

LA RÁBIDA

DECLARATION FOR RAISING AWARENESS AND THE TRAINING OF SPECIALISTS IN LANDSCAPE PROTECTION, MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING.

The European Network of Universities for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention (UNISCAPE) and the participants representing 22 universities from 5 different nations at the **I International Meeting for Directors of Masters Courses in Landscape Studies**, held at La Rábida, Huelva (Spain) from 14 to 16 May 2009, issue the following statement and conclusions deriving from the meeting:

1. We thank the International University of Andalucia, the University of Sevilla, the Centro de Estudios Paisaje y Territorio, the Andalusian Council for Public Works and Transport and the Huelva Port Authorities for their generous help in organising this event and the visits to landscapes of a high cultural (places with connections to Columbus), natural (Odiel marshes) and functional value (intensive agriculture and industrialization in Palos de la Frontera and Huelva).
2. We are aware of the importance that landscapes have in the quality of our lives and culture and also that many of these landscapes are subject to constant degradation. For these reasons we ask our public authorities, scholars, teachers, leaders of popular opinion and citizens in general to devote more thought and effort to maintaining our landscapes, fundamentally by encouraging a greater social awareness and increasing the means made available for education in the subject.
3. Following the approval of the European Landscape Convention (Florence 2000), education in landscape demands special attention at university level because the deterioration of the quality and identity of landscapes is due to complex processes that require wide understanding and specialised professional capabilities. One main aim of university education in this field should be that of contributing to the quality of landscapes as an important factor in the quality of life and identity.
4. Within this context, it is highly desirable that universities, public administration at all levels and non-governmental organisations cooperate to make the latest findings available to government employees, professionals, businesses and any social entities either involved in or interested in activities that may impinge upon the landscape and the safeguarding of affected territories. Public participation and agreement, together with inter-administrative and institutional co-

ordination and co-operation, are nowadays essential to maintaining and/or improving the quality of European landscapes.

5. Landscape studies are already high on the agenda in university syllabuses, although somewhat unevenly throughout the various European educational systems, and they are also approached from different disciplinary, conceptual and methodological angles. The exchange of information concerning the content of the Masters courses represented at the meeting in La Rábida leaves no doubt that a special effort must be made to substantiate a common theoretical framework and terms of reference. The European Landscape Convention provides a starting point in this matter, which should be widely developed and shared amongst all interested parties. The complexity of this subject leads us to the conclusion that Masters courses should share a common and multidisciplinary basis from which they may then concentrate on different, more specialised objectives.
6. Embracing as it does a variety of concepts both natural and cultural, objective and subjective, historical and modern, the entire subject of landscape is extremely complex and has attracted a multitude of scientific disciplines. Thus the content of landscape education at universities should continue to be multidisciplinary and integrative. In accordance with the European Landscape Convention, which sets down that the territory in its entirety is landscape, all Masters courses in landscape studies should pay due heed to the following issues: the characterization and assessment of existing landscapes, their dynamics and transformation, their natural and ecological basis, their economic value together with past and present processes, their evaluation by the population as a whole and the cultural values attributed to them.
7. The Masters courses presented at the meeting all agree on the public value of landscapes and deal with common or related aspects. The most important orientations are.

- Land management and city planning
- Protection of natural and cultural heritage
- Landscape architecture
- Landscape design
- Agriculture and landscaping
- Art and landscape

All of these Masters courses contain a significant practical component, developed in the form of workshops, which frequently incorporate geographical information techniques, culminating in landscape projects on different scales. There is a clear tendency to train professionals capable of finding solutions to existing problems and innovating or creating contemporary landscapes, without forgetting

the importance of teaching and research at more basic educational levels.

8. A multidisciplinary approach is essential when studying landscapes with the intention of intervening in them and protecting, managing or planning their values. This multidisciplinary approach should be embarked upon without any loss of depth in our knowledge or the conversion of proposals into superficial remedies. The prime end of an interdisciplinary approach should be that all the various professional participants be able to communicate with each other in a common language in such a way as to achieve the maximum synergy from their team work and transdisciplinary co-operation.

9. After a very fruitful discussion about the offer of Masters Courses in Landscape by the 22 universities represented, a UNISCAPE co-ordination committee was formed to further enhance European co-operation in the area of landscape education at university level. Three working groups were also set up to:
 - a) establish a sound basis for presenting and characterizing the various Masters courses;
 - b) prepare and co-ordinate joint summer courses and common workshop experiences;
 - c) develop a strategy for financing for these activities.

La Rábida, Huelva (Spain), 15 May 2009.