



## LEARNING from LANDSCAPES

**The Landscapes we live in are social and cultural interpretations of nature. They represent the living archive of humankind's technological and social development in its strive to adapt itself to natural circumstances. As such, landscape resilience<sup>1</sup> is crucial to people's livelihoods, and it will provide answers to both, socio-economic needs as well as ecological issues. As a society, we are confronting the realities of increasingly rapid change and the challenge to create a sustainable lifestyle, while maintaining and improving the quality of life for all inhabitants.**

The undersigned, as representatives of the 34 National Associations of the European Region of the International Federation of Landscape Architects, having considered what we can learn from Landscapes at our general assembly in Lisbon,

### **WE BELIEVE**

#### ***landscapes are knowledge***

*they can teach us about nature and our own culture, providing we are able to read them and make sense of them.*

#### ***landscapes are memory***

*we need to allow for constant change while working with the historic layers and the identity they provide.*

**Understanding** that landscapes are the result of longterm mechanisms, of intangible and physical processes, repositories of ancestral knowledge, which made the best use of natural dynamics balancing them with the specific requirements of human societies. Also showing us the results of unbalanced relations, they can teach us good and bad examples about both troublesome and fruitful relations.

**Conscious** that how we change the landscape and what we add to it is a decision that influences the life of generations to come. Throughout history, landscapes have been subject to changes, many vulnerable or lost, once the relations between human communities and natural systems are interrupted.

**Recognizing** that landscapes are now confronting various dynamic changes. The ability of natural and managed ecosystems to adapt is unable to cope or react in order to slow down the rate of biodiversity loss. At the same time we are losing landscapes that were familiar to us. Constant urbanization is a reality around many of the economic centres in our countries.

**Aware** that as a result, many landscapes have undergone a deterioration process which is having significant impact on human livelihoods and that many communities are changing the way they live, work and socialize, possibly migrating and abandoning their landscapes. Once a long lived balance is lost, it is very hard and also costly to renew it, as creating new landscape quality is a difficult task.

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<sup>1</sup> Resilience is: a) the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; elasticity;  
b) the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

## WE URGE

the Council of Europe, the European Union and all IFLA Europe Member States to develop a holistic vision regarding cultural, social, political, environmental, and economic balance beyond political borders, thus

**Taking** constant change into account in their social, economic and environmental policies. This means to follow an integrated and holistic approach to planning, which will develop strategies for landscapes to adapt to climate change, increase ecosystem resilience and foster the sustainable use of all our natural and cultural resources.

**Ensuring** the involvement of local communities, enhancing local knowledge about landscape and the way they understand it and adapt it to their needs. The lessons learned from the European landscapes, will teach us sustainability and help to create true quality of life for generations to come.

**Committing** to work closely with all stakeholders, international organizations, civil society and scientific community. By mobilising public support at local, regional, national and European level we can address the multiple challenges in the political arena.

**Promoting** research, sustainable development and examples of best practice in landscape planning, design and maintenance. The discourse of how landscapes can be or should be altered needs to embrace the holistic vision of landscape architecture. We can promote the sharing of knowledge about our landscapes and we can help to arrive at decisions on how to make the necessary changes.

**Assisting** developing countries, which are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of rapid change.

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

- The European Social Charter (CoE, 1961)
- The World Heritage Convention (Paris, 1972), whose Operative Guidelines first expressed the notion of Cultural Landscapes
- UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992);
- The Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development (UNESCO, Stockholm, 1998), which recognises the importance of civil society within a democratic framework
- The European Landscape Convention (CoE, Florence, 2000).

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