

**Reflections on  
Democracy Pedagogy:**

# **The Open Landscape Academy**

**Blended learning  
model and Its Impact on  
Design and Planning  
Students**

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Caroline DeVries, & Dr. Ellen Fetzer



# **OLA**



# The Charta for Democratic Landscape Transformation

This living document enunciates the mission, vision, and values of the Open Landscape Academy community of learners and practitioners.

**Why?**

Definition of the Charta's key terms:

*"Our mission is to build capacity for democratic landscape transformation in the global community"*

*"Our vision is a more just and sustainable world in how we use and shape landscapes"*

involve local authorities, civil servants, local activist groups and NGOs.

**How?**

Mission and vision of the Open Landscape Academy

"We **value** an approach to landscape change as an *iterative, dialogic process*, not only a physical product..."

"We **act** upon this commitment by thinking creatively and systemically, fostering the genius of the place through [...] *participation*."

research, practice, and community participation, all related to landscapes. We see ourselves as agents of democratic change in landscapes.

**For whom?**

We follow the definition of landscape laid out in the 2000 Council of Europe Landscape Convention. According to this convention, a landscape is not just what

**OLA** believes that democratic landscape practitioners are responsible for *empowering* the voice of the fragile, the marginalized, and the underserved and that wicked problems are positively addressed through collaboration in research and design co-creation.



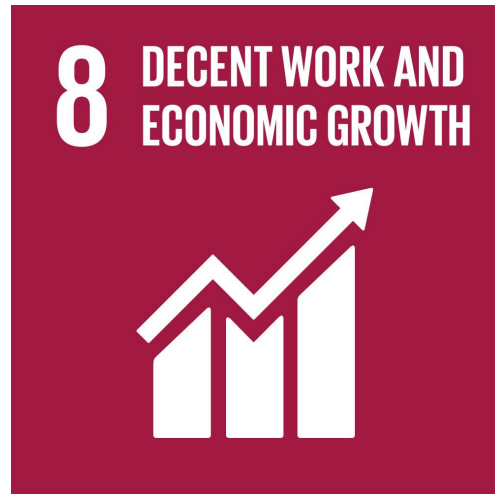
# UN Sustainable Development Goals



Promoting health and well-being for all ages and abilities

More active lifestyles

Healthy, KM-zero foods

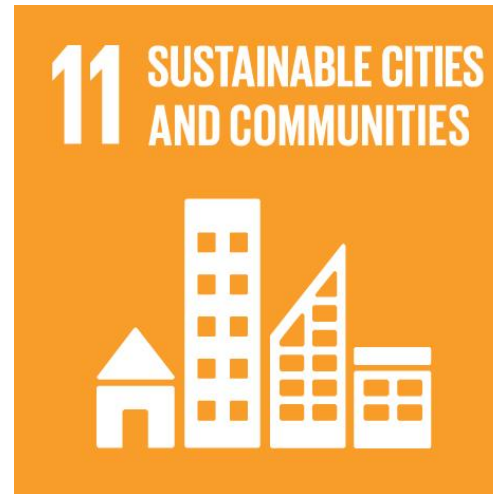


New job opportunities and incomes for a decent life

Personal development

Social integration

Landscape-based social economy of solidarity



Safe and affordable housing for all

Safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transportation options

Soft mobility instead of cars



Protecting fragile ecosystems and water

Adapting and being more resilient to climate change

Organic, sustainable, and regenerative agriculture



Partnerships between public administrations, civil society, scientists, academics, and the private sector.

