

Landscape, Democracy and the European Union: Empowering learners for the European Green Deal



Abstract

The Jean-Monnet-Module ‘Landscape and democracy in the European Union’ aims to fill a knowledge gap and to motivate students to become active citizens and inspiring professionals, guided by an informed, critical and profound understanding of the European Union. Our target groups for this seminar were primarily students of the spatial planning and design disciplines, in particular landscape architects. Spatial planning, including landscape architecture, is increasingly influenced by European policies, strategies and legislations especially when it comes to environmental protection. Landscapes have strong systemic links to regional development and agricultural policies, both are priority investment areas of the European Union. This Jean-Monnet-Module has been offered digitally by Nürtingen-Geislingen University, to a European audience of learners from April 2019 to July 2021. This paper describes the motivation of this course, its learning objectives, its implementation, the main findings from the course evaluation and a critical reflection of the piloting phase. The participant evaluation suggests that the seminar has well met the learning goals. The course has thus contributed to an increase of knowledge, competence and critical appreciation of European Union policy in the field of landscape. Possible improvements include the need for a better community building within the seminar audience and involvement of further target groups outside the direct academic context. Since EU Policy is constantly evolving and important new themes such as the European Green Deal and the New European Bauhaus are getting more and more visible and relevant, this seminar will also continue to develop and integrate new topics in the future.

The course is accessible via this link: <http://www.eu-ladder.eu>

Keywords: European Union, European Policy, landscape, landscape architecture, sustainable development

Introduction and Motivation: Why this course is needed

Planning and design disciplines like landscape architecture, landscape planning, urban and regional planning operate within very specific local sites, contexts, territories and communities. Their goal is to change a given spatial situation in order to improve the livelihoods of citizens in line with a wide range of sustainability goals. These disciplines implement on the ground what the European Commission is steering at a European scale. European policies already influence environmental planning and design in their daily work. These specific aspects are included nowadays in most higher education programmes. Traditional focus places usually on the most relevant environmental directives such as Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Impact Assessment, Habitat Protection, Birds Protection,

Water Management and Flood Risk Management. However, the overall approach towards those policies is largely reactive: students learn what these directives mean for their daily work and how to use the instruments that have been derived from those policies. They are not really encouraged to become agents of change who will be actively shaping policy. This is a critical situation when we take into account that environmental policy is nowadays primarily designed at the EU level.

We have therefore formulated the following curriculum development needs, with the overall aim to bring a truly European dimension into the planning and design disciplines:

- (1) A holistic understanding of the EU's overall vision and strategic goals and how those goals translate into directives and regulations, which then affect the professional practice in the member states. In short: the link from the local to the EU's overall vision and vice versa.
- (2) Knowledge of how those policies are made, who are the actors and how the decision-making processes are structured, what is the role of the European Parliament and how citizens and stakeholders can get involved in shaping those policies
- (3) Knowledge of how the EU's environmental policy links to other policy fields, in particular agriculture and rural development, regional and urban policy and climate action. There is an urgent need to break up the sectoral perspective on policies towards a more integrated understanding which will increase the effectiveness and impact of sustainable development. Although their impact is on the same territory, agricultural and environmental policies are currently lacking the necessary cross-fertilization required by contemporary integrated system thinking. Environmental planning and design disciplines such as landscape architecture and landscape planning are very suitable not only for envisioning integrated approaches, they can also test those approaches at local scale and thus generate relevant evidence for future policy development.
- (4) Knowledge of how EU policy is related to and complementing with other international/European policy actors in the field of environment/landscape and sustainable development. In particular the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000) and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (UN, 2015).
- (5) A much stronger awareness of the political dimension of the planning profession and the development of competences for planners and designers to become active citizens who can not only promote and steer sustainable development on the ground in a democratic way but also help shaping the political framework of it at a European scale.

The proposed module 'Landscape, Democracy and the European Union' aimed to fill this knowledge gap and to motivate students to become active citizens and inspiring professionals, guided by an informed, critical and profound vision of the European Union.

Context and prior developments

Our seminar idea has evolved in the context of increased European exchange and cooperation in the field of higher education in the spatial planning and design disciplines. In particular, a sequence of ERASMUS thematic network projects in the field of landscape architecture education, implemented over a period of ten years from 2002 – 2012, has continuously advanced a shared discourse on the dimension of so-called 'European Issues' in landscape architecture (Jørgensen et al, 2000). Very early in this process, around 2004, a first list of possible educational themes has been set up in this context. This process was accompanied by another EU-funded project titled 'Implementation of relevant European Teaching Contents in the Studies of Landscape Architecture (Reinke et al, 2011)', by which a more elaborated list of European content elements was developed. At that point, it was clear what a course introducing the European Union to landscape architects and related spatial disciplines should

ideally comprise. Nevertheless, it was not until the start of this Jean-Monnet-Module ‘Landscape, Democracy and the European Union’ in April 2019 that a focussed educational offer appeared in the European academic community. The lead protagonists behind the seminar, Dr. Ellen Fetzer and Prof. Dr. Michael Roth, have an academic background in landscape architecture with a focus on landscape planning and landscape development. The seminar thus evolved within an academic environment of landscape planning and design, but was always addressed to all neighbouring disciplines.

Landscape, Democracy and the European Union: Our seminar approach

Thematic scope

We set up the course structure in such a way that it would cover both a general introduction to the political model of the European Union and a specific introduction to those EU policy fields with a strong impact on European landscapes. These policy fields are in particular: agriculture, regional development, environment and climate adaptation. ‘Landscape’ is understood here in the sense of the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000) as ‘an area as perceived by people...’ which can be an outstanding as well as a neglected or degraded environment in urban, rural or peri-urban contexts alike.

