

# Seminar Syllabus

## Democratic Landscape Transformation

An open online course on landscape democracy and co-creative activation in community partnerships - part of OLA - the Open Landscape Academy

<http://www.openlandscapeacademy.org>

Contact for questions: [info@openlandscapeacademy.org](mailto:info@openlandscapeacademy.org)

### Vision, Mission, and Goals

Our vision is a more just and sustainable world in which how we use and shape our landscapes is driven by the common good and a collaborative process. Our mission is to build capacity for democratic landscape transformation in the global community.

Democratic Landscape Transformation is a semester-long international online seminar presented by a team of practitioners from universities and NGOs across Europe and the U.S. with presentations, discussions, and multimedia resources from around the world.

It is one of three components of Open Landscape Academy, a participatory action research project on landscape democracy. The other two parts of OLA are: Intensive onsite workshops that test what you learned in the seminar and Local Living Labs at several European sites where ideas, experiences, and methods are tested, assessed, re-interpreted, and documented.

The question driving the project is how we co-create a model for democratic landscape transformations -- grounded in theory, practices of landscape democracy, and participation. Landscape democracy is an emergent aspect of our profession at the intersection of landscape and human rights. The OLA's biggest goal is to prototype a model that engages academic and local knowledge, professionalism, and creativity, giving privilege to the perspectives of the historically underserved communities who have not had access to landscape democracy. We seek to think truly globally and apply local solutions.

The course is open to all, but designed for students of the planning profession who want to learn the tools and skills to create a more democratic, equitable, just, and sustainable world.

The Charta for Democratic Landscape Transformation enunciates the mission, vision, and values of the Open Landscape Academy global community of learners, activists, and practitioners.

Find out more: <https://www.openlandscapeacademy.org/vision>

## OLA Project Partners

Nürtingen-Geislingen University, Germany (coordinating institution)

Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences, Germany

LE:NOTRE Institute, Netherlands

University of Bologna & Fondazione Flaminia, Italy

University of Maryland, USA

Mate & Kulturaktiv, Hungary

Agricultural University of Athens & Commonspace, Greece



Learn more about our team: [https://ledwiki.hfwu.de/index.php?title=OLA\\_Project\\_Team](https://ledwiki.hfwu.de/index.php?title=OLA_Project_Team)

## Getting involved

We invite interested people across cultures and contexts to join this learning activity. Therefore, the course is designed to allow for inclusive participation from different time zones. Our seminar group meets weekly from April 2 to July 2, 2025 from 18:00 – 19:30 pm CEST. In addition, there is a weekly reflection session on Wednesdays from 12:00 – 13:00 pm CEST, which allows participants from Eastern time zones to join the live discussions.

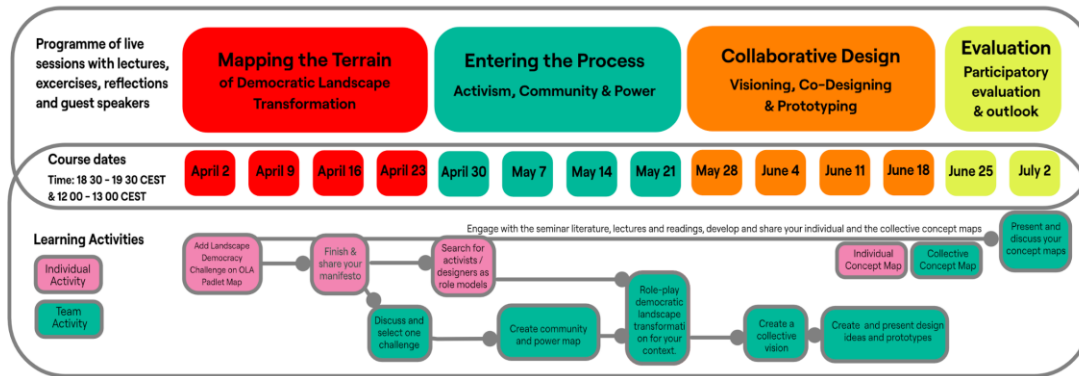
Sessions take place via Zoom. The lecture inputs from the evening sessions on Wednesday are always recorded. Join in: [>>> Seminar registration and wiki page](#)

## Process & Activities

Participants get introduced to theories and concepts related to democratic landscape transformation and develop their own conceptual understanding in small intercultural teams. Most sessions include interactive exercises so that theories and methods can be applied and reflected. The semester is divided into separate phases, each led by a different and mixed faculty team.

