

Zeitschrift: Anthos : Zeitschrift für Landschaftsarchitektur = Une revue pour le paysage
Herausgeber: Bund Schweizer Landschaftsarchitekten und Landschaftsarchitektinnen
Band: 50 (2011)
Heft: [1]: Scales of Nature : 48th IFLA World Congress

Vorwort: Message of welcome from the president of the BSLA
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Message of Welcome from the President of the BSLA

Ladies and gentlemen, In the name of the Swiss Federation of Landscape Architects, I bid you a cordial welcome to Zurich and to the 48th IFLA World Congress.

This the third World Congress of landscape architects to take place in Switzerland, and its theme is "Scales of Nature". It is not easy to find a title that on the one hand says something about the individualities of the host country, and yet leaves enough scope for the presentation of the whole spectrum of up-to-the-minute landscape architecture worldwide. "Scales of Nature" seemed particularly appropriate because Switzerland, as a small country occupying a very confined space, has a whole variety of facets of designed landscape to offer. At the one extreme are new urban neighbourhoods with parks and squares designed very painstakingly and down to the last detail. At the other extreme are the expanses of the Jura and the monumental mountain landscape of the Alps. Above all on these scales there is in Switzerland a substantial need to do something. The Swiss landscapes are under massive pressure.

In the heads of most Swiss people, these landscapes are something pristine and eternal, largely immune to the activities of mankind. But this is definitely not the case. Not only in Switzerland's towns and cities, but also in the open countryside, there's a great deal

of building going on. Recreation facilities, tourist infrastructure, agricultural buildings, utilities and structures designed to protect us from the dangers posed by nature. Every day sees a creeping remodelling of these landscapes, which are so typical of Switzerland and so essential for its identity.

The IFLA World Congress will, we hope, bring home to participants from all over the world the enormous variety of different landscape types and scales in Switzerland, but at the same time hone their awareness for these processes of change. The deliberate shaping of the landscape must, even outside the towns and cities, become something we take for granted. Otherwise qualities threaten to get lost for ever without our noticing.

Landscape on all scales is influenced by human beings. We decide on its sustainable use, on the quality of its "design", and ultimately on the image it presents. Care and maintenance is not a passive retention, but an active process of formation, to which we as landscape architects can make an active and valuable contribution – in Switzerland and worldwide.

Pascal Gysin
President BSLA, June 2011