

Dr Tessa Matteini,
Director,
Uniscape

10th June 2021

Dear Tessa,

I would like to offer my candidacy for position of Vice-President of Uniscape. You will be aware that I am a serving Board member and that I represent the National University of Ireland, Galway, which joined the network in 2011.

As well as contributing to meetings and discussions, my commitment to Uniscape is evidenced by my voluntary work on, for instance, the 2013 **Landscape and Imagination conference** and GA (Paris, La Villette), and the 2016 **Landscape Values: Place and Praxis conference** and GA (Galway). I have spearheaded the current Landscape: Where the Disciplines Meet online lectures series, worked on the White Paper on the European Landscape Convention which is before the members for discussion as I write, and, as you know, I am a contributor and section-co-editor of the forthcoming *Cultivating Continuity of the European Landscape. New Challenges, Innovative Perspectives* (Springer, 2020).

My background is in archaeology and heritage, and I specialise in landscape archaeology. I have particular interest in later prehistoric and early medieval royal landscapes and associated mythologies and literary accounts, and have published widely on the subject. I was awarded the British Academy's John Coles Medal for Landscape Archaeology in 2011. At a national level, I was chairman of the Heritage Council of Ireland (2008-16), and during my tenure the Council published, inter alia, *The Irish Landscape 2009. Looking Around, Looking Ahead* (2009) *Proposals for Ireland's Landscape* (2010), and successfully pressed the Government of Ireland to publish a National Landscape Strategy in 2015; we remain one of the few countries to have such a policy. I am a co-director of the international project Making Europe: Columbanus and His Legacy (2010-present), and I am on the Expert Advisory Board for Charter (ie Cultural Heritage Actions to Refine Training, Education and Roles), a Sector Skills Alliance project funded by Erasmus+ under the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills initiative.

I put my candidature for vice-president forward because I am committed to what the ELC stands for, and the important role I believe Uniscape plays in delivering on it. What Uniscape has achieved, as a voluntary body, is very impressive, and testifies to the professional and personal commitment members have to the landscape philosophy and the principle of international collaboration, which has become an even more pressing concern than it was 21 years ago when the Convention was first published. I think, however, that Uniscape is at a critical juncture. Challenges around *maintaining*—not to mention *growing*—the Uniscape network, and developing the value-added of membership are interrelated and immediate.

We are all aware of the crisis around membership fees—an alarming number of universities are behind in their subscriptions, including my own institution (so I speak from experience)—but this is only symptomatic of more systemic issues affecting most universities across Europe. It has become increasingly difficult to argue the merits of membership of the network to university authorities who consider initiatives such as this in monetary terms. Faced with a potentially fatal contraction in membership, wisely, Uniscape's philosophy to date has been one of collegial forbearance, despite the fact that this induces its own issues vis-à-vis governance and financial sustainability!

Similarly, in spite of the great work being done, the network is not growing in any appreciable way, and large areas of temperate, northern and insular Europe are under-represented. There is a mismatch between the state signatories to the ELC and Uniscape membership, which implies that the connection between the two has broken down, if it ever existed in the first place. Ideally, there should be a direct connection between Article 6B of the Convention and Uniscape membership, and I think it would be worthwhile exploring this further. Consciously or otherwise, signatory states already support landscape education and training at 3rd and 4th level, should not the network be considered axiomatic to that support?

A lot of different factors, local, national and international, influence membership, many of them completely outside of the control of Uniscape. The bottom line, however, is that maintaining and growing the network *depends on membership yielding tangible benefits*. Membership has to be seen to leverage tangible returns. The proposition that membership = access to big EU-funded projects does not stand up to scrutiny, and is not a selling point. In any case, it refers to only one aspect of academic work, the others being research, dissemination, education, training and mentorship, which I think are largely untapped strengths of the network. Modest though it may be, this year's online lecture series, coupled with the year-long validation of online teaching as a methodology during the Covid-19 lockdowns, flags up interesting possibilities in the area of shared, network-based modules. Such is already in development with the 2021 launch of the European initiative Enlight (<https://enlight-eu.org/>), and I think this is an avenue we should develop further.

Thank you for bringing my candidature to the members, and I remain happy to discuss these and other viewpoints at the GA if required.

Sincerely,



Conor Newman
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