Individual and group learning activities are designed to support application, cross-cultural reflection, and context-specific transfer of the landscape democracy approach. On the following pages, we describe the course process. For a better overview, all learning activities and required results are **marked in green**.

You can also visit the [assignments page](#) on the seminar wiki.



# Unit 1: Mapping the Terrain of Democratic Landscape Transformation

Instructors: Kristin Faurest, Ellen Fetzer, Deni Ruggeri,

This unit will introduce you to some basic concepts of democratic landscape transformation, explore different models of democracy and participation, and challenge you to create a map and a manifesto for democratic landscape transformation.

Main Learning Goals Unit 1:

- To understand the concept of democracy based on a dialectical approach to this meta-topic. To know how public participation and democracy are related. To become aware of contemporary challenges to democracy in the context of landscape architecture and urban design in relation to a 'right to landscape' approach.
- To develop an understanding of the multiple concepts of landscape and to relate this to the contemporary context of a pluralistic society. Become sensitive to the different attitudes towards open space and also the disparities in access to landscape that exist among different ethnic or socioeconomic groups in a community.
- Get introduced to the concept of Participatory Action Research as a research strategy relevant for transformative science.

## Pre-seminar assignment: Landscape democracy challenge

All participants are invited to share a landscape democracy challenge from their own local context on the seminar's global landscape democracy Padlet map. You can share an image, a drawing, or a video, localize it on the map, and add a few sentences about which

sustainability values and goals are at stake or if there are aspects of spatial justice that you want to address. You can find the map [here](#): Please add your challenge before the seminar starts on Wednesday, April 2, 2025.

Meeting 1, 02.04.2025: Introduction to democratic landscape transformation

Lecture: Introduction

Activity: Review and discuss the Landscape Democracy Challenge Padlet map

Assignment: Building your conceptual understanding of democratic landscape transformation. This is a cross-cutting, two-part assignment.

- Part 1: **Landscape manifesto**. In your manifesto, you will express your very personal and individual beliefs and understanding of landscape democracy. You can use any medium you like. Your manifesto should include visual evidence (photography, graphics, etc) of landscape democracy challenges in your context and/or home country. You are encouraged to refer to your everyday environment. Due date: 16.04.25.
- Part 2: Working in transnational teams, express your personal understanding of the relation of landscape and democracy in the form of **a concept map** with linking words or any other diagrammatic representation. Please make your maps very visual and not just verbal. Think critically about why one map differs from another. Present not only your individual but also a shared conceptual understanding. Due date: 02.07.25 (last session of seminar).

For more information please also visit [the seminar wiki](#).

Meeting 2, 09.04.2025: Introduction to democracy, landscape & its conceptual relations

Lecture: Landscape Democracy and the Making of a Just City

Activity: Discussion of lecture, questions or comments about assignments

Assignment for next time: Continue working on manifestos and maps

Meeting 3, 16.04.2025: Introduction to participation and its role in planning and design

Lecture: How Can Game-Based Participation Enhance Neighborhood Development?

Activity: Role-playing exercise for building empathy and understanding others' perspectives

Assignment for next time: Final preparations for presenting your manifesto

Meeting 4, 23.04.2025: Sharing Your Own Landscape Democracy Story

Lecture: None

Activity: Discussion in small teams on Landscape Democracy Manifestos

You will be divided into breakout rooms and present your landscape democracy manifestos to one another. Show your manifesto and explain its origins. The teams will continue working together from now on. Within your team, decide on one focus challenge to work on together. **Start mapping the landscape and community context of this challenge.**

Key readings for this unit:

