

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

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PREAMBLE

This declaration by UNISCAPE Network University Rectors, assembled for the first time in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain) on 23th November 2018, is to assert their firm commitment to promoting a coordinated transdisciplinary approach to, and increasing the importance of, university landscape studies in Europe by working with National Councils of Rectors, Ministries of Higher Education and the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth.

In recent years, local and regional authorities and civil society have increasingly demanded that landscape – i.e. “landscape as perceived by people, whose character is the result of action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”¹ – receive more attention from policy-makers. Landscape is continuously changing due to a wide range of factors arising from nearly every important policy and production process sector. Meeting the challenges of sustainable landscape development entails greater involvement by qualified professionals (“landscape specialists”) as required by the European Landscape Convention.

Universities need to take up this challenge, overcoming the current limitations of a rigidly compartmentalized academic structure of disconnected disciplines in order to support transdisciplinary landscape education, research and training aligned with the principles enshrined in the European Landscape Convention. These principles, further elaborated since the year 2000 when the European Landscape Convention was opened for ratification, provide a new, solid framework placing landscape at the forefront of European policies on cultural heritage, architecture, environment, urban and rural development, agriculture, food production and spatial planning.

Different from previous approaches that focused mainly on the protection and conservation of cultural and natural heritage, for the first time the Convention presents landscape as a comprehensive vision combining both natural and cultural aspects of any kind of landscape with special emphasis on the social dimension of

¹According to the *European Landscape Convention* (Art.1) 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)

landscape, particularly the well-being of people and their relationship with the environment they inhabit.

We foresee a rich panorama of opportunities arising in the coming years from a landscape approach, enabling us to re-think and adapt the framework of universities to address new challenges by finding synergies between social demands and environmental and spatial planning and design issues to create a sound future for European landscapes.

We believe that effective action is needed to meet the principles and requirements of University Landscape Education in Europe (see Appendix).

COMMITMENT

We, the undersigned Rectors, Vice-Rectors and their delegates,

aware

1. that universities have a crucial role in education, research and information exchange, and
2. that university leadership should provide initiative and support to mobilize internal and external resources for the protection, management, planning and projects of future European Landscapes,

agree

to promote the following actions:

1. *Integrate* landscape issues and the dimension of landscape into the fields and disciplines of university education wherever possible;
2. *Encourage* all universities nationally to engage in academic landscape education and training;
3. *Collaborate* in fostering national awareness of landscape topics in university networks and Councils of Rectors.

Document drafted under the responsibility of UNISCAPE President and Executive Board, Florence, 6th May 2019.

APPENDIX

PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS OF UNIVERSITY LANDSCAPE EDUCATION

On the basis of the recommendations presented by UNISCAPE to the Council of Europe Conference² on the European Landscape Convention and related documents³, we recall the following fundamental principles in Landscape Education:

1. Transdisciplinarity
2. Integration of scientific, normative and project approaches
3. Landscape-based collective identity

We therefore consider that landscape education and training should cultivate the following practices and approaches:

- a. An **integrated attitude combining many different disciplines into a new holistic approach**, the primary requisite for properly addressing future landscape challenges.
- b. **Proper *in situ* observation of natural and cultural landscape features and patterns** from multiple perspectives including the study of perceived values, through analysis, diagnosis and the definition of landscape quality objectives (ELC, Art.6) leading to interpretive reading and projects comprising vision-development as well as design and management guidelines.
- c. Perceptive, sensorial and existential reading and interpretation of landscape integrated with geographical, economic, ecological, morphological and historical-cultural landscape analysis that is synthesized into **suitably site-specific forward-looking vision, plan and project** in order to protect, transform or manage the landscape in an **effective and sustainable way**⁴.
- d. Considering the **cultural dimension** of landscape as a key element in the construction of a collective vision of a territory's future as landscape fundamentally **contributes to people's identity and their sense of belonging to a place**.

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

³ Ref.: *European Landscape Convention (2000)*; Recommendation CM 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).

⁴According to 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.

e. Promoting sustainable development and ecological soundness by integrating abiotic, biotic and cultural functions to foster **biological, cultural and temporal diversity** in natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas; and in land, inland water and marine areas (ELC, Art.2).

f. Recognizing **intangible historically-rooted and currently-perceived landscape values**, crucial to promoting landscape identity.

g. Incorporating the concept of **collective space (the public realm)** and debate on **landscape as a common good**, be it public or private land, into landscape planning and design methods in order to create landscapes promoting a sense of “community living”.