Seminar structure and delivery mode

The graphic below shows the structure of the seminar on the example of the courses held in the academic year 2020-2021. The course covers two semesters, summer and winter. Each edition consists of 12 live sessions of 90 minutes duration. These seminar plenary sessions were always held online with a virtual classroom tool. In the beginning, we used Adobe Connect and later, when the pandemic caused some problems with the availability of the Adobe Connect server, we switched successfully to Zoom. In addition, learning management processes such as registration, provision of learning materials and submission of assignments was supported by the university’s learning management system ILIAS. This is also, where lecture recordings are available for everyone as open educational resources.

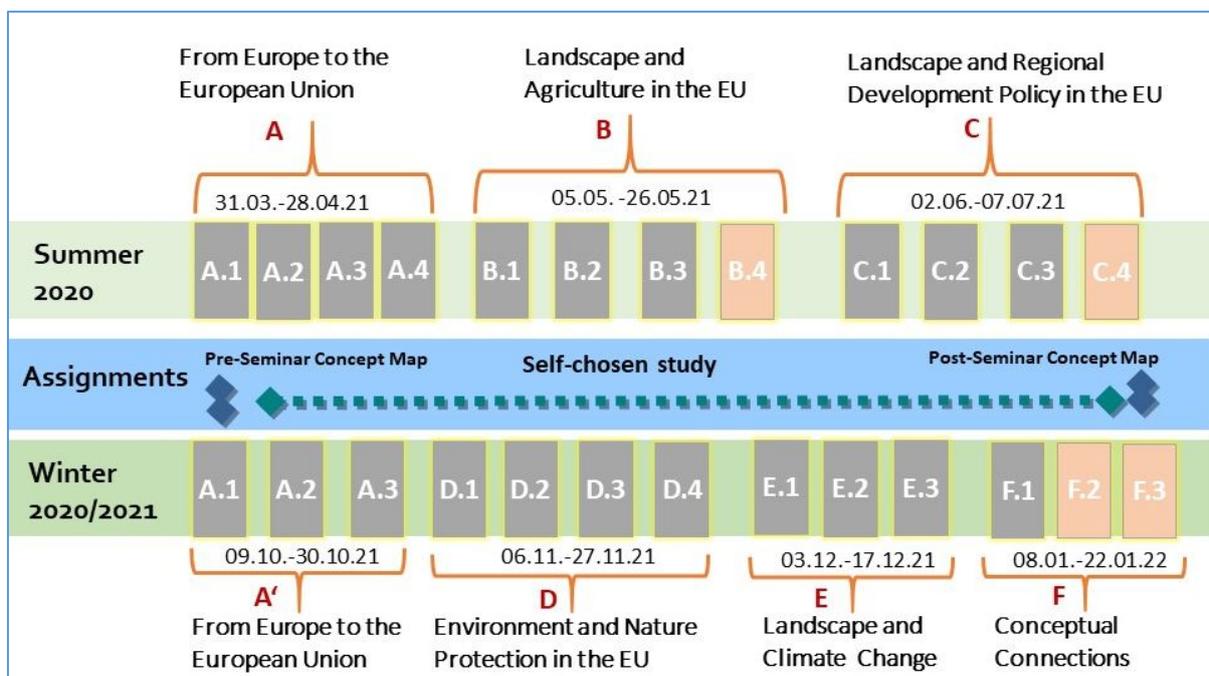


Figure 1: Seminar schedule and content scheme for the academic year 2021-22

Phase A is the general introduction to the European Union as a political system. The lectures of this phase are offered twice a year at the beginning of each semester. This way, new participants could join in each semester without losing the basic knowledge on the European Union as a requirement for effectively understanding the more specific policy fields. In the summer term, the introduction was followed by focussed sessions on Agricultural Policy (Phase B) and Regional Development Policy (Phase C). The winter term started with a repetition of the introductory part for newcomers to the seminar. We continued with a quite extensive focus theme on Environmental Policies (Phase D) and Climate Adaptation (Phase E). The last session was a reflective recap for discussing the conceptual connections of Landscape, Democracy and the European Union. Both seminars always included a presentation session at the end during which the participants could present their individually elaborated topics.

Within the framework of this ERASMUS project, we were able to implement the summer edition of the course three times and the winter edition two times. Currently, we continue the winter edition for the third time without ERASMUS funding.

Seminar sessions, contents and learning goals

The following matrix gives an overview of how sessions, contents and learning goals are interrelating:

Summer Term edition from April to July:

Phase A: From Europe to the European Union			
ID	Session title	Goals	Contents
A.1	Landscape, Democracy and the European Union	(1) Understanding the seminar objectives, structure and activities. (2) clarifying core seminar concepts: Landscape, Democracy, European Union (3) foster critical thinking	Presentations and interactive exercises on different concepts of landscape, democracy and the European Union
A.2	Uncovering the European Union	(1) understanding the political structure of the European Union, (2) Understanding the process of policy-making, (3) Understanding the influence of EU policy	The organisational and political framework of the European Union, strategic documents and objectives, the most relevant directorates touching upon the issues of sustainable landscape development, the process of EU policy making, the role of stakeholders and citizens in EU policy making
A.3	The political environment of the European Union	(1) knowing relevant international institutions in the field of sustainable development	An overview of related political actors, their goals and policy documents, such as: United Nations (UN sustainability goals, Habitat III new urban agenda, Arhus convention), Council of Europe (European Landscape Convention) and the activities of professional associations (IFLA-Europe, UIA)
A.4	European Union Policy in the Context of Landscape and Democracy	(1) knowing the relevant EU directorates in the context of landscape, (2) Specifying own research interest	A general overview of the relevant directorates general of the European Commission and their specific strategies, objectives and policy documents, in particular DG Environment, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, DG Regional and Urban Policy and DG Climate Action