- Faurest, Kristin. "[Listening to Nature - and Each Other](#)"
- Schneidewind, Uwe, et al. (2016): [Pledge for a Transformative Science - A conceptual framework](#)
- Council of Europe (2000): [The Council of Europe Landscape Convention](#)
- Editors Shelley Egoz, Karsten Jørgensen, Deni Ruggeri (2018): [Defining Landscape Democracy](#) (first three chapters)
- LED Team (2019): [Landscape Education for Democracy](#) (Chapters 1-3, InBo Special Issue)
- Kühne, Olaf (2015): [Landscape Concepts](#)

# Unit 2: Entering the Process: A reflection on our Role and Agency

Instructors: Ellen Fetzer & OLA team members

This unit will engage the students in a critical reflection on our role and agency, both as designers/process facilitators and citizens. While questioning our practice through the description of different approaches, the students will face round table discussion on the impact of perspective and individual values, as well as the limits of their technical expertise.

Main Learning Goals Unit 2:

- Critical reflection of structures, conditions, and dependencies with respect to societal contexts & individual environments, motivation for active citizenship, and identification of landscape democracy challenges and their potential for change.
- Critical reflection of the role of the planner in a diverse society (expert vs facilitator) and what leadership means in a participatory context.
- Identification of stakeholders and power structures in a new and unknown context, along with the development of (reflected) leadership competences: empowering people to build common visions and mutual trust.
- Active listening and a high level of empathy for various perspectives and viewpoints in an intercultural context.
- Bold, adaptable, and innovative approaches, with an understanding of the role failure plays in democratic processes.
- Relate context to personal community and space. Become able to select the most adequate methods and tools to be applied in specific challenges requiring participatory processes, understand a range of participatory planning activities, and the importance of matching techniques to the community.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the evolution and contemporary understanding of concepts of community and identity. Seminar participants should be able to relate these concepts to planning and design practice. This includes a critical reflection on the role of the planner (as 'expert'). Through understanding these principles, we can reflect on our own values as planners ('experts').

Meeting 5, 30.04.2025: Design as Activism

Lecture: Design as Activism: An Introduction

Activities: MIRO Warm-up exercise, Open plenary discussion on what the participants think about activism, how they relate to activism, and what they think about the

examples presented. Answering key questions like - Is activism democracy? What do you keep in the process, what do you leave behind?

Assignment for next time: Each participant will talk about an inspiring example of activism from their home country. The talk should be supported by images or references if available. If images and references are not available, the example should be well explained through a location map and the surrounding context.

Meeting 6, 07.05.2025: Community & Power Mapping & Activism Examples

Lecture: Community Mapping and Power Mapping

Activities: 45 mins breakout room presentations: Presentation from each participant in breakout sessions (5mins each participant): Inspiring example of activism from your home country, 10 mins Open plenary to exchange thoughts on agency and activism from a design perspective.

Assignment for next time: In your teams, prepare a community and a power map related to the landscape democracy challenge you are working on together.

Meeting 7, 24.05.2025:

Lecture: Democratic leadership: Transforming power maps

Activities: 45 mins breakout room presentations: Presentation from each participant in breakout sessions (5mins each participant): Inspiring example of activism from your home country, 10 mins open plenary to exchange thoughts on power structures and democratic leadership

Assignment for next time: Prepare a role-play within your team. Take a role inspired by your activism examples. Show us a role play in which you discuss how to address your landscape democracy challenge.

Meeting 8, 21.05.2025:

Activities: Breakout Room presentations 1 hour:

Role play assignment presented by working groups.

Plenary discussion 30 mins:

What are your values? What do you care about?

Open discussion on thoughts about design, agency activism and the role of the designer as an agent of change or activist or both and more.

Required readings for this unit:

- Rebecca Solnit, Hope in the Dark. Chapt. Grounds for hope.

- Jeff Hou, Deni Ruggeri, Kofi Boone, et al. (2020). Design as Activism: A Framework for Actions in Landscape Architecture Education. Retrieved from <https://designactivism.be.uw.edu/framework/>, pages 12-15, 29-37 / 56-68.
- American Society of Landscape Architects The Dirt blog on [activism in landscape architecture](#)
- A list of movers and shakers for role play engaging with the landscape democracy challenges is [here](#) at the bottom of the page.
- Podcast on how Dutch bicycling culture is the democratic result of citizen activism is [here](#).

