

WHY WE MUST RE-DOUBLE OUR EFFORTS!

Speaking notes Brian Mark Evans

Thank you Gillian, thank you Rachel.

As an earth scientist, a planner and a designer I have had the good fortune to work with the landscape for 40 years: from St Andrew Square to the Shetland Islands, from St Petersburg to Shanghai. This has left me with an abiding interest in, and concern for, the importance of evidence.

The finding of the UN research for which I was lead author (***Towards a city-focused, people-centred and integrated approach to the New Urban Agenda***) was last week adopted by Ministerial Declaration by the 56 member states of the UNECE as the basis for their future work in the field of sustainable urbanism. The research identified a cocktail of challenges that face our society in the north in the coming years: climate change, ageing, local fertility, migration, automation, inequality, affordability and environmental risk.

There is every indication that migration to the north and to the city will continue for the foreseeable future throughout the developed countries of the northern hemisphere. This will be accompanied by research trends in urban concentration and urban sprawl. However, there is also paradigm shift in the global north from ***the industrial city*** to ***the knowledge city*** that Scotland's cities are well placed to take advantage of. In the knowledge city, the means of production has become knowledge itself. The industrial city required access to raw materials and markets with specialised transportation networks, the in-migration of a significant labour force to power the industry and later the zoning of land for efficient industry and population health. The knowledge city however has no spatial needs beyond proximity and access to universities, airports and cultural districts. The knowledge city demands mixed-use neighbourhoods and an experience economy. The importance of image and attractiveness, of place itself, has become paramount.

In essence, the Ministerial Declaration – and the research that supports it – is concerned with the implementation of the United Nations' 17 ***Strategic Development Goals*** for the security and improvement of the human habitat. And landscape and natural capital are embedded in and essential to the delivery of 8 of the SDGs. Indeed it could be argued to all 17.

Reading '***A Nation with Ambition***', Scotland's program for government in this light, it is clear that there is a significant degree of congruence with action at the national level in Scotland that is intended to deliver on the global SDGs. '***A Nation with Ambition***' is an excellent document and recognised as such throughout the UK and internationally.

In '***Growing Awareness: How green consciousness can change perceptions and places***', the book that I edited together with my wife Sue Evans, there are many echoes of these issues expressly related to landscape and the natural and urban environments: climate change; urban concentration; wellness not illness; stewardship of water systems; the onset of the knowledge age; the assimilation of best practice; a new normal of green to grey infrastructure and a new landscapes aesthetic. In terms of our purpose this evening, the relevance of ***Growing Awareness*** is its content is entirely related to green and blue infrastructure: to the landscape, the natural and urban ecosystems internationally and in Scotland.

In terms of our purpose today, perhaps the most significant conclusion of *Growing Awareness* concerns – the mainstreaming of green consciousness. Many of you will know ‘*The Highlands and the roots of green consciousness*’, T.C. Smout’s excellent paper that he wrote for *Scottish Natural Heritage* when that body was established in 1992. Smout traces the move from 18th and 19th century romanticism, through 20th century science to the emergence of green thinking into political mainstream as the 21st-century approached. Today it is clear that he was right to observe this transition.

So why, when we have such an excellent national government programme, so many first class documents and policies and when we are known internationally for the quality of our landscape, natural capital and build heritage, do we need to redouble our vigilance and effort to observe and conserve our landscape and natural and urban ecosystems?

Well, to uphold this reputation, we need to be alive to the challenges of the 21st century that I have mentioned above and their consequences for spatial policy and society. And I have not mentioned the wrecking ball of Brexit and populism.

We have been good at explaining the importance of landscape, natural capital and our ecosystems. It is known throughout Scotland and internationally as ‘a good thing’. However we have so much of it, it is often taken for granted. Therefore we need to redouble our message about the importance of landscape, natural capital and ecosystems to our daily lives – the way we live and the way we work – essential to our well-being and prosperity. Indeed it is existential to Scotland as we know it today.

We have ambition as a country: we are able to fund major elements of physical infrastructure – the Queensferry Crossing, the dual-ling of the A9, and, it is to be hoped that we can find similar levels of investment to fund equally important aspects of green infrastructure such as the nationally important Central Scotland Green Network.

For fragmentation of the ecosystem does not happen overnight. This takes time and carelessness. Every new dual carriageway, powerline or windfarm is pored over, volumes of documents are produced and the consequences of these developments examined in minutiae in the name of mobility and of energy security. However, the creeping industrialisation of our landscape leads to the attrition of the very qualities that we are renowned for: a clean green and accessible country.

Landscape change is slow and pernicious. It is cumulative and when finally obvious to all, hard if not impossible to reverse. For these reasons change needs to be understood. And it needs to be designed for. Not only to mitigate effect on landscape and natural environment but to positively contribute to their enhancement. So we will need national policies in these febrile times to ensure that we have the institutional framework to support the aims of the document that is launched tonight. In these times, it will not be good enough to set targets nationally and believe or hope that the market will provide. Therefore to me, mainstreaming green consciousness means that daily decision-making is permeated with thought for the quality of our landscapes and ecosystems and that their enhancement is planned and designed for.

In Scotland, we have the technology and capability to address these challenges. Scotland’s

landscape and our natural capital needs to be an equal and central pillar of community and business development in the prosecution of '***A Nation with Ambition***'.

We need national policy, well resourced and astute agencies. The Landscape Institute cannot, should not and does not want to prosecute this vision on its own. That will take all of us. This mission needs a collation of the willing – across government, communities, professionals and charities – to carry it forward and to make it central to the body politic and to our civil society in the 21st-century.

Thank you

Landscape for Scotland

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Professor Brian Mark Evans
Professor of Urbanism + Landscape
Mackintosh School of Architecture, The Glasgow School of Art