Participation, co-creation, citizen science, and solidarity



# Council of Europe Landscape Convention



**“Landscape” is an area as perceived by people whose character is the result of the action of natural and/or human factors. Its management, design [...] and protection entail rights and responsibilities for all.**



# LANDSCAPE

## tangibles

Physical elements  
& resources

## intangibles

social, economic  
& cultural values

# RIGHT TO LANDSCAPE

*individuals, communities,  
marginalized groups*

## Existence

Physical & mental  
health  
Spiritual well being  
Ecological health  
Identity


## Dignity

*Socio-economics  
Politics  
Social justice  
Equity*

# HUMAN RIGHTS



# A (Design) Pedagogy of Freedom



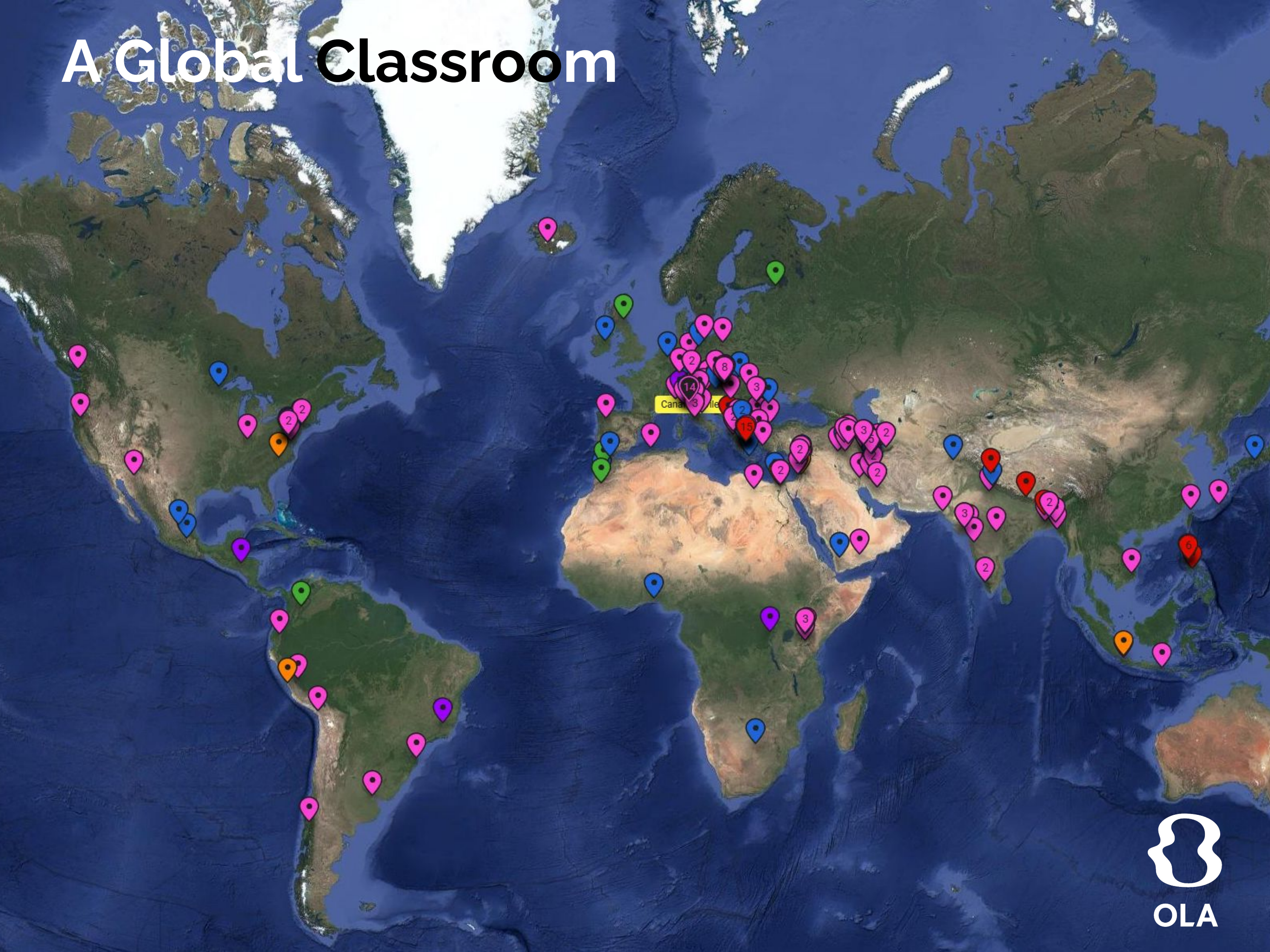
“Education either functions as an instrument [to] bring about conformity, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”