An extensive list of 'design as activism' examples can be found on the seminar wiki.

## Unit 3: Collective Visioning and Co-Creation

Instructors: Zsófia Földi, István Valánszki, Eszter Tóth, Anna Szilágyi-Nagy

This unit introduces the potential of collective visioning and co-creation for democratic landscape transformation. Enjoy, explore, and reflect on the power of design for sustainable local change and community building.

Main Learning Goals Unit 3:

- Know the relevance of goal setting and visioning in transformative practice
- Develop the ability to move from individual to collective goals while identifying common goals.
- Understand, practice, and reflect on participatory goal setting, along with collaborative evaluation and setting future agendas.
- Know common communication tools supporting participatory processes as well as different examples of participatory processes and how methods and tools are applied in practice. Have a gestalt of this and practice participatory transformation.
- Understand, reflect and practice participatory processes of landscape transformation, the terms related to this approach, and how these terms are perceived by local communities and actors.

Meeting 9: 28.05.2025

Lecture: Mapping the community and joint analyses of the site



Activity: Cartography of Social Perception ("Emotional Mapping") - about your childhood (sketching and interpretation)

Assignment for next time: In your team, **reflect the approach** in relation to your team's community and power maps.

Meeting 10: 04.06.2025

Lecture: Planning with a community - Collaborative visioning and idea generation

Activity: 45 minutes: The teams practice collective visioning and goal setting by means of a Nominal Group Technique exercise.

Assignment for next time: Teams develop the results of the exercise into a **vision** for their example and **define SMART goals**. The goals are the starting point for the prototyping process of the following week.

Meeting 11: 11.06.2025

Lecture: Prototyping as engagement and collaborative implementation.

Activity: After introducing the act of making with people in the different phases of design, the definition of prototypes follows. After studying low-fidelity and high-fidelity prototypes, we reconstruct various prototyping events. We finish the lecture with the topic of collaborative implementation providing examples on different spatial scales.

Assignment for next time: In your teams, **develop prototypes** for your case.

Meeting 12: 18.06.2025 (Parallel to Landscape Forum Vác / Budapest)

Activity: Teams **present their prototypes** to each other.

Possibility to participate in the OLA Onsite Workshop in Vác/Hungary from June 13 – 22, 2025, integrated into the Landscape Forum 2025: <https://forum.ln-institute.org>

Readings for this unit:

- Gaete Cruz, Macarena; Ersoy, Aksel; Czischke, Darinka & van Bueren, Ellen (2022) Towards a framework for urban landscape co-design: Linking the participation ladder and the design cycle, CoDesign, DOI: 10.1080/15710882.2022.2123928. [Link:](#)
- Sanders, Elizabeth B.-N. & Stappers, Pieter Jan (2008) Co-creation and the new landscapes of design, CoDesign, 4:1, 5-18, DOI: 10.1080/15710880701875068. [Link](#)
- Sanders, Elizabeth B.-N. & Stappers, Pieter Jan (2014) Probes, toolkits and prototypes: three approaches to making in codesigning, CoDesign: International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts, 10:1, 5-14, DOI: 10.1080/15710882.2014.888183. [Read online](#)

- Krebs, Roland; Mayr, Stefan (EDs.) (2023): Future Public Spaces. Urban Design in Times of Crisis. Berlin, Jovis.
- Szilágyi-Nagy, Anna; Mihály, Regina (2019) With children in all spaces. Online and offline community planning with young people. Tips and methodology for transforming young people's outdoor spaces for teachers and designers. Pécs, kultúrAktív Egyesület. ISBN 978-615-6382-01-6. [Read online](#)
- McCann, Eugene J. (2001): Collaborative Visioning or Urban Planning as Therapy? The Politics of Public-Private Policy Making, *The Professional Geographer*, 53:2, 207-218, DOI: 10.1111/0033-0124.00280. [Download here:](#)
- Hofmann, Susanne (2019): Architecture Is Participation. Die Baupiloten—Methods and Projects. Berlin, Jovis. [Read online:](#)
- Delbecq, Andre L.; Van de Ven, Andrew H. & Gustafson, David (1975): Group Techniques for Program Planning. A guide to nominal group and Delphi processes. Glenview IL, Scott Foresman and Company. ISBN 0-673-07591-5
- Deip, P., Thesen, A., Motiwalla, J., & Seshardi, N. (1977): Systems tools for project planning. Bloomington, Indiana: International Development Institute. [Read online.](#)
- COMMONSPACE: Guide for Spatial, Urban & Environmental Participatory Planning for Climate Change Adaptation (in Greek). (2021), [Read online](#) / [Read online](#)
- [Creighton, J.L.: The Public Participation Handbook: Making Better Decisions Through Citizen Involvement. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, Calif \(2005\)](#)

