

# PlaCES NEWSLETTER OF THE ERASMUS PLUS PROJECT

Improving Landscape Planning and Design with Cultural Ecosystem Services in HEIs



## Erasmus+ Project PlaCES Newsletter – 1/2026

Dear partners and friends,

Welcome to the third edition of our PlaCES project newsletter!

Over the past weeks, our project has continued to move forward with several important developments.

We are very happy to welcome Karl Matthias Wantzen in the PlaCES Team.

In April we had an exiting first PlaCES fieldwork in Gothenburg, Sweden. 17 Students participated and produced well-grounded new proposals for the Frihamnen area.

In addition, we had a great exchange at the ESP in Prague.

Happy reading!

### CURRENT TOPICS

#### CHANGES IN THE PROJECT TEAM

p.2ff

#### FIELDWORK

p.3ff

#### ACTIVITIES

p.5ff

#### OUTLOOK

p.7ff

## Changes in the project team

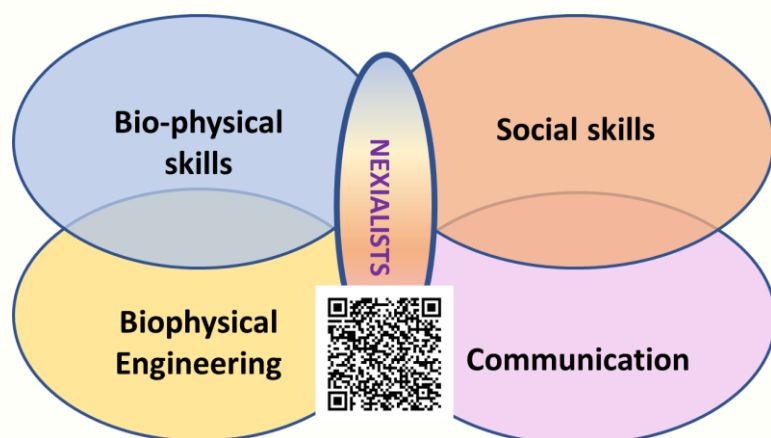
The changes within our team continued. We are very happy to welcome Karl Matthias Wantzen in the PlaCES team, who replaces Aude Zingraff-Hamed on behalf of ENGEES.



**Karl Matthias Wantzen**

**Short description of my background:** I am full professor for restoration ecology of continental aquatic socio-ecosystems. At the University of Tours, France (CNRS UMR for Cities, Territories, Environment and Society ([CITERES](#))), I am holding the UNESCO Chair for Rivers and Heritage, and at the University of Strasbourg ([CNRS Earth and Environmental Institute](#)), ENGEES and the Karlsruhe Institute for Technology KIT ([Institute for Water and Environment](#)), I am holding the [EUCOR Transboundary Chair on Water and Sustainability](#).

**My work** focuses on functional ecology, biodiversity and human nature-interactions, specifically in freshwater socio-ecosystems and their floodplain wetlands. Starting my career as a Max-Planck basic researcher, I am more and more widening up my focus on transdisciplinary approaches and science-policy transfer, e.g., by developing the Hydronexialism concept for innovative teaching for future water crisis managers ([Master EUCOR Continental Water Sustainability](#)).



<https://switch.unistra.fr/formation/master-cws/>



**Eco-positivism is key!** (photo M. Lantz, with permission)

**For PLACES,** I see my role mostly in making people understand and to engage for nature stewardship. Animals and plants do not speak our language, so we have to learn theirs to become ambassadors bravely opposing to the permanent decline of biological and cultural diversities by presenting feasible and sustainable solutions. Only healthy ecosystems can provide ecosystem services!

# Fieldwork UGOT

## Frihamnen

From 8–10 April 2026, students and staff from the PlaCES project gathered in Gothenburg, Sweden, for a three-day international fieldwork focused on the transformation of urban riverscapes and the role of Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) in sustainable planning and design. The fieldwork took place in Frihamnen, a central waterfront area along the Göta Älv (Göta River), which drains Lake Vänern into the Kattegat Sea on Sweden's west coast.