# **The OLA Classroom**



# A Global Classroom





# OLA Landscape Seminar 2023-2025



**12**  
Class sessions



**300**  
design and  
planning  
students



**10+**  
Instructors per  
year



**3**  
Yearly summer  
intensive on-site  
workshops



**5**  
Local Living Labs  
in European Sites



**5**  
Partner  
Universities +  
LE:NOTRE





# OLA Course Development & Structure

Programme of live sessions with lectures, exercises, reflections and guest speakers

**Mapping the Terrain of Democratic Landscape Transformation**

**Entering the Process**  
Activism, Community & Power

**Collaborative Design**  
Visioning, Co-Designing & Prototyping

**Evaluation**  
Participatory evaluation & outlook

Course dates

Time: 18 00 - 19 30 CEST  
& 12 00 - 13 00 CEST

April 2

April 9

April 16

April 23

April 30

May 7

May 14

May 21

May 28

June 4

June 11

June 18

June 25

July 2

Learning Activities

Individual Activity

Team Activity

Add Landscape Democracy Challenge on OLA Padlet Map

Finish & share your manifesto

Search for activists / designers as role models

Discuss and select one challenge

Create community and power map

Role-play democratic landscape transformation for your context.

Create a collective vision

Create and present design ideas and prototypes

Individual Concept Map

Collective Concept Map

Present and discuss your concept maps

Engage with the seminar literature, lectures and readings, develop and share your individual and the collective concept maps

One cross-cutting assignment. Each block follows a set of reflections, classroom activities and readings.



