

Landscape

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“ Great landscapes do more than shape places—they shape the way we live. ”



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EDITOR'S NOTE

There is a tendency within our industry to judge projects by what we can see: the architecture, the planting, the materials, the craftsmanship or the scale of the development. Yet the longer I spend speaking with the people shaping our built environment, the more I am convinced that the true measure of a landscape is not how it looks on opening day, but how it is experienced for years afterwards.

The most successful places become part of people's lives. They are the streets we choose to walk, the parks where children grow up, the waterfronts we return to, and the gardens where conversations linger long after the sun has set. They create memories rather than simply impressions.

That idea runs quietly throughout this issue.

Our contributors explore the profession from remarkably different perspectives, yet many arrive at the same conclusion. Abdullah Elbashary reminds us that engineering should support great places, not define them. Annie Baillie examines why people are instinctively drawn to nature and what environmental psychology teaches us about designing for wellbeing. Michael Goode reflects on a career built around creating places people want to return to, while Angel de Diego Rica explores the enduring importance of the Spirit of Place and why every successful masterplan must begin by understanding its landscape, climate and culture.

Our project features continue this conversation. From Dubai Islands Beach to The Leela Palace Jaipur, from intimate residential gardens to large-scale waterfront communities, each demonstrates that landscape architecture succeeds when it enriches everyday experience rather than competing for attention.

As our cities continue to evolve, the profession is also being asked to respond to new challenges. Climate resilience, extreme heat, long-term sustainability and rapidly advancing technology are reshaping the way we design. Yet even as our tools become more sophisticated, the purpose of landscape architecture remains unchanged. We are not simply designing land. We are creating environments where people can connect with nature, with each other and with the places they call home.

If there is one message I hope readers take from this issue, it is that memorable landscapes are never accidental. They are the result of thoughtful collaboration, careful observation and a deep understanding of how people experience the world around them.

Because in the end, the places we remember are rarely defined by a single feature. They are remembered because of how they made us feel.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

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WHEN EUROPE DISCOVERS WHAT THE GULF ALREADY KNOWS

Industry Contribution | Submitted by LAND

Across much of Europe, record-breaking temperatures have pushed cities into unfamiliar territory. Heatwaves exceeding 40°C, prolonged periods of high overnight temperatures and increasing pressure on public infrastructure have become headline news across the continent.

For those living and working across the Middle East, however, these conditions are far from unfamiliar.

Designing cities that remain comfortable, functional and resilient in extreme heat has long been part of the region's urban development story. While Europe is now confronting a rapidly changing climate, many of the principles being discussed today have shaped landscape and public realm design across the Gulf for decades.

The difference is not simply the temperature—it is preparedness.

As European cities begin adapting to a hotter future, landscape architecture is increasingly being recognised as essential infrastructure



“We do not simply plant trees. We design functioning ecosystems that make cities more resilient.”

rather than an aesthetic addition. Trees, permeable landscapes, green corridors, water-sensitive design and connected ecological systems are becoming critical tools in improving urban resilience and quality of life.

In this contributed article, Andreas Kipar, Founder and CEO of LAND, explains why Nature must become central to how cities are planned, designed, and managed if they are to thrive in an era of climate uncertainty.

Heat is Changing the Rules of the City

The latest European heatwave reinforces what scientists, landscape architects and urban planners have been warning for years: extreme heat is no longer an occasional event—it is becoming the new reality.

Temperatures above 40°C and increasingly frequent tropical nights highlight the urgent need for cities to adapt. Decades of development focused on hard surfaces, sealed ground and vehicle infrastructure have intensified the urban heat island effect, creating environments that place increasing pressure on public health, liveability and economic performance.

Climate adaptation is no longer a future ambition. It has become a fundamental responsibility of contemporary urban planning.

As Andreas Kipar explains:

“Heat is no longer simply a weather issue. It has become a planning challenge. We cannot ignore the climate crisis, but we can learn to live with it if we recognise Nature as our greatest ally.”

