



ECLAS CONFERENCE STATEMENT

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TAKE CARE!

Towards Planetary Landscape Architecture

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Introduction Statement

The urgencies of our time is no longer abstract. Climate change, biodiversity loss, soil degradation, water scarcity, flooding and social inequality are reshaping everyday life. These interconnected challenges become tangible in the landscape and require landscape architecture to evolve from spatial production into a practice of care. *Take Care* calls for awareness, responsibility and action. It means respecting planetary limits, recognizing the consequences of human interventions and using design to sustain life at planetary, regional and local scales. Care is a continuing practice: observing before intervening, considering relationships and consequences, remaining accountable for long-term outcomes and adapting when conditions change. Design includes stewardship, monitoring and learning.

Landscape is not a passive backdrop or empty surface for development. It is a living system in which natural processes, cultural histories, economic activities and everyday practices are interwoven. Taking care of the landscape means understanding these relationships, working with landscape processes and nurturing their regenerative capacities. Landscape architecture connects ecological knowledge, spatial imagination and societal action. To fulfil this role, the discipline must broaden its foundations and strengthen its agency through collaboration across research, education, policy and practice.

Landscape architecture cannot resolve the planetary crisis on its own. Political choices, economic transformation, scientific research, technological innovation and societal engagement remain essential. Its distinctive contribution lies in connecting ecological processes with spatial development, working across scales and time, making complex relationships visible and translating knowledge into tangible alternatives. This provides a basis for grounded optimism: confidence that informed, collective action can create meaningful change. This memorandum identifies five pathways towards a planetary landscape architecture of care.



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I. Reframe Our Worldviews

Landscapes are not objects outside ourselves, but living and evolving relationships of which humans are part. Our interventions therefore affect ecological processes, cultural meanings, social relations and future generations. Taking care requires a shift from control and exploitation towards reciprocity, stewardship and coexistence. It also means questioning whose values shape landscapes, which forms of life are recognized and who bears the benefits and burdens of spatial change. Taking care here means:

- recognizing landscapes as living, dynamic and interconnected systems;
- understanding humans as participants in, rather than masters of, nature;
- respecting planetary limits and the intrinsic value of non-human life;
- questioning dominant assumptions about growth, ownership, progress and control;
- addressing justice, power and intergenerational responsibility;
- connecting local interventions to regional and planetary consequences;
- designing with humility, reciprocity and long-term commitment;
- recognizing that care may also involve restraint, uncertainty and deliberately choosing not to intervene.

II. Renew Our Design Methods and Tools

Designing for life begins with how landscapes are seen, interpreted and altered. Fieldwork, mapping, modelling, drawing and scenario building should connect analytical, experiential and creative knowledge. Digital technologies such as GIS, XR and artificial intelligence can support this work, provided they help reveal relationships and enable informed decisions. Care requires methods that validate lived spatial practices, redistribute agency and make hidden environmental and social dynamics visible. Participation should not be regarded as a single procedural step, but as part of long-term governance and stewardship. Digital and analytical methods can reveal processes such as drought stress, nocturnal ecologies and patterns of use. Sensory and phenomenological approaches complement these methods by engaging sound, smell, touch, heat and memory. Experimental fieldwork, including walking, story listening and citizen science, can connect local experiences, memories and ecological knowledge to design and management. Research through design should be further developed as a practice of care. By exploring alternatives, making possible futures tangible and reflecting on the consequences of interventions, it connects knowledge production with ethical and spatial responsibility. This requires iterative experimentation, rigorous evaluation and continued learning with landscapes, communities and other disciplines. Taking care here means:

- reading the landscape before intervening;
- connecting soil, water, ecology, culture and human use;
- combining digital, analytical, sensory and embodied forms of inquiry;
- working across spatial and temporal scales, including human and more-than-human temporalities;

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- developing adaptive strategies rather than fixed end states;
- testing design alternatives rigorously and communicating their expected effects transparently;
- evaluating interventions and learning from their performance;
- developing research through design as an iterative and collaborative practice of care that connects inquiry, imagination and responsible action.

III. Engage Diverse Voices

Resilient and just landscapes require the meaningful involvement of communities, Indigenous and local knowledge, under-represented groups, future generations and non-human life. Participation should not be limited to consultation or formally organized moments, but should influence decisions and continue through implementation, management and adaptation. Care does not require us to fully know, understand or agree with every other perspective. It also means allowing space for difference, conflict, uncertainty and what may remain unheard. In landscapes affected by trauma, careful listening is particularly important to avoid intensifying harm. Taking care here means:

- listening and engaging from the outset and over time;
- recognizing human, non-human, local and experiential forms of knowledge;
- making participation accessible, consequential and properly supported;
- paying attention to obscured, suppressed or silenced actors and relationships;
- sharing authorship while distributing responsibility fairly;
- creating spaces for trust, autonomy, disagreement and unexpected outcomes;
- communicating knowledge and design proposals beyond expert audiences;
- remaining aware of our own position, values and power.

