

City Nature

The Era of City Humans

The urbanisation of our planet reached a milestone in 2007.¹ For the first time in the history of man, the number of people living in cities equalled the number living in rural areas. While in 1900, only 10% of the world population lived in cities, comparatively 70% of the world population will be living in cities in 2050. The number and magnitude of cities will grow in the future.

Metropolises have since their rise in the 19th century given us tremendous opportunities to enhance material welfare, but we have also lost our connection to the very nature that has been the basis of our existence for millions of years.

The 20th century vision of the city as a machine has proved fatal for our well-being. City and nature have increasingly become separate entities, because urban planners have simply been more occupied with the built environment than the grown environment. Our behaviour has also contributed to nature changing gradually, for instance through climate change that continues to place increasing demands on the design our cities.

Urbanisation has transformed our living conditions fundamentally. It is a fact that our children will be the first generation of Homo sapiens to be born, grow up and die in cities. An urban generation whose collective existential question will be whether we can in reality live without a relation to nature.

There is a need for a new sustainable practice for the development of cities, which on the one hand restores the connection between nature and people, and on the other hand develops cities as resilient and sustainable systems. Therefore, we have to reinstitute nature as a prerequisite for our common well-being.

¹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2006-2007.

City Nature as a New Practice

City Nature is not a dream about having more greenery in the city, no more than it is the conceptualisation of nature in urban surroundings. City Nature is a new practice that will connect urban man with the order of nature, and will at the same time connect the cities with nature's processes. The vision for City Nature is new sustainable welfare with a global impact. No more, no less.

Our generation needs to institute nature as the foundation of life quality that both satisfies man's fundamental need to experience the aesthetic sense of nature and the city's need to withstand man-made challenges such as climate change and a decrease in biodiversity.

City Nature also suggests how we can create actual sustainable growth, including how we can design our cities so that there is room for both people and cars, private and public interests. And not least, how it will be possible for citizens to become co-creators of the city and thus become part of new and meaningful communities.

Nature is inclusive and the aesthetic sense of nature unleashes creative thinking in all people. Nature is thus an ideal physical frame for the development of new localised communities in the city.

On the whole, City Nature is the precondition for implementing a global green transformation, because nature prompts the mobilisation of civil society and the desire to co-create. And with the aesthetic sense of nature at the helm, hope is created, which is a much more lasting motivating force for future society than the fear that everything is going to the dogs.

Nature-Based Design Solutions

Understanding the connection between nature and our wellbeing has become crucial for cities that favour sustainable life quality. Nature is the focal point of everything we develop, draw and think at SLA. Because the order of nature is the starting point of how we organise our world, and for how we create the framework in which life can unfold fully.

What distinguishes us from our colleagues is our fundamental approach that nature's grown environment and the constructed and built environment differ from one another. Although they are not comparable, they are complementary. And in our view, they together constitute a holistic approach.

We prefer working with that which grows, whether the challenge is climate adaption or community development. Because it is the living that constitutes our very foundation. That which ensures the vivifying changeability of the urban environment. Architecture, master planning, urban spaces and landscapes are just some of the means that we use to put nature's processes into play. On the wall, we invite you to experience our nature-based practice in an urban context around the world. On the floor, local pines welcome you to experience the aesthetic sense of nature and explore the utility value of pines in the city.

A city that feels and functions as a forest is a model for our time, as we imagine cities that both makes us happy and protect us from harm.