

# **Environmental History**

Volume 15

## **Series Editor**

Mauro Agnoletti, Florence, Italy

The series intends to act as a link for ongoing researches concerning the historical interrelationships between man and the natural world, with special regard to the modern and contemporary ages. The main commitment should be to bring together different areas of expertise in both the natural and the social sciences to help them find a common language and a common perspective. Interdisciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity are needed for more and better understanding of the environment and its history, with new epistemological frameworks and methodological practices. The links between human activities and flora, fauna, water, soil, are examples of the most debated topics in EH, while established disciplines like forest history, agricultural history and urban history are also dealing with it. The human impacts on ecosystems and landscapes over time, the preservation of cultural heritage, studies of historical trajectories in pattern and processes, as well as applied research on historical use and management of landscapes and ecosystems, are also taken into account. Other important topics relate to the history of environmental ideas and movements, policies, laws, regulations, conservation, the history of immaterial heritage, such as traditional knowledge related to the environment.

Mauro Agnoletti · Saša Dobričić · Tessa Matteini ·  
Juan Manuel Palerm  
Editors

# Cultivating Continuity of the European Landscape

New Challenges, Innovative Perspectives

 Springer

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# Preface

This book collects the contributions of more than 90 experts from all Europe who attended the meeting to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the European Landscape Convention, occurred in Florence (Italy) in October 2020. The meeting was held in the beautiful Salone de Cinquecento, inside Palazzo Vecchio, the town hall of the city of Florence, where the convention was signed in the year 2000. The organization of a meeting, partly in presence and partly on line, required an extraordinary effort considering that in those times Europe was still heavily affected by COVID-19. We have to thank the town of Florence, the Landscape Observatory of the Region of Tuscany and the Project GIAHS Capacity Building of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, for the support offered in order to make the meeting possible, as well as UNISCAPE for the scientific content.

Considering the times we are living, characterized by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, climatic and political shocks, together with many rapid and intense socio-economic changes, it may seem trivial to discuss about landscape. We think it's the right time instead for considering the value of a landscape approach. The essential aspect of landscape, as a democratic right, suggests that we have to consider it as a project capable of including in one vision all the cultural, social, economic and environmental diversity characterizing the European territory. Whatever is the judgment on the level of the application of the convention in each signatory states, the recognition of all the cultural diversities existing in the European territory is the only way to reduce the power of the forces favoring the distance between cultures instead of the process of integration. It is also worth remembering that, according to genetic research, the European continent shows a very high correlation between genetic diversity and geographic diversity, which brings about the great landscape diversity associated to different cultures, that any political process should take into utmost consideration. This is also the reason why taking the landscape into account requires to continue the work of identification and assessment of all the European landscapes, as well as the monitoring of the changes occurring in urban, natural and rural areas.

The COVID-19 promoted a greater attention to landscape quality. Many rural and urban people were unable to travel for work reasons, immobilized by lockdowns; this

has contributed to a renewed attention to rural areas and green areas, especially in the surroundings of urban settlements. The COVID-19 pandemic is exceptional in that it has shown how a shock of global proportions can occur suddenly, spread rapidly and compromise the status and livelihoods of billions of people to an unprecedented degree and over a long period generating a new attention to environmental resources and rural areas that were less influenced by the infections.

Another effect of the COVID-19 was the development of smart work, an act of production performed independent of time and place. In its ultimate form, the “office” no longer exists and traditional work conventions such as work hours are no longer so relevant, removing thousands of people from the daily routine of going to office in the morning and back home in the evening. This is one of the effects of COVID-19 that will stay, independently from the reduction of the infections. The greater amount of time spent at home has resulted in a growing attention to many services associated to landscape, as also to the current booming of tourism due to the reduction of the limitations to mobility. This new situation would require a better attention to landscape policies. It is worth remembering that there is still a long way to go before we can speak of a real integration among cultural, urban, environmental and agricultural policies that are often acting independently from each other. Even in the most advanced examples of landscape plans applying to entire territories, the integration between development plan and landscape plan shows the difficulties of promoting rules that combine a sectorial approach with an integrated approach responding to the needs of the entire society.

