

International update – common challenges, common barriers  
Held on 15th February 2024. Questions, comments and references  
Partners: ICF, UDG



## International update – common challenges, common barriers (held online)

Agenda

**Chair: Tony Kirkham** MBE, former Head of Arboretum, Gardens & Horticulture Services, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Vice-President of the Arboricultural Association and TDAG Patron

### Introducing 'renature.brussels'

**Julien Ruelle**, Head of the Department for Nature Development, Bruxelles Environnement, TDAG's European partner

### Landscape at the edge

**Dorella Pinter Burus**, Consultant, BPLA, Riyadh

### Protecting trees in places of conflict

**John Parker**, Chief Executive, Arboricultural Association

**Yana Bobrova**, Executive Director and Co-founder Peli can live, Rotarian

**Partners: Institute of Chartered Foresters, Urban Design Group**

## QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND REFERENCES BY TOPIC (AS FAR AS POSSIBLE!)

NB. Questions and comments are anonymised unless answered in the chat by one of the speakers.

### Introducing 'renature.brussels'

Julien outlined the project and explained some of the barriers, no doubt familiar to most of us, of disjointed decision making and too many organisations with some degrees of involvement.

Comments and questions for Julien included:

How and what sort of green spaces can you create in densely urbanised areas?

Is SUDs commonplace in Brussels? Do you have legislation to encourage SUDs?

Did you find that the focus on "nature for people" actually help to get financial and political support for "biodiversity for nature#?"

Do you think we are being narrow in our scope for future management of trees & green infrastructure?

For example, the last large reservoir was built in the UK in 1991 (for a 1991 population). We anticipate the climate of say Manchester to be that of Cornwall in the coming decade... trees are resilient to climate adaptation but the biggest problem we are likely to face is drought. With creating infrastructure for people, that could also be utilised for trees, such as a reservoir, we could manage the tree stock that is present hopefully with the view that we won't have to replace trees on mass. Therefore, we should be working

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with engineers and other folk to determine the most efficient way to implement such infrastructure

Do you have forest schools or nature education programmes in schools

- From Julien: There are nature education programs, but there's relatively little actual nature in schools in general (and no forest schools). We're pushing for the greening of schoolyards, but it's time-consuming and costly. We're going to do 19 schools in the next 2 years, but there are several hundred in Brussels - there's clearly a scaling issue regarding the climate challenge.
- You can see the projects here (in French) :  
<https://www.bubble.brussels/operation-re-creation/>

Are there also plans to create green walls and roofs as part of greening the grey/concrete which could include tree planting on balconies to create higher canopies?

- From Julien: Green roofs and green walls are included in the proposed new urban planning legislation. We have also incorporated them into the calculation of the new "biodiversity area factor" (bird bricks also) which will be required for all projects. We have also included an option related to vertical forests, but there is much debate about the sustainability of such projects (irrigation needs, longevity of plantations, need for stronger structures...). But I believe we should provide this opportunity if we want to encourage innovation in the field.

Is there a policy/process to replace trees vulnerable to disease like replacing ash due to ash die back and if so what types of trees would be planted in their place?

- From Julien: We're working on the issue because there's very little awareness about phytosanitary aspects (or even invasive species). So, currently, the existing plantations are not always suitable, and it depends on the expertise of the project leader and the type of project on a case-by-case basis (we are usually consulted in large development projects, but not always in smaller projects)

The heritage issue is interesting as this seems universal with heritage freezing places in time which is often not appropriate for today's challenges.

Question for everyone...Julien's challenges - do they sound familiar?  
YES!

Comment from Emma Ferranti:

Really interesting presentation - we have many of the same aspirations and challenges in the UK. We have mapped climate risk and vulnerability in Birmingham -  
<http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/4259>

More about renature.brussels can be found here: <http://www.renature.brussels/>

### **Landscape at the edge**

Dorella has lived and worked as a landscape architect in Riyadh since 2008. She recognises the benefits that trees can deliver and is now undertaking the Masters course at Myerscough.

Comments and questions to Dorella included:

You must need a lot of water to establish 7 million trees. where do you get so much water in the middle of the desert?

