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# PaCE, a project for Europe

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## Abstract

Pace è in italiano una parola che evoca sentimenti positivi e valori universali di rispetto e uguaglianza. In inglese, ha un significato ugualmente positivo di ritmo, andatura, passo regolare. In entrambe le lingue, *pace* è dunque indice di accordo e armonia, un augurio e un destino per un progetto che ha la fortuna di portare un acronimo tanto speciale. PaCE è, infatti, un progetto europeo Culture 2007-2013 - Plants and Culture: seeds of the cultural heritage of Europe (7° nella call EACEA 09/2006), nato con lo scopo di promuovere e valorizzare il patrimonio culturale verde d'Europa. Sviluppato dal 2007 al 2009, PaCE ha svolto buona parte della sua attività nel 2008, Anno Europeo del Dialogo Interculturale. Oltre alla ricerca, tale attività si è resa tangibile negli incontri tra ricercatori di gruppi diversi, nella realizzazione di una mostra (temporanea e anche virtuale), e nella redazione di questo volume. Alla base c'è l'idea che la tradizione e le conoscenze legate alle piante tipiche d'Europa rivestano un valore non solo botanico, ma anche culturale molto forte e rappresentino un'eredità comune intima e significativa per questo continente che tende a dimenticare il valore delle piante, da sempre fonte di alimento, medicina, abbigliamento, abitazione, preziose nella vita delle persone e nella storia dei paesi.

When the project '**Plants and Culture: seeds of the cultural heritage of Europe**' (CLT2007/1.2.1/IT-182; 7° in the call EACEA 09/2006) was being prepared for the Call for proposals in February 2007, I realised that the acronym resulting from this title had to be PaCE.

The word 'PaCE' – which comes from *Plants and Culture Europe* – means 'peace' in Italian, and 'speed, rhythm, walk quickly' in English. This is probably the best word that could be chosen to promote the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008) established last year by the European Community.

Approval of this project has resulted in satisfaction in two areas:

- PaCE, which was submitted by a scientific department, has been included in a handful of projects devoted to Cultural Heritage,
- plants have been properly recognised by the European Committee (EACEA) as both part of European Cultural Heritage and a means of recovering of Europe's common culture.

The aim of the **PaCE** project is to recover and promote green cultural heritage common to Europe in 2008, European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The main project drivers are the improvement and dissemination of knowledge of the different botanical cultures in the history of European countries, and the safeguarding of their common cultural heritage (as per Article 151 of the Treaty).

## 1. Box and the Logo of PaCE

*Buxus sempervirens* L. (Buxaceae) is well known today, mainly because it is excellent for hedging, but its history as a plant useful to humans goes far back. For the Ancient Greeks, box was a symbol of life, sacred to Pluto, while in northern European traditions, it is a plant of peace, and it was this belief that encouraged us to use its leaves in the project logo (fig. 1).



1. - The Logo of the PaCE project represents leaves of box (*Buxus sempervirens*).

The plants are slow-growing, evergreen shrubs and small trees which grow from 2-12 m in height, with opposite, rounded to lanceolate, leaves. The flowers are small, yellow-green, and monoecious i.e. with the two sexes present on the same plant. The fruit is a small capsule containing several poisonous seeds which are dispersed by ants. The genus is native to southern Europe, northern Africa and western Asia.

In classic times, box was a symbol of the continuity of life in the Underworld and of eternity, and as such, like other evergreens, was a funerary symbol and also sacred to Hades and Cybele. When planted in the necropolis, it became a symbol of sterility. However, it was also consecrated to Venus because of its significance as plant of love and death. Its self-fertilizing property led to it becoming a symbol of chastity (Baumann 1993; Brosse 2004; Cattabiani 2006). The Gauls also considered box a sacred tree.

*Buxus* pollen was found in layers from the Taormina theatre, where box may have formed close evergreen hedges, also including yew, cypress, myrtle and laurel, near flowerbeds featuring *Acanthus* (Mercuri *et al.* 2006). The layers dated to the Roman period, when the garden was considered a place of culture and art and box was frequently cut into shapes typical of the topiary art (*ars topiaria*).

