

Conclusion: Landscape Observatories in Europe: the Action Plan

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## Proceedings of the UNISCAPE En-Route International Seminar LANDSCAPE OBSERVATORIES in Europe II

Organised by UNISCAPE, CIVILSCAPE, RECEP-ENELC,  
UNIVERSITY OF TURIN and POLITECNICO DI TORINO

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## Preface

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For the European Landscape Convention (ELC), “landscape observatories, centers and institutes” are crucial instruments in the development and implementation of landscape policies. They form a strong incentive to collect and exchange information, to raise awareness, and to offer a platform for public participation and training in landscape matters, which is relevant at the level of local communities and regions as much as for states. In 2013, thanks to the European Landscape Networks (UNISCAPE, CIVILSCAPE, RECEP-ENELC), a first overview on the existing Landscape Observatories was presented in the International Seminar “Landscape Observatories in Europe: from ELC Recommendations to Local Initiatives 2000-2013” (Florence, 27-28th June 2013), which saw the participation of about hundred experts and stakeholders from many different countries. The Seminar “Landscape Observatories In Europe II” discussed how cooperation can enhance the foundation and management of Landscape Observatories from the perspective of representatives of varying denotations and levels of institutionalization, together with other interested stakeholders. The Seminar’s concluding session discussed challenges to be tackled and actions to be taken: the identification of further Landscape Centers, Institutes and Observatories, the establishment of a Network of European Landscape Observatories, and a “Landscape Observatories Action Plan”.

## Mission and role of the Landscape Observatories in Europe: an introduction

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### 1. European Landscape Convention objectives and Observatories' missions.

Nearly a decade after the first experiences of Landscape Observatories (LOs), this Seminar recalls the one of Careggi in 2013 trying to define their evolution, since the creation by the Council of Europe of the three networks provided for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention (ELC): UNISCAPE, RECEP-ENELC, CIVILSCAPE. The wide development of LOs in European countries testifies the relevance of their scope - the need for supporting with knowledge and social participation the scientific, political and cultural change promoted by the ELC – but also gives evidence to the ambiguities, the conceptual uncertainties and the coordination difficulties. So, the optimism reflected in the landscape rhetorics and the hopes or illusions that many communities entrust to the landscape concept, cannot obscure the need for a critical approach by the LOs. In the attempt of defining the role of LOs in the changing context of modern society, we must recall the main ELC objectives relevant to this regard:

- Expansion of landscape policies, in terms of protection and enhancement of the entire territory, beyond the constraints and safeguards traditionally applied to single landscape properties',
- Strengthening of landscape policies, in terms of knowledge and awareness of structural factors, public interests and values at stake, multi-sectorial strategies,
- Effective participation of the stakeholders, right holders and local communities, based on their expectations and perceptions, for the public regulation of landscape processes.

According to such objectives and to the further definitions of the Statute of RECEP-ENELC, the Careggi Seminar underlined a two-fold mission for the LOs:

- a) on the one hand, they constitute *instruments for the defense and the enhancement* of the local identities and cultures;
- b) on the other hand, they can be configured as *knots of networks* open to the world and linking diverse natural and cultural resources for the improvement of the territorial qualities.

### 2. Specific role of LOs

Such mission regards both the 3 networks created by Council of Europe to drive the implementation and monitoring of the landscape policies at the European level, and the numer-



ous Observatories formally set up with this title in various European countries on the basis of national, regional or local initiatives. The role of the 3 European networks is different from the role of the LOs, and it is different for each of them. Particularly, the role of Uniscape as it raises from the experiences, seems to be crucial for linking landscape' practices to scientific and project activities, unlike the role of Recep-Enelc which aims to promote the local powers activities, or the role of Civilscape mainly related to the diverse social interests. Surely, in different forms and with different scopes, the 3 European networks are called to perform the activities provided by the ELC, which include landscape observation as well as evaluation, monitoring, analyzing, management. But the 3 networks are not merely or mainly 3 Observatories, with the same meaning of the LOs specifically considered in the present document.

While the scope and the function of the three European networks have been defined with their founding acts in strict relation to the ELC, it is not the same for the Observatories, whose definition is much more diversified. In fact, to perform effectively their first mission, the LOs must make specific and unavoidable reference to the territorial realities on behalf of which they are created. The territorial rooting is the trade-mark of the LOs and their "raison d'être". As we can see in the experiences made, the reflections and the documents produced (such as the Canarie Manifesto 2011, or the numerous contributes presented to the Careggi Seminar or even to this Seminar), the concerned territories are extremely different in terms of size, natural and cultural characters, knowledge, plans and regulations. Such diversification has some relevant implications: the need for a trans-scale and trans-sectoral approach, the "interpretative" (not directly normative) prevailing character of the LO' functions, their role "open" and consciously partial towards the activities that other subjects and institutions are carrying out in the same territories (local administrations, universities, research centres and so on). In other terms, the LOs, to be well rooted in their territories, are called to play an interactive game, rather than to produce an objective and autonomous collection of statements or neutral data. This need has to be well considered when the LOs are concerned with the production of the atlas of maps.

