

7th International Permaculture Conference/Convergence

C/o PERMACULTURE INSTITUTE of EUROPE

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FINAL REPORT

The whole 7th International Permaculture Convergence/Conference was planned as it has been from the beginning of these gatherings in Australia in 84, in USA in -86, in New Zealand in -89, in Nepal in -91, in Scandinavia in -93, in Australia in -96 and now in Balkan

The program consist of a preconvergence 72-hour course, a trip around to some of the spectacular plots in the region, a convergence for certificate holders and an open Conference for the public.

The 72-hour Course was held in Podgrad, an old manor close to Vransko village in the eastern parts of Slovenia. The teachers was David Holmgren from Australia, George Sobol from England and Tony Andersen from Denmark. There were 27 participants from 11 countries, mostly Europeans.

The course was fulfilled according to the 72-hour standard course program and with designs for the whole estate. That includes the manor house, the old stables and barn, the surrounding fields and forests plus a proposal for a small ecovillage.

The Tour started from Ljubljana at the Celica Hotel where the foreign participants met up. There tour was run in a Slovenian bus. The first stop was Podgrad to pick up those of the participants who had participated in the Course.

The first visit of the Tour June the 1st was Slovenian eco-society Planinca, and after that primeval forest Pecke (host: Jaka Subic). After that, driving for supper and sleep at village Vinica, close to the Croatian border.

June the 2nd, started with Anka & daughter presenting their garden in Vinica permakulturna eko-kmetija (host: Anka Cernec). Next stop the first organic farm in Croatia (host: Ivka Sever, www.eko-sever.hr). After that visit to Ivan Ladislav Galeta – PC pioneer, garden artist and professor at Zagreb University – at his place EndArt, Kraj Gornij. Supper and stay in Zagreb (hostel).

June the 3rd, visit to organic orchard at Slavonski Kobas (host: Basic, Marija Heffer-Lauc), and after that traditional Croatian village further east. Then a long bus drive to Hungary, with late arrival at BIOFALU, Mariahalom (host: Geza Lakatos).

June the 4th: The whole day spent at BioFalu, with presentation of the ecovillage, plenary sessions, music and dance in the evening. Bela Baji came visiting to present his project elsewhere in Hungary, by slides, and showing his plantation designs at BIOFALU.

June the 5th, short meeting on the road with local farmer breeding endemic Hungarian cattle and explaining about landscape deterioration and serious droughts developing in the area. And then another long bus drive to Tamsweg in Austria, staying overnight at Hotel-Pension Kandolf.

June the 6th, the whole day spent visiting Sepp Holzer's project Krameterhof. Leaving around 8 PM for the last long leg of the Tour, arriving at Motovun well after midnight.

Notes and comments:

Originally, Krameterhof should have been the first stop of the Tour. Due to Sepp Holzer's only having time for visit Monday 6/6, the whole Tour had to be rearranged in the opposite order. That's also why, an extra day had to be added to the Tour.

The programme was well packed with interesting places to visit. Staying two nights at BioFalu was excellent. Some of the bus drives were very long, and timings were suited for private car, not a large bus. But all in all: A very rewarding Tour.

The Convergence was situated in Motovun, a middle-aged fortified town in the centre of Istria. The centre of the events was the Hotel “Kastels-Motovun”, situated in the middle of the old fortified castle on top of the hill, and from where there was the most beautiful view of the surrounding valley. Among other things centre of the Mediterranean Truffle tradition.

The program followed the general scheme from the earlier six Convergences with workshops, key note lectures and plenary sessions.

Besides that were there a lot of different meetings about diploma procedures, academies, European network and convergences, course curriculum, future IPC's etc.

During the convergence where there formulated harsh criticism of the whole arrangement in relation to planning, to accommodation and to food.

Despite that did the convergence end in a last day session where all the central decisions were concluded in close to consensus, and there were agreements of continuing discussions of different more specific subject to be managed in regional convergences and up to the next International Convergence in Brazil in 2007.

The Conference, were original planned to take place in Zagreb, but was of logistic reasons moved to Motovun in direct prolongation of the Convergence.

The 2 days were planned by the Croatian groups with International presentations the first day, and presentation of the initiatives and projects in Croatia the second day.

First day consisted of presentation by David Holmgren from Australia with an introduction to Permaculture in the perspective of Oil Peak and Energy Descent – Joe Polaicher and Trish Allen from New Zealand with their Rainbow farm, Ali Sharif from Brazil with his developed network of Permaculture projects and Tony Andersen from Copenhagen with community strategies and urban Permaculture.