Though box was considered an important medicinal plant, its use in treating syphilis, epilepsy, rheumatism, gout and malaria tends to be overlooked nowadays. In the Renaissance, it was believed to be a good remedy for baldness. Nevertheless, it is still fruitfully used in popular medicine as a depurative, a laxative, and for alleviating fevers and inducing perspiration.

Box's hard wood has always been employed to make boxes for medicines or for ritual uses, such as the 'pyx' in which communion hosts are kept, as well as other objects, like spinning tops, combs, flutes and writing board. Today, as in the past, it is commonly used in Palm Sunday traditions in northern Europe. Finally, box has been associated with formal gardens for centuries and still maintains this ornamental feature today.

## 2. The priorities of PaCE

The project covers three themes deemed priority issues by the European Community.

### 2.1. Intercultural Dialogue

Since the Council of Europe Summit (Warsaw, May 2005), Intercultural Dialogue has become a main priority, as '*Dialogue between cultures, the oldest and most fundamental mode of democratic conversation, [is] an antidote to rejection and violence. Its objective is to enable us to live together peacefully and constructively*

*in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging*'. In this perspective, the project promotes joint actions involving countries from **North, East, South and West Europe**, which include:

i) a scientific research network of different countries; ii) a dissemination network for the popularization of this research, providing plant history in the languages and cultures of Europe; iii) **enlarging the network of associated partners**, thus helping institutions that are experiencing difficulty participating in European calls.

This project translates intercultural dialogue on the scientific and humanistic cultural heritage of Europe into **a concrete action in the form of a pan-European exhibition**, that proves a simple, visible way of getting the message of intercultural dialogue across to people at all levels.

### 2.2. Plant Biodiversity

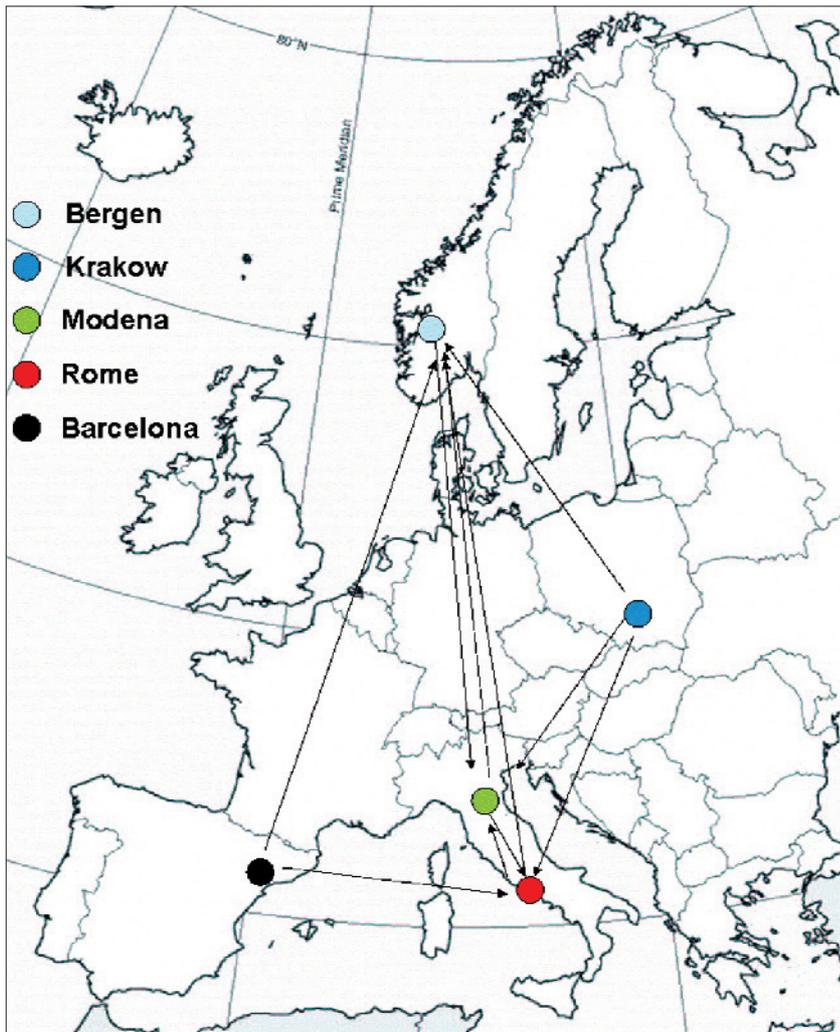
As a signatory party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD; Rio, June 1992), the European Community bears part of the responsibility for the full implementation of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC; The Hague, April 2002, decision VI/9). In order to reach GSPC targets, and before attempting to do so, awareness must be raised among citizens and politicians **about the historical value of plants for human life and traditions**. This project contributes to reaching some of the GSPC targets: i) maintenance of local knowledge, as a step in the plant biodiversity conservation process; ii) promotion of plant education and awareness, in which the importance of plant diversity is incorporated into educational activities.