According to the definition of landscape proposed by the convention, the perception of the population is a fundamental aspect to consider, and this brings about the need to analyze the different experiences of the people living in different territories. While most of the European citizens are concentrated in urban and periurban areas, with a relatively limited extension, a much smaller amount of the population lives in the countryside and an even smaller percentage is directly connected with agriculture and forest activities. This means that when planning and management policies are undertaken, it should also be considered that people in rural areas may be limited in number, but have a closer contact with the environment, while they create and manage landscape. Therefore, in times of extreme climatic events, affecting both environmental and agricultural activities, a closer attention to rural territories is necessary. Agricultural activities not only produce food and create landscapes, but also prevent the effects of extreme climatic events, through a careful ongoing management of the territory that serves the entire society, an activity of utmost importance for our fragile environment.

When thinking of landscape policies, it should also consider the differences existing between the concepts of territory, landscape, nature, environment and related conservation strategies. These terms are often overlapped one to another, even in the scientific arena, but, conceptually, they mean different things. The case of environment is very useful to explain these diversities, especially in times when environment is the main concern at world level. Environmental quality responds mainly to indicators that can be measured and transferred into political action and monitored. Ideally, if we can achieve a certain quality of the air, soil, water and biodiversity, we can have

an acceptable environmental quality in any country. Therefore, in the case of many countries accepting common standards in terms of indicators, we might achieve a good environmental quality in many parts of the world. When speaking of landscape quality instead, there is no way to indicate one landscape type that fits for all, because landscape is always a local project. Although we can measure many features of the landscapes, the overall values associated to landscapes are not always depending from measurable indicators. The cultural identity represented by the structure of one landscape may exist even in an area with no forests, although forests are always seen as valuable environmental element. Well-established scientific approaches are useful tools for landscape assessment, but the beneficiaries' perception, as well as the cognitive and emotive impact of direct perception, expressed by the local culture, should be taken into consideration in order to capture the entirety of a system. This is also a way to study landscape which is a very challenging activity, especially in a world dominated by sectorial knowledge. Many different skills are needed in order to perform the systemic approach required to apply a transdisciplinary approach to such a fascinating theme.

Florence, Italy

Mauro Agnoletti  
Editor of the Series

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Refugees from the former Yugoslavia, Camp Ivankovo, Croatia, 1994.  
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# Introduction: Preserving Continuity in Uncertain Times

*Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more,  
thought through my eyes.*

James Joyce

## Side Note

The uncommon title of this introduction aims at revealing the uncertain, even desolating, scenario in which the UNISCAPE's 20th anniversary celebration of the European Landscape Convention took place and which has substantially affected the reflections expressed in the following contributions. We could never have imagined that less than one year after setting the scene for the celebration, all our rationale and most concrete certainties would tremble and ultimately crash because a tiny, invisible being had entered our lives, influencing it irremediably. Indeed, nothing suggested that *cultivation*, the driving concept of the conference, intended as the art of inventing "the common garden of life", combined with the most minute species, would actually become not only a concrete reality, but also a key agent of discovery revealing many other uncomfortable truths embedded in our society. To make things worse, a mere instant after what was imagined, at last, as a global ecological awakening from the long capitalist dreamland and a step forward from the pandemic emergency with its proliferation of fuzzy metaphors of war, killer, enemy, fight, Europeans would again collapse disastrously, in this very moment and with no accompanying metaphors, into another tragic scenario of limitless death and destruction.

Hence, it is with great discomfort but also with a glimmer of hope, that we invite readers to ignore, for an instant, the omnipresent martial lexicon and try to imagine how the meaning of *conflict*, *problem*, *challenge*, *obligation*, *will*, etc. could be disentangled with the use of different words like *interaction*, *observation*, *persuasion*, *attention*, *care*, *cultivation* and *emotion*; in other words with a landscape focused lexicon.

Because landscape has nothing to do with the land of fairy tales, but it is the first vision of belonging that we recall at our awakening once our disenchantment of the old world is over.

