

## *Press Report International Green Roof Congress*

### **The International Green Roof Congress 2004: A transnational exchange of “best practices” for green roofs**

Can green roofs contribute to fight the current environmental problems? What are the problems and challenges for the green roof trade in different countries? How will the international green roof market develop within the next few years?

These questions were in the focus of attention during the ”International Green Roof Congress 2004“ (14-15 September) in Stuttgart-Nuertingen. Bringing together 200 participants from 25 countries, the congress was a truly international event and a huge success for the hosts (e.g. IGRA, ELCA and other landscaping, roofing and environmental lobby groups) and the main sponsor (green roof company ZinCo GmbH).



*International Green Roof Congress at the K3N in Nuertingen (photo: IGRA)*

“Although we have a lot of outstanding green roof projects all around the world the enormous ecological and economic potential of green roofs are widely unknown. So, the international exchange of ideas and technologies within the green roof sector is not only desirable, but just a simple necessity with regard to an efficient environmental policy”. With these words Aart Veerman, chairman of the International Green Roof Association (IGRA), describes the background and the motivation of the International Green Roof Congress.



*Aart Veerman, chairman of the International Green Roof Association (photo: IGRA)*

The possibilities of green roofs are almost unlimited. Future oriented technologies like the combination of green roofs with solar energy production and thermal insulation contribute to global CO<sub>2</sub>-reduction strategies. Apart from that, green roofs are offering various additional advantages e.g. natural habitats for animal and plants, high water retention, reduced noise levels and the improvement of the urban climate. Last but not least green roofs are increasing the life expectancy of the roof in a substantial way by protecting the waterproofing from climatic extremes, UV exposure and mechanical damage.



*The combination of green roofs and photo voltaic panels offers a lot of synergetic effects (photo: ZinCo GmbH)*

More than 25 speakers from North America, Europe, and Asia shared their green roof knowledge with the audience. In order to provide a solid platform for the international information exchange all presentations were translated simultaneously into English/German. As a result, the congress provided for the first time the opportunity to analyse the technological, political, ecological and economical green roof situation in a comprehensive international context.

“Why Green Roofs?” was the guiding theme of the first session. Municipal delegates, engineers, landscape architects and energy experts presented convincing examples regarding the integration of green roofs in international concepts of sustainable energy policy and urban development. A special highlight was the presentation of Dr. Bettina Menne about the international WHO study on health impacts of heat waves for the urban population. Higher maximum temperatures and more hot days over nearly all land areas are very likely for the next years. This applies in particular for urban agglomerations. So, the reduction of outdoor and indoor thermal stress by urban planning and the creation of new green spaces within the cities is a major challenge for the future.

Within the second session (“From Science and Research”) acknowledged scientists from Germany, the UK and the USA presented the current results of studies on substrates, plant selection criteria, water retention and the microclimate on green roofs. Many of these studies found their way to the green roof guidelines of the FLL (Landscaping and Landscape Development Research Society). Although originally designed as a standard for the German green roof market the comprehensive and detailed FLL guidelines are creating great interest in many other countries. The key criteria of the green roof standards were presented by Prof. Gilbert Lösken (head of the FLL task force “green roofs”).

Many of the participants were also very curious about the third session: “Green Roof Technique”. It is commonplace, that there is no better advertising for the green roof trade than a durable, well-functioning and attractive green roof. Qualified installations and high grade materials are the basic requisites for the lasting success of the ecological green roof idea. In

this context, potential sources of error and practical tips to avoid them were presented by landscape architect and green roof surveyor Bernd W. Krupka. Kurt Michels (Roofing expert) and Roland Appl (Technical Director, ZinCo GmbH) took a stand on two other basic construction modules: root-resistant waterproofings and reliable green roof build-ups.

Within the last session outstanding examples of “Global Green Roof Architecture” were presented by experts from the Netherlands, UK, Spain, USA, Germany, Denmark, Singapore and Japan. Urbanisation is a global problem and green roofs are a multifunctional instrument to overcome the negative side effects of sealed surfaces. Depending on the local conditions and the demands of the builder-owner, different ecological and economical functions of green roofs were in focus of the presented architectural concepts:

- The largest green roof worldwide is the financial district “Banco de Santander” in Madrid, Spain. Extensive green roof areas and intensive green roof gardens for recreational assets will be installed on more than 1 000 000 sq ft<sup>2</sup>. Apart from the vast size of the green roof the planning and design of the landscaped areas impressed the audience very much.



*Financial district Banco de Santander, Madrid (photo: Barrio)*

- The Church of Latter-Day Saints Conference Centre in Salt Lake City is a very sophisticated green roof project. The religious building received various prizes (e.g. American Society of Landscape Architects Merit Award and Sustainable Communities Green Roof Award) and attracts through its architecture and its multi-leveled green roof. The design incorporates elements of water, stone, trees and a roof garden of firs, pines and meadowland. The planting involved over a thousand volunteers that carried the native plants to the roof of the building.



*The green roof of the Church of Latter-Day Saints conference center in Salt-Lake City is harmoniously integrated within the natural landscape (photo: Weiler)*

Although the congress programme was quite comprehensive, the meetings and lively discussions about green roofs were also continued at the evening get-togethers. In addition, the subsequent social programme which included a bus tour to green roof projects in the region of Stuttgart and a visit to the world`s greatest comprehensive trade show for urban green and open spaces in Nuremberg found favour with the congress participants.

The success of the Green Roof Congress in Stuttgart-Nuertingen proved in an impressive way that transnational green roof promoters like the International Green Roof Association (IGRA) are on the right track. The next green roof event is already in the pipeline: The International Green Roof Congress in Basel (Switzerland) in autumn 2005.

For more information about the congress, the speakers and the congress proceedings please contact the congress office (Tel.: ++49 7022 /6003-590, e-mail: [info@greenroofworld.com](mailto:info@greenroofworld.com)).

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