

Cultivating the Continuity of European Landscapes¹

20th Anniversary celebration of the European Landscape Convention

The anniversary of the European Landscape Convention creates an occasion for UNISCAPE to discuss the main achievements and lessons learned in the 20 years from its adoption in Florence, as well as future objectives and challenges. Today we can appreciate that notable progress has been made in its implementation, which has meant empowering the European landscape dimension.

National and international relations have gradually taken into account the landscape dimension, 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 ordinary landscapes. The European Landscape Convention has catalyzed the generation of an all-encompassing, systematic effort to build a generalized shared dimension of multiple landscape preservation and design strategies at national and international level that is progressing towards true inclusiveness. The landscape model has stimulated traditional scientific, educational and productive categories to systematically acknowledge the need to redesign their boundaries, step out and engage with paradigms that fully embrace that complexity of life in a globalized world so clearly evidenced by environmental and social issues.

Landscape has become a powerful model of thinking. It has now pervaded traditional academic disciplines with a new “ecology of thought”, impelling them to rethink the relationship between us and others and shifting the focus from the single elements making up the mosaic of our “art of living” to the glue binding these elements together into a coherent “ensemble” of many different voices. New effort has involved educational and research sectors in thinking of those forms of continuity that are cultivated entirely within and in-between diversity.

Actually, perhaps the most fortunate and explicit expression of the implementation efforts of the ELC today, 20 years after its adoption, is in its rich and diverse constellations of protected areas, natural reservoirs, heritage sites etc., representing the most authentic and diverse articulations of our distinctly European art of living with (rather than against) nature, its resources and the various actors that make up our extended community of living beings.



However, any thoughtful celebration, as UNISCAPE'S 20th anniversary of ELC aspires to be, needs to avoid entrapment into commemoration and must be driven by a judicious dosage of "philosophy of suspicion". In the interest of the continuity of our common future, we can launch the following challenge :

If Landscape is a relational model driven by a glue seamlessly bonding the observed to the observer, the "background" to the actors, in a cycle of reciprocal influence affecting and transforming each other, then **how should new patterns of connection among the different patches composing the European landscape be established and integrated? And how should these forms of continuity be adopted, keeping all the components of the Landscape model bound together and in-relation although in friction with the world and history?**

¹ text drafted by Saša Dobričić (University of Nova Gorica, UNISCAPE vice-President) based on a proposal by Carlo Magnani (University IUAV of Venice)

