

Press Release

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World Forum on Urban Forests, Mantua 2018

The first World Forum on Urban Forests from 28th November to 1st December 2018

From 28th November to 1st December 2018 the city of Mantua will host the **1st World Forum on Urban Forests**, promoted by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), organized by the City of Mantua, Politecnico di Milano and SISEF (Italian Society of Forestry and Ecology), curated by an international scientific committee of experts headed by the architect and urban planner Stefano Boeri and Cecil Konijnendijk, professor at the University of British Columbia.

Cities occupy only 3% of the planet's surface, but they consume 75% of natural resources. If pollution, climate change and the use of renewable energy are now central themes on the agenda of governments and in the public debate, it is vital to draw attention to another crucial issue for the future of the planet, that of **urban forestation**. It is therefore urgent to reflect on how to make our cities greener and therefore also more inclusive, safer and richer.

The Forum will bring together over **400 experts** from **more than 50 countries around the world** to discuss - for the first time all together - the importance of integrating green infrastructure into the grey infrastructure of cities. The benefits that urban forests can provide to the population in terms of sustainable economic growth, conservation of the environment, social cohesion and public involvement will be illustrated with positive examples of urban green planning, design and management that several cities around the world have already put into practice.

The Forum aims to trigger a fruitful dialogue and confrontation between representatives of national and local governments, research institutes and academics, non-governmental organisations and international and national development cooperation organisations, town planners, foresters, urban foresters, tree growers, landscape architects, designers and professionals from other sectors. Each of them being asked to recount how they have faced or are facing the problem in their countries and which strategies to implement for the protection of the planet and sustainable urbanization.

Mantua, for the second consecutive year indicated as **the greenest city in Italy** in the Urban Ecosystem 2018 ranking drawn up by Legambiente and Ambiente Italia, is the ideal place to host this first world event on urban forests. The city of the Gonzagas, a UNESCO City together with Sabbioneta and in 2016 Italian Capital of Culture is not only known for its artistic and architectural wonders, but also for the natural splendour of its surrounding area. The city - built on water, surrounded by a real green oasis - over the years has taken on challenges of cultural, urban and economic regeneration that have made it a true front runner. In welcoming the Forum, Mantua continues to put its focus on the future, becoming an international meeting place, a laboratory for experimenting with new environmental paradigms.

More and more people are living in cities and this trend is all set to continue as also indicated by the forecasts according to which, by 2050, 6 billion people (or at least 70% of the global population) will be living in metropolitan areas of the world. It is therefore necessary to focus efforts on a resilient, sustainable and equitable development of cities, capable of tackling pollution, poverty, food insecurity and degradation of natural resources, caused by the increase in the density of the city population, through sustainable models of urban growth.

Green urbanization is a concrete response to these problems: forests and trees in urban and peri-urban environments can bring important benefits to cities, making them greener and healthier, fairer and happier.

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Removal of harmful pollutants from the air, reduction of noise pollution, improvement of local temperatures, mitigation of climate change impacts, supply of products and renewable energy, protection of river basins and flood prevention, preservation of biodiversity, are just some of the benefits of forestation in cities.

Green areas also have positive effects on the well-being of individuals and communities: they provide space for recreational activities and socialization, promote active and healthy lifestyles, increase social cohesion and a sense of belonging to a place.

The effective designing of green and tree-lined surfaces must not be limited to the creation of new forests, but must also regenerate existing green spaces, create urban vegetable gardens, parks and gardens, transform roofs into lawns, boundary walls into plant facades and empty spaces into green oases. All this is essential for our lives and those of future generations, who are already burdened with a heavy environmental debt.

The ways in which cities can become green lungs will be explored at the Forum, where delegates from the 5 continents will be present, demonstrating the collective desire to undertake green urbanization as a method of reversing ongoing environmental destruction. The aim is also to support the process of implementing the *New Urban Agenda*, launched in 2016 at Habitat III, by optimising actions related to the maintenance and strengthening of urban ecosystems and green spaces in cities, and to launch the **Mantua Challenge**. The World Forum on Urban Forests in Mantua will be the starting point for long-term partnerships on urban forest planning strategies and the future of our cities.

PROGRAMME

With the Forum, Mantua becomes greener with free events throughout the city and **a day dedicated to young people** and their ideas for changing the world. On **Tuesday, 27th November**, Lida Aljabar, Alessandro Leonardi and Abdallah Tawfic, will illustrate their urban reforestation projects to young entrepreneurs in the morning and in the afternoon there will be a real competition which - following the format of *Dragon's Den*, the television show broadcast almost all over the world - will reward the best projects presented by the participants.