# Living Labs: Solidarity Landscape

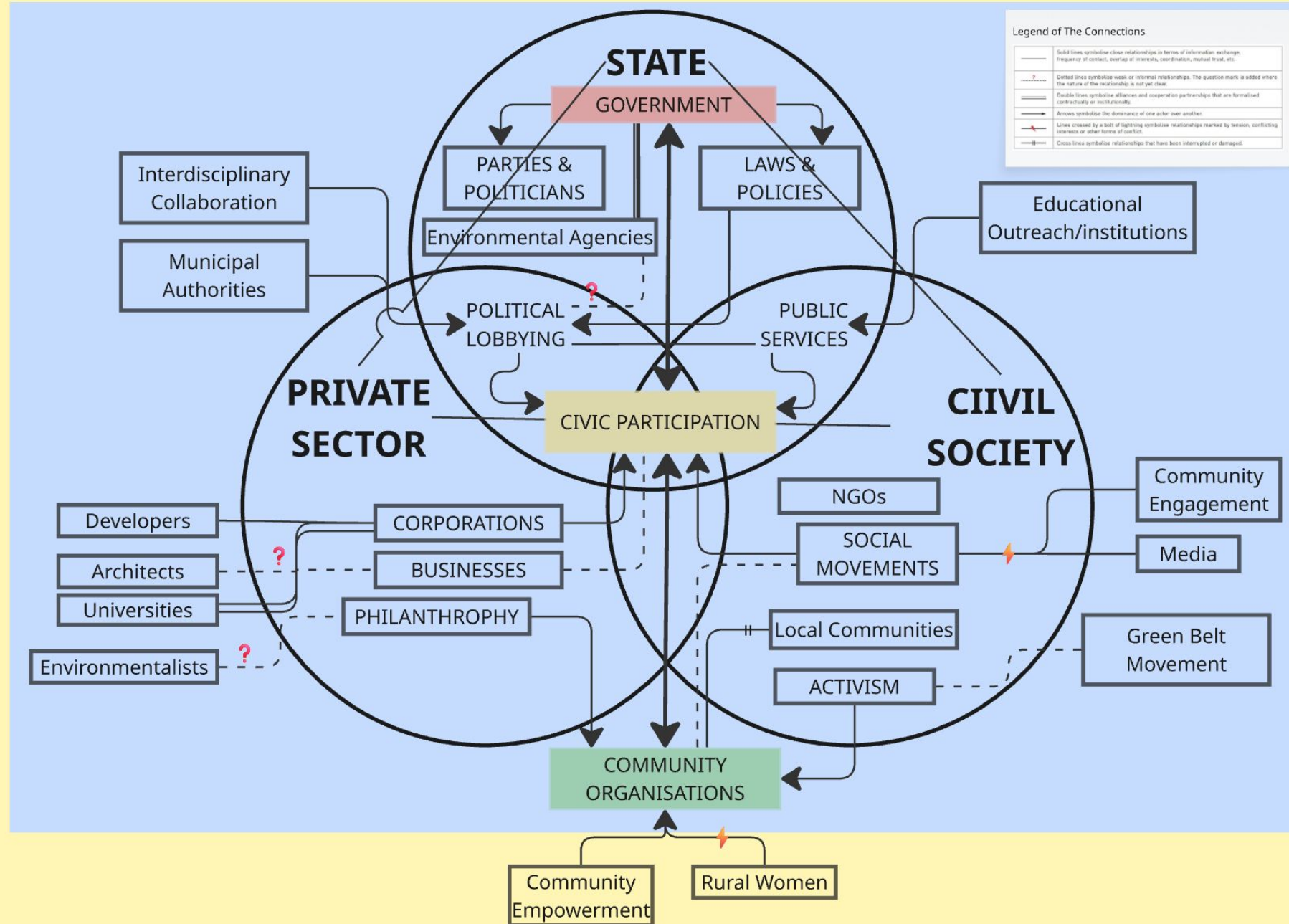
## Lurano, Italy



[Learn more](#)



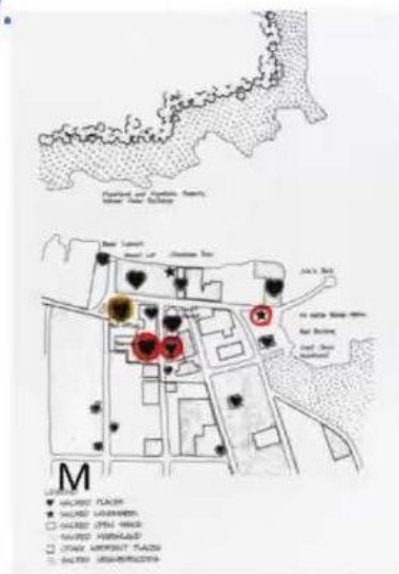
# OLA Online Collaboration







## 2. Map the Everyday Sacred of the Community.



1980

The Sacred Structure of Manteo North Carolina





# Yearly Intensives





# **The OLA Impact: A Student View 2024 Seminar**



# Assessing the OLA Education Impact

Quantitative: Pre-and post surveys

Qualitative: Padlets, interviews

**COURSE  
IMPACT**

**CONCRETE  
IMPROVEMENT**

**BUILDING ON  
MOMENTUM**

What do  
students  
report in terms  
of their  
learning?

How can we  
respond to the  
students'  
feedback for  
future  
seminars?

How do we  
empower  
students to  
continue on  
this path?

