

## Conference Proposal

Tentative title: **Healthy landscapes: green, regeneration, safety, sustainability**

Venue: University of Bologna (Italy)

When: June, 2018

Possibility to organize the General Assembly of Uniscape within the Conference

### Background

Today, two thirds of the world's population live in urban areas, and this trend is expected to increase. While, on the one hand, rural areas are under pressure due to the growth of urban areas, on the other hand, the demand for green areas in the city for a better urban quality is increasing, as recommended in the international strategic program 'Healthy Cities' of the World Health Organization. The scientific literature acknowledges that the presence of green areas and open spaces within the city is an opportunity for the well-being of the citizens. Green is recognized as capable of improving urban sustainability and resilience from an environmental and ecological point of view. In terms of environmental services, urban green, in all its forms and dimensions (parks, spaces along urban mobility systems, private and public green spaces, urban gardens, uncultivated areas), is considered one of the major tools that can be used to contrast the loss of biodiversity caused by urban sprawl and land use changes. Moreover, it provides services in the context of climate change adaptation and mitigation. A well-structured green, in fact, mitigates water surface runoff and soil erosion, purifies air, captures CO<sub>2</sub>, reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by reducing the effects of summer heat island and heat dispersion of buildings in winter and thus reducing energy needs for cooling and heating, reduces soil and water pollution, and plays a key role in environmental regeneration. Moreover, it can help to improve the quality of indoor air. Green as a construction element of urban and rural architectures increases the quality of everyday open spaces, whether they are dedicated to dwelling, education, or work. The interaction with nature has cognitive benefits with consequent performance, affective and physiological improvements. Generally, green creates recreational opportunities that contribute to people's health, wellbeing and quality of life, especially in relation to their ability to build an environment that alleviates stress and mental fatigue. The perception of green itself has many benefits from a psychological point of view, both in natural and in urban environments. Therefore, an increasing attention has been paid to its accessibility in urban areas, as proper planning of urban green spaces contributes to increasing the benefits of psychophysical health, with a reduction in health costs. Moreover, positive impacts are well known on social interaction, integration and inclusion, by improving spaces for the benefit of the entire community. Green in the city is also linked to a reduction of the fear of crime and to an actual reduction of small crimes in large cities. For the beneficial effects in the medical rehabilitation field, activities in the green support projects for the social inclusion and rehabilitation of people with mental illnesses and prisoners. The therapeutic function of gardens has been recognized since antiquity. Benefits of green on people's well-being have been scientifically proven, as well as a correlation between a proper design of the hospital environment, capable of allowing access to green areas, and an improvement of patients' and staff's conditions, to the point that the design of healing gardens has become a well-established specific field of study. In this sense, the study of the influence of (indoor and outdoor) physical environment on people's health and well-being should become more and more the subject of integrated studies carried out jointly by different disciplines. Green also contributes significantly to the aesthetic quality and sense of identity of a place, increasing its attractiveness, with consequent effects also from an economic and social point of view, as in the case of major urban regeneration projects. As a consequence of the multiplicity of benefits provided by green, and given the complexity of the relationships between biodiversity, ecosystem functions and human health in a broad sense, it is clear that systematizing the above-mentioned research approaches is important and urgent, by integrating plans for

sustainable urban development and decision-making processes and activities related to the promotion of health and quality of life. At the same time, the search for innovative and multidisciplinary approaches that consider jointly the fields of study of green, landscape, and environmental, social and health sciences is strategic to respond in an integrated manner to the health, urbanization and environmental management challenges, also ensuring the active involvement and participation of local communities and stakeholders.

### **Conference theme**

Actions, policies, and projects aimed at promoting landscape quality cannot prescind from the challenge of thoroughly addressing the more and more important role of prevention and safety in our living environment. Green areas and elements play a crucial role for the healthiness of urban, periurban and rural environments, and for health and safety of people.

Design and management of open spaces and green areas are closely related with sustainability, in terms of healthiness of cities and countryside, green regeneration and requalification of degraded areas, mobility and smart cities, carbon footprint reduction, energy and resource sustainability, also in a circular economy perspective, and social inclusion and recovery promotion.

Experts in landscape-related disciplines, plants, green areas design and management, urban regeneration and sustainability, environmental and urban prevention and monitoring, geography, social sciences, environmental psychology, as well as planners and decision makers, are invited to join a deeply interdisciplinary conference which aims at exploring the manifold and mutual relationships which are at the basis of the landscape-safety nexus, crosscutting research and practical experiences and policies bridging the landscape and green planning, health, and urban policies fields.

### **Tentative conference keywords**

- interdisciplinary experiences
- green regeneration and sustainability
- green/landscape-health/prevention nexus
- landscape projects and health promotion
- urban planning and quality of life
- landscape planning and social wellbeing
- green-landscape-health and education
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