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Making COP26 count

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A fractured planet

In 2007, Landscape published its first edition devoted to the topic of climate change. The cover showed a tree half-alive, and a landscape both arid and fertile. Two years ago, Landscape published its second edition devoted to the same topic. This time it used the familiar image of a lonely earth viewed from space. And for this edition, we have followed the imagery adopted by COP26. But the image is fractured. Over this period, the LI has declared a climate emergency and published a Climate and Biodiversity Action Plan. It has also published a paper on Greener Recovery and Landscape for 2030 demonstrating how landscape practice can respond to the climate crisis.

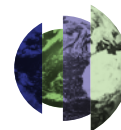
This edition of the journal goes one stage further. We ask those responsible for the future of the profession to speculate on what needs to change to achieve any hope of reaching net zero. We ask students to consider how education needs to change by 2030 [page 16] and we ask tutors to explain how they will be teaching net zero [page 28]. We publish the IFLA Climate Action Statement, a world-wide call to action; and we complement this with a summary of the work that members of UK Landscape Architects Declare have undertaken over the past two years [page 10] and the LI's policy position [page 7]. We examine a collaboration between landscape and architecture students in Bangladesh and Birmingham [page 22], and we explore the pioneering research on water management led by Newcastle University in Colombia [page 40].

Judy Ling Wong considers the links between landscape practice and citizen energy in achieving climate justice and climate equity [page 44], and Ed Wall looks at designing for direct action [page 36]. We visit Glasgow to see how it is preparing to welcome COP26 from Sauchiehall Street [page 52] to the City Council [page 47], and we contrast approaches to tackling climate emergency in Bradford [page 56] and in a national park [page 61].

A new website from HTA [page 63], a review of the Pathfinder Carbon Calculator [page 65] and an interview with climate activist Alice Bell about her new book [page 67] bring together a catalogue of ways in which students, academics and practitioners can make both a personal and a professional commitment to making COP26 count for the landscape profession and for all of us.

Paul Lincoln
Commissioning editor





Making COP26 count

Sue Morgan joined the Landscape Institute as CEO at the beginning of September. Together with the President, she will be representing the LI at COP26.

Sue Morgan



CEO, Landscape Institute

I am delighted to be attending COP26. Whatever the outcome of this hugely important gathering, we must plan what we do next carefully. How we translate the dialogue and discourse that takes place into action and how we continue to present our change manifesto as one which is achievable, with real impact, will be the key to success.

As landscape users, practitioners, policy makers and advocates, we need to appreciate how each aspect of climate emergency interacts with the need for both climate equity and justice. And we must learn one of the most significant lessons of the COVID-19 crisis: that major catastrophes generally affect those who are the most disadvantaged.

Working with collective effort and across sectors is key to success. I am heartened and encouraged by the zeitgeist of thinking that is placing social and environmental value at the centre of funding policy. For example, Flora Samuels at Reading University¹, Mariana Mazzucato at UCL and the IIPP² as well as the National Infrastructure Commission³ and the Quality of Life Foundation⁴, are all developing frameworks to show value for the environment, health and social equity. Seeing practical application through government backed innovation, such as Vinnova in Sweden⁵, and Architecture Design

Scotland⁶, is inspiring and shows how government-backed initiatives can make a difference.

Seeing new enthusiasm and regulatory compliance by finance institutions to develop new products and services to fund green initiatives and address the UN Sustainable Goals is also exciting. A good example of this is the new Green Finance Institute⁷.

We know as a profession that our work is inherently collaborative, that we have the ability to work across disciplines, that climate change is causing problems with nature and land. The landscape profession thinks holistically, we therefore understand systems of both nature and climate, so we are essential actors in the staging of the COP26 discourse and beyond COP. It is essential, therefore, that we play our role and make our voices heard.