## An Uncommon Introduction

Initially, the 20th anniversary of the European Landscape Convention created an occasion for UNISCAPE member universities to discuss the main achievements and lessons learned in the two decades following its adoption in Florence. However, what was intended as a single celebratory event turned out to be a much longer journey of reflection undertaken jointly with many members of the UNISCAPE community. This over one-year long adventure, bouncing between different COVID-19 emergencies, emerged as an extraordinary continuity of different actions and initiatives. The unexpected rise of public dialogue of an unprecedented intensity encouraged open debate, the formation of different working groups to process key public statements and the proactive opening up of UNISCAPE to a wider public: ultimately remaking UNISCAPE's political *garden*.

Indeed, between the opening and closing conferences, in October of 2020<sup>1</sup> and 2021<sup>2</sup> respectively entitled *Cultivating the Continuity of the European Landscape*, many singular forms of reflection carried out in different formats of discussion have nourished UNISCAPE's open forum: in addition to conference contributions, followed by a series of online lectures *Landscape, a place where disciplines meet*<sup>3</sup> and the international workshop W.A.VE on *Islands, Architecture and Landscapes of water*,<sup>4</sup> the works concluded fortunately "in person" with a range of diverse and inspiring landscape ateliers (*Woods go urban*<sup>5</sup>; *Isolario*<sup>6</sup>; *Perception conception*

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<sup>1</sup> *Cultivating continuity of the European Landscape*, first edition, October, 16–17, 2020, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.

<sup>2</sup> *Cultivating continuity of the European Landscape. One year after*, October, 22–24, Bardini Garden and Villa, Florence.

<sup>3</sup> This online lecture series is part of the program of UNISCAPE's Year of Landscape 2020-21 launched in October to mark the 20th anniversary of the European Landscape Convention. In 2023, the series is at its third edition.

<sup>4</sup> Promoted with the Università IUAV in Venice and dedicated to Enrico Fontanari, June 28, July 16, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Coordinated by Lisa Diedrich (SLU Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences) and Catherine Szanto (ENSA La Villette).

<sup>6</sup> *Landscape of Islands and International Carlo Scarpa Prize for Garden* (draft title) coordinated by Luigi Latini (Fondazione Benetton Studi e Ricerche, Treviso, IUAV).

and visions for terraced landscapes<sup>7</sup>; UAV landscapes<sup>8</sup>; Reinventing public spaces,<sup>9</sup> *Cultivating energies: in pursuit of a new Ektopy*<sup>10</sup>), four round tables (*Cultivating the landscape*<sup>11</sup>; *Landscape policy and governance*<sup>12</sup>; *Landscape design and time*<sup>13</sup>; *Observing landscape*<sup>14</sup>) and a *Challenges/Living Lab*<sup>15</sup>.

To manifest our will to openly discuss, share future challenges and find common solutions for the European Landscape together with wider society, the drafting of the second UNISCAPE manifesto on the *Future of the European Landscape* and the formation of *Uniscape's Green strategy* have been initiated. These distinctly opened, shared and evolving initiatives were essentially set up as a vivid public reminder that European Landscape (the most authentic expression of the relationship between people and places) and the European Landscape Convention (the driver of key democratic principles) can both truly frame the new European green shift by contributing to a more inclusive, sustainable and beautiful Europe, a “place open for everyone”.

Hence, this publication, originated during a year of intensive and numerous “in person” and “online” meetings, should not be intended simply or solely as conference proceedings, but rather as a blend of contributions, that express through different visions and approaches the genuine desire for landscape to reactivate and animate the impassioned reasoning that will enable us to face, through a multiplicity of local actions, some of the most urgent, common and global world challenges. Because landscape in its essence equals *diversity*, it imposes an engagement with singularities of both types: with individual perceptions that permanently change as well as with unpredictable character of nature in its perpetual movement and transformation.

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<sup>7</sup> Curators: Timmi Tillmann, Maruja Salas (ITLA, International Terraced Landscapes Alliance), Lucka Azman (University of Ljubljana).

<sup>8</sup> Coordinated by Margherita Vanore (Università Iuav di Venezia, Department of Architecture and Arts) with PRIDE Laboratory (Pro Research in Integral Design Environment), Research Infrastructure IR.IDE.

<sup>9</sup> *Landscape design exercises on Largo Annigoni, Florence*, coordinated by Anna Lambertini and Antonella Valentini (DIDA University of Florence) supported by AIAPP (Italian Association of Landscape Architects) and Municipality of Florence.