### *3. Problems, evaluations and indicators*

By consequence, as it raises from the contributes presented to the Seminar, each LO has to face risks and problems, worries, regulation needs and project inputs largely diversified. Of course, a sharp distinction may be made between the problems raising from the territorial realities (such as local or regional problems linked to the effects on landscape of global change) and problems or questions concerning theories, methods, laws technological devices to be used for planning and regulation of landscape dynamics. Despite the wide diversity of the problems that should be faced by the landscape policies and therefore by the LOs, their utility and their positive contribute to the "landscape project", always request analysis and evaluations based on adequate multi-disciplinary, scientific and



cultural competencies, able to guarantee the effective pursuit of the above recalled ELC objectives. To this end, it could be useful that the 3 ELC networks (possibly with the help of the Scientific Committee) build up a shared evaluation framework, containing models and sets of indicators of quality, to be flexibly applied to diverse territorial situations. As an example, one should expect from the Italian LOs the special attention for participation processes that has been lacking up to now, even in legal terms (see the Italian Code 2004 on cultural heritage and landscape). Moreover, we must underline the mediation role that LOs can play between experts' knowledge and local cultures, in a bi-directional interaction which, on the one hand gives voice to the involved populations as stated by the ELC, and on the other hand may translate scientific and technical information in effective regulations.

#### 4. Tools and services

To perform the above activities, the LOs should have at their disposal some proper tools. It has been proposed that each LO, or a set of LOs, provides a centre for Landscape Observatory Documentation (LOD), in order to ensure the continuity of its activity, the sedimentation of outputs, and their accessibility and dissemination. The services entrusted to the LODs to be accessible by means of the suitable website, may concern particularly:

- mapping LOs and relative centres and institutions,
- linking people involved (scholars, public officials, citizens...),
- exchanging information among LOs,
- gathering maps, data bases and other documents concerning each LO,
- promoting events and shared initiatives.

The building of LODs is open to anyone willing to contribute, sending information and documentation and joining the working groups which are to be constituted for the above activities. But, in order to ensure the coherence of the implementation processes towards the general and specific objectives recalled in the above point I, we can also provide a "competence platform", formed by experts accredited by Uniscape, to be consulted for the comparison of proposals, evaluations and local projects, with an integrated and international vision.

#### 5. Coordination networks

In order to play their role as knots of networks, the LOs need the *coordination* of initiatives, experiences and activities, clashing with the extreme diversification and dispersion of initiatives, which reflect, at least in part, the inherent meaning of landscape, the irreducible subjectivity of the landscape experience, and the indispensable role of local options and perceptions. As it was stated in the Seminar of Careggi, a first move in this direction



could consist of a concerted redefinition of the tools and tasks of each of the 3 European networks, and possibly the role of the Scientific Committee, to be reconsidered as a transverse instrument at the service of all three networks. In the context of this redefinition, an important goal could be the creation of a Network of European Landscape Observatories focused on the organization activities enlightened above. Such network, working with and for the Observatories, should offer a common ground of dialogue and cooperation for the 3 existing networks.

A second crucial move concerns the shift of conservation policies from the protection of single properties to the active conservation of the entire territory of each landscape, as a whole network of natural, economic, social and cultural relations. The LOs can play an important role in identifying and evaluating values and problems and indicating the objectives of quality to be pursued by landscape planning and management, against the tendency of the detachment of protection from the range of territorial policies impacting on the landscape. A detachment that can condemn the LOs to a merely “inventory” or cosmetic role. But if we want avoid this risk we must draw the attention to the need for an effective *alliance* between the policies of landscape conservation and the policies of nature conservation. In particular, the conservation of parks and natural protected areas, both inside and outside the city, both at the local and at the regional or even international level (see for instance the Rete Natura 2000, created by the European Union).


As a final remark, we can observe that the risks and processes of environmental degradation related to global changes and threatening the European landscapes, meet new imperatives of fairness and equity required for the world’s population, calling for new visions and new strategies of development. Against this dramatic scenarios of change, the active conservation of the landscape poses unavoidable instances of public regulation at all levels. The “*right to landscape*” implies that new citizenship rights should be guaranteed by public authorities, even by means of supra-local measures and strategies. At the same time, public regulation must strengthen the role of local communities in creating and managing their landscapes. In these directions, the task of the networks of LOs is of utmost importance.