I was wondering about this too. I wondered if you had trees that were adapted for much drier conditions and whether they needed different aftercare than those that we have in the UK

Are you harvesting rainwater in Riyadh?

- From Dorella: not yet but it has been proposed
- Brad Lancaster is a rainwater harvesting guru in Tucson AZ.  
<https://www.harvestingrainwater.com/>

I work in the Middle East with trees and was surveying in Wadi Hanifah in December. Many new developments are using outdated technologies for planting, with excessive irrigation.

- From Dorella: Yes, that's true, it is sometimes difficult to get new solutions through

And is the budget of greening in Riyadh almost unlimited?

Where does Phoenix Palm come from? Are they transplanted from date palm farms?

Are date palms also imported from overseas?

- From Dorella: No, thankfully, date palms are native and are a cultural and economic part of the country.

Any products harvested from Historic Riyadh landscaping? Or all of them, including date palms, are just ornamental?

Do you have biosecurity when importing trees / shrubs?

Good question! It is really important that each country develop its own nursery stock production.

Is there any conflict between trees and surveillance/crime prevention or telecoms in Brussels/Riyadh?

How will they manage all of this green space / urban forest going forward. Are they training arboriculturists or hoping to employ from abroad?

How do you manage the health and maintenance of all the trees and if when need replacing.

Will there need to be cultural change to encourage people to walk and cycle and have confidence to know that the microclimates make them workable?

How do you evidence the co benefits such as shade, clean air, water retention and improved habitats for increasing biodiversity?

Has this greening ambition opened up green skills job opportunities that people in Riyadh want to take up?

Looking back in recent history, has there ever been greenery like this in this area before? For context, I was thinking about how in the UK we are trying to recreate wilder less-managed landscapes that we used to have

How many native tree species do you have in the Kingdom and the city?

- From Dorella: <https://www.plantdiversityofsaudiarabia.info/Biodiversity-Saudi-Arabia/Flora/Flora.htm> This is a useful site for your question, though still not an

exhaustive list. Many are being found as they are discovering more of the biodiversity.

We naturally assume that tree planting in deserts is water and power hungry so perhaps unsustainable. If you plant sufficient numbers and densely enough, is it possible to start to change the microclimate, so reverse desertification?

Dorella provided the following references:

- Plant Manual: <https://www.riyadhenv.gov.sa/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Riyadh-Plants-Manual-English.pdf>
- Green Riyadh: <https://ce.riyadhgreen.sa/>
- King Salman Park: <https://kingsalmanpark.sa/en>
- Sports Boulevard: <https://sportsboulevard.sa/ar/>
- MISK City: <https://miskcity.sa/>
- Historic Diriyah: <https://dgda.gov.sa/home.aspx>

### **Protecting trees in places of conflict**

John Parker introduced the topic with a reflection on his 2023 visit to Ukraine. Yana Bobrova then gave a very moving account of the efforts to protect and plant trees even during the conflict where there is no certainty where the next areas of destruction will be and who, of friends and colleagues on the front line may never return.

Comments and questions for Yana included:

I am no expert but I guess Ukraine has vast areas of Forest and so the perception of the significance of trees for the Ukrainians is perhaps different to ours. Just googling a few questions, I see deforestation is a major issue, even before the impacts of the current conflict. So perhaps afforestation and reforestation are going to be big challenges.

It is interesting that we regard trees as 'renewable' but to replant and regrow what is lost will take much longer than repairing or rebuilding buildings - and worse in the case of special botanic collections.

One of the issues we all forget is that having Europe's two largest (in size) countries in conflict has a massive impact on natural capital in terms of carbon released, trees damaged and destroyed, soils disturbed. We are all the losers if the damage is not made good.

Interesting survey - tree care top of the list for arboriculturists...how do we get that as the top requirement from others in positions to influence trees?

Further translations of books would be fantastic, the AA just translated a Norwegian root identification book and its grand. So, I'd like to see more recommendations

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John's ARB Magazine article can be found here if anyone would like to find out more:  
<https://www.trees.org.uk/News-Blog/Latest-News/An-arboricultural-study-tour-to-Ukraine>

Details for Peli can live are here: <https://pelicanlive.com/>