CARING FOR AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPES

As CULTURAL HERITAGE
AGROECOSYSTEMS AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

IFLA Europe Working Group
Agricultural Landscapes
Under the authority of the Vice President Professional Practice Katerina Gkoltsiou
WG Chair: Francesca Neonato Members: Lena Athanasiadou, Albert Fekete, Daniela Micanovic, Nicoletta Piersantelli, Manuel Sanchez, Steffi Schueppel

The agricultural landscape of Karditsa, Greece
Sketch by Lena Athanasiadou
Why Landscape Architects care for Agricultural Landscapes

Agriculture covers 175 million hectares of Europe and shapes the landscape like no other activity. Diverse in every aspect, agriculture has affected ecology, the environment, culture and history, politics and economics, and, in return, has been affected by them.

Agri-Cultural landscapes have emerged over centuries, reflecting Europe’s history. Dynamic conservation strategies and processes allow biodiversity and essential ecosystem services to be maintained thanks to continuous innovation, transfer between generations, and exchange with other communities and ecosystems. The wealth and breadth of accumulated knowledge and experience in the management and use of resources, is a globally significant treasure that needs to be promoted, conserved and allowed to evolve.

Landscape Architects can make a difference, by adopting a holistic approach in planning, designing and managing multifunctional agricultural landscapes and in applying aesthetic and scientific principles to address the sustainability, quality and health of landscapes, collective memory, heritage, culture and territorial justice (IFLA Definition of Landscape Architect).
Landscape Architects deal with the interactions between natural and cultural ecosystems, such as adaptation and mitigation related to climate change and the stability of ecosystems, socio-economic improvements, community health and welfare, to create places that anticipate social and economic well-being (IFLA Definition of Landscape Architect).

**As Landscape Architects**

- We believe that dynamic conservation strategies and processes could transform a current weakness into an opportunity to promote landscapes and communities through economic viability.
- We adopt a landscape approach, that connects healthy food with healthy landscapes, with community-driven processes replicated on a large-scale.
- We establish a strong narrative with public and private stakeholders, to reconnect them with their landscape identity and geographical characteristics.
- We promote ecologically based landscape planning by using regenerative agriculture management and supporting small holders and family farming.
IFLA Europe Agricultural Landscapes Working Group - AL WG

IFLA Europe settled the ALs WG with the belief that Rural Landscapes are actually an expression of human biodiversity linked to a wider concept of biodiversity.

The AL WG’s main goals are to:

- Share best-practice of Landscape Architects (and other professionals) for the acknowledgement, planning, design and management of agricultural landscapes.
- Make an inventory of agricultural heritage systems according to Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems - GIAHS guidelines.
- Share knowledge about EU policies concerning agricultural landscapes, with a specific focus on the EU Conservation Agriculture, (EIP-AGRI), the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Farm to Fork Strategy as core topics of the European Green Deal, the European Landscape Convention, the Common Agricultural Policy 2020-27 and other relevant documents.
- Raise the overall awareness of competences of Landscape Architects related to agricultural landscapes.
- Promote the profession of Landscape Architects at EU level, especially in the European Commission.
Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems - GIAHS

GIAHS are outstanding landscapes of aesthetic beauty that combine agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems and a valuable cultural heritage. Located in specific sites around the world, they sustainably provide multiple goods and services, food and livelihood security for millions of small-scale farmers. Unfortunately, these agricultural systems are threatened by many factors including climate change and increased competition for natural resources. They are also dealing with migration due to low economic viability, which has resulted in traditional farming practices being abandoned and indigenous species and breeds being lost. These ancestral agricultural systems constitute the foundation for contemporary and future agricultural innovations and technologies. Their cultural, ecological and agricultural diversity is still evident in many parts of the world, maintained as unique systems of agriculture.

The strategic aim of the AL WG is to enhance the integration of GIAHS FAO strategy in the professional practice of European Landscape Architects, to promote the knowledge and the awareness about dynamic conservation of agricultural landscapes, in order to commit Landscape Architects to acknowledging and supporting local communities to protect biodiversity in their own territory. IFLA Europe Members can help local communities, farmers and institutions to recognize when agricultural landscapes constitute potential GIAHS sites.

Pistacia lentiscus var. Chia, mastic tree cultivation landscape, Chios, Greece
Photograph by Lena Athanasiadou
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Agricultural Landscapes

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do join the Working Group by sending email to secretariat@iflaeurope.eu

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