

Landscape Architecture Education in Europe

The modern history of landscape architecture can be traced from mediaeval beginnings in monastery cloisters and secular pleasure gardens. It developed through the humanist gardens of the Italian Renaissance, the magnificent French Baroque gardens of Andre Le Notre, to the English landscape tradition of the eighteenth century. Over recent decades the discipline has expanded to environmental studies and urban areas.

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Issues associated with sustainability and the conservation of the cultural landscape heritage are nowadays addressed by the discipline. In most countries the design of the urban outdoor spaces like squares, streets and the surroundings of infrastructure is included in the domain.

Contents of courses

The nature of the landscape architecture means that the subject area not merely draws on and integrates both sides of the traditional divide between the creative arts and the natural sciences. It also incorporates many aspects of the humanities and technology. This complexity is closely reflected by the diversity of approaches to the discipline in Europe. A diversity that is clearly illustrated by the range of different types of higher education institutions in which landscape architecture teaching has been established.

The contents of the actual courses have been influenced by:

- the roots of the institute, either a horticultural school, a university for agriculture and forestry, a school of fine arts and architecture or a technical university (Scheme 1);
- academic staff giving a specific focus to the subjects taught and research programmes;
- the demands and development of the professional practice within different countries,
- the development of allied disciplines.

Starting from a tradition the courses have been developed by pioneers in the field of landscape architecture whose influence can still be seen in the course content. To name only a few important key persons: Bijhouwer who developed ideas on genius loci and the use of indigenous planting in Wageningen, Dieter Kienast doing research in order to make use of ecological principles in design in Berlin and ETH Zurich and Dusan Ogrin implementing landscape classification in Slovenia.

Although many courses are not directly related to the professional practice, students work on projects that are reflecting the issues of society. What landscape architectural practice has in common throughout Europe is the use of design techniques based on knowledge of the functional and aesthetic characteristics of landscape materials, and of the organisations of landscape elements, external places and activities. The design issues vary from country to country. The lay out of the new polders in the Netherlands, the demand for private gardens in Belgium and France, the great number of historical gardens in Italy and Spain, the way landscape planning is organised in Germany, all have influenced and still influence the contents of courses.

New demands of the community at large have been addressed by the discipline, e.g. the redesign of former industrial sites, the upgrading of outdoor space in cities or the relation of art and public space.

Tradition	Examples of Institutes
Horticultural	Budapest, Larenstein, Vilvoorde, Versailles, Weißenstephan
Agriculture/Forestry	Evora, Wageningen, Zagreb
Fine Arts	Edinburgh, Hamburg, Leeds
Architecture	Amsterdam, Barcelona, Genua, Greenwich, Helsinki
Environmental Planning	FH Neubrandenburg, Newcastle, FH Nürtingen
Urban Planning	TU-Vienna, TU-Delft, ETH Zurich

Schema 1. The roots of the institutes

These contemporary assignments are also taken as starting points for recent student projects.

In some cases, however, allied professionals like architects, artists, engineers, planners, ecologists, landscape scientists have taken up these issues. In Italy, Greece and Spain architects claim the design of parks, squares and outdoor urban space.

In these countries a Dutch landscape architect is not allowed to make use of the title 'architect' and is designated as a 'paysagist'.

Discipline of landscape architecture

In Europe there is an ongoing discussion as regards the definition of landscape architecture. The schools collaborating in the Thematic Network LE:NOTRE have formulated a common definition: *Landscape architecture is the discipline concerned with mankind's conscious shaping of his external environment. It involves planning, design and management of the landscape to create, maintain, protect and enhance places so as to be both functional, beautiful and sustainable (in every sense of the word), and appropriate to diverse human and ecological needs.*

This definition is broader than the definition of EFLA, which is slightly more design oriented:

The Landscape Architect plans, designs and manages urban and rural landscapes that satisfy human and natural, aesthetic and functional requirements. These activities are based on knowledge of the natural processes and cultural values that underlie a continuous process of formation of landscapes, and the opportunities and constraints encountered in the intervention of existing environments. This requires a methodological and functional expertise combined with creative talent, and is founded on the knowledge of specific areas within humanities and the applied science and techniques" (definition in EFLA's Education Policy in 1998)

EFLA Education Policy

Since Landscape Architecture is a relatively new discipline, which is still not recognized in many countries within Europe, a need was felt to define the

subject of the profession and essential domains of knowledge. In this context the European Foundation for Landscape Architecture (EFLA) that was founded in the early nineties started to promote landscape architecture in the EU. It has stated that higher education in landscape architecture should call for a course with a minimum length of 4 years and a minimum of 50% of study in design studios or projects. Graduates should have:

- design and planning skills based on artistic/creative talent and an ability to think along the lines of logic and reason
- an intellectual development based on a broad background of- and reflection on - human-related and natural processes.
- a technical know-how in order to understand the implications and consequences of design and planning decisions.
- an understanding of the different roles of landscape architects in interdisciplinary teams and an ability to manage planning processes.