Second day did the Zmack Group from Zagreb present their urban/land project Voukumeric, Bio Istra presented their work with organic farmers and the attempts to convert into Permaculture, Kneja group with the spiritual project at Eia in the middle of Istria, a group from the Permaculture Course on Cres presented the design from the village of Lubenice into a gradual transformation into Permaculture and at last a special presentation of spiritual elements in design plus a bio-fuel project and its implication into more integrated energy strategies.

The Evaluation

The practical planning and organisation was executed by the local organisations: in Slovenia the local Permaculture group and in Croatia the Permaculture association in cooperation with the “Green network of alternative groups” – Zmack, Kneja, Balkan Ecovillage Network and Bio Istra as the local organisation in Istria and practical organiser of the local infrastructure.

The organisation of the different seminars, workshops and other sessions was to be run by the European Institute by its organising secretariats, first in Copenhagen and secondly in Croatia – in cooperation with the scribe group from England.

The European Institute had the overall economical responsibility

The planning process started already after the IPC 6 in Perth in -96. Pat Dare as the main-organiser there, and Tony Andersen as the main organiser from Copenhagen in -93, should co-ordinate the initiative to IPC 7.

During the years there were several proposals from Mexico, Argentina, South Africa, and New Zealand. None of them fulfilled the criteria that we had put up for the organising theme.

At the European Convergence in 2001 in Seveco in Slovakia, was it then decided to let the European network do it, because the international network at that time seemed to start a dissolving process, because the old global connection from the earlier IPC's seemed to fade out.

At the European convergence took the Croatian group up the task in cooperation with the European Institute in Denmark. The Croatian group were quite newly formed but consisted of a broad group of skilled practitioners within a lot of occupations. Unfortunately did that group not show consistency to do the job and there had therefore to be created a new group. The creator of the Croatian Permaculture movement Marija Heffer Lauch had a keynote lecture about that at the Convergence.

This new group was formed during a visit in Ljubljana and in Zagreb in connection to Tony Andersen from the European Institutes visit early in -04. In connection to that was the site for the Course and the Convergence decided, through a tour along the Adriatic sea, to visit 5 different locations, and where Motovun was selected because of the infrastructure, the organisation and the reputation.

To form the local organisation group was it decided to run a 72-hour Permaculture course in front, which was done in September -04 in Lubenice at the island Cres, with Tony Andersen as a teacher. After that course where the actual division of planning organised and the different tasks divisionalised between Bio Istra, the Zagreb group, Marija from Osier, Ira from Ljubljana and the Institute.

In relation to the start of the whole scheme did Tony in the first week of the 72-hour preconvergence course, again went into a trip to Motovun and Zagreb to get the last pieces together.

As it could be imagined did the difficulties in organising such a big event with so many actors over so long distances very soon show some difficulties. During the process there were a lot of times where we asked ourself if it wouldn't be better just to cancel the whole event – but as there haven't show anybody else up to do it, we decided to continue. Before and during the Convergence there expressed criticism of the arrangements.

In the first hand about the insecurity of the accommodations, next about the food.

About the accommodation did the prices raise since the first visit to Motovun a year earlier, and it took a good deal of negotiations to get them right or almost right. About the food was it organised by the local organic organisation, Bio

Istra, and prepared by our own cooks – but interference from an outside group with not professional cooks, disrupted the process to a degree that it stopped, and had to be reorganised.

About the accommodation did we succeed to get the prices down close to the estimates from the announced program, and we got the promised standards on the different levels: Hotel, boarding house, dormitory and tents. Even the actual places were arranged were late, 2 weeks before.

The food was supplied a bit more expensive than estimated, except for the camping, where it was provided from a nearby market (Pazin).

All in all did the booking at a hotel show the inflexibility of connecting a full board arrangement with all the difficulties of fitting to all individual wishes.

Conclusions

About the results was it decided that the next Convergence should be in Brazil in 2007. There were a big group that didn't want to go so soon after this one, but according to the wish from the organising group was it decided to accommodate their wish.

For further discussions was the subjects of:

- Qualification principle, the organising of network; associations, regional groups, institutes, diploma procedures, academies, universities
- Another important question was the understanding of Permaculture, as an integrated strategy and its coherent conception of all elements interrelationship based on the growth of plantsystems and forests – more than on technical solutions.
- The whole Permaculture networks intercommunication should be much more transparent and the feed back information flow organized in a way that it is obvious and in a form that it adaptable to the whole network
- The whole IPC was announced in a search for the new international generation, to replace the older ones that tends to die out (in memorial of Karol Koncho and Emilia Hazelip). Generations to carry on the network and the global understanding of Permaculture in its local practise in projects.

So – it was supposed to be some kind of the new generations entering the scene. And so there was. But in stead of bringing a renewal, there seems to be a tendency of reviving the old political traditions from the 60ies and 70ies – the generation that fought the hard political fights with self-righteousness and attempting to outmanoeuvre and marginalise other groups.

