way to see the shift from the individual to the collective experience(s) of nature.



- Language is a powerful tool for expressing ourselves in the world; how this played out in the workshop: while the workshop was conducted in English, participants were invited to write their texts in their mother-tongues (if that felt more natural to them). In relaying their texts back to the group, it was clear that the mother-tongue of many of the participants held and conveys much more emotion than when they expressed themselves in English. It was really beautiful to witness.
- To foster more meaningful engagement and commitment towards the long-term engagement of communities in nature-based solutions, there is a need to understand and recognize the value of emotional language, and to consider it as an equal alongside the more technical language that is used when discussing nature-based solutions.

The mapping of the collective themes against the IPBES values typology was an interesting exercise; this was the first time it was conducted as part of the workshop; it is an area for future work – both practical application and research-based.



Key Message:

The emotional aspects of nature-based solutions are as important as the technical aspects.

Trust, connection, vulnerability, intimacy are drivers for sustainable change!

“Sometimes you have to be in the room.”



Key Message:

Coherence of policy applications.
Good ideas for cooperation at
regional and local level between
different departments
Interdisciplinary aspects.

Workshop E: Policy instruments to successfully implement nature-based solutions

During this workshop the participants familiarized themselves with a diverse range of policy instruments that support urban nature-based solutions and ecosystem restoration that are part of the INTERLACE Urban Governance Atlas. Additionally, YES Innovation gave an input on the Ecuadorian experiences on policy coherence that served as inspiration for the group discussions. Building on the good practices examples, inspiration and an interactive and inspiring discussion was held using the 25/5 crowdsourcing method. The discussion and prioritization of ideas revolved around the following question: What could be done to increase coherence between policy instruments?

Main findings:

Each group shared ideas on policy instrument coherence and what would be good strategies to achieve this goal. Some of the aspects mentioned include:

- Foster collaboration between different city units
- More communication and transparency in policy making processes
- Promote interdisciplinary teams within the municipalities and across governance scales
- Promote policy monitoring processes as a strategy to check whether they are in line with the city visions and strategies and to understand and overcome implementations challenges.

Field Trips

The second day was all about practical experiences: During a six hour tour, conference participants visited different green transformation initiatives under development by the city of Chemnitz, and joined in a pilot INTERLACE educational scavenger hunt addressing the challenges of climate-adapted urban planning. These on-site visits produced a lot of exchange and rounded off a stimulating conference.

Stations

- Participatory urban nature project (Saatgutgarten)
- Renatured old train station (Pleißenbach Grünzug)
- Green roof (Wirkbau)
- The challenges of climate-adapted urban planning (pilot scavenger hunt)



Learning Tour

- App based scavenger hunt through the City of Chemnitz
- 7 stations about current urban challenges (e.g. Heat island effect)
- Created for students from 7th to 12th grade
- Developed in course of the Interlace engagement program
- Possibility to integrate the tour in the school day

Pleißenbach Grünzug

- Revitalization of an old railroad wasteland
- Development of a publicly usable park
- Creation of a biodiverse natural area
- Restoration of a canalized brook course
- Construction: 2022-2027
- Total costs approx. € 20 million

Gründach Wirkbau

- Since 2022 the green lung of the Wirkbau area
- Located on an originally metal processing hall from 1922
- 1,500 m² of intensive roof greening
- Open to the public
- Planned by landscape architect Urs Gehrhardt in cooperation with Architect's office MEYER-GROHBRIDGE
- Financed through the state funding program „Nachhaltig aus dem

Saatgutgarten

- Established in 2010 on an old wasteland
- Currently 70 beds on 700 m² of cultivated land
- To protect and strengthen the local biodiversity through indigenous plants
- Two main projects: "Environmental Education" and "Neighbourhood"
- Funded by EFRE

Thanks a lot for participating in the Cities Talk Nature Event!

This is a little treat for you, to pass the time on your way back home.

Safe travels!



interlace-project.eu
interlace-hub.com



Alcaldía de Enaviego



Ajuntament Granollers



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