**Frihamnen** provided an inspiring learning environment. Once a wetland estuary and later an important industrial harbour area, the site is currently undergoing a major transformation into a mixed-use urban district. This dynamic context offered students a unique opportunity to investigate how ecological, cultural, social and spatial dimensions can be integrated into future urban development while addressing climate change and enhancing human–nature relationships.



### Learning Through Practice

The main objective of the fieldwork was to test and apply the skills acquired throughout the PlaCES project using a common methodology developed through theoretical and practical exercises across different European riverscape case studies. Students worked directly on-site, applying interdisciplinary approaches to analyse urban riverscapes and develop innovative solutions.

The learning objectives included:

- Analysing urban riverscapes from cultural, social, ecological and spatial perspectives;
- Recognising the challenges posed by climate change in riverfront environments;
- Mapping and assessing Cultural Ecosystem Services provided by riverscapes;
- Applying interdisciplinary and participatory approaches to develop sustainable and climate-resilient design solutions, including river restoration and governance strategies;
- Integrating expert knowledge with local knowledge and stakeholder perspectives.

The fieldwork followed a structured format that combined stakeholder input, site analysis, collaborative learning and design development. Throughout the three days, students worked in small interdisciplinary groups focusing on specific “topos” areas within Frihamnen.

# Fieldwork UGOT

## Fieldwork Highlights

During the three-day fieldwork in Frihamnen, students worked in interdisciplinary groups to analyse selected areas of Gothenburg's transforming waterfront. Through stakeholder presentations, site visits and data collection, participants explored the cultural, social, ecological and spatial dimensions of the Göta River landscape and assessed the Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) it provides.

Using a structured process from analysis to design, students developed creative proposals for their chosen sites. Ideas ranged from transforming underused spaces beneath bridges into vibrant community areas to biodiversity-focused concepts inspired by Lundbyhamnen, Sweden's national bird.

The fieldwork highlighted the value of combining perspectives from ecology, heritage conservation, spatial planning and open-space design. Students learned that addressing CES requires a stepwise and interdisciplinary approach.

The 17 participating students came from diverse academic backgrounds related to conservation, build environment and architecture. Feedback showed strong engagement and appreciation for the opportunity to apply theoretical concepts in a real-

world setting, collaborate internationally and interact directly with local stakeholders.

Overall, the Gothenburg fieldwork successfully demonstrated how Cultural Ecosystem Services can support more sustainable, inclusive and climate-resilient urban riverscapes while providing students with valuable practical experience.

## Our key learnings

- The interdisciplinary perspectives, ranging from ecology to open-space planning, fostered dialogue and enriched the students' analytical approaches.
- A structured, stepwise approach is required to comprehensively address CES.
- The integration of sense of place and spirituality are frequently overlooked in planning processes.

Find more about our fieldwork:

[www.places-erasmus.eu](http://www.places-erasmus.eu)



