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Landscape studies in Europe: a difficult harmonization

Pierre Donadieu

The reform of the higher Education system, initiated by the Bologna Declaration signed by European ministers in 1999, has modified most of the academic studies in Europe, which hadn't adopted the Anglo-American system. Concerned as the others, the landscape architecture studies are currently in the process of restructuration. This evolution is particularly complex especially since:

- the professions in architecture and landscape are constantly changing with the public policies adopted in the field,
- there is no common agreement on the use of the term landscape architect, especially between France, Spain and Ireland,
- the studies in Europe propose a large variety of durations and objectives according to the Universities and the countries and are rather not known.

Who is a landscaper?

According to the International federation of landscape architecture (Ifla) and the European council of landscape architecture schools (Eclas), the landscape architecture refers to: "the discipline concerned with mankind's conscious shaping of his external environment" (Website, 2007).

In most of the countries, the professional is designed as landscape architect.

However, some professional organizations do not accept the term, and use the designation landscaper or landscape gardener. In France, the appellation 'landscaper', not protected by the law, is also used by the nursery gardeners, the contractors, the engineers, the painters and the writers. Initially limited to the design, the realization and the care of garden, the skills of

landscaper have been considerably enlarged at the end of the last century.

Today, distinctions have been made between the profession of landscaper and the professions of landscape contractor and architect, which have developed independent professional organizations. However, in Italy, the architecture Order admits among his member the landscape architects. The landscape architecture requires a large number of knowledge and skills, essential to organize the shaping, the functioning and the social use of the non built places.

The landscape architecture refers to: the planning of the space uses on variable spatial and time scales; the design and the realization of space landscaping; the preservation and the restoration of historical parks and gardens; the landscaping of open spaces in urban regions; the environmental engineering; the artistic creation; the assessment and monitoring of natural resources; the studies on the consequences of the infrastructure landscaping and on the design of the residential life environment. More the public policies on landscape, heritage and environment are ancient and efficient; more the competencies of the landscaper are diversified. On this point, the major professional landscape organizations in North Europe are more developed than those in South Europe.

A large geographical diversity of studies

If the figure of the gardener is, in most of the countries, at the origin of the landscape cultures, the art of garden is not the only reference. The pictorial and photographic arts, as well as the literature, the theater and the architecture are also important references since the Antiquity. These references have led in

Europe to the development of two different systems in landscape studies.

When the sciences of horticulture (and of gardening) have inspired the development of landscape studies, the courses were located in the agronomy and horticulture schools or Universities, and were often linked to the agricultural ministry. It's the case in Denmark (KVL in Copenhagen), in the Netherlands (Wageningen), in Italy (Turin), in France (Versailles and Angers), in Spain (Valencia) and in Portugal (Lisbon).

When the architects and the urban architects have claimed the competencies related to the gardening and to the landscape design (linked to the act of building edifices and cities), the studies have been placed in the frame of Universities, schools or departments of architecture associated to urban planning. It's the case in Italy (Milan, Venice, Reggio de Calabre), in Spain (Barcelona), in Germany (Karlsruhe, Berlin, Dresden, Munich), in Great Britain (Newcastle), in the Netherlands (Delft), in Austria (TU Vienna), in Finland (TKK Helsinki) and in France (Bordeaux, Lille). Certain studies have been also developed in relations with Arts schools in Denmark (Copenhagen), in the Netherlands (Amsterdam), in Great Britain (Edinburg); others in relations with eco-biological science department or Universities (Porto, BOKU Vienna), with department of Geography (Paris 1, Angers, Toulouse) or with department of History (York, Paris 1).

The rising social demand for better quality of life and the large rank of skills required by the three main profiles of the landscape architect can explain the multiplication of the studies and the diversity in the discipline. The different profiles have become either specializations or have

been committed in a unique practitioner.

Three profiles of landscape architects

1. Born in the nineteenth century in industrial cities in North Europe, the figure of landscape architect has been developed at the crossing points of the garden architecture, the painting, the landscape literature and the upcoming urbanism (particularly in colonial cities). The creation of the Ifla in 1948, has led to the structuring and the organization of the profession. If originally the profession has been marked by the historic art of garden, it today claims a multidisciplinary capacity in the design and the realization of landscaping projects in open spaces. At the beginning of the twenty-one century, two opposite evolutions in the figure of landscape architect have appeared. The first one distinguishes the design to the technical realization (by the engineer). This professional specialization process has been described by French architects. On the contrary, the second one, designed by the term Landscape urbanism, brings together all the competencies essential to the urban design.

The first evolution has led to the explosion of the group of landscape designers: garden artists, land artists, sculptor, architects, and photographers. The other perspective has led to the development of a new conception of this profession, which criticizes the traditional figure of the landscape architecture and the environmental planning. 2. Also born in the nineteenth century, the second figure refers to the landscape manager and the countryside manager. It refers to those who are in charge, in public institutions, of the shaping and the management of the urban

and periurban public space. In these regions and for each local authority, the landscape manager is in charge of: the definition and the implementation of the public policies on landscape, the creation and the preservation of the green and aquatic places, the definition and the implementation of the rules regarding the production in rural and urban landscapes. The landscape manager is also in charge of the security and the cleanness of the public space. He has to reduce the tensions and the social conflicts. He is in charge of the preservation of the ecologic milieu, of the reduction of the public nuisance and the environmental pollution as well as the organization of cultural events (exhibitions, concerts ...).