THE FORUM

The World Forum on Urban Forests will be divided into sessions of conferences, debates, meetings, thematic discussions in three macro areas: past, present and future.

Wednesday, 28th November: PAST

The Forum will open with the institutional greetings of FAO, the Municipality of Mantua, the Politecnico di Milano, SISEF, the co-chairs of the Scientific Committee Stefano Boeri and Cecil Konijnendijk and the Lombardy Region Governor. The first day will explore the role of urban forestation in the past and the way in which the presence of green in cities has changed over time, with two conferences.

Fabio Salbitano of SISEF and **C. Y. Jim** of the University of Hong Kong will discuss the relationship between history, trees and cities (*Talking of history, trees and cities*), followed by **Joe McBride** of the University of California Berkeley who will retrace the evolution of *the role of trees and forests in the history of landscape architecture*.

The event will continue with conferences on how the relationship between green and urban areas has changed over time, also shedding light on the economic, environmental and social benefits that urban forests and green infrastructure have provided to the population and the environment over the years. To name but a few: **Clive Davis** of Newcastle University will explore the role of urban forests

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in national urban parks; **Roberto Diolaiti**, director of the Environment and Energy Department of the Municipality of Bologna, will talk about the importance of far-sighted management and design of urban forests to create better cities; **David Nowak** of the U.S. Forestry Service, will investigate the benefits of the presence of trees in cities and how their distribution has changed over time and **Samaneh Nyckayin** will explain the role that urban forests have had and still have in the age of urbanization. But discussions will also centre on gender gaps in urban arboriculture and forestry with **Adrina Bardekjian** of the University of British Columbia and the importance of communication and in particular storytelling techniques to promote social change with director **Sarah Marder**.

The impact which urban forests have had in different territories, from the United States to Pakistan, Peru, Japan, Uganda and Italy, will also be compared. The debate will focus on the stress and security perceived in relation to the presence of green areas with **Thomas Campagnaro**; how green has allowed the improvement of air quality even in highly polluted areas such as India with **Mesanlibor Syem Tiewsoh**; the environmental policies of different countries in the world will be compared, analysing the different approaches and **Prapassorn Siriwichai** will illustrate the results obtained in the field of sustainable development through voluntary activities, as for example in Thailand.

The first day will end with a debate on the relationship between man, nature and the city in the past with **Richard Deverell**, director of the Royal Botanic Gardens - Kew Gardens, **Cynnamon Dobbs** of the Universidad de Chile, **Gareth Doherty** (GSD Harvard), **Richard Weller** of Penn University and **Sylvie Nail** of the University of Nantes.

Thursday, 29th November: PRESENT

The second day of the Forum is dedicated to the present. What are our cities doing today to expand urban forests and green spaces?

It begins with a reflection on the subject of urban forestry and its progress from the Sixties to the present with **Francesco Ferrini** of the University of Florence and **Giovanni Senesi** of the University of Bari (*The present status of urban forestry in the world*). Then we continue with **David Miller**, director for North America of the *C40 Climate Leadership Group* and Global Ambassador of its *Inclusive Climate Action*, who will list the actions which the major cities in the world - Milan, London, New York, Paris and Toronto - have put in place to mitigate the effects of climate change (*Governance challenges for urban forests and green spaces*).

During the day, papers and contributions will be presented from the world's leading experts in the field, who work every day to build greener cities: **Sylvie Nail** of the University of Nantes will present the virtuous example of the city of Bogota where urban forests have increased well-being and social cohesion; **Theodore Endreny**, of the State University of New York, will explain how urban forests can mitigate temperatures rise in cities; **Carlo Calfapietra**, of the CNR and of the University of Tuscia, will lead a panel on a number of particular case studies: from the city of Mantua to Buenos Aires, the Mediterranean regions and Indian cities.

The use of big data in the evaluation of urban forests will be the topic of **Nadine Galle's** speech; green corridors and their contribution to the quality of life of people with **Qunyue Liu**; how the roofs of Cairo can become areas of greenery and cultivation with **Abdallah Tawfic**; the importance of public participation in city innovation projects with **Anna Steidle**.

The day will end with a multi-voiced conversation - moderated by neuroscientist **Enrico Alleva**, of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità - on the relationship between urban forests, human health and well-being (*UPF for human health and well-being*) with: **Terry Hartig** of the University of Uppsala; **Matthias Braubach**, Europe Technical Officer Urban Health and Equity of the World Health Organization; **Dave Nowak** of the US Forest Service; **Wilma Zijlema** of the programme on Air Pollution and Urban Environment of the Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal) of Barcelona and **Lida Aljabar** of the US organisation Trust for Public Land.

