



International Green Roof Congress 2013 – The Future of Urban Roofs

Over 250 participants from more than 40 countries attended the 3rd International Green Roof Congress (13th-15th May) in Hamburg, using it as a platform to gather information on future trends for roof and façade greening. One of the highlights of the event was Lord Mayor Olaf Scholz’s appearance to present the new Green Roof strategy of Germany’s second largest city Hamburg.

The International Green Roof Association (IGRA) and the German Roof Gardener Association (DDV) invited the Green Roof branch to Hamburg for the three day multidisciplinary and transnational information exchange under the patronage of the Federal Minister of Transport, Building and Urban Development, Dr. Peter Ramsauer. Given the other events which were also taking place in Hamburg, namely the International Garden Show (IGS) and the International Building Exhibition (IBA), with their spectacular landscape designs and innovative living concepts, there was no better place this year to present a status report on Green Roofs at an international level and to identify future areas of application.

The green city on the water already has a Green Roof tradition spanning several decades. This led to over 100 excursion guests making their way in two buses to various Green Roof reference projects in the Hamburg region on the first day of the congress. A 70 year old settlement with greened “Norwegian Houses” in Hamburg’s north east was visited as well as a child care centre with a drought tolerant Sedum vegetation on a sloped roof, a green inner courtyard oasis on the roof of an underground car park, the roof terrace at the HafenCity Unilever building which serves both as a meeting place for employees and an event area, and the new Gorch-Fock-School building which has a sports field running track on its roof. Camera teams from the national television channels accompanied the excursions, ensuring that the topic of Green Roofs would reach millions of television viewers.

The official greeting by the organizers and cooperation partners took place at an evening “get together” at the congress venue, the Hotel Empire Riverside. Senator Jutta Blankau from the Hamburg State Ministry for Urban Development and the Environment (BSU), August Forster President of the German Federal Landscape Gardening Association (BGL), Ilya Mochalov Secretary General of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) and the Presidents of both hosting associations Roland Appl (IGRA) and Reimer Meier (DDV)



presented the importance and meaning of Green Roofs for sustainable and future-oriented urban development in their greetings. Old friends met up, new contacts were made and discussions abounded until late in the evening.

The programme of lectures over the next two days, which was moderated by the American green roof expert Linda Velazquez, gave the more than 250 attendees from over 40 countries an overview of the many design and application areas of Green Roofs and façade greening. Keynote speeches on the first day were made by generalists working in architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning and green roofing who think outside of the box, looking for synergies with other disciplines. IGRA President Roland Appl gave the guiding principle for the congress with his speech “Green Roofs Quo Vadis?”. The subject of Green Roofs in Germany is often limited to the ecological values of the so called “extensive” Green Roofs, which hampers the creative potential of architects. The Danish architect Jakob Lange (Bjarke Ingels Group - BIG) demonstrated in his speech “Green is the New Black” that green areas on roofs also have an impact on fun, quality of life and the design of experience spaces for the residents. It’s not for nothing that the multi-award winning architecture firm feels bound to the concept of “hedonistic sustainability”. The Singaporean architect Wong Mun Summ (WOHA) also places the needs and wishes of homeowners and tenants to the fore in his greening philosophy “Breathing Architecture”. The same holds true for the urban waterscapes of the urban planner and landscape architect Prof. Herbert Dreiseitl, who brings rain water as lifeblood and a natural climate buffer back into public spaces and makes it a tangible experience. His approach for integrated urban water management sees the rain water retention aspects of Green Roofs as an important factor. The inspiring morning round ended with Prof. Manfred Köhler’s presentation on traditional and forward-looking techniques for façade greening systems, their possibilities and their limits.

The congress participants divided into two parallel workshops, according to their main areas of interest, in the afternoon. These were, as with all the speeches, simultaneously interpreted in German and in English to ensure an intensive exchange of experience. Workshop 1 “Green Roofs - Practical Experience” gave an insight into the planning, construction and care of Green Roofs. New research results and technical innovations were also presented. That Green Roof research is long from finished was demonstrated by current research results from the Netherlands (Prof. Christoph Maria Ravesloot, University of Rotterdam) and a four year cooperation between the University of Sheffield and the German Green Roof manufacturer ZinCo GmbH (EU Research Project “Green Roof Systems”, Ralf Walker ZinCo



GmbH). Special interest was aroused by the new green roof system “Naturline” which is made from renewable resources and was presented by ZinCo’s managing director Dieter Schenk.

The second workshop “Green Roof Policies – Urban Planning and Stormwater Management” (in cooperation with the Hamburg State Ministry for Urban Development and the Environment - BSU and the HafenCity University of Hamburg - HCU) was moderated by Prof. Wolfgang Dickhaut and dealt with the question of how cities in the 21st century can be sustainably redeveloped. This subject is of special importance to Hamburg as a growing metropolis with an annual construction volume of 6000 housing units and the extensive urban development projects of HafenCity and Wilhelmsburg. Green Roofs seem to be a perfect solution for the conflict between redensification and the keeping, or bettering, of the urban environmental quality. In order to best benefit from the experience of other municipalities, experts from Portland (Amy Chomowicz), Chicago (Michael Berkshire), Copenhagen (Dorthe Romo London (Dusty Gedge) and Linz (Edmund Maurer) were invited. A second important theme of the workshop was taking Green Roofs into account when planning urban drainage system measures.