Within the project, research projects and popularization activities leading to the creation of networks of knowledge on plants as part of the European cultural heritage would be effective for both scientific and cultural reasons. The project is an example of **a basic cultural support system for plant conservation activities, established at international levels**.

### 2.3. Cultural Landscape

According to the European Landscape Convention (2000, ETS no. 176), outlined in the framework of the Council of Europe Campaign "Europe, a common heritage", the landscape '*is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity*'.

Plants are key elements of the landscape. The changes in vegetation brought about by human cultural actions, largely studied by archaeologists and botanists, have played a key role in shaping the natural landscape into a cultural one. These studies, which deal with plant



2. - The five universities that are partners of the PaCE project together with the Centro Universitario Europeo per i Beni Culturali di Ravello.

remains from archaeological sites in Europe, are covered by the project's scientific program. This provides more information on plant exploitation in the different countries, and thereby contributes to **increasing knowledge on the evolution of the cultural landscape**.

### 3. The objectives of PaCE

PaCE has promoted three main objectives to valorise green cultural heritage common to Europe:

1. Transnational mobility of researchers working in the laboratories of partners through meetings, training for young researchers and exchange of information on treatments and methods, in order to adopt the same investigation methods and improve common scientific interests.

2. Transnational circulation of cultural works and products through joint research papers on plants and historical/folk traditions, and a **pan-European**

**exhibition** presenting the research of the countries involved in the project.

3. Intercultural dialogue through the creation of an **international working party** on scientific and humanistic issues, investigating local differences and looking for common history; and through the combination of European languages and traditions on posters, website and this book.

### 4. The PaCE network

The PaCE project has focused on the links between plants and culture in its research and popularization activities. These were based on an innovative partnership among universities, research institutions and museums, and among archaeologists, botanists and zoologists from European countries. The number of people involved in the PaCE activities continued to increase even after the project had started, with the following countries involved: **Italy, Norway, Poland and Spain** as partners (fig. 2), supported by institutions from **Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Greece, Romania, San Marino, and Turkey** (Tab. 1). The PaCE working party has presented scientific knowledge on the significance of plants in human life

and the history of Europe. The complete list of partners and associated partners is reported in the project website: [www.plants-culture.unimore.it](http://www.plants-culture.unimore.it).

The PaCE project was mainly carried out in 2008. This year coincided with important local cultural anniversaries in the partner countries, such as 250 years of the Botanical Garden of Modena, founded by the Duke of Este (Italy), 750 years of the city of Krakow (Poland) and 120 years of the 'St. Kl. Ohridski' University in Sofia (Bulgaria).

### 5. The activities

The PaCE project activities can be grouped into five main types:

- Two **meetings** of the partners were organised, in the cities of Ravello (November 23-24 2007, Italy), and Bergen (April 23-26 2009, Norway) by the two partner teams therefrom.

