

Pla~CES NEWSLETTER OF THE ERASMUS PLUS PROJECT

Improving Landscape Planning and Design with Cultural Ecosystem Services in HEIs



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Erasmus+ Project PlaCES Newsletter – 1/2025

Dear partners and friends,

Welcome to the first edition of our PlaCES project newsletter!

Project introduction

The Erasmus+-project PlaCES (Improving Landscape Planning and Design with Cultural Ecosystem Services in HEIs) aims to create a new methodology in relation to cultural ecosystem services (CES) and urban rivers. The goal is to show how CES can be integrated into the curricula of European universities. The main target groups are students and lecturers of landscape-related studies, local stakeholders, and citizens. The project will develop open access learning material to facilitate the integration of CES in Higher Education curricula.

CURRENT TOPICS

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PROJECT PLACES** p.2ff

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Definitions of ES and CES

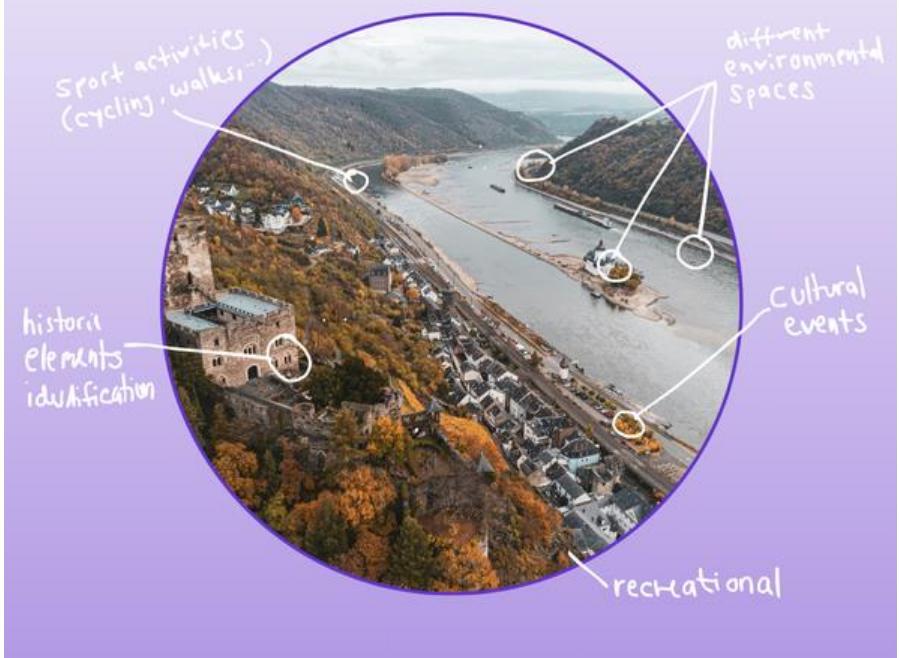
ES = Ecosystem Services describe services and goods provided by ecosystems and used by humans. For the most part, these services cannot be replaced by humans, or only at great expense. Examples of services that cannot be replaced include the provision of water, soil, plants and living organisms.

CES = Cultural Ecosystem Services are intangible benefits that people derive from ecosystems e.g. recreation, aesthetics, education, spirituality.

These ecosystem services contribute to the well-being of people.

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Examples for CES of rivers



Why we focus on urban riverscape ...



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Urban riverscapes are both natural and artificial systems. Urban rivers and their floodplains have been shaped by water flows and ecological processes. They have been altered through built structures, such as quay walls or weirs. Floodplains have been built over. Riverscapes also have cultural meaning and represent the history of a place. In the past centuries, rivers had high economic values as important means for transport. Riverscapes, therefore, often represent the history of a place and have cultural meaning. However, through their use for transport of goods and waste, they also became heavily polluted and a source for disease. Today, some urban rivers have been forgotten, covered, or transformed into hard-surface, channels disconnected from their surroundings. Others are places for recreation and outdoor activities. Some are refuges for plants and animals, and function as ecological corridors. With all their diversity and complexity, urban rivers hold great potential for being developed into multifunctional blue-green corridors that contribute to human well-being, urban biodiversity, and climate adaptation.

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What will PlaCES do?