IV. Act on Urgent Transitions

Climate adaptation, biodiversity recovery, urbanization, circularity, public health and the energy and food transitions converge in all kinds of landscapes. Urban extension and transformation, circular land use and the maintenance of existing landscapes add further urgency. These transitions offer opportunities, but also carry ecological, cultural and social risks. Landscape architecture can connect these challenges and translate broad ambitions into spatial strategies and concrete interventions. It can explore, visualize and communicate the value of approaches that combine a planetary perspective with site-specific knowledge and integrated spatial action. Taking care here means:

- treating climate, biodiversity, health and spatial justice as interconnected;
- using natural and landscape systems as a foundation for spatial development;
- prioritizing regeneration, adaptation, maintenance and reuse;
- creating multifunctional landscapes for people and nature;

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- combining immediate action with long-term spatial perspectives and transformation;
- safeguarding ecological and public values throughout design, implementation and management;
- monitoring how landscapes respond over time and adapting interventions where necessary.

V. Transform Landscape Architecture Education

Future landscape architects must be prepared to work with uncertainty, complexity and conflicting interests. Education should foster ecological literacy, ethical awareness, critical reflection and collaboration. The design studio can become a laboratory of care, connecting students with real landscapes, communities and challenges. Education should encourage students to move beyond desk-based analysis and engage directly with landscapes by walking, observing, touching, smelling, listening and sensing. It should support inquiry into not only what a place is, but also what it means to different human and non-human actors. A pedagogy of care also begins with self-awareness. Students and educators must reflect on their own role, values, cultural context and positionality before facilitating collaboration or speaking on behalf of others. Building trust requires long-term relationships that extend beyond the duration of an individual course or academic project. Taking care here means:

- placing planetary limits and social justice at the heart of curricula;
- combining scientific, spatial, artistic and experiential knowledge;
- using embodied fieldwork, critical dialogue, storytelling, collaborative stewardship and other alternative methods of inquiry;
- learning with communities and landscapes;
- moving from merely caring about landscapes to actively caring for them;
- recognizing restraint, maintenance and even non-intervention as legitimate design positions;
- supporting experimentation and responsible innovation;
- balancing deep engagement with sufficient critical distance to enable students to make clear design decisions;
- avoiding an overload of themes and actors that may lead to paralysis or obscure the distinctive contribution of landscape architecture;
- preparing students for interdisciplinary and collaborative practice.

These commitments ask landscape architects to act as gardeners at every scale – from soil and backyard to neighbourhood, city, region and river basin. A gardener observes, initiates, nurtures and adjusts rather than seeking complete control. To cultivate a region means creating the conditions in which the best qualities of nature, culture and society can emerge and flourish.

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A Shared Agenda

The transition towards a practice of care requires collective commitment.

Researchers should develop interdisciplinary and applicable knowledge about how landscapes function, change and can be regenerated. They should combine rigorous evidence with experiential, local and more-than-human knowledge, and communicate the anticipated effects and limitations of design interventions transparently.

Educators should prepare critical, imaginative and responsible professionals who can work across disciplines, cultures and scales. They should cultivate awareness, attentiveness and the capacity to act without overwhelming students with the expectation that they must understand or solve everything.

Policymakers should recognize landscape as vital infrastructure and use landscape systems as a foundation for long-term spatial policy and investment. They should create the institutional continuity, resources and regulatory conditions required for long-term care, monitoring and stewardship.

Practitioners should embed care throughout planning, design, implementation and management, involving communities and remaining accountable for long-term outcomes. They should combine spatial imagination with methodological rigour, careful listening and a willingness to adapt – or refrain from intervention – when circumstances require it.

From Principles to Action

To turn these commitments into practice, we call on researchers, educators, policymakers and practitioners to:

- make an integrated understanding of landscape systems the starting point for policy and design;
- resource participation properly and ensure that contributions can genuinely influence decisions;
- combine scientific, local, experiential and more-than-human knowledge;
- define ecological, spatial and social ambitions that can be evaluated over time;
- test alternatives, communicate consequences and monitor the performance of interventions;
- invest in long-term stewardship, maintenance and relationships rather than one-off projects;
- work across disciplines and scales: from planetary systems and regions to neighbourhoods and backyards;
- remain involved, learn from change and adapt actions when landscapes respond in unexpected ways.



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Take Care is both an ethical position and a practical commitment. It calls on landscape architecture to connect knowledge, imagination and action in support of landscapes that sustain life. It asks us to move from caring about landscapes to actively caring for them – and to remain accountable for what our interventions set in motion.

Together, we must:

Take care.

Take into account.

Take responsibility.

Stay involved.

Take action.

Design for life.