Phase B: Landscape and Agriculture in the European Union			
ID	Session title	Goals	Contents
B.1	An agricultural perspective on landscape: Mapping the terrain	(1) Understanding situation of farming and global food security (2) Understanding trade-offs between farming and nature protection, (3) Development trends	Presentation of the role of farming and explanation of the trade-offs between nature protection and farming
B.2	Our landscapes in the light of the Common Agricultural Policy	(1) Understanding the goals of the CAP, (2) Understanding the impact of the CAP on our environment, (3) Understanding the development perspective of the CAP	Presentation on the Common Agricultural Policy, its history, status and development trends
B.3	Development perspectives in agriculture and landscape development	(1) knowing current development trends in agriculture (2) reflecting possible impacts on landscape development	Case study presentation of successful integration of intensive farming and nature protection
B.4	Interim presentation	(1) learn how to present and discuss in a virtual classroom, (2) Formative assessment of study progress	Interim presentation of student work
Phase C: Landscape + Regional Development Policy in the European Union			
ID	Session title	Goals	Contents
C.1	Our landscapes in the light of the EU's Regional Policy	(1) understanding history and evolution of European Cohesion and Regional Development Policies, (2) understanding the main funding areas, (3) understanding how to access further information	Introduction to the EU's strategic goals for regional policy, introduction to different funding schemes and instruments.
C.2	Rural development in the European Union	(1) Understanding landscape-related regional development approaches in rural areas, (2) Get to know about models how funding schemes have been applied	Invited guest lecturer with experience in LEADER or INTERREG projects
C.2	Urban development in the European Union	(1) Understanding landscape-related regional development approaches in urban areas, (2) Get to know about models how funding schemes have been applied	Invited guest lecturer with experience in Urban Innovative Actions or INTERREG
C.4	Revision	Deepen the knowledge acquired so far	Repeat the main concepts from all previous sessions
C.5	Final presentation	(1) learn how to present and discuss in a virtual classroom, (2) Formative assessment of study progress	Final presentation of student work



Winter Term edition from October to January:

Phase A: From Europe to the European Union

>>> repeated from summer term

Phase D: Environmental and Nature Protection in the European Union

ID	Session title	Goals	Contents
D.1	Environmental Impact Assessment - An international comparison	(1) understanding the goals and the methodology of environmental impact assessment (basics) (2) Knowing 1-2 int. practice cases	Interactive presentation on environmental impact assessment and classroom discussion
D.2	The Water Framework Directive	(1) understanding the goals of the Water Framework Directive, (2) Knowing 1-2 EU practice cases	Presentation of the water framework directive and its history, highlighting the role of (public) participation in the context of the water framework directive
D.3	The European Floods Directive	(1) understanding the goals of the floods directive (2) understanding the concept of sustainable/integrative flood management	Introduction to the floods directive, what it implies, cases of integrated flood management
D.4	Natura 2000: The European Nature Protection Network	(1) understanding what Natura 2000 is and how it works (2) reflecting opportunities and limitations of the approach	Interactive presentation on Natura 2000 and case studies from the EU
D.5	Natura 2000: European Case Studies	(1) knowing how Natura 2000 validation works in practice (2) reflecting opportunities and limitations of the approach	Interactive presentation on Natura 2000 and case studies from the EU

Phase E: Landscape and Climate Change

ID	Session title	Goals	Contents
E.1	European Landscapes in the light of Climate Change	(1) Understanding the climate objectives of the EU (2) reflecting the impact of these policies on the landscape	Introduction to the strategic goals of DG Climate and its major policy documents, reflection on the relation of climate targets and landscape impacts.
E.2	Renewable Energy in the EU	(1) Understanding the role of renewable energy for climate adaptation (2) reflecting the impact of renewable energies on the landscape	1) Renewable energy in the world 2) Current state of renewables in the EU 3) Support schemes for renewables 4) Examples of promoting RES in the EU

Phase F: Landscape, Democracy and the European Union: Conceptual Connections

ID	Session title	Goals	Contents
F.1	Landscape, Democracy and the European Union: The conceptual connections	(1) Understanding and describing the conceptual connections, (2) critical thinking	Interactive concept mapping exercise and reflective discussion
F.2	Presentation of participants' individual topics	(1) learn how to present and discuss in a virtual classroom, (2) Formative assessment of study progress	Final presentation of student work

Formative assessment and seminar assignments

In general, all participants had the possibility to choose if they want to follow the seminar in a listen-only mode, without seeking for credits, or actively working on the assignments for credit. Those seeking for credit had to complete the following course requirements:

1. Development of a concept map before and after the seminar
2. Regular participation in the seminar lectures. However, if their schedule competed with other campus-based courses, students could catch up via the seminar recording.
3. 20 minutes online presentation of an individually chosen seminar topic.

In the following, we present the seminar assignments in more detail:

Assignment 1 and 3: Pre- and Post-Seminar Concept Mapping of the Seminar Theme

Participants submit the pre-seminar concept map after the first seminar session. The goal is to capture the status of the participants' knowledge at the beginning of their individual learning journey. The task is to develop a concept map on the following focus question:

What is the relationship of landscape, democracy and the European Union?

All participants engage with their initial concept map again at the end of the seminar. They then have the chance to integrate all new concepts and conceptual connections resulting from their individual learning process in the seminar.

This assignment is inspired by the research of Joseph D. Novak on concept mapping as an effective method of meaningful learning versus rote learning. A concept map (Novak 2008: online) is a graphical representation consisting of concepts and the relationships between them. The relationships are expressed with linking words that form propositions together with the concepts. Ideally, the concept map also shows cross-links between concepts and thus identifies relationships of a concept to different contexts. In order to offer an adequate scope for the concept map they should evolve around a focus question. For this seminar, we asked students to define the relationship of the main seminar concepts: landscape, democracy and the European Union. There is often a kind of hierarchical order with the more general concepts at one end from which more specific differentiations derive. However, in some contexts an identifiable hierarchy may not exist. We challenged the students by putting these three quite abstract concepts as starting points for their concept mapping process. This forced them to apply a systems thinking approach from the very beginning.

