

UNISCAPE PRESIDENT**Juan Manuel Palerm**

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Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 25 June 2020

Dear members of UNISCAPE,

The topic that clearly reflects the objective of this communication, in preparation of the General Assembly meeting 2020 on 27 June, is focused on the crucial concept of CONTINUITY meaning FUTURE and aims to offer a new attentive and effervescent look on Landscape perspectives, on which we have to work in the coming years with UNISCAPE; as well as the necessary adjustments and critical reflections on our organisation in coherence with these issues.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of UNISCAPE, held in January 2018 in Florence, I was reflecting on the trajectory of the Network and the avatars that Landscape has been assuming since the signing of the European Landscape Convention in Florence (ELC, 2000). Among the arguments put forward, I claimed the need to review some themes, concepts and statements of the ELC, a difficult but essential task for the European Landscape and for our network and the need to take it into account in the Action Plan that we would present in 2020, precisely in the celebration of the 20 years of the European Landscape Convention.

Well, we have arrived there with some difficulties but we have been overcoming them with effort and work until we have outlined a Plan and the strategies to carry it out, that will begin in the next General Assembly and will be developed within the framework of the Conference in Florence on the 16-17 October 2020, in continuity until 20 October 2021.

But then the COVID-19 emergency has arrived and it entailed the alterity of the reasoned continuity of the human being, built every day as an evolutionary process, with a situation diffusely denominated as a new normality, tending to accept the coexistence of the "other". I sincerely hope that you have overcome it without too much impacts and that we can now continue our route, taking advantage, if possible, of the new paths that we are discovering.

In this new scenario we must make an effort to overcome new perceptions about Landscape that have arisen from the conditions that COVID-19 has demanded, characterised by opposing "Imagination to Reflection". Approaching and intertwining Reflection and Imagination means overcoming the gaze towards the typical and topical contemplation of nature and critically externalising it with an attentive look to understand the phenomena and individuals that interact within the Landscape, whatever it may be. Recurrences to an idyllic



imaginary of nature, in this period of confinement, are massively deteriorating the *raison d'être* of Landscape.

This duality between "reflection and imagination" also entails being attentive and careful in the direct, evident, reclaiming visions of the environment and the territory, capable in the recent years of not considering "imagination" and replacing "reflection" by actions not sufficiently severed by the analytical, scientific and purposeful capacity of man; hosting evident flows of subjectivity in a supposed collective pragmatic praxis.

From this perspective, UNISCAPE flourishes by cultivating and disseminating the Continuity of Landscape, investigating and educating, from the imagination and reflection, precisely because it has been contributing in these 12 years to train a new generation of professionals attentive in the comprehension of Landscape; because it has generated, through multiple research works carried out by its members, presented and debated during several forums held, new tools to better understand our territories, the individuals who inhabit it and their landscapes. In short, it has offered a unique framework for the exchange of knowledge and experience in Europe, in a continuous process capable of identifying and offering strategies for contemporary avatars of Landscape from diversity.

This continues to be our main objective for the future, taking on new challenges through a structure capable of responding to current demands and commitments.

The necessary and continuous revision of our network also allows us to recognise our internal and external differences and to face a political and cultural discourse from a critical and therefore reflective and imaginative position, in confrontation with the CDCPP of the Council of Europe and the UE itself, as well as the guidelines on Landscape issued by the members States and administrations of the CoE and EU.

On the basis of the aforementioned, let me to refer to certain points at the Agenda of our next General Assembly, which will deserve special attention in the debate:

1. Network composition, organs and new strategies

Throughout the history of the UNISCAPE network, its members have ranged from the 23 Universities that participated in its foundation, to a number of regular members of 45 with a temporary range of 28 irregular and a maximum punctual presence of 65 members. Currently, considering the year 2019, the network is composed of 42 members, 12 of them not having paid their membership fee as of December 31, which brings to 30 the effective number of members in a regular position, in compliance with the Statutes rules. As of today, the members who have renewed their membership are 10.

Practically since the creation of the Network, we have experienced some problems derived from the management that the staff of UNISCAPE had with the universities administrations.

This difficulties, repeated every year, have caused a significant damage in terms of time and



communication and affected the correct application of the Statute, with consequences either from an economic than and organisational point of view.

Although the reasons are different, there is a structural aspect that clearly determines this situation, that we can identify it in the dysfunction of having the representatives of the Universities referring to the departments while the formal adhesion corresponds generally to the Rectorate and to the corresponding administrative areas. In order to solve this situation, we propose to recognise this reality and to open to the possibility, already contemplated in the Statute, of having as members of the network single departments, research groups, or other university bodies, besides of foundations, institutes or research centres. This would strengthen and simplify new adhesions, with the will to offer a well-structured network, able to facilitate the management and communication with the members.