PARTNERS		
COUNTRY	INSTITUTION	UNIT COORDINATOR
ITALY	University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Department of Palaeo-biology and Botanical Garden	Anna Maria Mercuri
ITALY	University of Rome 'La Sapienza', Department of Plant Biology	Laura Sadori
ITALY	University European Centre for Cultural Heritage of Ravello	Jean-Paul Morel
NORWAY	University of Bergen, Department of Botany	Dagfinn Moe
POLAND	Jagiellonian University of Krakow, Department of Palaeobotany	Jacek Madeja
SPAIN	University of Barcelona – Fundació Bosch I Gimpera, Faculty of Geography and History	Jordi Tresserras Juan
ASSOCIATED PARTNERS		
COUNTRY	INSTITUTION	UNIT COORDINATOR
Hungary	Aquincumi Muzeum, Budapest History Museum	Alice M. Choyke Brigitta Kulcsarne-Berzsenyi
Romania	Institutul de Cerceteri Eco-Muzeale Tulcea	Cristina Dinu Maria Catalina Popa
Greece	Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki Department of Archaeology of the Aristotele University	Polyxeni Adam-Veleni Soultana-Maria Valamoti
France	Musée municipal de Hyères	Martine Sciallano
Repubblica di San Marino	Musei di Stato della Repubblica di San Marino	Paola Bigi Gianluca Bottazzi
Norway	Dept. of Botany, Tromsø Museum, University of Tromsø	Brynhild Mørkved
Norway	National Board of Antiquity (Riksantikvaren), Oslo	Mette Eggen
Norway	Agder Museum of Natural History (Kristiansand)	P.Arvid Aasen
Bulgaria	University 'St. Kliment Ohridski' di Sofia, Dipartement of Botany	Anely Nedelcheva
Spain	Museu D'arqueologia De Catalunya - Departament De Cultura - Generalitat De Catalunya, Monjuïc, Barcelona	Pere Izquierdo
Spain	IBERTUR-Patrimonio, Turismo y Desarrollo Sostenible, Barcelona	Arabella Gonzales
Spain	Università Autonoma di Andalusia, Baeza	Lourdes Soria Herrera
Turkey	Nezahat Gökyigit Botanical Garden, Istanbul	Adil Guner
Turkey	Department of Pharmaceutical Botany, Faculty of Pharmacy, Ankara University	Ayse Mine Gencler Ozkan
Italy	Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei	Annamaria Ciarallo
Italy	Museo Archeologico di Privernum, Priverno, Latina	Margherita Cancellieri
Italy	Museo Nazionale Romano delle Terme di Diocleziano - Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma	Maria Antonietta Tomei
Italy	IBAM-CNR (Istituto per i Beni Archeologici e Monumentali del Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche), sezione di Potenza Scuola di Specializzazione in Archeologia di Matera - Università degli Studi della Basilicata	Dimitris Roubis Francesca Sogliani
Italy	Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici of Emilia Romagna	Chiara Guarnieri
Italy	Musei Civici di Reggio Emilia	Silvia Chicchi
Italy	Centro di Ricerche Storiche 'Palazzo di Cortina', Comune di Carpineti, Reggio Emilia	Linda Olmi

Tab. 1. List of partners and associated partner of the PaCE project.



3. - The Europe made with plants is the cover of the PaCE exhibition hosted in eleven countries of the European continent (drawn by Fabio Cepelli).

- The **scientific research**, based on pollen, seeds/fruits, phytolits, pollen and micro-charcoal analyses from archaeological sites, in addition to ethnobotany and a list of useful European plants and typical European plants, focusing on the links between plants and traditions, art and history, and using up-to-date research carried out by teams of experts in the field. Similarities and dissimilarities in the continental territory were highlighted, especially in terms of plant introduction, exchanges and forgotten plant resources. Research concerned the Roman period, the Mediaeval, the Renaissance, and the Modern ages. Co-operation in joint papers was enabled by exchanges and researcher mobility.

- The **pan-European exhibition** on ‘*Plants and Culture in the history of Europe*’, held in different locations in 11 countries (from September 2008 to July 2009) by a number of partners and associated partners, including institutions that have not previously been involved in the European project. The various branches of the exhibition were staged more or less simultaneously during 2008 (**European Year of Intercultural Dialogue**) and 2009 (**European Year of Creativity**). They were scheduled from to last from one or two weeks to over two months. Posters and virtual representations were provided from all contributors, based on their research and most recent archaeological/botanical data.

Researchers from the 11 countries supplied texts and figures to the coordinator to assemble the exhibition and develop a common format. The map of Europe made up of plants became the opening image of the PaCE exhibition, bringing together all the plants selected to represent each country in one figure (fig. 3; Tab. 2).