Given the complexity of the seminar topic and the diverse background knowledge with which participants joined the seminar group it was important to find an assessment approach that allows them to construct knowledge on a very individual basis. Realising this, we introduced this assignment after the first pilot seminar in spring 2020.

We never graded the concept maps, but they were a compulsory submission for completing the course and received an individual qualitative feedback.

Assignment 2: Your EU-related Landscape Reflection Theme

The seminar participants were also invited to actively transfer the seminar topics to their local landscape context. Alternatively, they could focus on a specific European landscape policy field, depending on their personal interest and disciplinary background. These individual seminar presentations usually fell into one or several of the following categories:



- If the landscape is located in an EU country: Analysis and reflection of EU policy fields that have an influence on this landscape (such as agricultural, environmental or regional development policy). Students analyzed the effect of policies on this landscape or explored EU-based funding opportunities that might contribute to a sustainable development of this landscape.
- If the participant's perspective was from outside the European Union: Comparison of how policies with an impact on landscape development are done in their country or region compared to the European Union. This approach was chosen very often.
- Some also explored case studies of how landscape-related policy has been implemented across the European Union, for example, management and monitoring of Natura 2000 protection areas, cases of nature capital financing, comparative analysis of environmental impact assessment.

Each participant had the opportunity to present and discuss his/her topic in the form of a small conference held online at the end of each seminar round.

The evaluation criteria for this assignment were communicated as follows:

- Relevance of the topic: it clearly addresses landscape issues in the context of European Union policy, this includes comparative approaches from outside the European Union
- Coherence and logical sequence
- Reflection and critical thinking
- Good readability of your presentation and good visual quality
- Clarity of speech
- Time management during presentation
- Quality of the discussion

The learners' perspective and experience

Participation numbers, profiles and prior knowledge

Within the framework of the Jean-Monnet-Module the seminar was offered in the period from April 2019 to July 2021. The spring edition was implemented three times and the fall edition twice. Currently, the third fall edition is running as a continuation of the funded version. In total, we had 130 participants who had registered for the course for credit plus 100 who registered for a listen-only mode. All participants received a survey on their seminar experience and a self-assessment of their learning progress. In total, we received 82 responses to this evaluation. The registrations and the number of completed surveys distribute across the five course editions as follows:

	Spring 2019	Fall 2019-20	Spring 2020	Fall 2020-21	Spring 2021
Credit-seeking participants	25	17	38	27	23
Listen-only participants	15	31	12	33	10
Surveys completed	18	15	25	15	9

All following percentages and numbers are referring to the total number of completed surveys (82). According to these, almost two thirds of our participants came from non-EU countries (65%) and one-third (35%) were EU-citizens. The course was promoted a lot at the masters' level and in particular in international study programmes and through the international office. Therefore, the topic attracted many international participants and exchange students. We did not specifically ask for this in the survey, but it is likely that international students, who are often planning to continue their professional or academic career in Germany or the European Union, have strong intrinsic interest in understanding how the European Union works. The vast majority of the respondents (61%) studied in a master programme and only 18% were bachelor students. So far, only 10% were professionals from outside

academia, a number that certainly has potential to rise in the future. In total, only two doctoral students attended the course as well as a few recent graduates.

Most participants had a background in landscape architecture (59%), although the course was promoted to an interdisciplinary target audience all the time. The second largest group were architects (28%) followed by urban planners (21%). A certain diversity within the planning disciplines was achieved. Unfortunately, only 12% came from other disciplines such as horticulture, bioengineering, agronomy and economics. In future editions of this programme, we will aim at increasing the involvement of other disciplines.

Our audience was primarily new to the subject of European Union policy. 38% of the survey respondents said that the theme was totally new to them, hence, learning something new on what they obviously considered as a knowledge gap for themselves was a strong motivation for participating. Another 28% said they knew only very little about the theme and about a fourth, 24%, confirmed having some basic knowledge about the theme. Only two persons said they had advanced knowledge of the theme, these persons were not students, but practitioners. Another six persons said they had intermediate knowledge. We can thus conclude, that the vast majority of our participants joined the course with none, little or very basic knowledge about the European Union and its landscape-related policies.

Self-assessment with regard to the main learning goals

Consequently, the self-assessment regarding the individual development of EU-related knowledge and attitudes is quite positive overall.

