

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION**

***21st MEETING OF THE WORKSHOPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE EUROPE LANDSCAPE CONVENTION***

***“Landscape and education”***

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***GENERAL CONCLUSIONS***

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**Lessons from the landscape**

Without aiming to open a conceptual discussion on the definition and scope of landscape – and taking for a basis the one defined in the European Landscape Convention – it is easy to conclude that landscape is a result of the relationship between humankind and the environment, a social and economic construct.

If this is so, and landscape is forged by humankind, therefore intrinsic to each individual, why is there actually a need to *teach* landscape? Why is this issue so challenging at this moment in time? Going back in history and analysing millenary dynamics helps frame the issues at stake.

Firstly, in the past individual identity as well as social cohesion was ensured, thanks to the tight integration which existed between individuals, social and political institutions and the – quite intangible – perception of belonging to a determined geographical area. The city, the village, the region, were not considered landscapes as the noun is understood now: they were an intrinsic part of the individual which had been nurtured by them and had helped forge them. But, in the 18th century, the massive exodus towards cities forever changed our conscience of the cultural and emotional links we had established with the immediate space which surrounds us. This initiated alienation processes – social isolation, vandalism, etc. – which have become accentuated recently.

Secondly, the perception of nature that has accompanied humankind during its millenary evolution the Earth has changed in the last years, beyond recognition. Nature, understood as an unaccountable infinity of things and processes which dominated humankind’s destiny no longer exists as such, but rather nowadays depends on humans. The Anthropocene, or the geological era of humankind, has taken over from the Holocene, starting 11,784 years ago, when the last Ice Age ended – and reminds us that

human activities are producing global transformations in our planet's fragile climate system. For the first time it is apparent that Nature is no longer dangerous, but rather is *in danger*.

The third, and for the purpose of this meeting, the last reason I have found for the need to “teach” landscape is that we have also arrived at the climax of a secular process of knowledge that, probably dating back to Hellenic times, acquires force during the Renaissance with the creation of universities and learning centres in Europe, and institutionalised itself at the end of the 19th century with the creation of academies. It is at this point – spurred by the ideas of Modernity that were sweeping this continent at the beginning of the 20th century –, that teaching becomes specialised, focused and oriented; undoubtedly this will help achieve spectacular scientific progress but it will also imply losing sight of the vast range of interwoven relations that linked man to his surroundings.

Thus, we are witnesses of a unique historical moment in which humankind's lasting relation with place, with nature, and with the planet itself is undergoing its – possibly – last revolution which will introduce a new planetary configuration for centuries to come.

It is at this stage that landscape becomes essential, thanks to landscapes we can establish a link between the past, the present and the future which will be able to define our identity, creating a sense of belonging regardless of the continuous changes which might take place. This is precisely why the teaching of landscape is fundamental as a repository of our past and as the founding stone of our future.

These two days there have been examples from all over Europe that present a fascinating array of methodological practices that encompass both primary and secondary education. Teaching landscape at early stages seems rightly necessary as it is individuals as well as a community that create landscape.

Regarding later stages of learning, i.e. university, there have also been speakers from various professions approaching the subject. Agronomists, archaeologists, architects, biologists, economists, forestry and civil engineers, environmentalists, historians, geographers, lawyers, and a large etcetera of professionals who all compose a myriad of visions necessary and fundamental to the understanding, protection, management and planning of our landscapes.

As one of these professionals, I am here representing the European region of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) which encompasses 34 national associations, a not-for-profit organisation that supports and promotes the profession of landscape architecture, recognising excellence in educational courses and promoting best practice operations in all member countries.

Some examples regarding the work done by IFLA member landscape architects have been described during the meeting. Other examples by these Associations in educational matters are included as annexes to this text. They range from projects addressed to elementary and primary education, such as the beautiful calendar produced by the Panhellenic Association of Landscape Architects for the Department of Environmental Education of Middle School Management of Athens, dedicated to the discovery and study of the landscape in the context of environmental education and sustainability; the practical workshops done by the Turkish Association of Landscape Architects with children so that they design their own playground; or others dealing with university teaching and beyond, as the joint project implemented these last years by the Lithuanian, Latvian and German Association of Landscape Architects regarding the Continuous Professional Development and Vocational Training for Landscape

Architects which builds pathways for continuous professional development by knowledge and experience exchange between the professional's communities in the Baltic Sea Region.

This is just a sample of the wide range of projects done by IFLA's National Associations in projects that strive to implement the subject of education as per the European Landscape Convention. Besides these, it is very pleasing to hear of the many projects being undertaken in European countries dealing with landscape architecture teaching; it is a good proof of the wide acceptance of the profession as a required component for the wellbeing of European citizens.

I have been nevertheless puzzled to hear the Croatian representative on "Landscape as a topic in higher education on Croatia" when a couple of months ago we had notice that the Ministry of Physical Planning and Construction has now excluded landscape architects from any role in the planning and building legislation and furthermore that they will no longer have a role in the processes of design, planning and construction as regulated by law, therefore reducing the status of the profession. This seems to follow a trend in some countries where the development of policies regarding the implementation of the European Landscape Convention have had the effect of diminishing the role of Landscape Architects in terms of their legal status and thus their professional standing is being eroded.

Though many of IFLA's National Associations are constituted in a Chamber system – Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Netherlands, Slovakia... – ; nevertheless, in many other nations, and even Spain, the country I come from, landscape architecture is not considered a profession. We are less than 300 landscape architects with no recognition, unregulated by the state (apart from within our own association) and we have no statutory reserved functions. I have devoted my life – and before me many others who have been a guide for us all – to learning and teaching landscape architecture, but in my very country I am not considered worthy of fulfilling my profession. What is especially confusing is that it is thought by governments that other *recognised* professions that have no training in landscape are actually quite competent to practice in this activity.

These policies seem quite contradictory with this Workshop and its aims, with Article 6 B. c. of the Council of Europe Landscape Convention on education, according to which "Each Party undertakes to promote: ... school and university courses which, in the relevant subject areas, address the values attaching to landscapes and the issues raised by their protection, management and planning".

IFLA therefore wishes to request all Member States present at this Meeting, to simply show their willingness and commitment not only towards the teaching of landscape and the profession but also towards the landscape itself. Landscape must be seen as an integrative, distributive and solidarian system that enables a holistic view far beyond its concrete materiality. These are the real implications behind article 6 B.c. of the European Landscape Convention, which, in addition to the teaching itself requires us to "address the values" inherent in our landscapes; let us not lose the chance of putting forward a model of what we ourselves would like to be.

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