One of the people who most eloquently expresses the complexity of tackling climate emergency is the poet Zena Edwards says in her blog 'When I think about climate change, my default mode is to think environmental justice, visualise all the small grass roots community projects and movements around the world as an interconnected web of hive minds on the ground, with dirt in their fingernails, skin darkened by the sun and food that they bring to kitchen tables hard won by their agricultural and conservational labour.'⁸

We may start with COP26 but ultimately, we need to draw a thread across the landscape connecting global aspirations with the dirt in our fingernails.

I am delighted to join and lead the LI, and be part of this hugely important journey.



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¹ Flora Samuel is Professor of Architecture in the Built Environment, University of Reading. Mapping social values, The Journal of Architecture, 2021. Her project on social value mapping with communities won the RIBA President's Award for Research, Cities and Community category.

² Mariana Mazzucato is Professor in the Economics of Innovation and Public Value at University College London where she is the founding director of the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose. <https://marianamazzucato.com/>

³ The National Infrastructure Commission is seeking to ensure the UK's infrastructure is prepared for the major challenges of the future – such as the impacts of climate change and population growth. <https://nic.org.uk/>

⁴ The Quality of Life Foundation is an independent, charitable organisation that aims to raise people's quality of life by making wellbeing central to the way we create and care for our homes and communities. <https://www.qolf.org/>

⁵ Vinnova is the Swedish Agency for Innovation Systems, set up to promote sustainable growth through the development of Swedish innovation systems in the areas of technology, transport, communications and working life, and by financing needs-driven research. <https://government.se/government-agencies/swedish-agency-for-innovation-systems/>

⁶ Architecture and Design is Scotland's design champion. <https://www.ads.org.uk/about-ads/>

⁷ The Green Finance Institute brings together global experts and practitioners to co-design sector-specific solutions that channel capital towards an inclusive, net-zero carbon and resilient economy. <https://www.greenfinanceinstitute.co.uk/>

⁸ Blog: Tackling climate change and building an inclusive movement Zena Edwards, September 2021. <https://zenaedwards.com/>

Glasgow prepares for COP26

Glasgow’s first ever city urbanist explains his hopes for the long-term legacy of COP26 for the city where he lives and works.

1. Glasgow Climate Plan.
© Glasgow City Council



COP26 is not an event, it’s ‘the Conference of Parties’. It’s not necessary to specify which conference, for it is the global conference on climate change. COP becomes an event by being a significant point in time, and will be remembered for what it did or did not achieve. We hold our breath in hope, if not expectation, that COP26 will be the moment when, collectively, we stepped back from the brink. This global conference is being staged in my hometown – Glasgow.

As I write this, there are under 100 days until COP26, and the IPCC 2021 report has just landed with the deafening thump of what its authors have described in the press as a “Code Red” alert for humanity. At just shy of 4000 pages, it’s a lengthy and challenging read. We all know the need for individual action, we certainly need national action, but above all, we now need international and global action. We need the global community and world leaders to heed Greta Thunberg’s plaintive, simple and blindingly obvious cry: “Don’t listen to me, listen to the scientists!” There is now no hiding place.

So how do we listen to the scientists at the local level? And more importantly, how do we act at the local level – at the level, say, of the COP host city? “Build back Better” was the phrase of 2020. But better than what? And to what end? To me, this means

recovery through climate responsive action. Bringing economic and social recovery together with climate mitigation action.

COVID-19 has had an immediate and visceral effect with potentially serious consequences for the individual as well as communities and nations. After a stumbling start, we reconfigured lots of city spaces to make them safer for people to physically distance, and in so doing developed a new urban aesthetic – the boardwalk placed in the street – enabled through emergency and temporary roads regulations. In April 2020, after suggesting such a thing, I was told “that’ll never happen here” – and then it did, after Paris and Milan showed the way and we saw the elegant ‘kit of parts’ designed by Vinnova, the Swedish Design Agency.

In the book ‘Adventures in the 21st Century: The Future starts here’, John Higgs has outlined the paradox of our times. It goes like this: “if we are to build the city of the future, we must first imagine it and what happens to our collective consciousness and mental health if the only futures we can imagine are apocalyptic and dystopian” We need to factor in hope.