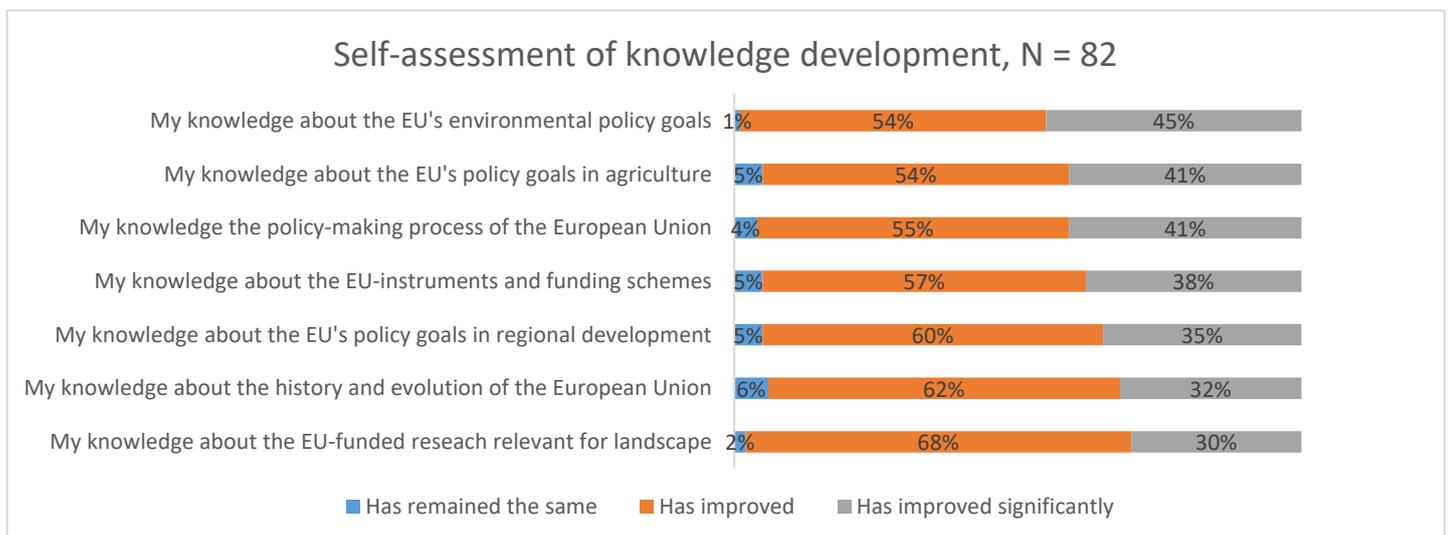


Figure 2: Summary of survey results 2019-2021: self-assessment of knowledge development

The first section of the self-assessment asked the respondents to reflect on the key knowledge areas presented in the seminar sessions and the accompanying self-study activities. Overall, the number of participants who did not experience any knowledge development is very low. The vast majority confirms a knowledge development in all relevant domains. It remains interesting to point out in which fields most participants have experienced a significant knowledge development. This was in particular for the knowledge about the EU's environmental goals and the goals of the agricultural policy.

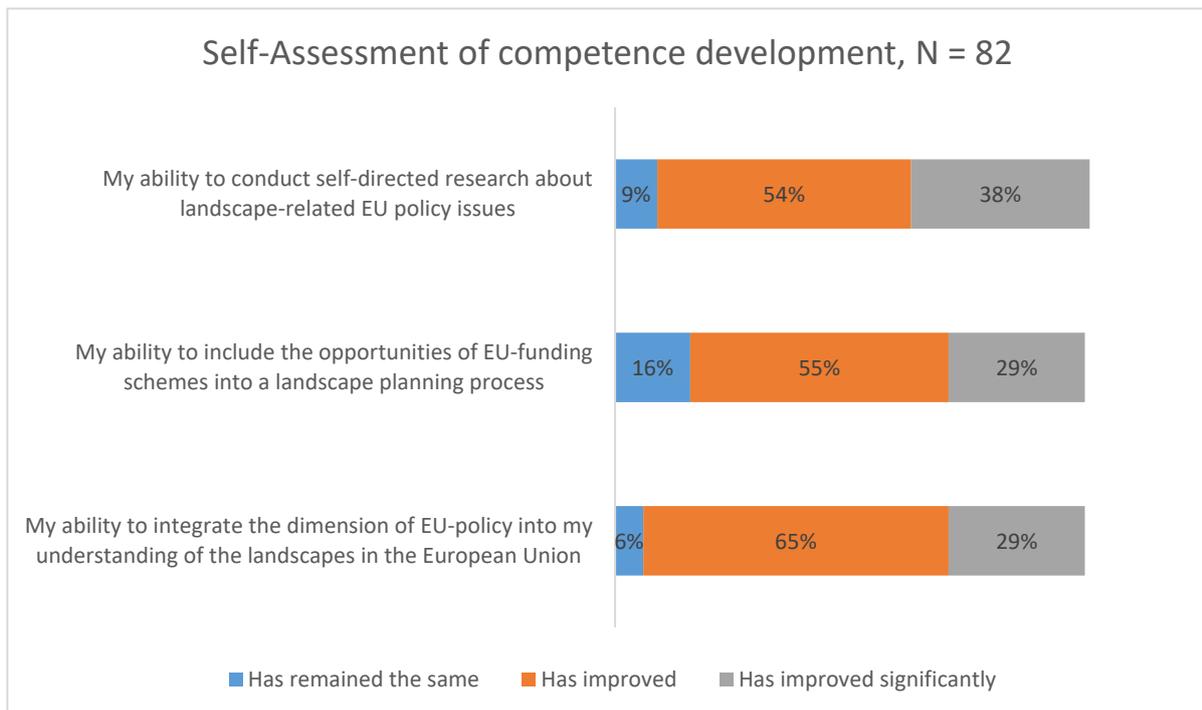


Figure 3: Summary of survey results 2019-2021: self-assessment of competence development

The second section asked them to reflect about three key competences that were supposed to be supported by the seminar activities. The respondents are most confident about their improved ability to conduct self-directed research about landscape-related EU policy issues. This corresponds well with the background of the seminar participants, as they were primarily master students. This finding is very positive since one of the main goals of this seminar is to increase the disciplinary knowledge about the influence of the European Union on spatial planning and design. Participants are somewhat less positive about their ability to include the opportunities of EU-funding schemes into a landscape planning process. This might be because most of them were not in practice yet by the time of the seminar or because they are non-EU residents and possibly less optimistic about getting involved in this in the near future. There is however a good confidence level regarding the ability to integrate the dimension of EU-policy into the understanding of the landscape in the European Union.