<sup>10</sup> *Curators* Paolo Picchi, Dirk Oudes, Sven Stremke, Academy of Architecture, Amsterdam University of the Arts, High Density Energy Landscapes Research Group; Roberta Pistoni, LATTIS école d'urbanisme de Paris, Université Gustave Eiffel; Auréline Doreau, Chaire Paysage et Énergie auprès de l'ENSP Versailles, Marseille; Alessandra Scognamiglio, ENEA, Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development; Angela Grassi, ETA Florence, Envision, Transform, Accelerate; supported by AIAPP (Italian Association of Landscape Architects).

<sup>11</sup> Chaired and coordinated by Mauro Agnoletti (University of Florence).

<sup>12</sup> Chaired and coordinated by Gian Franco Cartei (University of Florence), C. Cassatella (Politecnico of Turin).

<sup>13</sup> Chaired and coordinated by Rita Occhiuto (University of Liège), Margherita Vanore (Università IUAV, Venice).

<sup>14</sup> Chaired and coordinated by Juanjo Galan (Universidad Politécnica de Valencia), Juan Manuel Palerm (ULPGC).

<sup>15</sup> Chaired and coordinated by Saša Dobričić (University of Nova Gorica).

Already at the draft stage of this momentum of gathering, we have decided that the celebratory events should reflect upon the achievements and challenges of ELC with a judicious dose of “philosophy of suspicion” entangled within different debate formats as well as within diverse forms of expression, to ensure critical dialogue between multiple approaches but most of all to avoid any entrapment into commemorating achievements. Discussion, lectures, seminars, workshops, statements, design and art, all contribute to setting up a new stage for different expressions that knowledge, experience and imagination, when embracing landscape, can produce.

It was clear that we needed not just to organize events and exchange ideas but to enact a process that would move us a step forward from the necessary proliferation and cultivation of micro-areas of study disciplines to uncover some “concrete universality” that binds the multitude of diverse and specific problems: in the words of our keynote guest Emanuele Coccia “to move from the ‘point of view’ to the ‘point of life’”. In other words: to completely rethink, through the eyes of landscape, the predominant narratives, models and categories that affect our perception and understanding of the world, and that somehow we continue to cultivate when perhaps, we ought instead to challenge or, at least, reconsider. Specifically, in recalling the assumptions of Franco Farinelli’s contribution: facing a great return of *Places* and evident fading of the logic of *space*, can landscape dominate as a strategic model for understanding the world and rethinking globalization? In a world that has in many ways become evanescent and immaterial, can we trust ourselves to such a fleeting and intangible model as landscape?

Indeed, the two main challenging dimensions of our initiatives, *Landscape as a* (restless) *Project* and *Landscape as a Common*, framed the session of keynote contributions, by recalling the above-mentioned dilemmas: *Landscape as a project* seriously reconsiders our capacity to give body to something that does not exist yet, like the future. It seems indeed that in an unpredictable world imbued with uncertainties, mainstream “futurology” delivers nothing but weak and easily digestible certainties. We are indeed an anxious collective that, under the umbrella of fear or pressure of multiple predictions and prefabricated solutions, is incapable of envisaging any common scenarios, to give a concrete body to a future. So, Landscape Project, considered as a powerful thinking tool able to restlessly *project*, is to literally eject into the future a comprehensive image of a collective and “interspecific” body of thought. Recalling the suggestion of Frédérique Aït-Touati, we could consider Landscape as a performative agent, a model of human–nature performance on common ground.

Conversely but intertwined with the Landscape Project: *Landscape as common* considers landscape as a privileged playground to practice and test our capacity to inhabit, to dwell among the extended community of living beings, in other words to be a craftsman of the same fabric of life. Are we able to nourish those forms of reciprocal use that create “wealth” as a distinctly shared dimension, wealth that does not end as an appropriation? As Amy Strecker points out, we have to re-align the concept of property with the landscape and re-imagine the way in which property is conceived. So, beyond private or public property, a belonging that is experienced as relationship, as reciprocal use, as a co-designing process of the common dimension by treating all forms of existence as genuine and authentic: as to say making the

history also with those who apparently do not have the power to make it; and this is indeed what further challenges both the theory of action and our projects, that result literally *restless*.