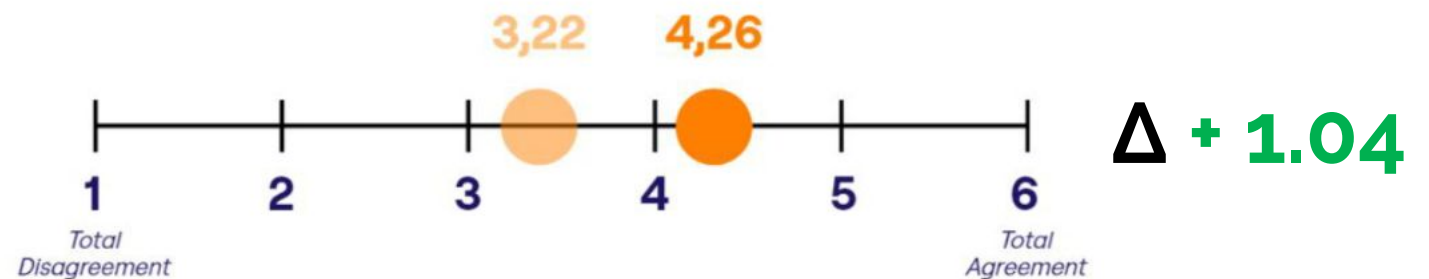


# 2024 OLA Course Student Pre & Post Survey

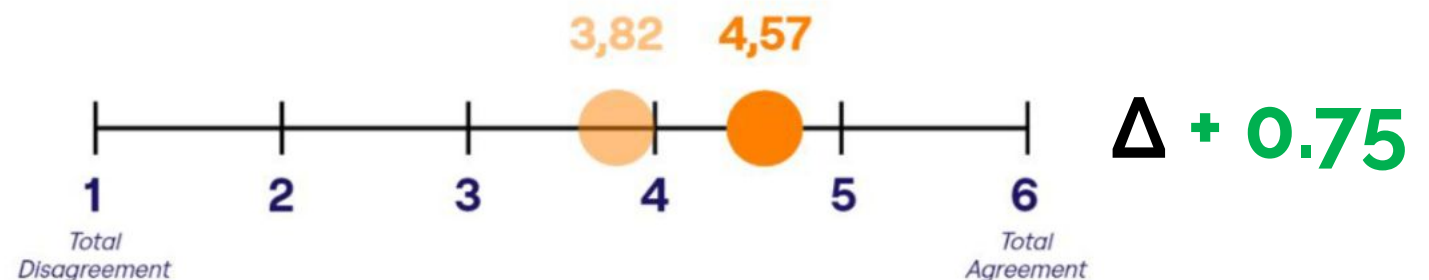
## COURSE IMPACT

Pre-survey N = 93 Post-Survey N = 53

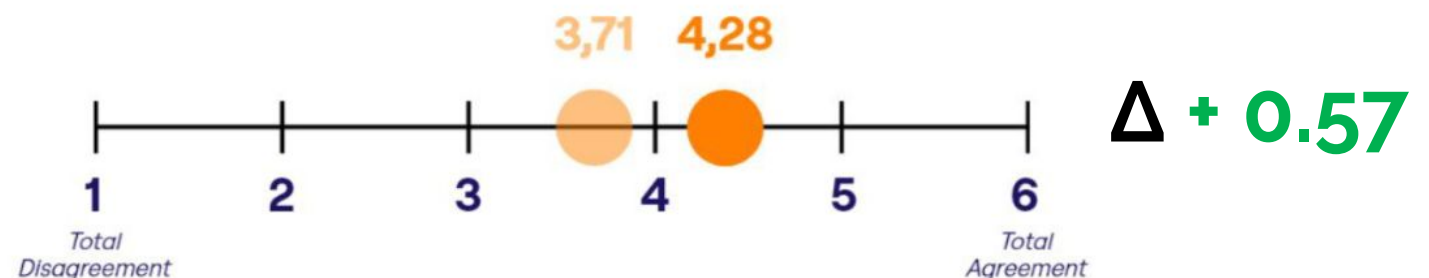
"I know how to use **prototyping** as an element of participatory design"



"I am aware of the concept of **participatory action research** and its role in transformative science"



"I know how to design and guide a **process** that helps **building a collaborative vision** among diverse groups"