However, it must be stressed that the aim was -and is- in no way to homogenise European landscape architecture courses, but to try and establish where common elements currently exist as a basis for the future developments. The cultural identity of courses should be preserved. The education committee of EFLA started to define domains of knowledge and a procedure for the recognition of landscape courses. In the Education Policy Document (1998) a common description of the contents was agreed upon.

Bologna process

The European Union focuses on the free movement of people and professional. Within the European community there are about 7000 landscape architects in public and private offices. The best way to facilitate the professional collaboration is to establish a common educational platform. With the Bologna Agreement that was effected by law in the Netherlands in September 2002 the foundation for a common educational structure was made.

The implementation of the agreement has just started. One of the advantages

is that course units will be described and evaluated in a standardised way.

Students can more easily incorporate course units of other programmes in their personal programmes, e.g. as elective subjects.

The division of longer programmes in bachelor and master courses offers the possibility for bachelor graduates to switch to the master programme at another university.

In order to facilitate this process collaboration between landscape courses is important.

Thematic Network LE:NOTRE

In 2002 The European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools (ECLAS) successfully applied at the EU for a thematic network for Landscape Architecture. The acronym of the network is LE:NOTRE, one of our famous predecessors whose image can also be admired at the landscape department (de Hucht) in Wageningen. The goal of the project is to take the discipline of landscape architecture to a new level of maturity, by building on and developing European best practice and identifying key needs and urgent areas for action in education and research. Its main objectives are:

- to strengthen the European landscape architecture academic community;
- to move towards the convergence of undergraduate curricula by the identification of broadly agreed core elements, while seeking to develop specialised courses at more advanced levels;
- to develop improved teaching methods and developing common teaching resources;
- to strengthen the potential for research in landscape architecture at the European level, by defining common research agendas and methods.

Research and European landscape architecture PhD programme

The future development of the landscape architecture discipline depends on the establishment and maintenance of an active and innovative group of

researchers at the European level. Landscape architecture in the Netherlands has a very weak research tradition. Staff and students should be able to draw on existing methods and techniques of research, referring to those of neighbouring disciplines such as architecture, urban and regional planning or environmental science. In Europe a small number of universities have a sound tradition in research, e.g. in the United Kingdom the universities of Sheffield, Edinburgh, Manchester and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The small scale and wide geographic spread of most landscape architecture departments means that the capacity to provide the necessary research methods training is limited. Furthermore, research calls for critical dialogue and discussion between researchers and research students. This can best be achieved through collaboration in the development of common

programmes of research methods teaching at a European level. The development of a high quality European PhD programme in landscape architecture must be seen as an essential basis for ensuring the continuing quality of research-led teaching within the discipline at master and bachelor level.

Consequences for studying at a European level

For students it is important to gain international experience. By doing this a student can learn from the specialised expertise of a certain course, but more important is that studying elsewhere helps to reflect on the methods and references that are used in the Netherlands.

It is not possible to elaborate on the expertise and courses of the schools all over Europe in this article. But students defining their personal learning objec-

tives, can find related subject areas by making use of the network of staff and the future databases of courses that are developed by ECLAS and LE:NOTRE. Each institute has a contact person who can help to find the courses that suit the student's demands. For the Dutch landscape courses it is essential to strengthen the research aspect and master graduates should be stimulated to complete a PhD study.<<

References

- www.eclas.org
- www.le-notre.org
- www.efla.org
- *European foundation for Landscape Architecture, Education Committee - Advisory Panel report, Landscape Architecture Education in Europ, June 1998*
- *European Foundation for Landscape Architecture, Education Committee Report, Education Policy Document, 1998*

[advertentie]

TOPOS - zwart op wit - INLOOPAVOND

Sinds TOPOS in 2000 als een Phoenix uit de as herrees heeft zij hard aan de weg getimmerd. Inmiddels brengen we 3 nummers per jaar uit, vaak themanummers over actuele onderwerpen. Onze lezers zijn studenten, universitair medewerkers en de vakwereld. TOPOS staat hiermee midden in het vakgebied, een unieke positie!

Door het publiceren van artikelen, het houden van interviews en het bezoeken van allerlei activiteiten proberen we deze drie werelden bij elkaar te brengen. We werken daarbij steeds beter samen met studievereniging Genius Loci en ook de Leerstoelgroepen houden ons niet onopgemerkt.

Belangrijk is dat het ook leuk is om in een redactie samen te werken. We praten met veel verschillende mensen, bomen als redactie af en toe flink door over alles wat we gehoord hebben en stoppen dat in het tijdschrift. We hebben veel lol onze ideeën in TOPOS kwijt te kunnen en leren elkaar steeds beter kennen!

Ons komende nummer wordt een samenwerking met de NVTL over "Onderwijs" voor dit nummer en de andere nummers die nog zullen volgen zoeken we versterking van de redactie. Er is plaats voor redacteuren, opmaak (grafische vormgeving) en na de zomer een nieuwe hoofdredacteur! Genoeg om je helemaal in uit te leven!

Wanneer? Donderdag 19 juni, tijdens de borrel (17:00 uur)

Waar? TOPOS hok, eerste verdieping in de gang naar de kantine op de Hucht

Oja? Wij betalen en zorgen voor de hapjes en drankjes!