

MANIFESTO FOR THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE PROJECT

Landscape as Interpretation. The Paradigm of the Gaze

1. Acting on and in the landscape means positing a (perceptive, sensorial and existential) interpretation of nature and translating it into a project with its corresponding management. Acting on and in the landscape is to create an affectation in nature, to manipulate it for the perception or the habitat, whether to protect, zone or manage it.

Landscape is not nature. Rather it is an active and intentioned “gaze” that eschews a superficial—and therefore empty, hollow—vision of nature which clouds the true meaning of how it is perceived and ignores key (biological, emotional, ecosystemic) relationships. The concept of vision and perception is implicit in the term landscape and, in fact, the landscape has no meaning if there is no one to look at it, to contemplate it and, in short, to experience it, to live in it, over and above the flows, connections and interrelations of nature and its dimensions of conservation and protection.

2. Landscape ought not to be seen solely in the light of sustainable—and as such ecological—development as well as urbanness and biological conservation. It is a cultural product. Landscape is made up of living and, by extension, changing entities such as vegetation or atmospheric and climatic agencies. For this reason, landscape is the representation of (natural or artificial) forms in the making and in continuous variation. Time and mutation are part and parcel of the landscape project, which, as a consequence, envisages growth, seasonal change, deterioration and maintenance as built-in qualities. It translates cultural values into formal and spatial landscape dimensions, thus contributing to its identity and beauty.

3. The landscape ought to be adopted not only as a right-duty of society, but also as a priority emergency. It is imperative to advocate the idea that enjoying a quality landscape is a new basic human right.

Landscape is a resource which can be qualified by adjectives such as natural, tourist, economic, social, cultural, etc. with the subsequent potential for transformation, exploitation and management. And it is its evaluation as an asset where the potentiality for a strategy of action lies, based on a necessary interpretation of the landscape and its exchange of intellectual and everyday readings.



Towards a New Dimension of the Public. Public Sphere-Public Space and Landscape

4. Landscape is one of a community's primary essential elements of identity. The search for this principle of identity is the basic motive that best explains the concept of the landscape.

The landscape represents at one and the same time a community's character, belief and vision of the past, the present and the future. This community may be passive and routine, or active and anticipatory, the voice of a project. In this way each society adopts its own stance as a contemplative or active actor with respect to the landscape, a stance which, in any case, changes constantly given its very physiology.

5. Landscape must define and act on the free public space. When it comes to defining a space as public, associating the public with ownership belonging to the State is a misunderstanding, given that it questions its very openness and accessibility, accepted by everybody as its primary fundamental quality.

Believing that it has to be subject to the jurisdiction of state institutions is tantamount to affirming that the public space does not, in effect, belong to the public, but to a political order that has assigned itself the function of controlling it and imposing its meaning on it.

6 The free public space defines a landscape that cannot be patrimonialised as "an entity" nor even as a "place" given that it is not an object nor a fragment of territory with fixed limits and signs that define and demarcate it. The places of our actions and community relationships are always presented as being more complex thanks to the layering and sedimentation in time of incoherent actions.

They are not places where something might happen at any given moment, given that this place only occurs inasmuch as this "something" happens and only at the very moment of its happening. This place is not a place, nor indeed a non-place either, put a taking place. A pure happening. They are sometimes configured as landscapes representative of the community, sometimes as undefined landscapes to be discovered; scenarios of a diffuse contemporary society.



The Territory as an Open multidisciplinary “System.” Landscape as a System of Relationships.

7.LANDSCAPE can not nor should not be mistaken for TERRITORY or ENVIRONMENT, nor can the same operative instruments be applied to each term.

The territory represents the physical space in which different systems of ecosystems intervene, interact and interrelate. **The environment** is commonly understood as a system of physical, chemical and biological conditions in which a collectivity of animal and vegetable organisms organises its life. **The landscape** takes into consideration the relationships of interrelation, independence and temporal evolution of a system of ecosystems. The territory is in fact covered by mosaics of landscapes.

8.- The landscape is not homogeneous. It creates relationships between pieces and elements (system of relationships), able to individualise specific operations between different disciplines in the physical medium, in the countryside and in the city, in the air and in the sea; therefore, one can differentiate different dimensions in the landscape.

It is essential to understand the distinction between these dimensions, for instance between the city and the urban landscape. The city is a place but the urban landscape is a radical form of social space, a scenario and a product of the collective in the process of defining itself, a deterritorialised territory in which, instead of goals, there are diagrammatic relationships, objects, loops and nodes subject to a state of permanent stimulation. This urban landscape is not the result of a specific morphology predisposed by the designer, but an articulation of sentient qualities that come from practical operations and temporal schematisations, procured by citizens and their slippages, stagnations and momentary captures.

9.- Core to the landscape project is the transversality of knowledge as opposed to inflexible orthodox disciplinary tools and rules. This process must be undertaken by associating diverse branches of knowledge not necessarily related with the science of the territory, such as economics, anthropology, agronomy, ecology, geography, sociology, semiotic, aesthetics..., but also creating relationships between the sciences, using different scales of work and referring to goals which are not necessarily coincidental. In any case, renouncing any determinist procedure from the general to the particular.