Every international convergence seems to have its burden. In Scandinavia '93 was it the elements of some people wishing to fit Permaculture into the new age movement with spirituality as an overruling ideology. In Perth, Australia '96, it was a group of hippies with only a superficial insight in Permaculture that changed the decision of place of the next convergence from the agreed South Africa, in consequence of which the whole continuance of IPCs became disrupted. And here now in Europe '05 it seems to be the revival of political power struggles.

It might be a part of a growing Permaculture movement that it is becoming a part of the general fights of our surrounding society, struggling for the control of organisations and movements by marginalising and manoeuvring in stead of cooperating. What is important in relation to that is the coherent understanding of the movement, its internal powers, its structure in different communities with there specific characteristics and the interrelationship of the overall strategy.

A lack of community understanding that might have been caused by the lack of exactly the kind of events like IPC 7. It is therefore one of the great achievements at IPC 7, that we decided to strengthen the international network through keeping up a momentum of IPC, and to form a structure of networking groups for that. At the same time did the continents of the industrialized world take the obligation to support participants from the less fortunate continents. In 2007 was it decided to host IPC 8 in Brazil.

There were proposals for Island in 2010 and Africa in 2014.

Besides that did the activities give the local Croatian organisations a reputation that has resulted in new initiatives and courses: a teachers training course and a new 72-hour certificate course. These courses are supported by local funding, just as a couple of projects have obtained some support.

The Secretariat

The Convergence secretariat was formed of the Croatian group for the practical, the English scribe group of mediation and scribing and the Danish group as the key organisers.

A lot of the time this group worked under a lot of stress because of the constant criticism of the planning and of the arrangements. Though it help after it was decided to concentrate the critical remarks and comments to the daily plenary

session.

The Croatian team should have been more than the 5 of them, so they would have been able to follow more of the sessions in the convergence.

The English scribe team worked perfectly and professional during the whole event – and got all reports into the WIKI-page.

The Danish team was stressed not only by the practical work, and the demand of the constantly changing demands - but too by the constant aggressiveness from some of the participants – with some personal costs, because of the lack of understanding of what could be demanded by voluntary workers.

The Accounts

The overall economy of IPC7 came out with a deficit of app. € 3.700. [A more detailed account is made available at the website www.perma.superserver.dk](http://www.perma.superserver.dk)

During the events of IPC7, the accounting administration broke down, and the accounts have had to be reconstructed afterwards to the best of possible. There were a number of unforeseen expenses, we had to accept. As an example, it was necessary to book and pay for rooms in surplus at the Hotel Kastel, to be sure to have rooms for all. It has been the experience of all international PC gatherings till now, that participants don't keep the deadlines for enrolment, and that they change their bookings and wishes on the way. IPC7 was no exception.

It was decided that the local Croatians should only pay 50 kuna (€6,85) for participation at the conference, June the 13th-14th.

The IPC7 also payed for 3rd world participation.

In advance of IPC7, UNDP had promised to sponsor five local participants, but shortly before the conference UNDP withdrew their promise, with the reason that IPC7 didn't fit their profile.

During the last two years of planning for IPC7 a number of international organisations was contacted with requests for sponsorships of 3rd world participants, but unlike previous IPC's no external funding was obtained from these organisations.

The danish PC association has made an arrangement with the bank to pay back the debt of € 3.700 with monthly payments until it is paid out.

It will of course be helpful to the danish situation, if any of you would wish to transfer an amount to help cover the deficit. If you so wish, money can be transferred to the same bank account that received your deposits:

Merkur Bank
Vesterbrogade 40
DK-1620 Copenhagen V
Denmark

Swift/BIC RIBADK22
IBAN nr. DK1284010001048406
(Danish registration nr. 8401, account nr. 0001048406)

PUBLICATIONS

Around all the activities where there produced different publications

Newsletter 1 – as the first announcement and call was it send out in a number of 1200 in the beginning of 2004

Newsletter 2 – should have been send out in marts 2005, but was delay to a degree that it never came out but was distributed at the opening of the Convergence.

The reason for that was that the information's about accommodation, food and the definitive prices not was available until the start of the events.

The information needed for participants to arrive to the destinations for the events was send out by e-mail to the enlisted participants.

In relation to the opening were there send out a Press Release to all the national associations around the world that had reacted in the newsletter 1

2 local newspapers and a radio station showed good interest in the events and had several articles and a radio broadcast National Croatian TV shoved up the last days of the Conference, which resulted in a program about the Conference.

WIKI

In relation to IPC 7 did the European Institute establish a internet homepage for the international Permaculture Network - www.perma.superserver.dk – in the form of a WIKI page where it is possible for everyone to get into

dialog.

All reports from the all events, workshops, plenary sessions etc. are situated there, and are open for comments, proposals etc.