

LANDSCAPE PLANNING IN EUROPE AND ECLAS 2006 CONFERENCE ON “CULTURAL DIMENSION OF URBAN LANDSCAPE” AT THE FA STU IN BRATISLAVA, SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Different landscape planning approaches within the EU are linked together by the common European policies interfering significantly into landscape development. They are mostly agricultural policy, environmental policy, transport policies, the infrastructure and the EU legislation (e.g. in the area of protection of landscape components, nature and landscape protection, environmental impact assessment, strategic environmental assessment). All the principles and basic philosophy of landscape planning within European space are defined in European Charter of Spatial Planning (approved in 1983) and later amended by the EU documents: Principles of European Policy of Spatial Planning (1994) and European Spatial Development Perspectives (ESPD, 1999). Besides these documents, integrative components are also other agreements and conventions concerning landscape protection and its natural and cultural heritage. Also the acceptance of Pan-European strategy supported activation in order to stop degradation of biological and landscape diversity in Europe (PEBLDS, 1995), the project NATURA 2000 has been implemented as a system of protected areas of the EU member states. This topic of landscape protection and cultural landscape formation has been fully represented in documents concerning whole European territory with regard to spatial development taking into account its social, economic and environmental dimension. This tendency has been confirmed by the Strategy of Sustainable Development EU (2001). The European Landscape Convention, that was opened for signature in Florence in October 2000 and came into effect on March 1st 2004, is of major important position in the sphere of landscape protection. It is positive that it was ratified by 18 EU countries and signed by other 13 countries. On May 30th 2005 also the Slovak Republic signed the European Landscape Convention.

In European context, the policies (European Landscape Convention, Thematic Strategy on Urban Environment, European Capital of Culture Action) on cities and urban environments have presented sensibilities to a certain extent to create urban landscapes as public spaces for cultural creativity and expression. However, in implementation of the policies, the sensibility, consciousness, ways and creativity in designing and managing these symbols by designers differ from one designer or one country to another.

The ECLAS 2006 conference put special focus on cultural dimension of urban landscape following from the fact of enormous growth of all civilization factors with their impacts on the landscape as well as from growing number of globalisation features all over the world.

The ECLAS 2006 conference reviewed the aspects of cultural dimension of urban landscape in its physical (material) as well as mental (spiritual) forms. The cultural dimension of urban landscape, as the subject of the conference, presented a professional view on different aspects of European and world culture and its impact on the landscape in the aspects:

- urban cultural landscapes of the mind,
- physical aspects of urban cultural landscapes,
- historical dimensions of urban cultural landscapes.

In the context of ECLAS 2006 conference the urban landscape, designed by landscape architects, with the codes of profession culture, was explored. These codes involve consciously or unconsciously messages to society within urban landscape symbols in forms of landscape spatial typologies, objects, design styles and materials. These messages sent with urban landscape symbols receive negative and positive reactions from the society according to society's cultural codes. Consequently, this actions and reactions define the people's use and benefit. Urban landscape, container of symbols, as ideological and professional artefact, has a role for defining and enhancing society's values, identities and cultural creativity as platform of expression and exchange. Changing urban landscape typologies within transforming city bring new symbolic spaces, visual patterns, design styles, signs and materials.

The demands of the European Landscape Convention with regard to its stress on the urban environment calls for the development of new approaches to the urban landscape in general and to urban landscape assessment in particular, which are designed to deal with the urban context. The Convention, however, also stresses two other important issues: firstly the importance of international cooperation between specialists in the development of consistent and widely applicable approaches, and secondly the involvement of the public in order to ensure that the values to be conserved and developed are widely held and broadly based within the population as a whole.

These issues and aspects have been highlighted by the ECLAS 2006 conference and international cooperation among professional landscape planners within the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools has been strengthened. This issue of ALFA SPECTRA Planning Studies brings selected papers from the ECLAS 2006 conference.

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