April 2024  
Class Average

July 2024  
Class Average

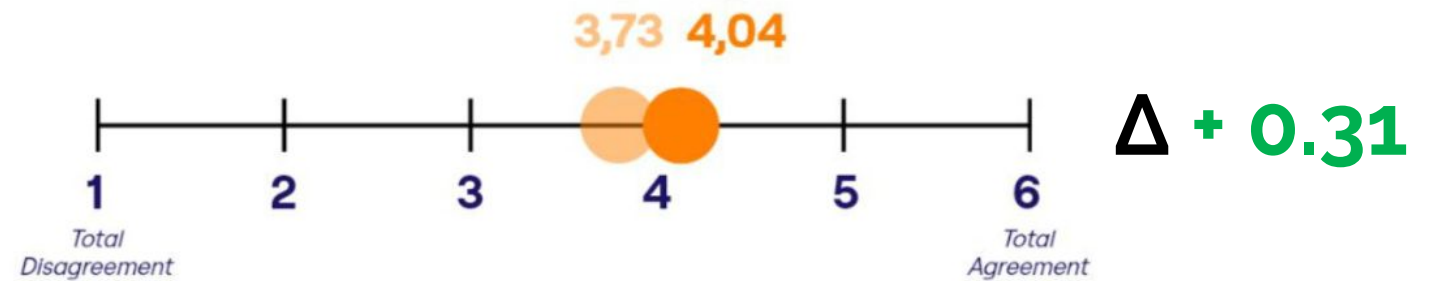


# Highest Growth Areas Pre & Post Survey

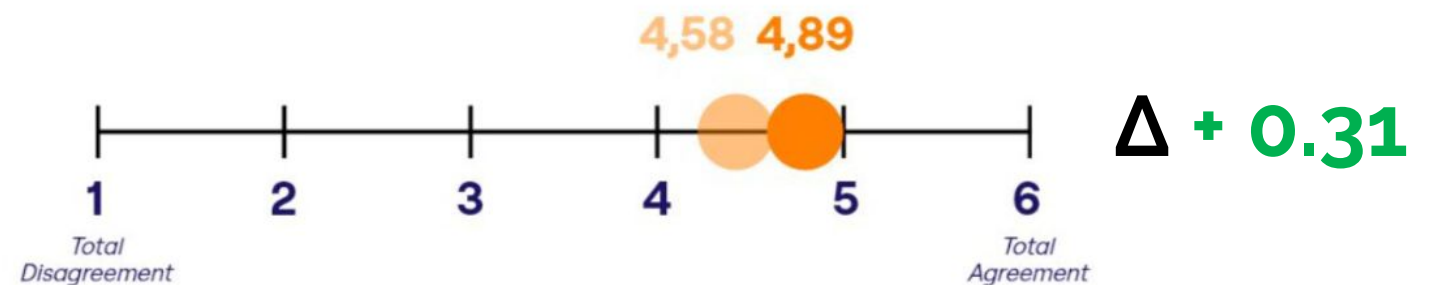
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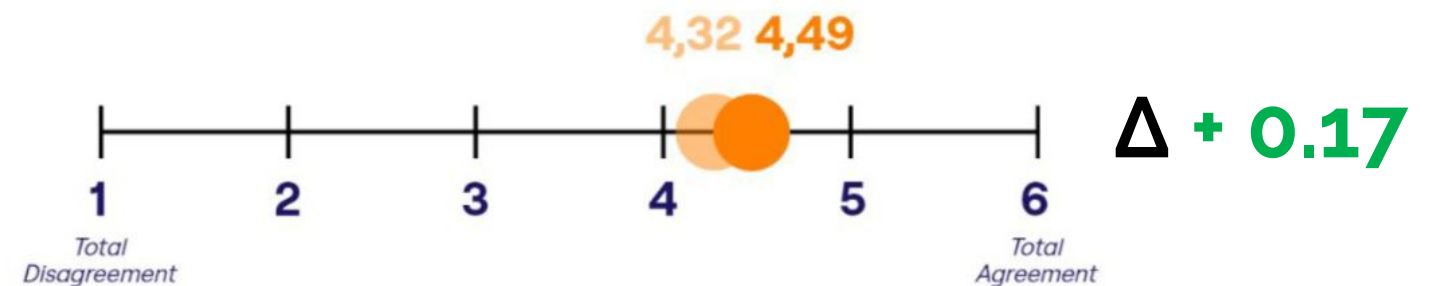
"My professional education has given me all the **knowledge and confidence** to make good decisions for my clients."



"I am **aware of the potential of design to support co-creation and collective action**"



"I am **prepared to lead a process** that engages communities and users in shaping their local landscapes."