## Landscape Observatories in Europe: the Action Plan

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On the basis of the twenty seminar presentations - from Italy, Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden, Lebanon, and Japan - we would like to make the point on the state of Landscape Observatories (LOs) in Europe, including some suggestions for the development of future initiatives and research programs.

General issues of discussion concern LOs definition, role and potentialities. The experiences and the projects mentioned during the Seminar show that LOs can be conceived in many different ways:

- 1. data-container** of material (cartography, pictures and other types of iconographic representation, texts, and so on) and immaterial knowledge; in other words, a landscape atlas;
- 2. monitoring instrument** for long term landscapes transformation;
- 3. place** where experience-based knowledge meets experts-based knowledge; civil society meet experts, public officials, decision makers trying to build up a common language;
- 4. mediator, catalyzer, incubator** of innovative initiatives, based more on people than on landscape types;
- 5. way** to improve the landscape right in Europe and promote the people responsibility being landscape actors and not bystanders!

Existing observatories also are very different with regard to their legal nature: civil society associations, public entities, research bodies, or a consortium. This differences have an effect on the role of LOs and on their capacity of interaction with other actors. This also means interactions between the information built up by LOs, usually bottom-up and open source, and official, and validated, governmental databases. And, of course, interactions intended for decision making. In particular, the world of European Observatories looks to the Council of Europe, and its Information System, wishing for a possibility of interaction.

During the Seminar, we felt that the interaction among existing observatories, and the interaction with people interested in setting up new observatories, was a fundamental task, due to the peculiar moment of effervescence, creativity, and experimentation. All the “observatories



people” are interested in meeting each other, confronting and sharing methods, experiences, but also practical information: “how do you?”.

Knowing “who and where” is doing LOs is the first step. Thus, we decide to build up an **international information platform** for LOs networking at European level: the Landscape Observatories Documentation (LOD) website (<http://areeweb.polito.it/LOD/index.php>). The website is hosted by Politecnico di Torino, as a heritage of the Turin Seminar. It is a tool for mapping LOs, or, better, a tool offered to LOs for self-mapping and get into the network. A web survey is ongoing, and the result will be soon available. In the meantime, it may be interesting to notice that, thanks to reports from the net, LOs in America have been found out.

The Seminar had another relevant heritage: the **Charter of Torino**. The Charter of Torino for the Promotion and Dissemination of the Landscape Observatories in Europe promote the establishment of a European Coordination of Landscape Observatories, identified as a useful approach for the application in all Member States of the principles of the European Landscape Convention. The Charter has been presented by Uniscape at the 8th Council of Europe Conference on The European Landscape Convention, in Strasbourg, on 18-20 March 2015.

The Landscape Observatories research is just at the beginning!

## **ANNEX I: Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the guidelines for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention** *(Extracts concerning landscape observatories)*

### *II.1. Division of powers and administrative arrangements*

In order to make sure that the landscape dimension is incorporated into territorial policies, it is essential to engage in consultation, particularly prior consultation, between the different levels responsible for administering the area concerned (government and local authority departments) and between the different bodies and sectors of the same level (horizontal and vertical consultation).

Consultation should cover both the formulation of general strategies and operational decisions. In this way it will be possible to transcend the unrelated and particularistic interests inherent in a view of quality based only on the protection of specific areas and avoid the risk of different or, indeed, contradictory policies on the part of the various public-service sectors.

At national level, it would therefore be useful to establish permanent consultation processes and procedures and regular meetings between bodies with the most central administrative responsibility (ministries) in order to define and agree strategies and prepare consultation bodies (for example, a standing interdepartmental conference). The same could apply vertically between ministries and lower administrative levels (for example, state-region conferences) and also within the different administrative levels. In addition to these permanent bodies, procedures can be drawn up for collaboration between the different bodies and institutes (public and/or private) specialising in particular national and local problems, especially collaboration between departments responsible for different operational sectors in the regions, in supra-municipal bodies or in municipalities themselves.

Arrangements could also usefully be made for national, regional and local bodies of an advisory and guidance nature to provide assistance to the above-mentioned technical and administrative services (landscape observatories, landscape councils, landscape centres and institutes, etc.). These bodies could be composed of representatives of the administrative authorities, the scientific and professional communities concerned with landscape questions, and associations.

Within its landscape-administration structures and procedures each state should define the criteria for public participation and ways of organising it.

