Integrate+

Welcome to issue four

Integrate+ conference gathers experts from 17 countries

The event took place 26-28 October 2016 in the Steigerwald Centre near Ebrach, Germany. 80 participants of various professional backgrounds discussed the project outcomes and the many network activities. Most importantly they reflected on viable options for ensuring a continuation of what has been set in motion by Integrate+ and its network partners.

Thomas Haußmann (BMEL) opened the conference by emphasising Integrate+ and its network as an important contribution to international discussions on forest biodiversity and forest management. He appreciated in particular the cooperation within the Czech-German Strategic Dialogue. Kurt Bollmann (WSL) elaborated in his keynote on the significance of having a network of different nature conservation tools at landscape level for ensuring the conservation of biodiversity on a large scale. Laurent Larrieu (INRA) emphasized the importance of microstructures on trees that provide crucial habitats for a broad range of species. *"Paying more attention to such structures can be well integrated into daily forest management decisions",* he concluded. Bengt-Gunnar Jonsson (Sundsvall University of Central Sweden) introduced to successes of applying active measures with the aim of enhancing nature conservation in forest stands where appropriate habitats and microstructures are still lacking. Network partners from Belgium, Italy, Spain, the Czech Republic, Finland and Slovenia gave insight to activities and applications that resulted from cooperation. Urs-Beat Brändli from the Swiss National Forest Inventory described how Marteloscopes are now utilized to train inventory staff for biodiversity-relevant structures. Ulrich Mergner from BaySF introduced the Ebracher "Trittstein Concept" followed by an inspiring excursion. All participants acknowledged the innovative concept and noted that such does not find many equivalents across Europe. They were especially impressed that nature conservation argumentation is paramount and timber use is tailored to those. Under the moderation of Margaret Shannon (United States) network partners discussed options on how to maintain a continuation of such vibrant exchange, learning culture and trust initiated across country borders. Exchanges, training and the sharing of experiences amongst researchers and practitioners was emphasised. It was voiced that a support by a permanent structure or organization would be beneficial. The plenary gave Integrate+ the mandate to investigate which form of organization would be best suited. Oriol Vialta (PCF) noted that their network around forest fire management was in a similar situation a few years back. He proposed to investigate, as they did, the establishment of a foundation. Such was supported by Pia Mayer-Gampe (FAUN Initiative) who further proposed to equip such a foundation with forest in order to best fulfil such needs. An overwhelming majority seconded this option. It will be elaborated on by a working group.

Link to conference website:
http://www.integrateplus.org/activities/integrate-conference-2016.html

Messages from the Network:

E F I

I+ software tools are being widely applied

The I+ tablet software package has been further developed supported by feedback collected during the many Marteloscope exercises. The software now comprises of three components: the Marteloscope database, the I+ trainer and manager.

The *I+ database* includes all inventoried Marteloscope data including site metadata, tree locations and single tree information. It allows saving results of tree selection exercises.
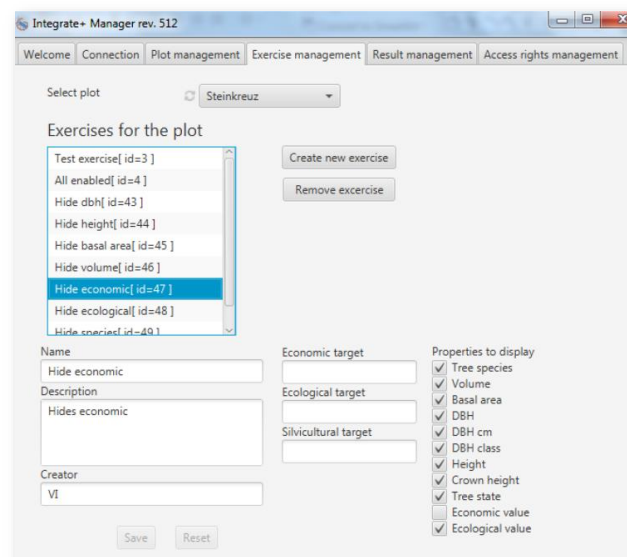
The *I+ trainer* is the interface for field exercises, results analysis and display. It communicates with the database and allows while having internet connection to load any requested Marteloscope. Once loaded it can be used offline in the field.

The *I+ manager* is used by the organiser of training events. Each exercise can be tailored to user groups. Marteloscope owners can also update or correct information of a site and save changes to the database (e.g. add new microhabitat structures; in-growth of trees). The manager also allows the analysis of results from group exercises. Those can give valuable information for additional training needs.
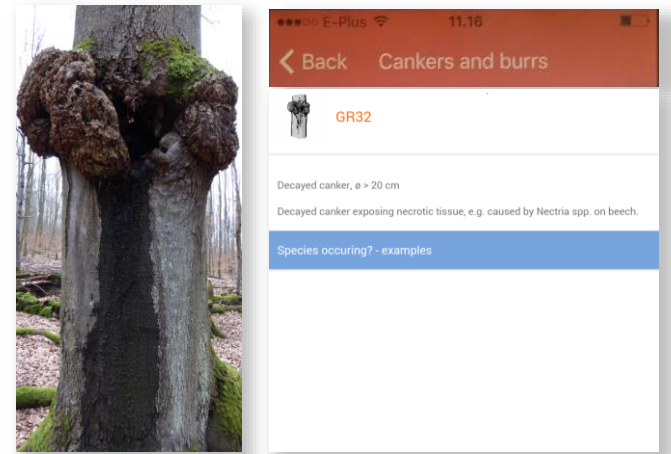
Further Integrate+ has made available, on request of the partner network, a '*smart phone application*' of the tree microhabitat catalogue. Once downloaded it can be used offline. It is built as a multilingual application. New languages can be added if requested. Currently it is available in English and German.

I+ networking activities – a success story

Integrate+ facilitated for knowledge and information sharing, exchange of experiences and collaboration among scientists and forest managers through a well-designed training and exchange programme.

Tools applied were professional exchanges, field excursions, tailored Marteloscope training exercises and various types of events.

Within a well distributed demonstration site network a broad portfolio of activities took place addressing a wide range of requests. Targeted excursions to network partners at national level or to other countries were frequently asked for. So were training and exchange of expert events often supported by seminars, workshops or conferences.

Those activities, adding up to more than 30, stimulated vibrant discussions, strengthened ties between institutions and often resulted in follow-up actions. Such included invitations and return visits, Marteloscope establishment, tree microhabitat catalogue translations or joint publications. Many of the virtual tree selection exercises performed in Marteloscopes were recorded and are used for analysing learning effects. This research is jointly implemented by Integrate+ and its network partner WSL.