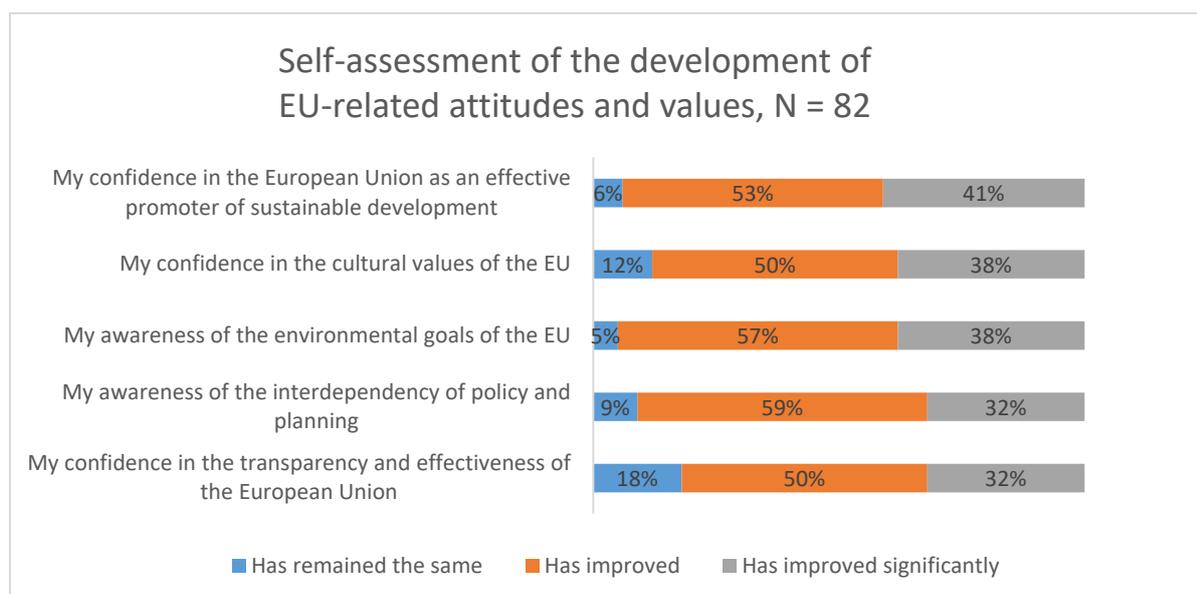


Figure 4: Summary of survey results 2019-2021: Self-assessment of the development of EU-related values and attitudes

The last section asked about participants' attitudes and values towards the European Union. It is very positive to state that 41% of the respondents say that their confidence in the European Union as an effective promoter of sustainable development has significantly improved. The numbers of people who ticked 'remained the same' is slightly larger in this section. Here we can assume that some people joined the seminar with an existing value scheme regarding the European Union, which possibly rather was reconfirmed and did not necessarily change. Overall, the figure shows a positive development towards the cultural goals and environmental values of the European Union. We need to take into account that two thirds of the seminar participants are non-EU citizens, so this is to a large extent a perception of people who experience the European Union from this particular perspective.

Which topics were most relevant for the participants?

One relevant indicator for this is the individually chosen subject for the self-directed study (assignment 2). Participants had to actively link the seminar contents to their personal experience and to transfer them to themes they find relevant. The following table gives an overview of all individual themes elaborated by some credit-seeking participants over the five editions of the seminar:

Summer 2019	Title	Reg	Agr	Env	Oth	Country of Author
Summer 2019	Pesticide Restrictions on Agriculture		1	1		USA / Kansas
Summer 2019	Organic Farming		1	1		Brazil
Summer 2019	Land Conservation Policy			1		USA
Summer 2019	Financial Crisis + Agriculture in Greece		1			Greece
Summer 2019	Sustainable architecture in India			1		India

Winter 2019-20	Title	Reg	Agr	Env	Oth	Country of Author
Winter 2019-20	Environmental policy in Bangladesh			1		Bangladesh
Winter 2019-20	Agricultural policy in Bangladesh		1			Bangladesh
Winter 2019-20	Protection of Marine Areas			1		Bangladesh



Winter 2019-20	Case studies of landscape policy implementation in Greece			1		Greece
Winter 2019-20	Water pollution control			1		China
Winter 2019-20	Environmental policy in Korea			1		South Korea
Winter 2019-20	Environmental Impact Assessment			1		Brazil
Winter 2019-20	Renewable Engeries			1	1	India
Winter 2019-20	Integrated Coastal Management			1		Poland

Summer 2020	Title					Country of Author
Summer 2020	Wetland Conservation Policy EU-Bangladesh			1		Bangladesh
Summer 2020	Circular Economies - France + Belgium			1		Lebanon
Summer 2020	Comparison Agriculture Policy Bangladesh		1			Bangladesh
Summer 2020	Participation in Iran vs. EU				1	Iran
Summer 2020	Natura 2000 Galicia vs Bavaria			1		India
Summer 2020	CAP in Flanders, Belgium		1			Belgium
Summer 2020	Transboundary Landscapes in the Middle East	1				Lebanon
Summer 2020	Landscape and the EU - An Irish Perspective			1		Ireland
Summer 2020	Natura 2000_Forests			1		Iran
Summer 2020	Bosnia-Herzegovina: Vrelo Bosne			1		Bosnia-Herzegovina
Summer 2020	Community gardens - The EU Perspective			1		Iran
Summer 2020	Forestation- Iran/EU			1		Iran
Summer 2020	Transboundary Planning in Luxemburg	1				Luxembourg
Summer 2020	Green Infrastructure: Iran vs EU			1		Iran

Winter 2020-21	Title					Country of Author
Winter 2020-21	Water Framework Directive			1		Germany
Winter 2020-21	Natura 2000 implementierten in Baden-Württemberg, DE			1		Germany
Winter 2020-21	Green Infrastructure Iran vs EU			1		Iran
Winter 2020-21	Harmonization of environmental norms for the trans-African highway			1		Nigeria
Winter 2020-21	Wetland Restauration: Comparing Algeria and Spain			1		Algeria
Winter 2020-21	Effects of Natura 2000 on agriculture and rural development in Romania			1		Romania
Winter 2020-21	Wetland Restauration			1		Romania

Summer 2021	Title					Country of Author
Summer 2021	EU Policies in the Region of Gorski Kotar, Croatia	1				Croatia
Summer 2021	Danube Transnational Programme	1				Hungary
Summer 2021	Comparison EU and Japan			1		Japan
	Related EU Policy Fields:	Reg	Agr	Env	Oth	
	Total numbers of topics:	4	6	29	2	

The vast majority of the self-chosen topics deals with environmental policy, in particular in the fields of water quality, floods management and species conservation. Agricultural and regional development policies were also addressed, but to a much smaller extent. This suggests that many participants, in particular those from non-EU countries, joined the seminar with a general concern about the status of environmental protection in their home countries, combined with an interest in learning about the EU's approaches in this field.

