

THE LAS PALMAS DECLARATION OF THE UNIVERSITY RECTORS FOR LANDSCAPE HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE

(2nd Draft 24.12.18)¹

A. PREAMBLE

The main objective of this declaration by the Assembly of the Rectors of the Universities adhering to the UNISCAPE Network is to encourage greater relevance of Landscape in Higher Education in Europe and to declare before the Council of University Rectors, the National Ministries of Higher Education and the Commissioner of Education of the European Community their firm commitment to a coordinated trans-disciplinary approach to Landscape studies.

In recent years, local and regional authorities and civil society have been increasingly demanding that landscape – i.e. landscape as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors (European Landscape Convention) – which is continuously changing as a result of a large range of driving factors, should receive more attention from policy makers. This goal requires greater involvement of qualified professionals in order to respond to issues arising from the implementation of the European Landscape Convention.

Universities need to take up this challenge, overcoming the limitations of the presently rigid and fragmented academic structure in order to support Landscape education, research and training with the principles enshrined in the European Landscape Convention.

These principles, further being elaborated since the year 2000 when the European Landscape Convention was opened for ratification, provide a new and solid framework, placing Landscape in the foreground of European policies on Cultural Heritage, Architecture, Environment, Urban and Rural Development and Spatial Planning.

Differently to previous approaches mainly focused on the protection and conservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, this one presents some important innovations: for the first

¹ The first draft presented in Las Palmas has been integrated with suggestions and contributions from Claudia Cassatella (Polytechnic University of Turin), Benedetta Castiglioni (University of Padua), Enrico Fontanari (IUAV University of Venice), Tana Lascu (Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism), Rita Occhiuto (University of Liège), Bas Pedroli (Wageningen University), Lionella Scazzosi (Polytechnic University of Milan).

time Landscape would enter into a comprehensive vision including both natural and cultural aspects, and the social dimension of Landscape would be introduced, especially the well-being of people and their relationship with the territory they inhabit.

We foresee a rich panorama of possibilities of such landscape approach for the coming years, in which we will be able to re-think and adapt the structure of our universities as they face such new challenges, finding synergy between social demands and environmental and spatial planning and design issues, for a sound future of the European landscape.

B. BASIC PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS IN LANDSCAPE EDUCATION

(from *Landscape in Higher Education. A UNISCAPE proposal for CoE recommendation, 2015*)².

On this basis, we, the Rectors, Vice-Rectors and delegates intend to reiterate here three basic founding principles of Higher Education in Landscape proposed by UNISCAPE and based on the European Landscape Convention and reference documents³:

1. *Transdisciplinarity*
2. *Integration of deductive and normative approaches*
3. *Landscape based collective identity*

We also suggest that Landscape Education and Training respond to the following Requirements:

1. A comprehension among the teaching staff of the **challenges** of teaching landscape in an **integrated way** is a first prerequisite of properly addressing the challenges of future landscapes.
2. Landscape teachings should be based on proper **observation of the natural and cultural landscape features in the field**, and study of the perceived values. This should preferably be practiced in real life examples of concrete landscape interpretations and projects, including analysis, diagnosis, landscape quality objectives definition, vision development, design and management guidelines (ELC, Art.6).

² The original draft has been integrated by suggestions received from Rectors delegates and during the discussion held in Las Palmas on 23 November 2018.

³ References: *European Landscape Convention* adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Co. E on 19.07.2000 (and opened for signature by its member States in Florence on 20.10. 2000); RecommendationCM Rec (2008)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the *Guidelines for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention* (adopted on 6 February 2008).

3. Landscape education implies putting forward a **perceptive, sensorial and existential** reading and interpretation of landscape along with **geographical, economical, ecological, morphological and historic-cultural landscape analysis**, and synthesising the results of these approaches into a **suitably site-specific forward looking project** to protect, transform or manage it, in an effective and **sustainable** way⁴.

4. Landscape teachings in higher education should start from the premise that the landscape is a **basic element contributing to the sense of belonging, to people's identity**. The pursuit of this identity concept allows identification of the competences to use the cultural dimension of the landscape as a key element in the construction of a **collective vision of landscape futures**.

5. Landscape education and training should enhance the requirements of **sustainable development and ecological soundness**, integrating abiotic, biotic and cultural functions for the sake of **biological and cultural diversity**, in the natural, rural urban, periurban areas, in the land, inland water and marine areas, and along the coasts (ELC, Art.2).

6. The education in assessing **“intangible” landscape values historically sedimented and recently perceived** is crucial to define the identity of the landscape.

7. Landscape education should pay due attention to the notion of **collective space**, and to the debate about **landscape as a common good**, accommodating both public and private ownership of the land. Methods and work forms should be promoted to create landscapes allowing a sense of “living together”.

C. COMMITMENT

We believe that effective action is needed to meet the challenges of Landscape Higher Education in Europe.

We are aware that Universities have a crucial role in higher education, research and the exchange of information.

University heads must provide leadership and support to mobilize internal and external resources so that their institutions respond to this cultural challenge, so crucial for the protection, management and planning of future European Landscapes.

⁴ According with the four pillars of sustainability: society environment, economy, culture as reported in the CEMAT (Conférence Européenne des Ministres responsables de l'Aménagement du Territoire) definition.

We, therefore, agree to take the following action:

- 1. Integrate** Landscape issues and the dimension of Landscape into each field and discipline of Higher Education in our Universities;
- 2. Encourage** all Universities in our Countries to engage in Landscape Higher education and training;
- 3. Collaborate** in fostering national awareness of Landscape topics in University networks and Councils of Rectors.

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