The IGRA Green Roof Leadership Award ceremony – prizes for especially exemplary Green Roof projects and initiatives – rounded off the first day of the congress. Peter Busby from the architecture firm Perkins+Will and the landscape architect Cornelia Hahn Oberlander were awarded a prize for the new visitor centre at the VanDusen Botanical Garden in Vancouver. The spectacular building, whose roof area represent the petals of an orchid, is a lighthouse project in the area of sustainability and landscape integration. A further prize was given to the city of Portland/Oregon in the person of Amy Chomowicz, who, as Ecoroof manager and together with her team, initiated outstanding programmes and initiatives to promote green roofing. The final prize went to the Turkish company Onduline Avrasya (Burhan Karahan) for the Zorlu-Center project in Istanbul. The company works together with construction companies, architects and landscape architects to ensure that new shopping centres in Istanbul do not simply use up ground space, but also create natural landscapes on the roofs of the building to bring experienceable “green” back to the city centre.

The second day of the congress also delivered a varied potpourri of presentations on the subject of Green Roofs. Martin Haas from the architecture firm haascookzemmerich/Studio 2050 kicked the proceedings off by presenting his ideas and concepts for sustainable



architecture which are not simply defined by energetic parameters. The American Green Building Pioneer Peter Busby, who was awarded for the VanDusen project the day before, explained the combination of nature and architecture which flow in the philosophy of regenerative designs to the participants. Both presentations delivered many starting points for the following panel discussion “Building with Nature”, which the managing director of the International Garden Show Hamburg Heiner Baumgarten joined alongside Martin Haas, Peter Busby, Roland Appl, Prof. Manfred Köhler and Wong Mun Summ. The first class discussions focused on current questions concerning considerations for roof and façade greening in Green Building certificates, the realisation of greening measures on existing buildings and the evaluation of green spaces in municipalities. In particular the fact that the term “Green Building” is not an automatism for including roof and façade greening and the fact that the advantages of greening buildings in the usual green building evaluation systems LEED, BREEAM and DGNB are not taken into account provided much fodder for discussion. The panel discussion participants quickly agreed that there are enough scientifically proven positive effects of roof and façade greening on buildings, people and the environment and that it is the implementation of these facts in the evaluation systems which is currently still missing. This will require committed lobbying by the Green Roof branch to the various certification authorities.

The momentum which the subject Green Roofs can take when political deciders set the agenda was made clear by the Lord Mayor of Hamburg Olaf Scholz in his greeting to the congress participants. With his vision of a living roof landscape with green and recreational qualities, he has commissioned the development of a comprehensive municipal Green Roof strategy. Roof areas are to be activated as leisure areas, rest areas, social meeting points, rainwater tanks or climate change adaption measures, depending on suitability and requirements. Hamburg will become a federal role model for integrating greened roofs in the maintenance and expansion of green infrastructure.

The programme for the second day of the congress was complemented by project presentations from the Netherlands, Russia, Poland, Germany, Singapore and Turkey. It came full circle with the announcement of the 4th International Green Roof Congress to be held in Istanbul in 2015. Urban development is facing enormous challenges in the explosively growing 14 million metropolis on the Bosphorus. It will be exciting to see which role roof and façade greening will play in the development of sustainable and future-oriented urban development at the point where Europe and Asia meet.



Further information about the 3rd International Green Roof Congress can be found at <http://www.greenroofworld.com>. The congress volume with summaries of the speeches and contact details for the speakers can be downloaded as a PDF.

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Pictures International Green Roof Congress 2013

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Picture: Auditorium.JPG

Caption: The congress venue, Hotel Empire Riverside in Hamburg, was filled to capacity.

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Picture: WOHA-Singapur.jpg

Caption: The buildings of the Singaporean architect Wong Mun Summ seem to “breathe”.

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Caption: Participants visited various Green Roof projects in Hamburg with camera teams from the national television channels on the first day of the congress.

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Picture: Panel-Discussion.JPG

Caption: The panel discussion with Peter Busby, Martin Haas, Heiner Baumgarten, Wong Mun Summ, Prof. Manfred Köhler and Roland Appl (from left to right) was first class and multidisciplinary.

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Picture: IGRA-Award.jpg

Caption: Exemplary Green Roof projects and initiatives in Canada, the USA and Turkey were presented with the IGRA Award 2013. From left to right: Wolfgang Ansel (Director IGRA), Peter Busby (Perkins+Will), Amy Chomowicz (City of Portland), Burhan Karahan (Onduline Avrasya A.S) and Roland Appl (President IGRA).

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Picture: Scholz-Hamburg.jpg

Caption: Hamburg's Lord Mayor Olaf Scholz gave an exclusive overview of the city's Green Roof strategy. From left to right: Reimer Meier (President DDV), Roland Appl (President IGRA), Olaf Scholz (Lord Mayor Hamburg)

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