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DIVERSITY, NATURE AND
HOPE

For a liveable future in which we don't explain away the climate crisis but deal with it, in which we find allies.
– Plea of a landscape architect

The repeated analyses of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emphasise the unchecked speed with which the climate crisis is progressing. January of 2025 was the warmest first month of the year worldwide since weather records have been kept. The catalogue of measures that is being assembled by experts ranges over a multitude of interventions, from rapid industrial decarbonisation to the reorientation of the financial sector toward sustainable investments to the ecological renewal of cities, all the way to reductions in consumption and behavioural and life style modifications. There is no area of business, society or politics that does not feel the pressure to change rapidly. A plethora of conflicts and contradictions is subjecting our societies to a stress test that threatens to tear them apart from the inside. At the same time, the political will to incorporate and deploy the necessary climate-protection tools that science has identified is sorely lacking. To find one's way through this without being crushed in the gears requires courage and foresight – and it requires the strength to make responsible contributions toward the goal of a resilient, nature-friendly future in which we do not explain away the climate crisis but deal with it.

We landscape architects in particular have learned in landscape and urban planning that there are ways and means to use nature-based measures to help create resilient living spaces, strengthen their diversity, cultivate nature with the needs of people in mind, and mitigate the consequences of climate change. At the same time, we object to all forms of greenwashing. The offsetting of carbon emissions through questionable CO2 certificates, such as the purchase of existing forests without investments in reforestation or in local communities, for example, is no longer acceptable. In planning and landscape architecture we have the technical knowledge to go beyond superficial solutions. We are "grounded"; we break open soils, plant trees, manage water systems and address urban heat islands. It is the cities and the urban, cross-border macro-regions in particular that are moving into the climate-resilience spotlight and showing that progress is possible even in the face of political setbacks.

The goal is to take people who have thus far been ignorant, uninvolved or even hostile toward ecological transformation along on this path – and, in parallel, to exert pressure on the decision makers in politics and in organisations. For that, we need allies in every camp. In the economy, however, companies that support urban development through natural wealth as "agents of natural production" and that promote biodiversity, sustainability and the recovery of ecosystems through public-private partnerships are in special demand.

This is particularly true for heat protection as part of climate adaptation in urban areas and its positive impacts on productivity, morbidity and mortality. Investments in green ecosystem services (cooling effects, water retention, air purification, increased cultural value) reduce costs over the long term for communities as well as for the private sector. Heat-adapted urban development must face challenges at the building, district, city and regional levels. In many cases this can be achieved only through public-private partnerships that range from residential construction to areas of finance (insurance coverage). Measurements of progress in ecosystem services can be made possible through the account balancing of natural capital. With nature-friendly strategies and decisions based on these principles, we can provide cities, businesses and organisations with guidelines for confronting the climate crisis with concrete, measurable actions.

When such goals become increasingly clear, a paradigm shift is imminent. The urban space in particular can no longer be organised according to purely profit-oriented interests. Friendly persuasion is ultimately impotent. Commitments are required. Certainly, granting nature its own rights, as is occasionally discussed in scientific circles, appears to be impracticable. But Germany (in Article 14 of its constitution) and Italy (Article 42/43 of its constitution), for example, have used the social obligations of property over a period of decades to effect a balance of interests between capital and labour and a democratically organised development of society. Now a constitutionally guaranteed ecological obligation of property must be added to achieve a balance of interests between capital and nature, with an aim toward greater quality of life. The German Federal Constitutional Court has made a first step in this direction with its 2021 ruling on climate protection; now the second should follow.

Nature acts as both a reminder and a role model. It is a reminder in that its vulnerability sheds light on our own. It is a role model in the way it uses diversity to exemplify forms of togetherness and growth. It is the power of development and evolution that drives it forward.

There is no path out of the current convolutions into a misguided smoothness; rather the path leads to new, manifold landscapes where nature can nest, grow, blossom and thrive. Civil society can counter the fundamentally empty political promises of quick fixes with a path toward fruitful ambiguities and its thresholds, if we succeed in designing, creating and expanding living spaces in which quality of life has top priority. This cannot be done without nature and the strengthening of its diversity.

The ethical approach to the preservation of diversity comes out of humility in the face of the natural whole, of which we are part and which our thoughts and actions must continue to penetrate. This is reflected in practical terms in the search for new aesthetic guidelines. In our cities, parks and gardens, greened architecture, open water courses and unsealed soil surfaces provide sufficient experimental fields for us to rethink urban development and to radically redevelop urban areas from nature. As landscape architects, we are the trustees of the public interest in both private and public spaces.

Our design tools are changing. We are concentrating on what is essential. New pictures are taking over. Hope is growing.

See also by Andreas Kipar:

„Aufbruch in eine neue Zeit. Die produktiven Landschaften und ihre Rolle in der Spätmoderne.“ Villa Vigoni Paper 4/2022 (Villa Vigoni Editore)
<https://www.villavigoni.eu/publication/n-4-2022-aufbruch-in-eine-neue-zeit-2/>

„Grün, schattig, sicher. Wie die Stadt der Zukunft aussieht.“ Essay. Stuttgarter Zeitung 9.11.2024
 (in collaboration with Porsche Consulting:) „Nature-Factory Manifesto“. Presented at the World Economic Summit in Davos 2025. <https://www.landsrl.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/nature-factory-manifesto-def.pdf>

BERNHARD MAAZ

CHRISTOPH BRECH

WINDHOSEN

They wobble, wave, whip, whirl, and writhe—colorful signals on the roof of the German Pavilion in the Giardini di Venice, near the strip of shore that separates the lagoon from the fortified, built-up terrain. Christoph Brech's temporary installation rises above the building's stone façade, suggesting an experiment, an earnest game atop the formal structure. Mounted on slender rods, the windsocks—recognizable from seaports, airports, and highway bridges—at times dangle listlessly, at others strain taut in the air, are driven by onshore winds, animated by a gentle breeze, or hang deflated in the midday heat. They perform an unpredictable ballet of movement, revealing how nature acts while all around, culture stimulates and inspires.

Wind can provide comforting warmth or tear it away with icy fingers, can be gentle, pleasant, or brutal. It belongs to the realm of nature, which humans cannot control. Only rarely does architecture in urban spaces contain, and, on occasion, unintentionally amplify, the wind. This cannot gloss over the fact that civilization is the cause of extreme weather and climate change and knowingly, ultimately willingly, accepts the consequences. Winds and storms are primordial human experiences, powers we can barely defend against and cannot control. Christoph Brech's multi-faceted installation thus serves as a reminder of these forces and commands the void atop the pavilion with a striking presence. The windsocks, displaying a sometimes cheerful, sometimes menacing life of their own, draw attention to the fragile balance between nature's power and human-made disruptions.

These eighteen windsocks, flying in a swarm-like formation, are made of lightweight, red-and-white striped fabric. They are called "Windhosen (wind trousers)" in German, though they are single conical tubes in which air flow is captured. However, the term "Windhose" has two meanings: one refers to the technical indicator of prevailing air movement, the other to the natural phenomenon of a tornado racing across the earth's surface, destroying everything in its path.

When people "talk into the wind," they waste their time. What is "cast to the wind" is consciously disregarded. The Old Testament (Book of Job 7:7) reminds us that life is but "wind"—or, in another translation, a "breath"—evanescent, fleeting, transitory. This idea ties into criticisms of civilization, particularly those related to architecture and urban planning. The modern word "skyscraper" alone