

## Report on Rhizosphere 4: Stretching the Interface of Life

**Rhizosphere 4** took place at the Maastricht Exhibition and Convention Center, in Maastricht, the Netherlands, from 21 June until 25 June 2015. Rhizosphere 4 was attended by 576 attendees from 46 countries, spread over 6 continents. Most delegates (71%) were from Europe. Ten percent of the delegates came from Asia, with a large delegation from China. Other delegate numbers were evenly spread over North America (7%), South America (6%) and Australia (5%). There was a small (1%) delegation from Africa.

The host of the Rhizosphere 4 congress in The Netherlands was the Center for Soil Ecology, CSE, a co-operation between the Wageningen University & Research Centre and the Netherlands Institute of Ecology.

The CSE was founded in 2010 in Wageningen to stimulate academic education, research and application of soil ecology. It stimulates interactions among scientists of the different groups and promotes career opportunities for young and talented researchers. Further, it promotes dissemination of knowledge resulting from fundamental research, enhances practical application and translation of societal questions into fundamental research.

The Local Organizing Committee, Hans van Veen, Liesje Mommer, Ellis Hoffland, Rene Geurts, Wim van der Putten and Jos Raaijmakers together with the convenors have put together an excellent scientific program out of the 634 abstracts received. With 12 keynote presentation from world renowned scientists, 140 oral presentations, 42 poster pitches, 425 poster presentations and 4 roundtables there was a full scientific schedule with top notch rhizospheric research from all over the world.

With 19 parallel sessions we had a very diverse program including Symbiosis, Nutrient Acquisition, Rhizosphere and Climate Change, Metabolomics, Above and Belowground Interactions, New Methods and Concepts in the Rhizosphere and Root-Root Interactions.

The 12 keynote speakers all covered different niches of the rhizosphere research. Our opening speaker Toni Hartmann took us on a journey through the history of rhizosphere research, while the other took us on similar exciting journeys through their research and the future of the field.

The poster sessions on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday during lunch were a great time for discussion and knowledge sharing. Out of all the 425 posters our Local Organizing Committee chose the best three posters for the Student Poster Award. Winners were Jessica Mowle (University of Western Sydney, Australia), Katja Steinauer (University of Leipzig, Germany) and Lin Zhang (China Agricultural University, China).

Nearly one third (30%) of our delegates were students. To stimulate young scientists to attend the meeting we had limited funds available for travel grants. We would like to thank the International Society for Microbial Ecology for their contribution to Rhizosphere 4 and raising our travel grant

budget by €3000,--. This helped us considerably and we were able to grant 26 travel awards out of the 68 submissions to young and promising scientists from over 5 continents.

Aside from the excellent scientific program there was time for some excellent fun. Our conference dinner on Wednesday evening was attended by 253 attendees. The conference dinner was held in the Bonnefantenmuseum. On entrance the attendees were able to tour the museum with a drink and canapé in hand. After the guided tour, dinner was served on the banks of the river Meuse. Due to the great weather this was the perfect location for dinner and drinks. The dinner turned into a party later on when the DJ started spinning great tunes and our scientists showed they surely have moves.

Furthermore we organized five different tours on Thursday. There were both scientific and non-scientific tours to attend. The scientific tours went to explore Research Centre Jülich, Wageningen (Wageningen University and NIOO) and the calcareous grasslands of Limburg. For delegates who wanted to wind down a bit more without science we offered a boat tour with a cave visit and a walking tour through Maastricht. The tours were attended by a total of 118 delegates.

All in all we can look back on a very successful meeting with great science and great people.

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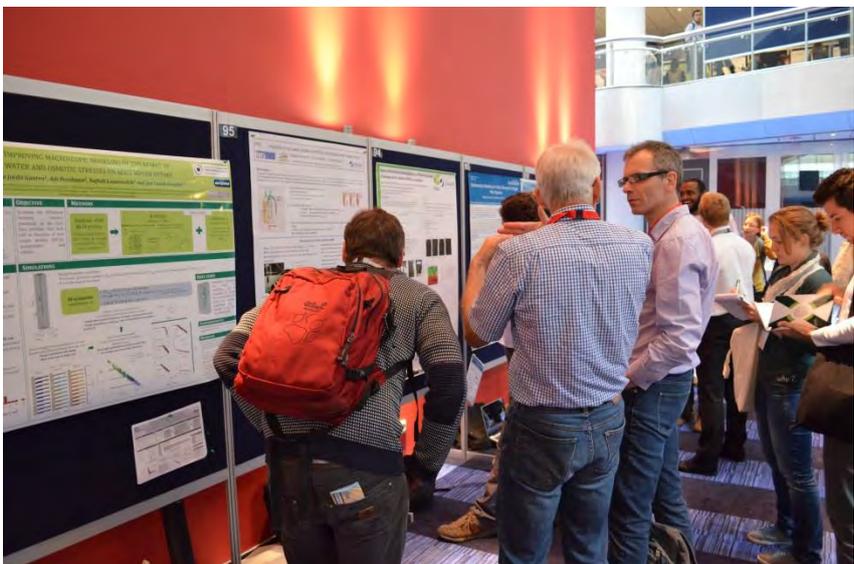
The audience at the keynote of Jeff Dangl



Ian Sanders on stage of the Auditorium



Discussions during the poster sessions



The Local Organizing Committee on stage (Wim van der Putten, Liesje Mommer, Rene Geurts, Ellis Hoffland and Hans van Veen. Missing: Jos Raaijmakers)



Guided tour through the Bonnefantenmuseum at the Conference Dinner