Facilitate study courses in Germany, Italy and Sweden and a transnational intensive course in France



Develop a methodology for integration of cultural ecosystem services in landscape-related curricula



Provide open access e-learning material for Higher Education Institutions



Host a final conference in Sweden



Students at the involved Higher Education Institutions



Local stakeholders and citizens that participate in the riverscape fieldwork



Lecturers and students of landscape-related studies that want to replicate the methodology

Our project partners

Who is working on

Pla~~CES ?



France



Italy



UNIVERSITY OF
GOTHENBURG

Sweden
(lead)



Germany

The University of Gothenburg (lead, Sweden), Roma Tre University (Italy), ENGEES - the National School for Water and Environmental Engineering of Strasbourg (France) and Hochschule Geisenheim University (Germany) will foster students' capacities to define strategies dealing with cultural and natural values by sharing and co-creating knowledge with stakeholders in a real-world setting.

The institutes in detail (I)

Who we are...

We are a multidisciplinary university that dates back to 1891. We take responsibility for societal development and contributes to a sustainable world. We are one of Sweden's largest educational institutions with more than 58,000 students and 6,800 employees. Two of our main research areas are sustainability & environment and society & economics.



What we do in PlaCES...

We are in the lead position for the PlaCES project. One of our tasks is to bring all the partners together and coordinate the project as a whole. Other tasks include technical and financial management, as well as project monitoring and evaluation. We will host a River Fieldwork in Gothenburg in spring 2026.

Find us here...

 www.gu.se

 [@universityofgothenburg](https://www.instagram.com/universityofgothenburg)

Who we are...

We are active since 1992, hosting about 35,000 students and more than 1000 teaching staff members. We have 13 Departments and 1 School, 33 Bachelor's Degree Courses, 54 Master's Degree Courses and 27 PhD Programs. The research unit within the Department of Architecture mainly deals with urban and landscape planning, environmental governance and GIS applied to planning.



What we do in PlaCES...

We participate in developing the project methodology and we are responsible of the development of the PlaCES common sharing platform and the project Syllabus. We will host a River Fieldwork in Rome in autumn 2026.

Find us here...

 www.uniroma3.it

 [@uniromatre](https://www.instagram.com/uniromatre)

The institutes in detail (II)

Who we are...

We are a leading engineering school that trains engineers and managers to work directly in the fields of water, environmental protection, infrastructure and regional development. We are hosting more than 450 students. We are also a partner institution of the EUCOR chair sustainable inland waters. Aware of the challenges in protecting the environment and water resources, we are teaching fully integrates the objectives of sustainable development.



What we do in PlaCES...

We organize and host the 10-day Transnational Summer School, combining theory and practice through lectures and fieldwork on a common case study. We guide students in collaborative exercises and contribute to developing the modular PlaCES E-learning course based on the project's outcomes.

Find us here...

 www.engees.unistra.fr

 @engees.ecole

Who we are...

We are a public higher education establishment located in Germany. Our curriculum and research activities encompass the entire value chain of special crops and their products, as well as the commitment to sustainable development of cultural landscapes, tourism, landscape planning and architecture. Our research cover a broad spectrum of applied and basic research. We currently have over 1500 students.



What we do in PlaCES...

We develop the PlaCES Methodology, combining theory and practice to integrate CES into landscape planning and teaching. We also coordinate communication and networking, managing the website, social media, and outreach to promote the project across Europe. We will host a River Fieldwork in Germany in summer 2026.

Find us here...

 www.hs-geisenheim.de

 @hsgeisenheim



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Activities

Virtual Kick-off

On the 7th of November, the PlaCES Kick-Off meeting took place, organised by the University of Gothenburg. The aim of the meeting was to get to know each other, talk about the objectives of each project partner and focus on the next task. It was a perfect start into the new project.

The Kick-off meeting was attended by: UGOT Susanne Fredholm, Ingeärd Eliasson and Jennie Sjöholm; Roma Tre Federica Di Pietrantonio, Romina D'Ascanio and Anna Palazzo; ENGEES Aude Zingraff-Hamed and Caroline Schmitt; HGU Rieke Hansen, Marianne Darbi and Eckhard Jedicke.