## Activities



## PlaCES at the ESP 2026

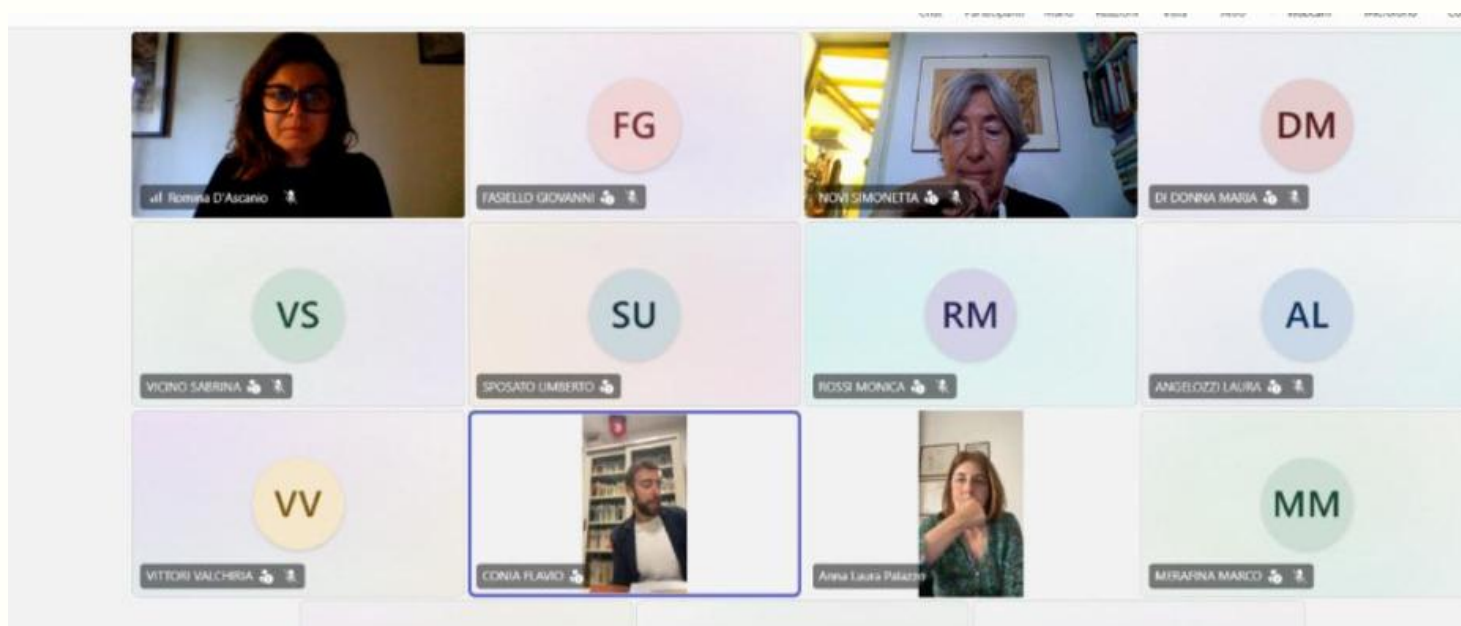
From 18–22 May 2026, representatives of Hochschule Geisenheim University and the Erasmus+ project PlaCES (Improving Landscape Planning and Design with Cultural Ecosystem Services in HEIs) participated in the Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP Europe 2026) conference in Prague. The event provided an excellent platform for international exchange on cultural ecosystem services and sustainable landscape planning.

A **highlight** of the conference was the PlaCES-organized session **“Cultural Ecosystem Services of Riverscapes”**, chaired by Prof. Dr. Marianne Darbi. The session brought together inspiring speakers from different research and practice backgrounds. Jan Danek presented research on factors influencing cultural ecosystem services in riverscapes, while Mónica Pinto shared insights into cultural narratives and storytelling in the Côa Valley. Christoph Woiwode offered thought-provoking perspectives on river heritage and human–river relationships, stimulating lively discussion among participants.

The presentations highlighted that **cultural ecosystem services extend far beyond recreation** and should receive greater attention in planning, research, and education. PlaCES partners Dr. Carolina Pozzi (Roma Tre University) and Dr. Nora Mehnen (Hochschule Geisenheim University) also presented project-related work, including the PlaCES approaches to teaching cultural ecosystem services and first results from student fieldwork in Sweden. The session concluded with a discussion moderated by Prof. Dr. Martina van Lierop on strengthening the transfer of research findings into higher education and professional practice. In addition, the PlaCES project attracted considerable interest during the poster session, where Felina Richter presented the project and engaged in valuable exchanges with international conference participants.



## Activities



## PlaCES presented at Joint Meeting of Borough VIII Environment and “15-Minute City” Committees of Rome

On 16 April 2026, Anna Laura Palazzo and Romina D’Ascanio, coordinators of the Roma Tre University unit of the Erasmus+ PlaCES project, were invited to participate in a joint meeting of the Environment Committee and the 15-Minute City Committee of Borough VIII of Rome Capital.