Friday, 30th November: FUTURE

On 30th November, we will look to the future with innovative ideas for a healthier, more liveable and more beautiful tomorrow.

Marc Palahi of the European Forest Institute will present the future prospects for the creation of greener cities (*Perspectives for greener cities*), followed by landscape architect **Bas Smets** who will talk about *Designing the green infrastructure and urban forest of the future*.

Paloma Cariñanos of the University of Granada will focus on how the presence of parks and green spaces in the city benefits the human respiratory system and on the possibility of designing allergy-friendly urban forests.

Noor Azlin Yahya will talk about ecotourism and environmental education, exploring in particular the Malaysian situation, while **Charl Justine Darapisa** will present a method to assess the healthiness of a city also from the point of view of the sound landscape, analysing the benefits that urban forests have in reducing noise pollution. **Patricia Sanches** will talk about how to reconcile the density of population and green spaces within cities.

The day will end with *A green vision for the future*, a choral reflection to outline the trajectories to be followed so that a perfect integration between green and grey infrastructures can be achieved. Some of the leading experts on the subject, **Cecil Konijnendijk**, **Stefano Boeri**, **Laura Petrella** (UN-Habitat), **Abdelkader Bensada** (UNEP), **Adam Freed** (Bloomberg Associates) and **Lina Liakou** (100 Resilient Cities) will take part in the debate.

Saturday, 1st December: CITIES FORUM

The final day will open with a dialogue between the two co-chairs of the Scientific Committee of the Forum **Stefano Boeri** and **Cecil Konijnendijk** who, on the basis of the ideas put forward by the many speakers during the three-day event, will take stock of the future of our cities and urban forests (*The Role of Cities and urban forestry strategies*).

The protagonists will then be mayors, heads of departments and chief resilience officers - figures introduced as part of the international project 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) to deal with urban strategies based on resilience. Representatives of cities such as Paris, New York, Athens, Lisbon, Melbourne, Bogota, Milan, Tirana, will discuss in three round tables the importance of trees to improve the quality of life in the city and a forward-looking urban design to make cities more resilient. To encourage cities to take measures to become greener, healthier and happier places, the Forum will launch the **Mantua Challenge**, an international recognition programme celebrating cities that are committed to creating an environment conducive to urban forest management to promote a better quality of urban life in the world.

THE FORUM FOR THE CITY

Mantua will be organising a series of initiatives open to everyone to involve members of the public in a reflection on the importance of urban forests: conferences and dialogues but also concerts, exhibitions and installations, film screenings, excursions, initiatives for children and schools.

Thanks to the synergy with **Festivaletteratura**, one of the most important events of the city of Mantua, four meetings and one show will explore the themes of the Forum from an alternative perspective: **Giorgio Vacchiano** of the University of Milan with the geographer and journalist **Emanuele Bompan** in *Climate change and forests. Benefits for society, consequences for ecosystems, proposals for actions* (Wednesday, 28th November); **Stefano Boeri** with **Rola Khoury**, founder of the Cloudburst Foundation in *Common earth: Regenerating dewealth of earth's commons* (Thursday, 29th November); *Design ricostituente e piante: risposte complementari alle sfide del nostro tempo* with the architect and designer **Paola Antonelli** and the neurobiologist and writer

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Stefano Mancuso (Friday, 30th November); the writer and poet **Tiziano Fratus** with *Fratello albero, sorella foresta – Quanto gli alberi riducono il Magistero del Disordine e possono salvare la vita* (Saturday, 1st December); the show *94 passi in giardino* with **Lorenza Zambon**, "actress gardener" and co-founder of the centre of artistic production *casa degli alfiери* (Saturday, 1st December).

Verde è Salute is the cycle of events that will investigate the benefits that urban forests have on the physical and mental health of people: *EcologicaMente: le foreste urbane per promuovere la salute mentale e ridurre lo stress* with the neuroscientist **Francesca Cirulli** (Wednesday, 28th November); *Verde ed esercizio fisico: come combattere l'obesità e le malattie metaboliche in modo naturale* with the endocrinologist **Enzo Bonora** (Friday, 30th November); *"Cambiamo aria" con le piante: verde e inquinamento atmosferico* with **Pier Mannuccio Mannucci**, scientific director of the Foundation Ca' Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico of Milan (Saturday, 1st December).