Teachers-Seminar

On March 12th until March 13th, 2025 in two morning sessions, a teachers, seminar was held with teachers and trainers from all the PlaCES-partner institutions. The seminar was organised by Roma Tre, with contributions from all project partners.

The main objectives were:

- Contribute to the Common Knowledge and Methodological Framework (Activity 2.1)
- Outlining educational methods and practices
- Deepen knowledge on Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) in landscape planning
- Peculiarities of riverscapes
- Frame topics to define a comprehensive Syllabus for the project



It was a good event to exchange ideas and get to know each other.

The PlaCES Study Areas



PlaCES Study Areas: Wellritz River, Germany; Göta River, Sweden; Tiber River, Italy; Jardin des Deux Rives, France

Within the PlaCES project, students from the four partner universities are introduced to the concept of cultural ecosystem services of river landscapes through hands-on, practice-oriented learning. This is achieved primarily through fieldwork, which allows students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings.

In 2026, fieldwork activities will take place in several European countries. In Germany, fieldwork will be conducted along the Wellritz River in Wiesbaden and will be supervised by Hochschule Geisenheim University (HGU). In Sweden, the Göta River will be investigated during fieldwork activities led by the University of Gothenburg (UGOT). In Italy, fieldwork will be carried out along the Tiber River in the Ostiense district of Rome under the guidance of Roma Tre University. Additionally, the Jardin des Deux Rives in Strasbourg, France, will be examined during fieldwork activities coordinated by ENGEES.

During all fieldwork phases, representatives of the partner universities will travel to the respective study sites to support and collaborate in the joint research activities.

The PlaCES Study Areas

Göta River (SE)



The study area for UGOT's Riverscape Fieldwork is the Göta River (Göta Älv) around the city of Gothenburg, in western Sweden. The river – one of Sweden's largest – flows from Lake Vänern to the Kattegat Sea and has played a central role in shaping Gothenburg's development. The Frihamnen district is situated along the Göta River in the heart of Gothenburg. Once a rich wetland estuary with extensive reed beds, it supported diverse birdlife and served as hunting grounds in the 19th century. During the 20th century, the area became industrialized with harbor infrastructure, railways, and factories. Today, Frihamnen is undergoing a major transformation into a mixed-use urban district, facing significant ecological and social challenges.

This riverside zone spans approx. 1 km² and is a key case in the PlaCES project. Public events held in conjunction with the city's 400th anniversary between 2021–2023 engaged artists, planners, and scientists in re-storying the site through participatory art and multispecies storytelling. Its ongoing transition has inspired UGOT researchers to explore heritage as a cultural ecosystem service.



Critical features of the area include: loss of wetlands, historical bird habitats (e.g., for the ruff and black redstart), and the experimental urban park Jubileumsparken, developed with climate resilience and biodiversity in mind. Challenges include balancing dense urban development with ecological restoration. Frihamnen offers a living laboratory for integrating cultural and ecological values in riverscape planning.

Tiber River in Ostiense/Marconi district, Rome (IT)



The Tiber River, originating from Mount Fumaiolo and flowing into the Tyrrhenian Sea near Ostia, is one of Italy's longest rivers with a vast basin that has shaped the development of Rome and its surroundings. Beyond its historical role as a transportation route and industrial resource, the Tiber today is a key element in Rome's ecological network and urban planning, offering important opportunities for creating green corridors and enhancing public access to natural spaces within the city. The study area for Roma Tre's Riverscape Fieldwork is the Ostiense-Marconi district, particularly the areas along the river Tiber, located in the southern sector of the city of Rome.

Once an industrial hub relying heavily on the river for transport and production, this district is now undergoing a major transformation aimed at reconnecting the urban fabric with the riverfront. These ongoing projects focus on improving accessibility to the Tiber by developing continuous green spaces and public parks along the riverbanks, transforming fragmented and underused areas into vibrant community assets. This transformation highlights the importance of cultural ecosystem services in the area, recognizing the river and its surroundings as both natural and cultural resources that contribute to the identity and livability of the neighborhood.



However, there are many challenges, especially concerning the management of the river areas and their accessibility for local communities. Studying the cultural ecosystem services is therefore essential to strengthen the relationship between river and city, particularly in such a densely urbanized area.