The public authorities should devote human and financial resources to landscape policy: such resources can either be specifically earmarked or come from other sectors (for example, the environment, tourism, public works, culture, etc.), perhaps with the introduction of landscape considerations into the aforementioned sectoral policies.

### *10. Observatories, centres or institutes*

The strong forces surrounding contemporary landscapes and the many problems connected with landscape protection, management and planning necessitate continuous observation and



a forum for exchanging information; the creation of landscape observatories, centres or institutes could prove useful for this purpose. Such observatories, centres or institutes would allow observation on the basis of appropriate study protocols employing a range of indicators; they would also allow for the collection and exchange of information on policies and experience. They could be independent or part of a broader observation system.

These landscape observatories, centres or institutes could be set up at various levels – local, regional, national, international – employing interlocking observation systems, and providing the opportunity for ongoing exchanges. Thanks to these bodies, it should be possible to:

- describe the condition of landscapes at a given time;
- exchange information on policies and experience concerning protection, management and planning, public participation and implementation at different levels;
- use and, if necessary, compile historical documents on landscapes which could be useful for knowing how the landscapes concerned have developed (archives, text, photographs, etc.);
- draw up quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess the effectiveness of landscape policies;
- furnish data leading to an understanding of trends and to forecasts or forward-looking scenarios.

Exchanges of information and experience between states, regions and territorial communities, which already take place, should be based on exemplarity but should always be set against the political, social, ecological and cultural context of the original landscape.

The choice of the composition of observatories is a matter for the administrative bodies concerned but should allow for collaboration between scientists, professionals and technicians from the public authorities and the public.

### *11. Report on the state of the landscape and of landscape policies*

States and regions should draft a report on the state of landscapes in their territories at suitable intervals on the basis of the work of the landscape observatories, centres or institutes. The report should include a policy review in order to check the effectiveness of legislation and action taken.

This type of document drawn up by administrative bodies, landscape observatories, centres or institutes or other bodies and/or in collaboration with those different entities could compare what is actually happening in the concerned area with the landscape guidelines and measures implemented, highlight the results, solutions and problems encountered and indicate new directions. The document should stand on its own or be part of a broader report in which a specific section is devoted to the landscape. However, it should not be a substitute for the regular meetings which states should hold for the purpose of implementing the European Landscape Convention.

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## **Recommandation CM/Rec(2008)3 du Comité des Ministres aux Etats membres sur les orientations pour la mise en œuvre de la Convention européenne du paysage.** (*Extraits concernant les observatoires du paysage*)

### *II.1. Répartition des compétences et organisation administrative*

Afin d'aboutir à l'intégration du paysage dans les politiques territoriales, il semble essentiel d'utiliser des méthodes de concertation, en particulier de concertation préalable, entre les différents niveaux de l'administration du territoire (administrations de l'Etat et des autorités locales) et entre les différents organismes et secteurs de l'administration du territoire de même niveau (concertations horizontale et verticale).

La concertation devrait concerner aussi bien la formulation des stratégies générales que les décisions opérationnelles. C'est par ce moyen qu'il est possible de dépasser une conception de qualité liée seulement à la protection d'espaces particuliers et d'éviter le risque de politiques différentes, voire contradictoires, de la part des différents secteurs de l'administration publique.

Au niveau national, il serait donc utile de prévoir des instruments et des procédures de concertation permanente et des réunions régulières entre les organismes ayant la responsabilité administrative la plus centrale (ministères) afin de définir et d'accorder les stratégies et de préparer des instances de concertation (par exemple une conférence permanente interministérielle). Il peut en être de même, verticalement, entre ministères et niveaux administratifs inférieurs (par exemple, des conférences Etat-Régions) et au sein des différents niveaux administratifs. Outre ces formes permanentes, des modalités de collaboration pourraient être définies entre les différents organismes et instituts (publics et/ou privés), spécialisés dans des problèmes particuliers, nationaux, locaux, en particulier entre les directions responsables des différents secteurs opérationnels, dans les régions, dans les organismes supracommunaux et même dans les communes. Il conviendrait également de prévoir des organismes nationaux, régionaux, locaux, de caractère consultatif et d'orientation, portant assistance aux services techniques et administratifs cités ci-dessus (observatoires du paysage, conseil du paysage, centres ou instituts du paysage, etc.). Ces organismes pourraient être composés de représentants des autorités administratives, des communautés scientifiques et professionnelles expertes en paysage, et d'associations.

A l'intérieur de ses structures et de ses modalités d'administration du paysage, chaque Etat peut définir les critères et les modalités de la participation des populations.

Les autorités publiques consacrent à la politique du paysage des moyens humains et financiers : ces derniers peuvent être issus de ressources soit spécifiques soit d'autres secteurs (environnement, tourisme, travaux publics, culture, etc.), voire avec l'introduction du paysage dans ces politiques sectorielles.