That said, any celebration of an anniversary, even more so if it is that of the European Landscape Convention, must acknowledge the progress that has been made in the implementation of ELC and in the overall empowering of the European Landscape dimension. National and international relations have gradually taken it into account, contributing to the introduction of landscape issues in different sectors of society. This in turn has led to increased involvement in the *protection, management* and *planning* of both *outstanding* and *everyday* landscapes.

The European Landscape Convention has indeed been a catalyst in the generation of an all-encompassing and systematic effort to build a broadly defined and shared dimension of multiple landscape preservation and design strategies with the aim of progressing toward true inclusiveness at national and international levels. But most of all, the *landscape model* has stimulated traditional scientific, educational and professional categories to systematically acknowledge the need to redefine their boundaries, to step out and to engage with paradigms that fully embrace the complexity of life in a globalized world so clearly characterized by persistent environmental and social issues.

On the other hand, for many of us, teachers, researchers and, most of all, students, landscape has become a powerful thinking model that can ignite cross-sectorial debate and empower truly collaborative imagination. Landscape has pervaded traditional academic disciplines with a new “ecology of thought” that actually reframes the way we see our relationship with other facets of Earth and widens the focus from single elements to bind them into a coherent ensemble of many different voices that make up our mosaic of “art of living”.

We have all acknowledged that new efforts have involved the educational and research sectors in developing those forms of continuity that are cultivated entirely within and in-between diversity.

In essence, perhaps the most fortunate and explicit expression of the implementation efforts of the ELC today, 20 years after its adoption, lies in its rich and diverse constellations of protected areas, natural reservoirs, heritage sites, etc.

But can these cultural landscapes, considered as authentic and diverse articulations of fortunate coexistence, migrate out of the protective belt and meld with our world to re-design it and enact new relationships with animated and non-animated actors that make up our extended community? Is there a risk that this *migration* only reproduces the format thereby creating an outlet of standardized visions of how landscape should look, after all landscapes are often explained before they are really seen?

Hence, if landscape is a relational model driven by a seamless bond between the observed and the observer, a “background” to the actors, in a reciprocal cycle of influence, then how should new patterns of connection between the different patches composing the European Landscape be established and integrated? And how should these forms of *continuity* be adopted while keeping all the components of the landscape model united and interrelated albeit in friction with the world and history?

Maybe some hints for the future debate can be found in the reading of the volume.

## An Uncommon Structure

Lastly, we would like to expend a few brief words as to the conception and the laborious creation of this book. At the outset, this volume was intended as a traditional conference proceedings book, in other words a faithful report of the first UNISCAPE Florence Conference (held on October, 16–17, 2020).

In this sense, originally the core of the volume was composed of three complementary sections (*Landscape Policy and Governance*, edited by Claudia Cassatella and Gian Franco Cartei; *Landscape design and Time*, edited by Rita Occhiuto and Margherita Vanore; and *Observing Landscape* by Juan Manuel Palerm and Juanjo Galan). The crucial goal of this first part was the broader, innovative and shared exploration, beyond national and disciplinary boundaries, of the *landscape dimension* (and related landscape-oriented issues) as proposed by the ELC.

Then, as previously mentioned, during these last two years, the global context and the specific framework have been continuously transforming and evolving.

And so too this volume has been progressively enriched in an attempt to preserve the continuity of a landscape-centered discourse, *restlessly* developed within our UNISCAPE community, where the strong exigence of building new cultural places of sharing and awareness emerged.

In this sense, the first and last chapters have been conceived to complete the structure of the book, reporting the continuity of the reflections brought on over time.

So, Part I, dedicated to *New Challenges for European Landscapes*, is edited by Saša Dobričić and hosts a selection of the papers proposed by the keynote speakers who gave their lectures in both Florence conferences, whereas Part V, edited by Tessa Matteini and Conor Newman includes a set of reflections for the future challenges and landscape-oriented perspectives, drafted by some of the UNISCAPE members.

Saša Dobričić  
Tessa Matteini



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