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Editorial

Dear readers,

The IFLA Europe Communication Group is very glad to announce the 2nd Issue of our IFLA Europe (former EFLA) Journal. This edition was devoted to the theme of adaptive capacity of cities.

Adaptive capacity refers to creating flexibility that allows a better adjustment to new contexts and changing conditions in terms of behavior, values and orientations in order to effectively live in a different environment without significant declines in crucial functions.

On our 21th century´s urban planet with more than a half of the population being urban, in a world of interwoven financial, ecologic and social crises such challenges gain the highest possible relevance. Solutions of how to develop adaptive capacity to hyperurbanisation, environmental degradation, globalisation, social turmoil and resource scarcity seem to be crucial issues for ensuring our survival.

The built environment professions, including landscape architecture as the bridge between those disciplines, are most responsible instances to offer innovative and sustainable solutions of how to design, plan and manage cities. By thematizing adaptive capacity of cities and their character as complex conglomerates of social, ecologic and economic spheres, this issue of the IFLA Europe Journal aims to offer responds on how developing adaptive capacity should influence the way we think, imagine and design our cities. Can adaptive capacity help to mitigate the fatal projections and to create more resilient places?

In this Issue of our Journal we have contribution from across Europe submitted by colleagues with different professional specializations and backgrounds - which also says a lot about the international land interdisciplinary character of the topic. We hope you will enjoy reading and that this Issue of the Journal will answer some questions, open new ones and enhance the discourse on this important topic.

Many thanks go here also to the IFLA Europe Executive Committee, the entire IFLA Europe Communications and Sponsorship Group under the leadership of Martina Cervera, the IFLA Europe National Delegates and colleague Florian Lorenz. Without their grateful help and volontary contribution, starting from the first phases of defining the theme for the 2nd issue of the Journal as well as in its realization, this Issue would not have became realised.

Enjoy!

Best regards,
Haris Piplas, Dipl.-Ing., M.Sc.

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Landscape And Heritage: A Sustainable And Resilient Model For (re)designing Cities

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Abstract

This article will contribute to the discussions on the developing process of cities` construction in relation to the territory. We will argue that urban spaces should be (re)design on a regional scale by prioritising landscape as the ruling force in the analysis and planning of contemporary cities. The rules and limits of a landscape together with the forces of nature and its heritage values will be considered when striving for the long-term goal of developing a new urban landscape, socially-cohesive and ecologically-balanced.

The condition of contemporary landscape and the process of urban planning and designing

The crises affecting our current socioeconomic systems highlights the crises felt in the models for territorial organisation and urban planning. The dominant economic criteria ruling the territorial organisation and urban planning systems manifest themselves in fragmented and undifferentiated landscapes, in cities socially and environmentally degraded, and in the abandonment and destruction of heritage. Rapid, intense and overarching social and territorial changes make urgent a fundamental rethinking of the concepts and models for designing landscape and cities.

Our current landscape originates from a historical process which successively explodes urban limits. First, we could find traditional and historical cities. This was the compact city model characterised by a logic of continuity, multi-function and reduced mobility within the city. In this model, centre and limits were precisely defined and there was a symbiotic relationship established between city and the farming lands. This type of city formed a harmonious and balanced unit. On the other end of the scale we have an emergent city model. This model is characterised by the explosion of the city's limits and a dispersion of uses for the soil together with the spreading of activities and populations over the territory. This is the model of the diffused city where stable and clear urban limits are absent, the building tessitura is broken and its density rarefied. Increased dependency on cars and a deficit in infrastructures and urban designing is also typical of diffused cities. Dilapidation of natural resources, territorial fragmentation, a loss in biodiversity and a disrupted relationship with its surroundings, are all additional contributing factors to the unsustainability of the diffused city model [Rueda, 2000].

The explosion of limits in diffused cities has affected the overall understanding of urban systems, the models for territorial occupation and organization and the traditional contents covered by urbanism. The conventional definition of city as consisting of dense and continuous centre with precise limits, together with its associated designing and planning models, is no longer suitable [Portas, 2004]. A new classification must therefore be found to identify, interpret and intervene in the new urban configurations. Secchi [1999] considers 'contemporary city' as the most appropriated classification for this new urban concept which jointly integrates the traditional, continuous and compact cities together with the extensive and discontinuous diffused cities. For Secchi, a new planning model is required for contemporary cities. One that replaces the characterisation through key opposing concepts (urban/rural, centre/peripheries, concentration/dispersion and so on) with a reading of the city as a joint interconnected unit made up of many inseparable parts. According to this model, cities interdependently combine natural and agricultural systems, that is their hinterland, from which they are inseparable.

Emerging concepts and trends: presumptions for intervention strategies and design practices

The new urban form (whether more or less continuous or dispersed, but interconnected) depends on the relationships and associations established between the constructed and non-constructed spaces (the rural and the natural, but with infrastructures, spaces). Its workings will be considered within ecologically and culturally more complex contexts. An up-to-date analysis of city and its construction will require a joint (re)reading of the cities' spaces [Baista, 2009, p. 88; Costa and Batista, 2011]. Rethinking and act-

ing on the new urban territories will therefore be transferred from a local to a regional scale. This notion accepts the development of the city so that it potentially loses its limits and expands into the territory. The process of urban expansion adopts, moreover, landscape as a model for urbanism [Corner, 2006; Reed, 2006, p.31] by integrating and highlighting the ecological principles and natural processes when designing and planning the city [McHarg, 1992, p.55; 1997; Hough, 2004, p.23].