The meeting provided an important opportunity to present the ongoing activities of the PlaCES project, whose Italian pilot case study focuses on the Ostiense district within the Borough VIII. The discussion highlighted the relevance of the project’s work on river landscapes and cultural ecosystem services for the future development of the area.

The exchange with local policymakers and administrators was particularly valuable in view of the upcoming River Fieldwork, which will take place in Rome in October 2026. During this international learning activity, students and academic staff from the project partner universities will work along the Tiber River corridor between the Borough VIII and the Borough XI, applying innovative approaches to investigate the relationships between ecological and cultural landscapes and to map and evaluate cultural ecosystem services.

The meeting also opened opportunities for collaboration with local authorities, whose knowledge of the area and contribution to field activities will be important for the success of the River Fieldwork.

## Outlook



### HGU Fieldwork

We are excited to announce our Block Module Summer 2026, “Assessing Ecosystem Services, Developing Nature-Based Solutions,” taking place from July 27–31, 2026, in Geisenheim and Wiesbaden, Germany. As part of the module, students will participate in a fieldwork project in the Wellritz Valley in Wiesbaden. We look forward to gaining fresh perspectives from students while exploring the area and its unique cultural ecosystem services.



### RomaTre Fieldwork

From 20–22 October 2026, students and researchers will take part in the ROMA3 Riverscape Fieldwork in the Ostiense–Marconi district of Rome. The study area focuses on the River Tiber, one of Italy’s most important waterways, which has played a crucial role in shaping the city’s history, economy, and urban development. Once a major industrial area closely linked to river transport and production, the Ostiense–Marconi district is currently undergoing a significant transformation. New projects aim to reconnect the city with its riverfront through the creation of green corridors, public parks, and accessible open spaces along the riverbanks. The fieldwork will explore how these changes contribute to cultural ecosystem services, strengthening the relationship between people, nature, and the urban environment. At the same time, participants will investigate ongoing challenges related to river management, accessibility, and the integration of natural and cultural values in a densely urbanised setting. The fieldwork provides a unique opportunity to better understand the role of the Tiber as both an ecological resource and a key element of Rome’s urban identity.

## Outlook & Good to read

We are happy to announce that our International Summer School in Strasbourg will take place from March 1 to 10, 2027. It's a great opportunity for students who attended one of our fieldworks to deepen their knowledge and connect with students from our five partner universities.

### Get to know us at upcoming events

PlaCES will be present at the...

- 25.09.2026 Night of research in Geisenheim (Germany)
- 06.-07.10.2026 IALE-D in Hildesheim (Germany)
- 02.-06.11.2026 Nature-based solution congress Paris (France)

### Good to read:

- Gogreennext "Future proofing urban health" (<https://gogreennext.eu/>)
- Sense of place at the Baltic sea coast (<https://balticwaters.org/en/project/living-bays/>)
- CES classification framework (<https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.70245>) Danek et al. 2026
- Wantzen, K. M. (2022): River culture: How socio-ecological linkages to the rhythm of the waters develop, how they are lost, and how they can be regained. The Geographical Journal, 00, 1–16. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12476>
- Wantzen, K. M. Cao, Y. (2026). Cultural practices in European riverine floodplains: formation, typology, co-decline of biocultural diversity, and emerging drivers of conservation and sustainable management. Nature & Conservation 62: 195–215 (2026) DOI: 10.3897/natureconservation.62.156771
- How do you live with "your" river? River Culture Boo, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382775>
- Cao, Y., Barbier, R., Baron, C., Barreteau, O., Besenval, A., Camproux Duffrene, M. P., Dufour, S., Fernandez, S., Germaine, M. A., Guerrin, J., Hervé-Fournereau, N., Imfeld, G., Laborie, N., Marchand, A., Richard, S., Wantzen, K. M., & Zingraff-Hamed, A. (2025). Commoning water and integrating non-human entities into water governance in Europe. Ambio, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-025-02286-7>

**For more information visit our website and follow us on our socials**



[www.places-erasmus.eu](http://www.places-erasmus.eu)



[@PlaCES Erasmus+](https://www.linkedin.com/company/places-erasmus/)



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