One short exhibition version (15-18 posters) and one long one (80 posters) were prepared and files were distributed to all partners for them to adapt to the different locations. Each branch of the exhibition had the same title and cover and was developed along the same lines (e.g. maintaining the same poster contents and order throughout, using the same slide projection methods etc.), with the text supplied in both English and the local language. Each museum adapted the details of its branch of the exhibition to its own experience, and the event also included educational activities. Brochures, press, radio, television etc. were used to publicise the action.

Country	Plant	Notes
Norway	<i>Picea abies</i> (L.) Karst.	symbol of gratitude to the Allies of World War II
Poland	<i>Salix caprea/viminalis</i>	national emblem, used in Easter time
Italy	<i>Arbutus unedo</i> L.	red fruits, white flowers and green leaves were present together on this evergreen shrub recalling the Italian flag
San Marino	<i>Ephedra major</i> Host	this rare plant has the northern station of the Italian peninsula on the Titano Mount
Greece	<i>Acanthus mollis</i> L.	national emblem, plant present in the myths and art
Spain	<i>Dianthus caryophyllus</i> L.	national emblem, symbol of passion and fashion
Bulgaria	<i>Rosa x damascena</i> Miller	national emblem, important in the history and economy
Turkey	<i>Tulipa sprengeri</i> Baker	national emblem, important in the ‘tulip period’ of Ahmed III, in art and traditions
Hungary	<i>Rosa gallica</i> L.	flower of Elisabeth of Hungary, patron saint of the country
France	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i> L.	national emblem, known as “fleur de ‘lys”” by the king Louis VII
Romania	<i>Campanula romanica</i> Savul.	endemic and rare plant included in the protected flora of Europe

Tab. 2. Plants selected as symbol of the contributor countries of the PaCE exhibition (by Giovanna Bosi and Marta Mazzanti).

The temporary exhibition has become a permanent exhibition available on the PaCE website (see above). The exhibition was a real example of a joint action by the PaCE working party.

- **Educational and dissemination activities**, mainly included: i) seminars and conferences that introduced the exhibition and the project, detailing all the partners; ii) pamphlets and posters describing the project displayed in local institutions (universities, museums); iii) activities organised for visiting school groups by museums, which were based on the topics featured on the posters and at the pan-European exhibition; botanical gardens provided guided tours focusing on the theme of plants and culture and also information on PaCE. Newspaper articles and radio interviews helped to raise public awareness of the project.
- The **volume titled 'Plants and Culture: seeds of the cultural heritage of Europe. PaCE, a project for Europe'** contains the scientific results obtained. All the partners have actively and enthusiastically contributed with their papers containing up-to-date results of the scientific research on traditional knowledge, artistic expressions and archaeological/archaeobotanical data from sites in Europe.
- The **PaCE website** is a multilingual website providing descriptions of partner and associated partner teams and data on the project, aimed at a lay audience. The site was created according to the rules on accessibility for the disabled and offered an interactive guide to the up-to-date research on plants and culture and the permanent virtual exhibition. This website is another real example of a joint action by the PaCE working group.

## 6. Conclusions

The PaCE project has performed results which can be deemed valid on a **long-term basis**. In fact, the project produced:

- Scientific papers dealing with past and present knowledge on plant uses and exploitation, and their role as 'seeds' of the common cultural heritage of Europe;

improved knowledge on archaeobotany and archaeological sites; genetic variability of box; a history of selected useful plants from the Roman, Mediaeval and Renaissance Ages through to the present.

- A pan-European exhibition crossed the Europe as a *temporary* event, and has now been rendered *permanent* in the form of a virtual exhibition available on the website.
- The PaCE working party has applied itself generously to increase exchanges and visits among laboratories, to work together and increase expertise. This network will probably and hopefully continue to work together, or to exchange knowledge on scientific and cultural topics. I think that this work has provided, and is providing, an opportunity to familiarize the public with the key role of plants in human life, demonstrating the diversity of plant uses and their role in folk traditions and the history of Europe.

It must be remembered that this was a complex project, completed thanks to the great support of the partners and the associated partners, all of whom are researchers who believed, like me, that this could be an aid in the search for identity and peace among European people.

## References

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