Pre-and Post-Seminar Concept Mapping

We introduced this assignment with the summer term 2020, so after one year of testing. During the first piloting phase, we realised how diverse the audience is because of their varied cultural, academic and disciplinary backgrounds. The concept mapping provided a very individual way of visualising participants' prior knowledge at the beginning of the seminar. They could later reflect their individual change of assumptions, knowledge and overall conceptualisation with regard to the main seminar theme, which is the relation of landscape, democracy and the European Union. There was a great variety in the way the participants have interpreted this assignment. The differences are mainly in the way they were able to identify a significant number of relevant concepts and how they showed and defined the logical relationships between those.

The following examples is a good practice case, of which we, fortunately, had quite many. A full overview of all submitted pre-and post-seminar concept maps is available from this link: https://ilias.hfwu.de/goto.php?target=file_36453_download&client_id=hfwu

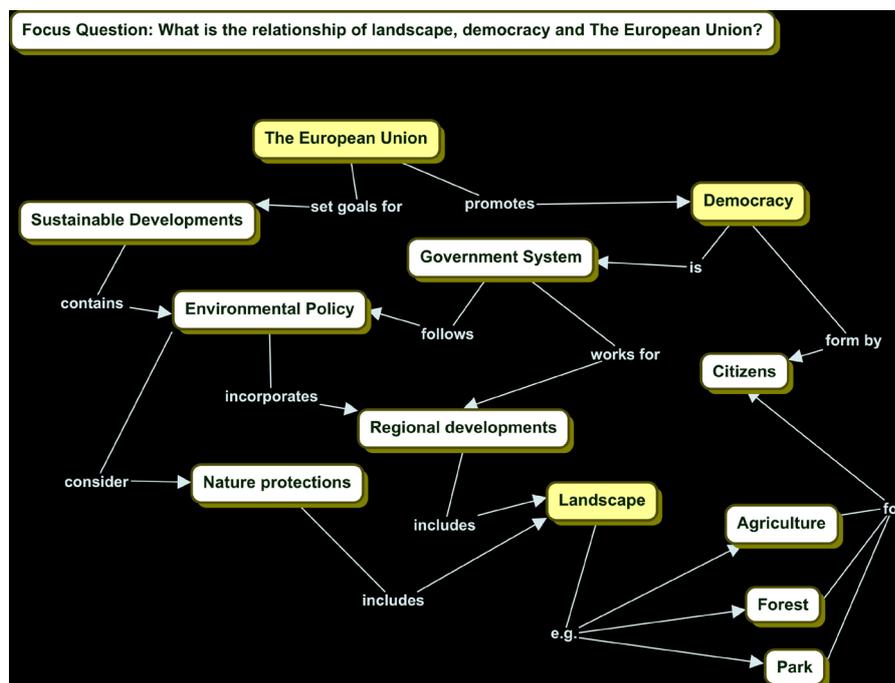


Figure 5: Example of a pre-seminar concept map, author: Noorjahan Begum

This pre-seminar concept map was prepared by a participant from Bangladesh with a background in architecture engaging for the first time with the seminar subject in spring 2020. The map shows the main seminar topics and links them to relevant policy fields. This is a good basis as a starting point.