Film lovers will appreciate two special initiatives:

the 1st **International Film Festival on Forests**, organized by the Associazione Montagna Italia and ERSAF (Ente Regionale per i Servizi all'Agricoltura e alle Foreste) from 26th to 30th November, to talk about forests through visual language, will enable the public to discover these realities through the eyes of film directors from around the world.

The screening of **Planet Earth CITIES**, the episode of the BBC documentary series dedicated to cities, starring Stefano Boeri's Bosco Verticale (Thursday, 29th November).

The scientific themes of the Forum will be reinterpreted in the audio-visual installation **Le foreste di Mantova** - directed and created by the visual design studio *Propp* - a sequence of animated paintings, lights and sounds with soundtrack by Painé Cuadrelli. The Rotonda di San Lorenzo will be transformed into a mobile observatory in continuous movement on the Planet Forest, a planet made up of virtual landscapes, imaginary forests and dystopic/utopic scenarios, where visitors will find themselves immersed in an infinite forest in constant evolution.

In the heart of the city, in Piazza Mantegna and Piazza Erbe, *Openfabric* presents **Into the forest**, two installations that recreate different types of forests: in the first the holm oaks are flanked by strawberry trees and laurels, in the second a fragment of flat forest is reproduced - the forest that covered the Po Valley before agriculture and urbanization. The project offers in a suggestive way different or even opposing ecosystems, sending the message that forests in their plurality can become an integral part of the contemporary urban landscapes in which they are still considered alien fragments.

The photographic exhibition **Cambiare la natura della città, Storie, cifre, notizie e nomi delle foreste urbane e periurbane in Lombardia**, created by ERSAF in collaboration with the Compagnia delle Foreste for the Forum, is dedicated to the lowland forests of Lombardy, to the stories that see them as protagonists, to the people who have helped to create and protect them (from Monday 26th November to Sunday 2nd December, at the Mantua Centre of Politecnico di Milano).

Many fun initiatives have been created **for children**. To prepare them to face the ecological challenges of our time and teach them empathy towards all living systems, Eureco and Mango Tree Montessori Lab have set up workshops in two Mantua schools dedicated to Ecoliteracy, ecological literacy: the results will be presented during the Forum.

As part of FAO's educational activities, the Mantua social cooperative Alkemica and the Per il Parco association are organizing projects for schools dedicated to various themes related to the forest, the world of plants and urban reforestation projects, which will allow children to venture on guided nature tours in "urban forests" installed in Mantua.

#FUTURAMANTOVA, among the initiatives of the National Plan of the Digital School of MIUR, (Ministry of Education, Universities and Research) is launching two challenges to students: *FOREST HACK*, a marathon project to imagine greener and happier cities and a gaming session of *Build Your City Forest*, virtual educational scenario developed by FAO in collaboration with Build a World EDU.

SIA JUNIOR, the working group dedicated to children of the Società Italiana di Arboricoltura Onlus, will be presenting an educational and fun tree-climbing experience to learn how to consider trees with respect and in a safe way.

The Scout group CNGEI Draco will provide visitors with the chance to take part in an activity of planting 8 *hackberry* plants in Parcobaleno, Environmental Education Centre within the Virgilian Forest, near Mantua.

The integration of the city and vegetation also passes through the coexistence with the animals which live in their natural habitat within the green areas. Two meetings will address these issues: *Plain forests and voluntary work* to learn about the experience in the province of Mantua of the local section of the WWF; *Lupo e sciacallo dorato a Mantova? Fra possibili ritorni e novità*, a debate on the presence of wolves in built-up areas, organized by the Mantua research team on birdlife together with the educational exhibition organized with the contribution of the Rotary Club of Mantua, on the historical reports of wolves in the Mantua area.

Thanks to the collaboration of the Mincio Park Authority, **excursions and guided tours** will be organized to the places that most represent the spirit of the Forum: the 19th-century Bertone garden and the Stork Centre, which houses numerous varieties of age-old trees and the centre for the reintroduction of the white stork; the Mincio River, with two excursions centred on art and nature; the Carpaneta Forest, the result of a forestry project launched in 2003; the Bosco Fontana State Nature Reserve, what remains of the ancient forests that once covered the entire Po Valley.

The World Forum on Urban Forests is promoted by FAO, organized by the Municipality of Mantua, Politecnico di Milano, SISEF with the patronage of the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies, and the Regional Authority for Agricultural and Forestry Services.

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