### *I0. Observatoire, centres ou instituts du paysage*

Les fortes dynamiques des paysages contemporains et les nombreux problèmes liés à la protection, à la gestion et à l'aménagement des paysages nécessitent une observation continue et un lieu d'échanges; à cet effet, la création d'observatoires, de centres ou d'instituts du paysage peut s'avérer



pertinente. Ces observatoires, centres ou instituts du paysage permettraient cette observation sur la base de protocoles d'étude appropriés et mobilisant divers types d'indicateurs ; ils permettraient également de rassembler et d'échanger des informations sur les politiques et les expériences. Ils pourraient être autonomes ou faire partie intégrante d'un dispositif d'observation plus large.

Ces observatoires, centres ou instituts du paysage pourraient être créés à diverses échelles – locale, régionale, nationale ou internationale – en mettant en œuvre des dispositifs d'observation à échelles emboîtées. Un échange continu entre eux devrait être possible. Ces observatoires devraient permettre:

- de dresser l'état des paysages à des périodes données;
- d'échanger les informations sur les politiques et les expériences de protection, de gestion et d'aménagement, de participation du public et de mise en œuvre à différents niveaux;
- d'utiliser et, si nécessaire, de rassembler les documents historiques relatifs aux paysages qui peuvent être utiles à la connaissance des processus d'évolution des paysages (archives, textes, iconographie, etc.);
- d'élaborer des indicateurs quantitatifs et qualitatifs permettant l'évaluation de l'efficacité des politiques paysagères;
- de fournir des éléments permettant de comprendre les tendances, et de réaliser des prévisions ou des scénarios prospectifs.

Les échanges d'information et d'expériences entre Etats, régions et collectivités territoriales, qui se pratiquent déjà, devraient reposer sur l'exemplarité mais être toujours replacés dans le contexte politique, social, écologique et culturel du paysage d'origine.

Le choix de la composition des observatoires revient aux organismes administratifs, mais ils devraient permettre la collaboration de scientifiques, de professionnels et de techniciens des administrations et du public.

### *11. Rapport sur l'état du paysage et des politiques paysagères*

Les Etats et les régions devraient rédiger, à des intervalles appropriés et sur la base des travaux réalisés par les observatoires, centres ou instituts du paysage, un rapport sur l'état des paysages de leurs territoires. Ce rapport devrait comprendre un bilan des politiques mises en œuvre, de manière à vérifier l'efficacité de la législation et des actions menées.

Un tel type de document, élaboré par les organismes administratifs, les observatoires, les centres ou instituts du paysage ou d'autres organismes, et/ou en collaboration avec ces diverses entités, pourrait confronter les dynamiques effectives des territoires concernés avec les orientations et les mesures paysagères mises en œuvre, souligner les résultats, les solutions et les problèmes rencontrés et indiquer de nouvelles orientations. Ce document devrait être autonome ou intégré dans un rapport avec des finalités plus étendues, en prévoyant une partie spécifique pour le paysage. Ce document ne devrait cependant pas se substituer aux travaux des réunions régulières que les Etats devraient tenir pour la mise en œuvre de la Convention européenne du paysage.



**ANNEX 2:**

**CHARTER OF TORINO**

*for the*

**PROMOTION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE LANDSCAPE  
OBSERVATORIES IN EUROPE**



Foto Tommaso Zanaica

*The* **UNDERSIGNED**

on the occasion of the first UNISCAPE En-Route *International Seminar*  
**"LANDSCAPE OBSERVATORIES IN EUROPE II"**  
 which took place in Turin, *Castello del Valentino*, on 22-23 September 2014,

- **considering** that the COUNCIL OF EUROPE RECOMMENDATION CM/Rec (2008)3 identifies LANDSCAPE OBSERVATORIES as a useful approach for application in all Member States of the principles of the EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION;
- **considering** that the participation of European citizens in the decisions concerning landscape is a priority for their proper and effective protection, management and enhancement;
- **being aware** that the LANDSCAPE OBSERVATORIES may be the appropriate platform of democratic debate for participatory policies and planning of the landscape;

**ADDRESS**

the COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS of the COUNCIL OF EUROPE to organise a special conference to exchange experiences and best practices in order to support efforts on establishment of LANDSCAPE OBSERVATORIES in the different countries. This to be achieved through the preliminary constitution of EUROPEAN COORDINATION between all those existing LO on the basis of studies and activities already carried out by the three European networks UNISCAPE, RECEPE-ENELC and CIVILSCAPE and others.



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