In recent work for the Long Now Foundation of San Francisco, Peter Leyden looks back from a perspective 80 years out and distinguishes between inexorable processes and the inevitability of their outcomes. Leyden reminds us that, as the Architects of the Anthropocene, we have agency that can influence the inevitability of its outcome. So, as we imagine our way out of the pandemic, we must migrate the urgency of that collective response into action, to influence the inexorable forces of extreme weather events and increased sea levels as a result of ice-melt and warming oceans, and in order to generate the imperative



FEATURE

to alter an otherwise inevitable and dystopian outcome.

The task ahead is daunting. Switching the energy source of cars and public transport from fossil fuels to electricity or hydrogen and introducing a circular economy is only the start. We need to retrofit and decarbonise *all* of our existing buildings, move on from our dependency on gas, and we need to deal with water. Not just the water coming down our rivers from increased rainfall and extreme weather events, but the water coming up our firths and estuaries from increased sea-levels which if Jeff Goodell and others are to be believed is now inevitable. Most of the population of the UK lives on or near the coast or tidal waterways. All this and without even considering populations displaced by climate change. How, then, are we to imagine this, how are we to afford it, and how are we to exhort people to follow of their freewill and positively contribute? More emergency powers and regulations, without a fairer system, grants and financial incentives seems a big ask.

First of all, we need to deconstruct strategic action directed to demographic, climate and technological challenges into local action dealing with quality of life and quality of place for everyday people at what the policy makers refer to as the granular, or community level. We need to find a way to wrap enlightened thinking, policy and action

around people. This means establishing the means to engage with people about the future of their places and the quality of their lives by having strategic programmes designed to be applied at the local level. That will take skill, belief, commitment and courage from politicians and professionals alike.

The two key themes which characterise Glasgow's approach to the climate emergency can be summarised as: (a) a commitment for Glasgow to achieve net zero carbon emissions by the year 2030; and (b) a corresponding aim to ensure that a just transition takes place for the city's people, businesses and institutions. This will mean confronting and overcoming four strategic challenges:

1. Decarbonisation and a deep retrofit of entire building stocks – residential, office, retail, and every other landuse;
2. Decarbonisation and a deep retrofit of entire movement systems in a shift to mobility as a service (MAAS);
3. Climate adaptation of the entire drainage network, the entire river systems and sea-level change; and
4. Balancing decarbonisation, retrofitting and climate adaptation with social justice.

We do not yet have the technology,



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programmes nor finance to ensure any of this happens. This is where the legacy of COVID-19 and COP26 should come through by using reality to facilitate a step-change. Legacy for Glasgow may be the preparedness of the city to address these challenges by forging international partnerships and play a leadership role among Scottish, UK and international city networks and taking the people of the city along for the ride.

A positive legacy for COP26 and for Glasgow as host city comes if the conference pulls it off and Glasgow21 enters the lexicon as a beacon of success like Rio92, Kyoto97 or Paris2015. That means humanity might have made some progress. Globally this means recommitting to Agenda 2030, to the SDGs, to their targets and maybe introducing climate sanctions to force a move to a redesigned system.

For Glasgow and its people, a positive legacy would be one where the city has used its position as host to become a city-network player, with its people fully engaged in transformation through a designed response to the strategic challenges outlined above. If properly resourced, if we trust in our people and if we engage the imagineers pouring out of our design schools perhaps we will achieve these great goals. It will take courage and a hefty budget, but there does not appear to be a viable Plan B.

Glasgow gets noticed, the City can't help it. November 2021 is a chance to be noticed for the right reasons.

Brian Evans is professor of Urbanism & Landscape at the Glasgow School of Art and is Glasgow's City Urbanist.

2. The Vinnova kit of parts for streets: how a street might look with various parklet elements added.

© Utopia Arkitekter

3. The Vinnova kit of parts for streets: how the same street might look with more extensive remodeling.

© Utopia Arkitekter



The task ahead is daunting. Switching the energy source of cars and public transport from fossil fuels to electricity or hydrogen and introducing a circular economy is only the start.



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