GREEN CORRIDORS,
TO MITIGATE CLIMATE CHANGE

Written by **MARIANNA BASOULOU**, Forester-Environmentalist, at Philodassiki, one of the partners in the project. In this article, she introduces the Green Corridor of Athens. Keep on reading to find out how urban forestry can create cities that are good for nature and good for people!

The LIFE UrbanGreeningPlans project will show how urban areas can become greener, healthier and more resilient.

Increasing temperatures, rising sea levels, and more frequent extreme weather phenomena, these are some of the more apparent "symptoms" of Climate Change. For ecology and society, the related consequences are catastrophic.

Cities are not only large emitters of greenhouse gasses; they also are affected heavily by the above-mentioned effects of Climate Change. From infrastructure failure, to increasing health problems for city dwellers, the time for action is now if we want to make sure our urban areas remain liveable in the next decades. Luckily, we can find many solutions in nature.

MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION THROUGH URBAN FORESTRY

Planting street trees is an effective mitigation and adaptation strategy for cities, that helps to moderate the negative impacts of climate change. In addition to the aesthetic value of trees, these urban "forests" are a living infrastructure that offer several environmental benefits to residents. Trees, for example, regulate the temperature in cities, filter the air, benefiting our human health and provide habitats for animals.

Green Corridors in cities strengthen the measures to adapt and deal with climate change and help reverse Biodiversity Loss. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of enhancing green urban areas and connecting green areas with ecological corridors. By doing so, improves biodiversity and the distribution of animal species within the urban landscape. When properly designed, green corridors can improve urban ventilation by allowing cooler air from outside the city, to penetrate the more densely built-up areas and thus reduce the urban heat island effect. Furthermore, these green spaces have a positive effect on human health and well-being.

ATHENS' GREEN CORRIDOR: GOOD FOR NATURE

The city of Athens already feels the effects of climate Change. In the summer, temperatures can surpass 40C, whilst flash floods pose a significant risk to the city's infrastructure. To adapt to this future, the Greek capital is actively working on an integrated Climate Action Plan.

Particularly remarkable, is the green corridor of Athens, which connects the centre of Athens with the forest of Hymettus across a7 km route through parks and streets. The city benefits from the wealth of forestry knowledge, this Periurban Park brings, to help create Athens' urban green spaces.

The ecological and social functions of the green corridor are diverse. The path begins in the forest and as the green corridor descends, the natural environment merges with the city without losing its ecological function, bringing to the city;

- The increase of biodiversity by increasing green areas in the urban environment;
- The reduction of air pollution and noise pollution in the city;
- The prevention of heat islands, effectively lowering the temperature;
- Its contribution to better stormwater management.

LIFE URBAN GREENING PLANS

The LIFE UrbanGreeningPlans project has received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union.

Furthermore, the green corridor allies the promotion of non-polluting mobility, like bicycles or scooters.

ATHENS' GREEN CORRIDOR: GOOD FOR PEOPLE

However, the benefits of green corridors are much more than the ecological features. It is for many citizens essential contact with the natural environment through green paths and forest. Furthermore, it has a strong social function. Within the green corridor, there are social-cultural places like monasteries and the University Campus providing places to meet and practice outdoor sports and activities.

This underlines that green corridors, in addition to the environmental benefits already mentioned, generate social, cultural, and economic benefits. For example, they

- improve people's quality of life by promoting physical activity and mental relaxation;
- boost the cultural scene with open-air auditoriums or buildings dedicated to exhibitions;
- often are a tourist attraction that has a positive impact on the city's economy.

THE TIME FOR GREEN CITIES IS NOW!

In short, if we want to support cities in adapting to climate change and create happier, healthier citizens, urban green spaces, like green corridors connecting cities to wider natural spaces around them, have a crucial role to play:

- Air purification: trees can remove particles and harmful gases from the air. By cooling the air, urban forests also reduce air pollutant formation.
- Flooding: trees intercept rain, helping to reduce the phenomenon of flash floods, which pose a serious problem for cities.
- Shading and cooling: trees are the major component of green spaces that provide urban cooling.

The EU Nature Restoration Law underlines the importance of green urban areas. In anticipation of its finalisation, it's time to get to work! LIFE UrbanGreeningPlans will help city planners, through a collection of practical examples and innovative actions, in the specially developed Urban Greening Knowledge Hub coming soon to the EUROPARC website. Here, you can get inspired by what large cities in Europe like Athens, Brussels, Milano, Lisbon and Barcelona are already doing to connect the outside green areas to the urban spaces and create the green cities of tomorrow.

READ MORE!

Learn more about the project here.

Integration of the green corridor into the city - Mt Hymettus - Marianna Basoulou