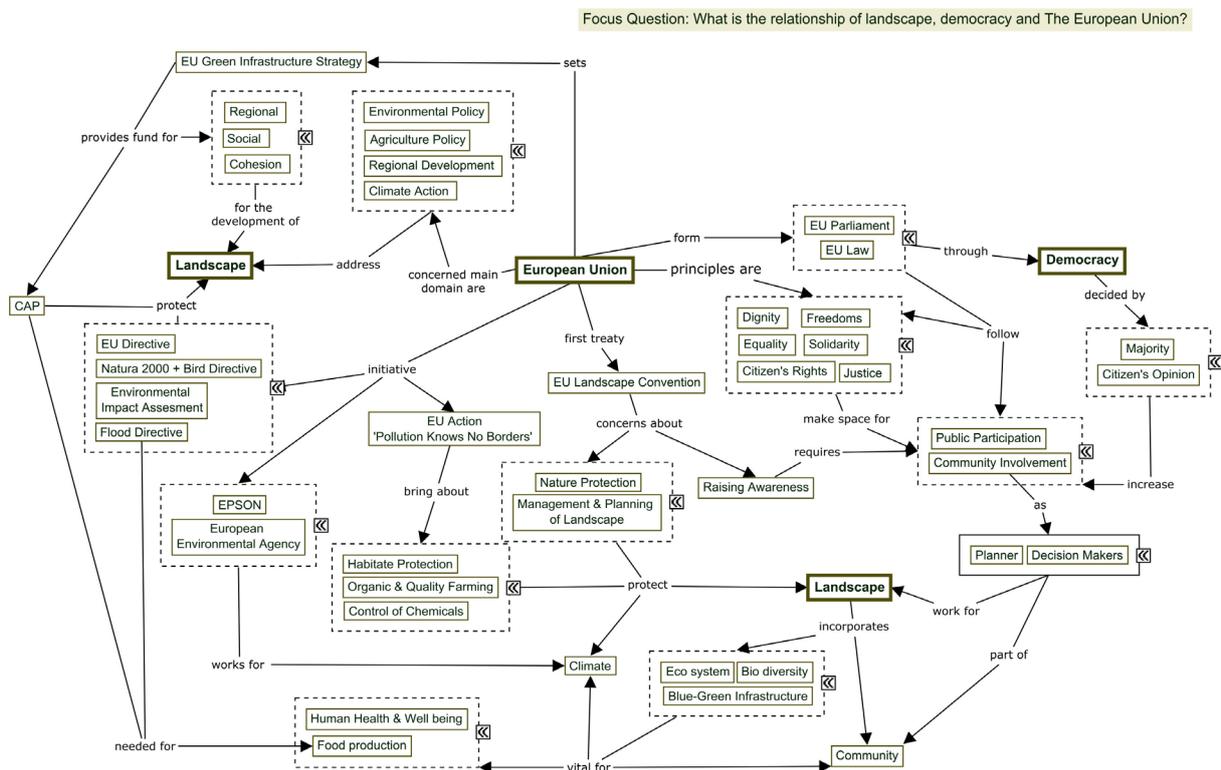


Figure 6: Example of a post-seminar concept map, author: Noorjahan Begum

The post seminar map elaborated by the same participant at the end of the summer term 2020 shows a significant development in the individual conceptualisation of this complex theme. All relevant subjects of the summer term sessions have been incorporated in the map and related to each other in a logical order. This map has also a good balance of generalisation and detail, without being overloaded. The only slight misconception is related to the European Landscape Convention, which is often associated with the European Union although it is actually a policy document of the Council of Europe (CoE, 2000).

Main learnings from our seminar piloting phase

Overall, our experience with this course has been positive, which was also reflected in the feedback and diverse contributions of the seminar participants. In the following, we will try to sum up the main learnings. Most are positive, but there is also room for further development of this course.

Positive outcomes:

- We have managed to translate a very complex topic at the interface of politics and spatial planning into a seminar concept that has attracted many participants from different places and disciplines
- The self-assessment of the participants suggests that many relevant learning objectives of the seminar have seen a certain development among the seminar audience
- The topics of the individually defined themes show that the participants were able to transfer the seminar topics to a concrete context that is relevant from their specific disciplinary and cultural perspective. Environmental protection seems to be a major concern here and there is a certain expectation to learn from the EU model in this regard.



- The seminar attendance was mixed between students enrolled at Nürtingen-Geislingen University and students coming in from other European universities as ‘virtual ERASMUS students’ so to say. This was well supported by our main dissemination partners, ECLAS and the LE:NOTRE Institute.
- The online delivery mode was a precondition for offering and advertising the seminar across Europe to a diverse audience. This online mode also determined the resilience of this seminar during the pandemic period.
- Our university and the academics involved in delivering the seminar have become part of a profiling process in relation to the seminar theme. We have become very visible during the dissemination activities and of course through the delivery of the seminar itself and by our engagement with the participants. In addition, we reached out to other colleagues across Europe to provide hands-on practice examples from EU-funded projects. This was a very enriching process and enlarged our professional and academic network. We also learned a lot ourselves since none of us had the expertise to cover all aspects alone. We had to exchange and teach together. This was a good learning process within our faculty and our institution.
- The subject itself is also a great learning case because it is constantly evolving. Delivering the seminar forced us to remain always up to date with the EU Policy process. For example, within the implementation period of the seminar we saw the launching of the new Biodiversity Strategy 2030, the announcement of the European Green Deal and the foundation of the New European Bauhaus. All of these are very relevant developments for our discipline, both professionally and academically, and constantly trigger innovative approaches.

Aspects that still need some improvement

- It has been challenging to balance between intensive content delivery and making room for reflection, discourse and exchange. Concise content delivery was necessary because the participants had only very little knowledge about the subject. Nevertheless, we also learned from their feedback that they would have wished to engage more with their classmates during the process. With the next edition in summer 2022, we will try to introduce learning tandems from the very beginning of the course. This way, the participants will have a defined partner for the seminar, or one per seminar phase. During the process, they can then work on the further development of their concept maps together.
- Most of our participants came from international or local master programmes in landscape architecture. There was enough diversity within this group to achieve the seminar objectives. However, there are still many potential target audiences we have not managed to involve yet. These are in particular recent graduates and professionals. Those remained difficult to reach during project implementation, although the course was constantly advertised to them with help of professional associations such as IFLA-Europe. We definitely need to explore this more and analyse how the seminar can become more attractive for this target group.
- Another important development field is to link the seminar participants to each other in a more horizontal and organic way. Possible options are for example a LinkedIn group or similar. So far, the seminar has been communicated a lot and also successfully through existing LinkedIn channels and groups. However, there is no digital seminar community yet where only the seminar topics would be further discussed and followed-up. This could be interesting in particular because the field of European Union policy is constantly evolving. For example, topics like the European Green Deal and the New European Bauhaus are very topical for the spatial planning and design disciplines. However, they have not been introduced to the first batch of participants because they only came up some time later.



Outlook and next steps

The experience and capacity gained from this Jean-Monnet-Module grant has made us confident about the relevance and the potential of this topic. 'Landscape, Democracy and the European Union' is of course a challenging seminar title especially for younger students. By far not everyone is immediately attracted by these concepts. They might be perceived as too abstract, too far away from their subject-specific topics or simply too complex to engage with. However, everyone who had managed to overcome this initial barrier became part of a very individual and critical learning journey leading to a deeper understanding of what Europe and the European Union can mean for us.

The European Union constantly evolves and so does its policy. We will therefore keep on offering this seminar as part of our inter-faculty modules addressed to students of all disciplines. It will also stay online and remain open to anyone in Europe and beyond who want to learn about the EU's approach to sustainable landscape development. It seems that the European Green Deal provides us with perfect blueprint for making this approach more inviting to other disciplines. The Green Deal comprises many innovative concepts and strategies, such as circular economy, farm to fork, the greening of the Common Agricultural Policy, climate neutrality, sustainable transport, zero pollution and the preservation of our natural capital. For our upcoming edition in 2022, we will probably reorganise some contents and align them more closely to the European Green Deal in order to generate a cohesive learning path from political goals, to strategies and to the relevant funding instruments.

Access to the seminar and the learning materials

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