By taking into account the working logics of agro and ecosystems, urban spaces will in the long term benefit from flexibility and stability. Conciliating socioeconomic with ecological interests will prove beneficial for both population and Nature [Forman, 2004, p. 47; 2001]. This is a new urban and systemic design, a new model of urbanism orientated for the landscape. It covers the values and activities of city and countryside, and promotes a relationship between the different spaces aiming to re-establish the unit urban-rural. It brings urban, natural and traditional farming systems together in order to configure a new sustainable city. A new dimension of landscape and urban designing will invest in the sustainability of local and global urban systems and in their multiple dimensions (ecological, aesthetic, cultural, socioeconomic and institutional).

Contemporary cities are now defined by the reality of their regions and landscape. Landscape intervention becomes therefore another 'problem' for the city. Here, landscape intervention will aim to reconcile the city with the countryside by using strategic measures concerning spatial ordering, functional organisation and the territorial articulation of the city with its natural and farming systems. In order to do so, urbanism, ecology and technology must come together [Ruano, 1999, p.11], and, in cooperation, generate a new urban designing focused on the natural and cultural identity of a place. In this context, landscape is read as a dynamic and mutable means, comprehending the unavoidable interaction between form and process [Corner, 2007], in addition to the following:

1. making visible the natural processes and the ecological urban cycles (atmospheric, hydrologic, organic matter and residues, and energy) which connect the city to its surroundings, and turning these processes and cycles into its central focus [Gorham, 1999];

2. valuing the city's wild, untouched and empty spaces, that is, its natural biotopes. Constituted by wild fauna and flora, the city's natural biotopes are highly resistant to urban dynamics [Hough, 2004, p. 17];

3. considering farming systems as an integral and fundamental part of the urban landscape which covers farmed areas with social, economical and ecological roles, together with the cultural network for leisure activities and environmental protection [Telles, 2003];

4. privileging an economy of means, based upon ecological principles which claim minimum energy expenditure may guarantee maximum environmental, social and economical benefits. On the field of architecture, these same ecological principles declare maximum aesthetic emotion and maximum intellectual impact may be obtained with minimal resources [Montaner, 2002, p. 162]. On this it should be added that both in relation to vernacular architecture and to traditional landscape construction, an economy of means has anonymous and collectively been conceived for generations specialising in achieving maximum results in the fields of beauty, functionality and endurance.

In the present context of a consumer-focused and wasteful society, dominated by fragmentation and chaos, Montaner [2002, p. 182] believe that the most balanced interventions and the best actions are the ones which aim for unifying this disjointed territory. To do so, new formal units and compositional principles such as union, harmony, simplicity and diversity are adopted. By taking into consideration connections to place, culture and landscape, minimum resources and forms are used in order to achieve the best possible interventions, from an ecological and social points of view.

Each city should therefore define its own model for sustainable urban development based upon intrinsic traits (biophysical, socio-economical, historical, cultural, etc.) and future possibilities. This, in the long term, has the potential of generating a harmonious relationship between nature and society [Forman, 2004, p. 23], and allows for the dependability in improved life and environmental conditions. The process that guides cities on the route for sustainability should primarily be based on a system of non-constructed spaces as the structural and skeletal approach for the urbanised region. The free collective production spaces (farming, forestry, cattle-raising), the spaces for environmental and heritage protection, and the leisure and sport-related spaces (greenways network, gardens, parks) help to formalise the urban cultural and ecological structures. They contribute significantly to the spatial and functional organisation of the city by making urbanisation compatible with agriculture, heritage and nature, and by creating resilient multifunctional urban spaces, easily adaptable to social and economical transformations and to the multiple needs of contemporary society.

On the one hand, the jump in scale that goes from the compact city to the territory of diffused urbanisation attributes to landscape a decisive role as an element for urban qualification and (re)structuring [Portas, 2004]. On the other hand, landscape, as a dynamic changing system where nothing is fixed, static or immutable, requires a different and creative approach to the urban project. As it goes beyond the typical architectural and urban considerations on formal and stylistic aspects, landscape demands an approach with a bigger focus on defining a method, a process and emergency configurations. Landscape will, in fact, take in the whole process of city (trans)formation [Corner, 2007; 2006].

Conclusion

Contemporary cities, on their regional framework, should become increasingly reliant on landscape-focused urbanism and landscape architecture. Landscape is viewed here as a means to connect and 'support' different forms and spaces, functions and activities, characterised by great plasticity and adaptability to new programmes. This 'new method' for urban designing considers landscape capable of previewing and anticipating change by offering a flexibility of solutions and negotiation. Landscape is integrated into the urban space and acquires in this way resilience and constancy, becoming, in relation to its ecological and cultural structures, a central concept to urbanism. This methodological process is capable of resolving the haziness typical of conventional urban planning. It contributes, moreover, to the spatial and functional organisation of the urban landscape on a regional scale and, in this way, secures the urban region's global coherence and workings, its cultural identity and environmental and economical sustainability.

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