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Towards an International Landscape Convention

Background

The quality of the environment is a key component of every society's identity and robust economic growth. Certain remarkable, valuable, historical and beautiful landscapes are given sanctuary, but at present, the everyday landscape, the social, economic and physical context of our lives, has no champion. Fragmented into various components that are green, grey or blue, agricultural, historical or ecological, landscapes are often undervalued and neglected, seemingly belonging to everyone, but actually to no one.

Each week, across the world, communities are experiencing benefits, but also feeling the impacts of industrialisation, urbanisation, and the search for energy. Lives are endangered or affected by poor or badly planned development. Problems are caused by demographic shifts and changing patterns of work and habitation, as well as climate change, the depletion of natural resources, de/reforestation, difficulties relating to food production, biodiversity, heritage, and a host of other issues relating to aspects of land use change and development. The quality of the landscapes of daily life is constantly being eroded.

A more strategic and holistic approach is desperately needed to provide support to communities in dealing with these global threats and challenges.

Why a Convention?

A new international convention would encourage a different way of thinking about the landscape by:

- Considering the landscape as a cultural and natural concept, a physical and abstract entity, having economic and social value
- Focusing on the experience people have of their physical environment, dealing with the protection of the past as well as the shaping of the future
- Recognising the vital connections between governance, culture, health and economics
- Offering inspiration through principles and guidelines, encouraging work across established institutional, geographical and disciplinary boundaries

- Providing leadership, sharing and rewarding good practice
- Dealing with the whole space, the rural and the urban, wilderness and man-made, the most treasured and memorable and as well as the unloved and degraded, will help establish the landscape as a holistic tool for planning, managing and creating sustainable development

Who is it for?

Recognising that different cultures have different ideas about the landscape, a convention will be comprehensive and overarching yet flexible, encouraging national, regional and local interpretation and application. The idea will empower communities and people who are concerned with economy, health, and sustainability of their culture and environment.

Acting as a catalyst for sustainable development, a new convention would encourage intergovernmental, transnational and public-private cooperation. Stimulating integrated policy making, unlocking greater value for people and the economy for now and in the future, it will help raise aspirations, reinforce democracy, encourage local culture and by recognising the true value of the landscape help improve the quality of life for all.

Contacts

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