# Unit 4: Evaluation and Outlook

Instructors: Jeroen de Vries, Ellen Fetzer

Main Learning Goals Phase D:

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding

- of the role of evaluating results and impact measurements.
- of the methods applied to the evaluation of democratic landscape processes.
- of the difference between short-term results and long-term impacts.
  
- Design a peer-evaluation process at the start of an activity both from his/her personal perspective and the goals of the process/project/intervention.
- Select and justify a method for quantitative or qualitative evaluation with a set of criteria that is tailored to the main goals of the activity.
- Draw up an action plan for the evaluation.
- Monitor a democratic process, reflect on it, and adapt it when necessary.
- Organise feedback from observers (outsiders, peers) and activity participants (users, stakeholders, target groups) in a way that is suited to them and include this in the collaborative evaluation

Meeting 13: June 25, 2025

Lecture: collaborative evaluation of landscape democracy processes

Recap the third phase with the MATE team. Jeroen de Vries: an introduction to collaborative monitoring and evaluation of landscape democracy processes and projects (reflection on the process during the OLA seminar).

Activity: Team breakout sessions: draft an evaluation plan for your team case.

Assignment for next session: **complete the individual and collective concept maps** (assigned at the beginning of the seminar process)

Meeting 12: July 2, 2024

Lecture: a short introduction, looking back and future outlook.

Activity: Co-creation workshop on the future of the Open Landscape Academy with all participants.

Core questions:

- Which values do you want to see incorporated in the Open Landscape Academy?
- What do you want to experience in the Open Landscape Academy?

- What can you contribute to the Open Landscape Academy?
- How could your community link to it?

Final activity: **Complete your team wiki page** with all elements and a small reflection by July 9:

Required readings monitoring and evaluation

Landscape Democracy Tool Box, especially LD tool

[https://ilias.hfwu.de/goto.php?target=file\\_27129\\_download&client\\_id=hfwu](https://ilias.hfwu.de/goto.php?target=file_27129_download&client_id=hfwu)

Campilan, D., 2000. Participatory Evaluation of Participatory Research. Paper presented at the Forum on Evaluation of International Cooperation Projects: Centering on Development of Human Resources in the Field of Agriculture.

*Websites*

[https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/participatory\\_evaluation](https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/participatory_evaluation)

[https://www.publicconsultinggroup.com/media/1272/pcg\\_collaborative\\_evaluation.pdf](https://www.publicconsultinggroup.com/media/1272/pcg_collaborative_evaluation.pdf)

<https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/cort>

## Follow-ups

Are you interested in continuing our discussion on democratic landscape transformation?

The OLA team plans to hold an online symposium in the fall of 2025. A separate call will be sent out over the spring time. This is a great opportunity to share local stories, achievements, and challenges you have experienced.

The annual conference of ECLAS, the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools, will also include a thematic track on Democratic Landscape Transformation:

<https://conference.eclas.org>

# Online Seminar & Vác Workshop

## Democratic Landscape Transformation

Online from April 2 - July 2, 2025

Wednesdays, 1200 - 1300 & 18 00 - 19 30 CET

Onsite in Vác near Budapest, Hungary June 13-22, 2025

Democratic Landscape Transformation is a semester-long international online seminar. It is part of the emerging Open Landscape Academy (OLA).

This online course is open for a wide and global audience.

[openlandscapeacademy.org](https://openlandscapeacademy.org)



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