In this year 2020 occurs also the end of terms for the roles of the network President and Vice-Presidents (4 years) and members of the Executive Board and the Director (3 years). Given the coincidence of this renewal with the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the ELC and related events, the Executive Board proposes to postpone all the elections to the General Assembly meeting of 2021. This proposal is ratified naturally by what happened with the COVID-19 emergency.

But beyond this inconvenience, it can be interesting to see it as an opportunity to deepen this important decision and choice. For this reason, I want to make the following proposals, with the aim support to the tasks of the President and Director:

- a. the two vice-Presidents should act as coordinators of thematic areas, in particular Education and Training (seminars-masters) and Research and Scientific Competencies (research groups);
- b. the Executive Board members should promote a greater coverage and participation of the network members (true heart of UNISCAPE), constituting a network of disciplines of each University that actively participates in academic events and research projects, with the aim to establish new contacts "among and with" other Universities. The need to offer a permanent map of the disciplines composing the network and the desire to promote interdisciplinary cooperation, also among different universities, require a further effort and responsibility, especially from the representatives of UNISCAPE, and for this reason I believe that it is necessary to coordinate these initiatives with the support of the Executive Board;
- c. nominate or delegate by the President members of the Executive Board or others members to search, promote and coordinate new collaborations with public or private institutions able to implement UNISCAPE and the ELC. This would require the generation of synergies between these institutions and UNISCAPE, aiming to provide the resources that Universities, Departments and Centres of our Network can offer to the society, establishing specific collaboration agreements. This would increase the ability for obtaining new funds that could



contribute to the consolidation of UNISCAPE.

2. Events and Celebrations 2020-2021

From the action plan approved during the GA meeting in La Coruña in 2019, the dates of the events scheduled in 2020 have been adapted due to the circumstances of COVID-19. The new calendar proposal is conceived in continuity with 2021, highlighting the dates of October 16 and 17, 2020 and the final sessions on October 20, 2021. In the meantime, we will have the Landscape Online series, the workshops W.A.VE and the General Assembly in Venice.

In any case, the development of the project for the Conference “Cultivating Continuity of the European Landscape” expresses the themes and objectives defined to build a critical position on Landscape, in its teaching and research. For this, several lines of work have been articulated based on the recognition of the “Landscape Project” and “Landscape as Common Good”, identifying the framework of the current paradigm of debate on the contemporary Landscape.

3. Administration and financial situation

Happily this year we present a positive financial report, in contrast with the balance results of the previous years, in which we had to take charge of taxes arrears and payments coming from the early years financial management of the association.

In the financial documentation provided, you will find the balance sheet of 2019 is, but we cannot forget the need to improve our financial capacity and the management derived from it, as well as finding a formula capable of guaranteeing the administration of the membership fees and the extraordinary budgets. For this, the correct contribution and commitment of the member Universities is essential. Please remember that at the moment members who have contributed in 2020 are only 10, which means an economic uncertainty for the network administration and organisation structure.

In order to find sustainable solutions and alternatives, I propose to establish a specific committee chaired by the President and Director with two other members with the aim of promoting incentives to raise new funds for the consolidation of UNISCAPE, such as the possibility of approving a specific external contribution according to the Statute and for which we should approve a specific agreement.

In addition to the formal requirements for complying with the financial report for the year 2019, we have considered appropriate and necessary to present also the expenses of the institutions that organised events in partnership with UNISCAPE, in order to meet the network's annual goals and programs.

In the same sense, we have prepared a financial-economic study of the events to be carried out in the period 2020-2021, in order to foresee the expenses accordingly to the estimate



budget, with the appropriate advance to be able to properly manage the organisation.

I would like to conclude this proposal letter in the same way as in November 2019, with a thanksgiving. A warm "thank you" to each and every one of those who have selflessly contributed with their time and work, taking care of transportation, accommodation, maintenance, in many cases took out from their family and daily life, to participate in the events organised in these last four years; but above all my thanks for the wisdom and knowledge implied in the formalisation of a demanding program of activities for 2020 and 2021.

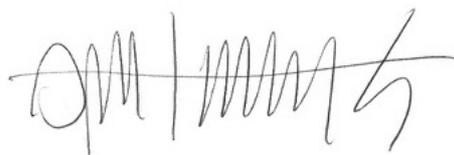
It was a difficult work, given the diversity of disciplines and people involved, as well as the criteria and approaches that are undoubtedly complicated by the demand for rigor and precision. The result is in my view excellent and extraordinary. All the resilient people who contributed have shown capacity for dialogue and understanding, this makes me proud as a member of UNISCAPE and will undoubtedly contribute to use, even more intensely, the time we still have to achieve the established objectives with greater zeal.

But above all, we have to continue to build a solid plot in order to guarantee the participation, the debate and the reflection to bring us to the expected level of development and a conclusion of what we have programmed, thereby strengthening the UNISCAPE NETWORK, despite the COVID-19.

I look forward to your participation in the General Assembly meeting online on 27 June

Sincerely yours,

Juanma Palerm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Juanma Palerm', written in a cursive style.