Nature as Essential Infrastructure

For more than 35 years, LAND has been developing landscape-led strategies that improve the resilience of cities and regions across Europe and internationally.

Central to its work is a Nature-Positive approach—one that sees natural systems not as something to preserve around development, but as essential infrastructure that actively strengthens climate resilience, biodiversity and human wellbeing.

Rather than treating landscape as decoration, this approach integrates permeable soils, high-performing urban tree canopies, sponge city principles, ventilation corridors and connected ecological networks into the urban fabric itself. Together, these systems help cool cities, improve biodiversity and create healthier, more liveable environments.

These principles can be seen across LAND's work, from Milan's Green Rays Strategy and the MIND Innovation District to the Green

Infrastructure Strategy for Germany's Ruhr Region, the Saint Lawrence Biodiversity Corridor in Montréal, and projects across Saudi Arabia that apply the same landscape-first philosophy within one of the world's most demanding climates.

As Kipar explains:

“We do not simply plant trees. We design functioning ecosystems that make cities more resilient.”

Climate Adaptation is an Investment

Viewing climate adaptation as an additional cost misses the wider opportunity.

Investment in green infrastructure delivers measurable long-term returns through ecosystem services that improve both environmental and economic performance. Well-designed landscapes reduce urban temperatures, improve air quality, retain stormwater, strengthen biodiversity and enhance public wellbeing.

The benefits extend well beyond environmental outcomes. Cooler, healthier cities reduce pressure on healthcare systems, improve productivity, increase property value and strengthen resilience against increasingly frequent extreme weather events.

LAND also develops methodologies that measure natural capital and ecosystem services, providing governments, developers and businesses with practical tools to support informed planning and investment decisions.

Simply put, investing in Nature is an investment in the long-term resilience and competitiveness of our cities.

Building Better Cities Together

Creating climate-resilient cities cannot be achieved by governments alone.

Equally, technology on its own is not the answer.

Meaningful progress depends on stronger collaboration between public authorities, private organisations, developers, consultants and local communities. Businesses have an important role to play—not simply as investors, but as active partners in restoring natural systems and embedding resilience into future urban development.

The Future of Cities Begins with Nature

Climate change is already reshaping the way cities must be planned, designed and managed.

Rather than responding after problems emerge, today's challenge is to place Nature at the centre of decision-making from the very beginning.

As Andreas Kipar concludes:

“Our cities must be designed from Nature. Nature is not decoration—it is the foundation of quality of life, resilience and long-term economic prosperity. If we want to build climate-resilient cities, we must learn from Nature. It shows us how truly resilient systems work—diverse, adaptable and capable of evolving over time.”

The challenges currently facing Europe offer a timely reminder that climate resilience is no longer a regional issue. It is a global one.

For the Middle East, where designing for extreme heat has long been a necessity rather than an exception, the conversation now moves beyond adaptation. It becomes an opportunity to continue leading the development of cities where landscape is recognised not simply for its beauty, but for the essential role it plays in creating healthier, cooler and more resilient places for future generations.

About Andreas Kipar

Andreas Kipar is an architect, landscape architect and urban planner, and Founder and CEO of LAND. A professor of Landscape and Public Space Design at the Politecnico di Milano, he is recognised internationally for his work in climate-resilient urban planning and nature-positive city development, serving on several expert advisory bodies, including the World Economic Forum's Nature-Positive Cities initiative.

Editorial Note

Landscape Middle East welcomes contributed articles, project insights and thought leadership from professionals and organisations helping shape the future of landscape architecture, urban development and the public realm across the Middle East.

If you have a story, project or perspective that would benefit our regional audience, we invite you to contact the editorial team to discuss publication opportunities.

LAND (Landscape, Architecture, Nature and Development) is an international landscape architecture and environmental planning practice with offices across Europe, Canada and Saudi Arabia. Since 1990, the practice has delivered nature-positive strategies that integrate landscape architecture, urban planning, biodiversity and natural capital to create more resilient, sustainable and liveable cities.