Wellritz river and valley, Wiesbaden (DE)



The city of Wiesbaden, Germany, has a historic connection to water. 250 km of rivers flow through the city area. Wiesbaden's urban core lies in a basin and five rivers with numerous tributaries flow towards the center. A sixth river links the water system to the Rhine at the southern city border. Hot thermal springs attracted people at least since Roman times. In the 19th century, Wiesbaden became an aristocratic health resort. With the rapid expansion during this time, a sewage system was created that also brought the rivers underground. Due to water pollution, the piping of streams was considered a major hygienic achievement. Today, the salutogenic use of the thermal water is limited and the stream water is mostly clean, but 14 km still run underground and are invisible to Wiesbadeners and visitors alike. Thus, the city aims at restoring the river system and daylighting some of the underground sections.

The Wellritz river flows underground in the city center as well as above ground in one of Wiesbaden's landscape parks. Historically, the Wellritz valley was characterized by small-scale agriculture, linen bleaching, and milling. Since the 1950s, the river has been straightened, plant nurseries, allotments and hobby gardens have moved into the area, while the surroundings have been urbanized. In the 1980s, the renaturation of the stream began. Today, the area is a highly valued recreational area with the restored stream as its main attraction. The valley is also an important corridor for cool air and provides flood retention. Issues result from the high recreational pressure, while large parts of the landscape corridor are privately used and inaccessible, as well as from sewage overflows from an adjacent settlement. The underground parts of the Wellritz River flow through densely built-up areas and daylighting has not yet been implemented.

Jardin des deux rives, Strasbourg (FR)

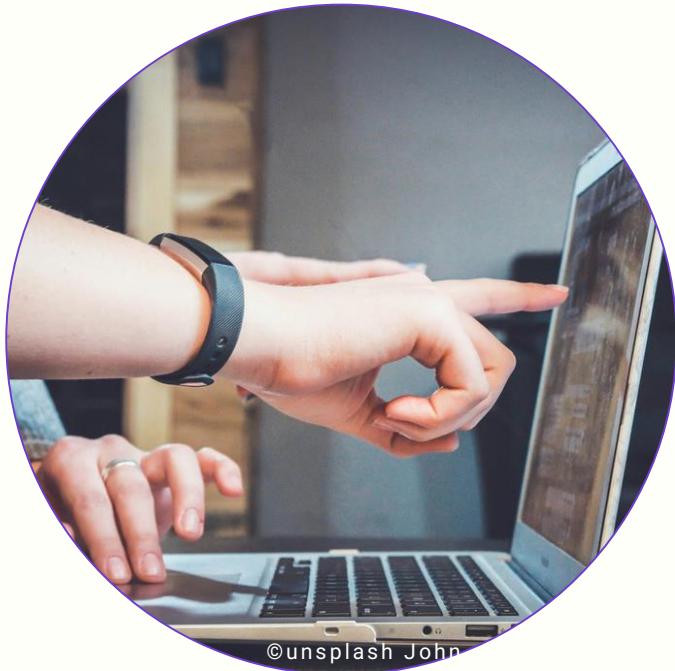


The Jardin des Deux Rives is one of the most emblematic parks in Strasbourg. Located on both sides of the Rhine River (150 hectares), it connects France and Germany through a unique cross-border landscape design. The design embraced a symmetrical approach, reflecting the idea of equality between the two countries. Water plays a fundamental role in the layout and the symbolism of the park. The Rhine, once an impassable natural boundary, historically embodied the separation between France and Germany, unifies Europe within a common park. The park's landscape design reflects this intention of unity: the water walls on the French side, located on either side of the central axis, mirror the dead arm of the Rhine on the German side.



Temporary gardens with varied themes (European rights, etc.) are also designed symmetrically. They follow the curves of the water features, reinforcing a sense of continuity and harmony. The park is also dotted with many memorials and commemorative artworks, referring to key moments in Franco-German, European, and even international history, thus reinforcing the park's role as a symbol of reconciliation and dialogue. Large green spaces encourage various outdoor activities as well as peaceful moments in nature. It attracts many visitors thanks to its wealth of recreational facilities, such as numerous walking paths, bike trails along the Rhine, picnic and barbecue areas, and multiple children's play areas. However, the ecological value of the riverscape and its contribution to climate mitigation remain questionable.

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