The INTANGIBLE as a Factor to Value and Consider in the Understanding of and Action in and on the Landscape

10. We need to introduce the “intangible” in the recognition and management of the landscape, helping to define its identity. “Maps of emotions”, beyond maps that guide or conserve the geographical memory, based on the “strategic function of survival”, so characteristic of our hegemonic cultural systems.

We strongly recommend “dignifying” citizens’ subjective, existential, symbolic and, in short, non-utilitarian relationships with their environs, sensibilising our sense of place in accordance with our own thought, memories and emotions. And not only visual, but also olfactory, auditory and tactile. After all, the landscape does not exist except as a condition of our cultural mediations in each different case, which are therefore unique and non-transferable, but also dynamic and in constant transformation, just like landscape itself.

11.- Landscape is a processual form. The forms of landscape are fused in movement, in the perception of movement. The factors of time and movement are consubstantial in the understanding and conception of the landscape. A landscape is also changing because it is experienced from within and it is literally moulded by the movement of the user, as happens in many works of contemporary art. We move within the landscape, but the very landscape itself is shifting, changing, growing and modifying. The architecture of the landscape is subject to temporality. Therefore, we wish to restore spaces to time, to give time to space, to look for spaces of relationship and a relationship between spaces rather than finished spaces in which to celebrate archaic or modern rituals.

12.- “The Landscape” allows us to transcend our individuality in a collective commitment. The concepts that even today refer to the beauty of the landscape and of its intangibility in undefined, balanced, educated, cultivated, pleasurable, harmonious terms, must be reconsidered on the basis of new paradigms and strategies of the landscape project of ecology and of the environment.

After having admitted the environmental crisis, the specificity of landscape and other similar professions must gradually focus their contributions on the accountability to address citizens problems associated with the territory and landscape, from viewpoints which the classical disciplines have been unable to adopt.



LANDSCAPE as Critical Construct, as INNOVATION and as Cultural Dimension

13. Landscape should underscore its cultural dimension in the construction of collective identity, enabling the cohabitation of the diversity of cultures and beliefs shared by contemporary society. Art, by means of its drive to imitate and represent, has shown us how to look at and to value scenes of nature, contributing decisively to the configuration of Landscape through painting, poetry, gardening, etc.

14.- The concept of contemporary landscape needs to rethink the “idea of space”, offering a new physical and conceptual dimension of landscape itself in consonance with our time. It therefore requires new urban planning, technological, architectural and legal tools which are able to renegotiate the idea of space and time, as well as place and site. This process of research requires a renegotiation of any code that would suppose a straitjacket in terms of thought, concepts, actions, obligations or participations and at once to revise the conceptions of representation of reality, the paradigm of our turbulent, ephemeral and dynamic times. The territory and city have become copies of their representations, of their maps and guides even of their own imaginary. Their reality is in cartographic representation as a regulatory legal bond that eludes the presence of man.

15.- The landscape should respond to the interaction between social agreement and participation and the critical project, coming up with an answer to the permanence and transformation of the territory as a necessary fact. This should not be produced according to a casual dependence from the general to the particular, but by absorbing and reinstating critical and creative energy. The landscape project is effective in responding in real time to a question of increasingly quicker and more changing transformation of the habitat, because it is interested not only in the construction of objects, but also in the relationship between them, the relationship between systems of elements which are even heterogeneous among themselves, which constitute a semantic unit when placed in sequence.



The LANDSCAPE PROJECT as MECHANISM between Technology and Process of Creation.

16. The landscape entails the need for the project as a coherent action, a permanent process, a symbiotic condition in the joint responsibility with the landscape. The landscape is the only multi-scale dimension that establishes a vital contact between project and contemporaneity. No landscape can exist without a project, whether from an action as bond or conservation, or whether it gives rise to management or maintenance interventions, or even to explicit innovative interventions of valorisation or requalification.

17.- A responsible management of the landscape project has to be implemented, as the process of formulation, articulation and deployment of a set of strategies aimed at valorising each landscape, thus enabling the increase in the quality of life in contemporary landscapes to be matched by greater individual and social wellbeing of the people who live in the territory.

The practice of the project, in particular, is truly confused with the practice of planning or with city planning. The most common mistake lies in positing or orienting the project and planning or zoning as actions in the same "range" at different scales: detailed and "large scale", detracting from the intrinsic nature the project must address. The project acts on complex systems and "forms" of the territory in which the project is located with a constant work of decomposition and re-aggregation of elements with differing social, economic and cultural qualities with the goal of reaffirming, maintaining or establishing from scratch the "characters" in certain contexts that remain strategic, in which the quality we call landscape is exploited, very far removed from the generic urban responses over recent years.

18.- The landscape project is a "device". A "mechanism" able to participate in correspondence with the landscape of the community that lives in it through circuits that process goals between the hope of progress and the expression of its characters and identity. The landscape project should in itself contain the capacity for an exact diagnosis, know how to recognise, in the context where it acts, the specific features that contribute to revealing the quality of the place and its environment, understand the nature of cultural values and recognise their historical meaning, their laws of evolution and their future projection. This essential perception of our culture is inspired by two apparently opposing mental attitudes: nostalgia and hope. It is between these two dimensions of our thoughts, referring to the past and to the future, where the landscape project acts, stimulating and interpreting the sense that the community has of its own landscape with an aesthetic ethical and cognitive commitment.

