

SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES

Current Scenario and the Way Forward

The Indian Society of Landscape Architects (ISOLA) held a seminar titled SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES: *Current Scenario and the Way Forward* on the 31st of August 2013 at Ahmedabad. The event was preceded by the 8th Annual General Body Meeting of the Society at the same venue in a bid to facilitate ease of attendance for outstation members.

The focus of the Seminar, as stated in the title, was discussing what one would define as Sustainable Landscapes, their current scenario, their anticipated future and the role that Green Rating Systems play in these projects.

ISOLA Honorary President Sachin Jain welcomed the panel of distinguished speakers and audience and invited Dr.Sudhir K.Jain, Director of IIT Gandhinagar to deliver the keynote address.

Dr.Sudhir K.Jain welcomed the audience and introduced them to the genesis of IITs in the country. He spoke of his ideas and experiences in the development of the new campus for IIT Gandhinagar whose design brief was focused on creating a welcoming and attractive ambience, functional convenience to encourage mutual interaction and low energy consumption and low maintenance. He invited the delegates to visit the campus once it was operational next year.

Sachin Jain then took the stage to make a brief presentation on the issues and concerns that landscape architects manage in practice while designing, detailing and executing landscape works, including site development works for achieving credits for Green Rating systems. With the help of examples contributed by ISOLA members , he pointed out that while credits were achieved on paper, the real goals are compromised quite frequently. He strongly advocated that this could only be obviated with much stricter auditing and compliance checks, not just post achievement of credit but on completion and after 5 years of operation i.e. measuring the actual performance of a system and comparing it with the initial design statements.

S.Raghupathy (Executive Director, CII-Godrej GBC) and Mili Majumdar (Director, Sustainable Habitat Division, TERI) were then invited to speak about their respective Green Rating Systems and the role they play in addressing the environmental concerns created by or increased by the activities in the construction sector. S.Raghupathy presented IGBC's objectives of ushering in a Green Landscape movement in India, of making India emerge as one of the global leaders in green landscaping. Mili Majumdar's talk titled 'Looking Beyond Buildings, Landscape as a Moderator for Microclimate' was more in context of the meet. While introducing GRIHA for Large Developments, she explained how GRIHA and its variants address several environmental and energy related issues of habitats at macro level and buildings at micro level. She also asked the audiences to look at the intent of the rating systems and how greening of the construction sector has proven to alleviate many environmental issues.

Dr.Vinod Gupta and Rajeev Kathpalia then regaled the listeners with their experiences of sustainable campus design, IIT Gandhinagar and Nalanda University, respectively. Dr.Vinod Gupta expressed that the rating systems stopped short of defining the real issues of sustainable development, because it is actually human activity that is responsible for resource consumption and that does not change when projects become more efficient. He felt that the important issue for the IIT Gandhinagar Master Plan was integrating the development with the social and physical context and of ensuring that the picturesque site was developed to meet the requirements of the academic campus as well as the larger

good of the community. The point scores that the rating systems are inherently based on do not focus on these criteria at all.

Rajeev Kathpalia too expressed that sustainability went beyond deploying high-tech energy saving methods and fundamentally it would be addressed through orientation of buildings and sound planning principles leading to achieving a carbon neutral and zero waste campus. Based on the belief that there exists a need for the university to engage with inhabitants from surrounding villages, the whole master plan of the Nalanda University in itself is transitional, as it demonstrates the integration of the campus into the large ecosystem of the site. Following Rajeev Kathpalia's presentation, landscape architect Sandip Patil demonstrated how the layers of landscape had been worked into the master plan.

Vinay Kothari, a research-oriented entrepreneur who has worked in the field of eco-restoration, made the final presentation of the day in which he presented some of his projects where various cost-effective eco-friendly alternative techniques for slope stabilization have been used.

A brief panel discussion was held with Mili Majumdar and the ISOLA members, where she expressed her understanding of the concerns raised by landscape architects and said that TERI-GRIHA would welcome inputs from ISOLA members on how the rating systems could be modified/amended taking into account these concerns.

The event then ended with a vote of thanks to all involved by Vandana Labba.

It is hoped that the end of the event will signal the beginning of a dialogue between the stakeholders of the rating systems and ISOLA, leading to more comprehensively developed rating systems that also aid in setting out and promoting sustainable guiding principles and practices.

Event report prepared by:

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