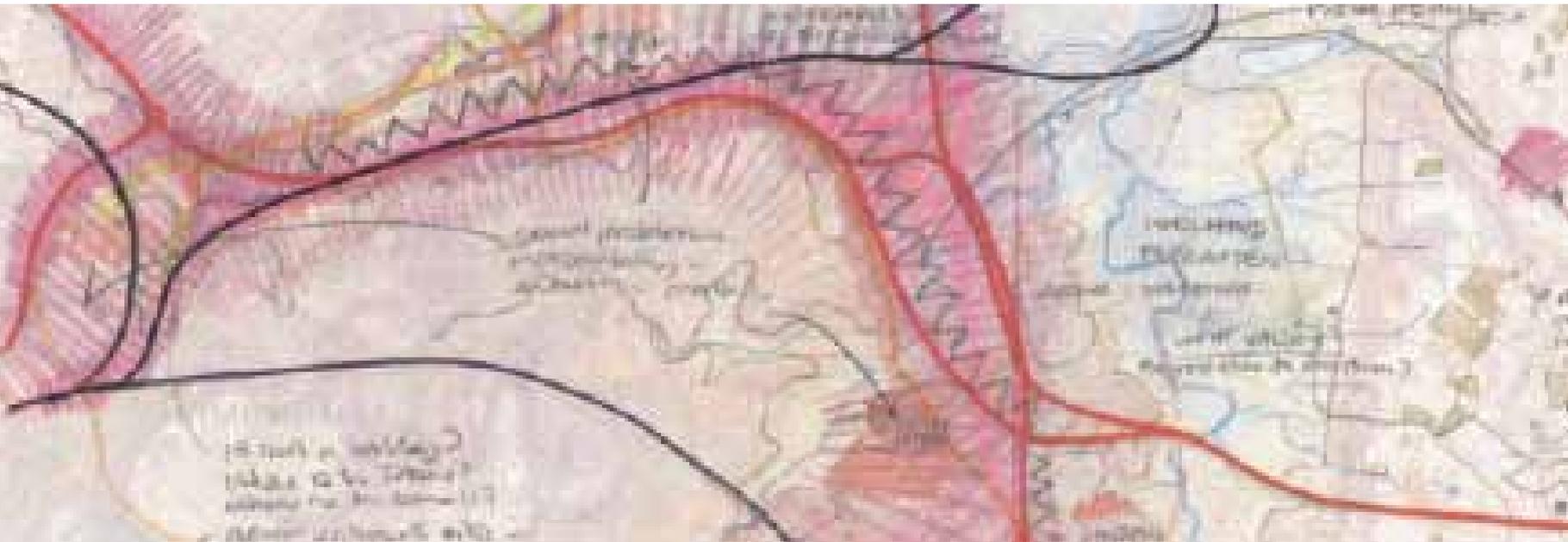


Bruno Marques, Kathryn Moore

BREAKING DOWN



Planning hierarchies are changing, with the landscape determined as the lead driver. Image: A landscape vision for HS2, a new high-speed train line in Great Britain, by Kathryn Moore.

Silos And Compartments

Emerging from the safety blanket of its 20th-century technological and scientific parameters, landscape architecture is increasingly being recognised as a broad cultural, ecological, and artistic practice. Leading practitioners, understanding that economic sustainability and cultural identity are just as much a part of their remit as raising aspirations and ex-

The International Federation of Landscape Architects aims to launch an International Landscape Convention to force a holistic and strategic approach to the landscape.

pressing ideas through technologies, rely on a geographic sensibility, a strong sense of social and ethical responsibility, and a knowledge of the spatial implications of governance, finance and transport, health, and education.

A far cry from the old-fashioned idea that design is whimsical and subjective, that planning is objective and fixed, and that landscape management is simply a matter of science, this is a vastly expanded field of practice, demonstrating skill and expertise in understanding the context within which the development processes take place – whatever the scale – in order to shape the future of the environment. An ambiguous, complex, multidisciplinary initiative – reflected in various IFLA documents such as the proposal to the ILO (2008), the Rio document on the future development of the profession (2009), the Birmingham document setting out guidance for landscape education (2010), and the recent UNESCO/IFLA

education document – this approach was embodied in the Florence Declaration on Landscape (2012) and underpins the proposed International Landscape Convention (ILC).

Led by an emerging generation of professionals, the ILC reflects the renaissance that is taking place as society, governments, and investors begin to appreciate the value and complexity of the landscape. Its potential to mediate between administrative, technical, social, and cultural forces was evident in the UNESCO expert seminar held to develop the proposal. It counted lawyers, landscape architects, architects, geographers, engineers, biologists, anthropologists, ecologists, and developers among its participants.

Extending the scope of design into policy and expanding traditional legislative concerns with landscapes that survive modern development, the ILC aims to inform a more sustainable cultural, social, and economic future. In IFLA, it is believed that an international convention is necessary because it will encourage a more holistic and strategic approach to the landscape. This is crucial in meeting the major global challenges created by industrialization, urbanization, energy, and demographic shifts, as well as climate change, the depletion of natural resources, deforestation, biodiversity, heritage, issues relating to quality of life, and other aspects of land-use development; these challenges do not respect territorial boundaries. It also responds to the urgent need to provide strategic design leadership at a regional, national, and international level. As one of the members of the UNESCO expert seminar observed,

every week people are dying because of bad decision-making in relationship to development and change. We have to develop a new approach.

The benefits are clear. An international convention will influence government bodies. Providing excellent leadership and expertise, and leveraging the support of other agencies, it will help those seeking to champion the landscape to articulate arguments convincingly and persuasively and help communities deal with the many threats to their everyday landscape. It will challenge preconceptions and reward good practice, empowering and providing support for those communities and organizations across the world concerned with the health, development, and sustainability of their landscapes.

Understanding the landscape not only as a physical entity but also as a way of life, as a powerful, evocative concept reflecting our values and ambitions, is key to erasing the uncrossable lines and boundaries that demarcate specific, special areas listed in other legislative tools relating to the landscape. Dispensing with the political, economic, and social wrangling relating to whether land or communities are in or outside of the red line that has for so long embodied the piecemeal approach to the landscape, it also opens up debate, encouraging new and surprising ways to articulate the social, cultural, and physical context of our lives. There are no rules, methodologies, or procedures set in stone. We can be as constricted or unconfined as our imaginations allow.

Building on the definition of landscape given by the European Landscape Convention and focusing on the relationship between people

and their physical environment allows for national, regional, and local interpretation and application, as appropriate in China as it is in Alaska, in Turkey as it is in Sweden. Dealing with the experience people have of the landscape – shaped by ideas, materiality, and culture – is an entirely different approach.

To have any real chance of providing a lasting blueprint for the landscape, this powerful, integrated vision needs to be absorbed into all of the decision-making institutions and organisations responsible for policy, strategic or regional planning at a national and international level, and education. But it won't be easy. Concepts carefully knitted together can be painstakingly, even innocently, picked apart by those not familiar with the ideas or ambition of the document. If we want to move beyond the institutional and disciplinary silos, we have to change views, change minds, and change the way we talk about the world. Expanding our concepts and ideas, we must develop a better descriptive vocabulary to help seeing

“Understanding the landscape not only as a physical entity but also as a way of life, as a powerful, evocative concept reflecting our values and ambitions, is key to erasing the uncrossable lines and boundaries that demarcate specific, special areas ...”

things from a different perspective. The role of language, advocacy, patience, and determination in all of this is vital and demanding. It requires strong leadership.

For bibliography see page xxx.