



**IFLA EUROPE**  
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

## LANDSCAPE AS FOOTPRINTS ON EARTH

Humanity has a long tradition of leaving indelible patterns in the environment. Footprints creating landscape, leaving important cultural reminders, vestiges of great civilisations, a broad heritage of agricultural and rural landscapes, great gardens and parks, transport corridors, managed river systems, urban forests and countryside parks and rich semi-natural habitats. But also, inevitably, scars, like footprints in the permafrost damaging nature beyond reasonable recovery.

Increasingly though, more significant indelible scars are manifest, as vast swaths of rain forest are destroyed, as endless vistas of unsustainable agrarian monocultures are created, crippling wildlife, cultural heritage and amenities, along with dried up rivers systems and deserts, consuming soils, damaging nature, reducing species diversity, exhausting water resources and contributing significantly to climate change. The resulting damage to biodiversity, human cultures and mankind is especially difficult for the poorest and most vulnerable.

We, the undersigned, as representatives of the 34 National Associations of the European Region of the International Federation of Landscape Architects, having considered Footprints in Landscape as a theme for our General Assembly, during a virtual meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2020, make the following statements:

## WE BELIEVE

### *Landscape architecture*

its theory and practice, in urban, peri-urban, rural and wilderness environments, constantly interact with economic, social, cultural and political dynamics. The interaction of people and their environment leaves footprints we perceive as landscape.

**Acknowledging** that landscape, as an area perceived by people, connects nature and culture, into our collective footprints on earth, mankind needs to tread more lightly on the earth for future generations and nature to save the living planet.

**Understanding** that natural resources on which societies rely for their survival and well-being are being continually eroded by our huge negative footprint. Consumption of soils and loss of biodiversity, resulting from human activities relating to excessive exploitation: the destruction and fragmentation of natural habitats, the impact of alien or alien species and mass extinctions, pose major threats to the degradation of diverse ecosystems.

**Conscious** that landscape is subject to an accumulating degradation of environmental values, collateral damage on the quality of life to human and other communities will be affected in the short and long term.

**Realising** that present changes in the economic environment have led to a huge, accelerating impact in the transformation of landscapes, contributing to the development of enormous negative footprints thus continuing to threaten both culture and nature.

## WE URGE

the IUCN, WWF, UNESCO, FAO, UNEP, Council of Europe, the European Union, EU DG Environment, EU DG Agri and IFLA Member states:

**to include** within comprehensive landscape strategies and other sectoral policies, the need to develop net positive footprints in landscape development, protection and management so as to:

**Respond** to the public's wish to enjoy high quality landscapes and to play an active part in the development of landscapes; believing that the landscape is a key element of individual and social well-being and that its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone;

**Ensure** that each society undertakes to identify its own landscapes, noting changes and assessing the landscapes thus identified, taking into account the special economic, natural and cultural values assigned to them by interested parties and the population concerned.

**Promote** through design new and traditional solutions that can be used to strengthen the capacity to develop a net positive footprint in productive, ecological and cultural-aesthetical sense, giving special attention to Nature-Based Solutions.

**Recognise** that landscape architects work with Nature-based Solutions. Their basic material was and still is the abiotic and biotic nature the earth provides us. They have the training, experience and expertise to recognise the importance of the relationship between nature and culture in the perception, planning and management of landscapes. They act to enable people and nature to remember, activate and realise positive footprints into sustainable landscapes for all creatures and materials. Landscape Architects' designs are managed adaptively, based on evidence; equitably balance trade-offs between achievement of their primary goal(s) and the continued provision of multiple benefits ecosystems provide through a dynamic conservation strategy; effectively and equitably manage trade-offs; are based on inclusive, transparent and empowering governance processes and are economically viable.

**Realise** that the footprints of Nature-Based Solutions finally result in a net gain to biodiversity and ecosystem integrity provisioning cultural and amenity values.

**Following** other international and European texts on the matter such as:

- The EU Green Deal (2019)
- The European Landscape Convention (CoE, Florence, 2000)
- The Davos Declaration (2018)
- European Heritage Strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century – Strategy 21 (2017)
- 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)
- Paris Agreement on Climate Change (Paris, 2015)
- European Union framework for climate and energy 2020 – 2030 (EU 2014)
- Environmental action programme 2020 (European Union, 2013)
- Convention on the Promotion and Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005)
- Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003)
- European Climate Change Programme (EU ECCP, 2000)
- The Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development (UNESCO, Stockholm, 1998)
- UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 1992)

- Bern Convention, Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (CoE 1979)
- The Recommendation on participation by the people at large in cultural life and their contribution to it (UNESCO, Nairobi, 1976)
- The World Heritage Convention (Paris, 1972), whose Operative Guidelines first expressed the notion of Cultural Landscapes
- The European Social Charter (CoE, 1961)

17<sup>th</sup> October 2020