

**20th World Congress of Soil Science**  
Soils Embrace Life and Universe  
Jeju, Korea, June 2014

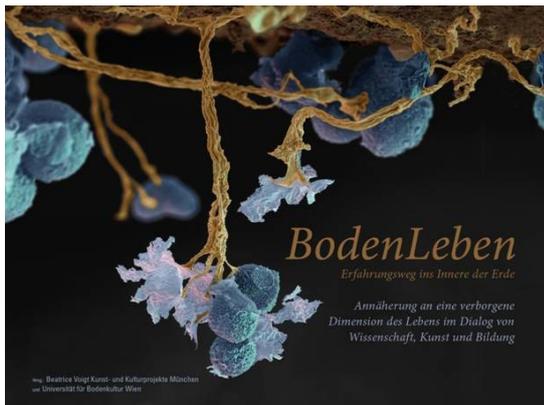
**Commission 4.1 - Soils and Environment**

**Division 4 : The Role of Soils in Sustaining Society and the Environment**  
**Cultural Perspectives on Soils and Soil Science**

**Presentation of the symposium documentation as part of the  
20th World Congress of Soil Science in Jeju, Korea on June 13, 2014**

**The 'Living Soils' Project**  
**Journey into the Earth**

*Approach to a secret dimension of life by building bridges  
between sciences, fine arts, culture and education*



With its incredibly wealthy and diverse inner life the pedosphere forms a 'Critical Zone' whose mechanisms maintain the global equilibrium between hydrosphere, biosphere, lithosphere and atmosphere. Soils enable life on earth! - The 'Living Soils' project is a trans-disciplinary model for education, research and design aiming to impart knowledge and understanding of the complex structure of living soils.

The starting point of our journey is the relationship of humans and soils from the archaic myths of humanity leading to today's age of globalisation and climate change. Soils are a merging world of phenomena and a world of life in dimensions and processes on a scale reaching beyond human life and comprehension. Against this backdrop, coordinates for a sublime approach to living soils are illustrated enhancing awareness and creating sustainable responsibility for humans managing soils and shaping life in innumerable scenarios.

The following subjects outline the general ideas of our contribution in three parts:

***Soils – Basis for creating sustainable values by individuals and society***

The relationship of humans and soils is fundamental. Each civilisation's approach to soils is determined by contextually developed patterns of orientation. Thus the conception of humanity and world derived from the individual understanding of nature and culture shape values, on the basis of which we interpret the world. In view of an almost infinite diversity of human identities and systems in our globalised society the question arises whether there is a resilient basis for supporting the development of individual and societal values. In this sense the goods and services generated by soils are existential.

### ***Soils - Experts for modelling dynamic complex systems in time and space***

The diverse and complex relationship between living organisms and the phenomenal world occur as dynamic processes in space and time. The geographic location as well as geological, biological and climatic conditions play an equally important role as human beings. The pedosphere with its highly sensitive microbial life is the essential driving force for sustaining the biosphere. The concurrence of all life processes involved and their interaction constitute the basis for a holistic quality of life. This interplay is characterised by processes of selforganisation following universal principles.

### ***Soils - Source for bridge building between nature and technology***

A beneficial dialogue between nature and technology is based on the recognition and understanding of natural processes and their significance for diverse manifestations of life. The interface between nature and technology forms a creative potential for bridging ecology and aesthetics and its own quality and beauty. This can be perceived as an essential element of ecological aesthetics inspiring philosophy and fine arts to enter unknown territory. Human beings, as mediators in this dialogue, can experience themselves as a part of nature and so become aware of their role and responsibility in shaping culture in harmony with nature and technology.

***The 'Living Soils' Project – Journey into the Earth*** is conceived as an itinerary for laying the foundation and raising awareness of a culture (Latin cultura “cultivation”, derived from “cultivate, worship, till, farm”) of soil, a limited resource that must be protected. The concept expands economic, ecological and social aspects of a sustainable approach to our precious base of life to include cultural-aesthetic and cultural-ecological dimensions, thus promoting the development towards a culture of sustainability.

### **Keywords**

Building bridges between soil science, fine arts, culture and education;  
Soils as basis for creating sustainable values by individuals and society;  
Enhancing consciousness for the holistic cultural dimension of soils;  
Transdisciplinary approach towards a culture of sustainability;

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