3. At the opposite of the two first, the third figure, the 'landscape mediator' has been developed recently. It doesn't find all its roots on the canonic rules of landscape architecture but refers also to the life science, the nature, the human and the society. It emphasizes the expertise in the development of representations on landscapes and places, which can lead to the development of project on territory (for example on inhabitants and visitors preferences). This professional posture, which enlarges the definition of landscape architect and engineer, refers to the indications notified in the European convention of Firenze. The convention defines implicitly the landscape practitioner as the professional in charge of the assessment and the governance of landscape projects linked to the territories administrated by public services. The three figures point out three different but complementary ways of practicing the profession of landscaper: the first (landscape architect) refers

to the designer of artworks linked to the art and architect fields, the second (landscape engineer) to the technician and manager of the open spaces (open to public) and the third (landscape mediator) to the mediator of the social dimension of the project of a society and of the art of living territories. In this last case, the landscape mediator meets necessarily the two others, with which his skills are complementary.

Studies in France and in Europe

In France, the first academic study in landscape has been created in 1874 in the Horticulture school in Versailles. The distinctions between the landscape architect, the landscape engineer and the contractor did not exist since the creation of the section 'landscape and art of garden from 1945 to 1975' linked to the national school of horticulture. This department graduated the first 'paysagistes diplômés par le gouvernement', with a curriculum influenced by arts and architecture (which became at the end the main references). The National school of horticulture in Versailles proposes since 1976, a two years study for landscape engineer and the National institute of horticulture in Angers a similar study in three years. The Ecole nationale du paysage in Versailles, which replaced the Horticulture school in the Potager du Roi in 1994, proposes a four years study to become Dplg landscapers (landscape architects). From 1990s, two architecture schools (in Bordeaux in 1991 and in Lille in 2005) propose studies for landscape designers. The Bordeaux school includes, in its curriculum, objectives of landscape mediation. A third school, created in 1996 in Blois, does not distinguish the figures of

landscape engineer, architect and mediator. Similar evolution process can be notified in most of the development of the studies in Europe. Before the Bologna declaration, each country was proposing very various studies which were difficult to compare. On one side, the studies closed to the Anglo-American system (bachelor, master, PhD) - with a variable number of Universities concerned according the countries - do not seem to have been affected by the Bologna process: Great Britain (12), Scandinavian countries (5), and the Netherlands (3). On the other side, the studies which have followed other models are currently in the process of restructuration: Germany with the Fachhochschule (9) and the technical Universities (8), France with the public 'Grandes Ecoles' of Landscape engineering (2), of landscape Dplg (3), as well as the private schools (2), and the University (1); Italy with one academic cycle (laurea), Spain and Portugal (licenciatura) in a 4 to 5 years study. This heterogeneity in the studies is currently in a process of harmonization. However, the impacts of the Bologna process on the structures and the curriculum are still at a too early stage to be analyzed. However, evolutions can be already notified in the frame of the European Erasmus program. Harmonization in the pedagogic methods and objectives can indeed be emphasized in the schools, who are exchanging students in the frame of this program. Common perspectives on the figures of landscape designer, the contractor and on the definition of a landscape project are shared by several academic institutions: the Edinburg schools (Art college Herriot-Watt), the Ecole nationale supérieure du paysage in Versailles, the Arts

academies in Copenhagen and Amsterdam, the landscape architecture and environmental planning Institute of the Technical university (Tu) in Berlin, and the department of biophysics and landscape planning in the Evora University. Otherwise, similar landscape postgraduate studies have been developed by institutions specialized in the scientific and technical fields: the department of environment and landscape in the Wageningen university, the Architecture university in Tu in Munich, the Landscape architecture Institute in the agronomical science University in Gembloux, the engineers in the Lullier school (Switzerland) and the National institute of horticulture and landscape in Angers. The implementation of the Bologna process has led to the development of new studies focusing on the figures of the engineer, the manager or the mediator. These studies prepare the students to new professions based on the researches in fields such as geography, history, law, agronomy (landscape agronomy), environmental science (landscape ecology), or Geographic information systems. These studies are extending the group of landscape architects towards a new and larger community of landscape professionals. Today, in the current transition period of the Bologna process, the diplomas, which give access to the position of landscape architects, are at a Licence level (Bachelor, laurea triennale, licenciatura), or at a master level (laurea specialistica). The doctoral programs in landscape architecture are still only few and slightly developed (around 20 countries analyzed in this study). On the professional practice

perspective, only the authorization to practice the profession is required. The document is usually delivered by a national professional organization: the Landscape institute in London, the Bund deutscher landschaft architekten (Bdla) or the Swiss federation of landscape architects. In France, the diploma of landscaper (Dplg, Master grade), delivered in three schools (Bordeaux, Versailles and Lille) gives access to the position of landscape designer, without the intervention of the French federation of landscape (Ffp).

The harmonization of the landscape studies will have to face a long process. For several years, with the support of the European union, the network Le: Notre (Landscape education: New opportunities for teaching and research in Europe) has been working on the harmonization of the European studies. The network, directed by the Vienna TU led by the professor Richard Stiles, is animated by a group of professors specialized in the field.

Conclusion

3 main ideas on the current situation of landscape studies have been pointed out in this study:

- the professions in landscape architecture are currently facing a process of diversification and specialization. The evolution process in the harmonization of the studies (linked to the Bologna process) will depend on the level of implementation of the Firenze convention;
- the circulation of the graduated landscaper in Europe will depend on the recognition of the national diploma between countries. This recognition may be enduring a long process.
- Today, the Europe of Landscape studies doesn't exist. However, common conceptions on the

profession of landscape architect are appearing. Several organizations (the Ifla, the European foundation of landscape architecture, the Eclas, Le: Notre) are actively involved in the process of harmonization of the studies at a European and International level.