April 2024  
Class Average

July 2024  
Class Average

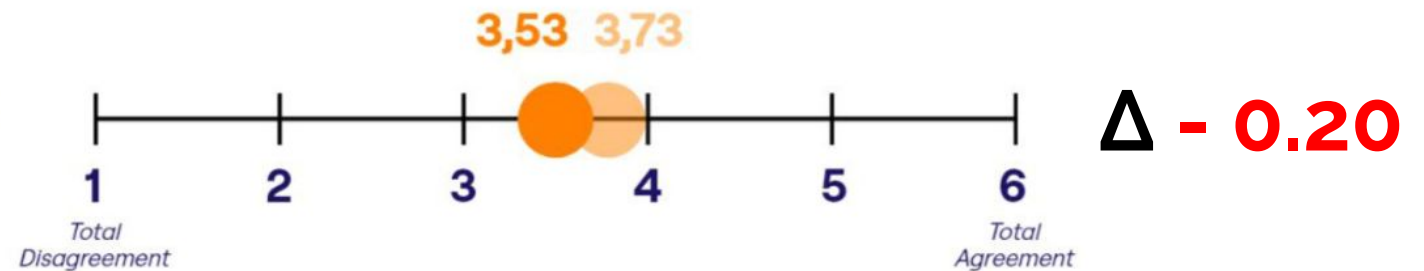


# Pre & Post Survey Change in Value

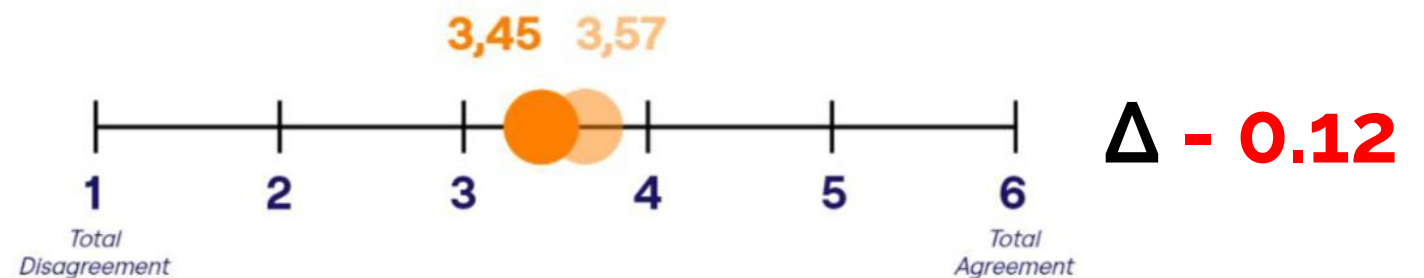
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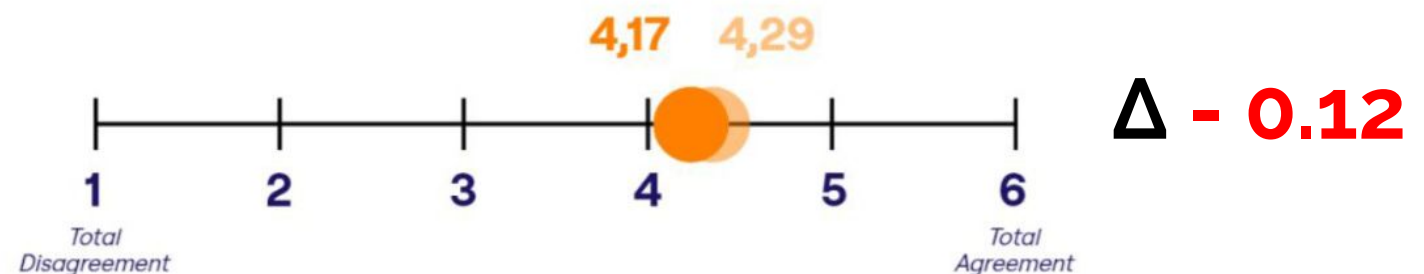
"Any process to design and plan a public space **should be linear and efficient to avoid costs and save time.**"



"As a professional designer/planner, **my responsibility is to respond to the needs of whoever is paying for my services.**"



"**The cooperation between people with a stake in a project is the only key** to successful landscape design and planning."



April 2024  
Class Average

July 2024  
Class Average



# 2024 OLA Top Learning Outcomes - Post

## COURSE IMPACT

Pre-survey N = 93 Post-Survey N = 53

1

### Collaboration and learning

**"Before the seminar I had an idea of 'landscape,' that turned out to be quite limited. I now understand how broad the term of landscape is, and how much culture influences it."**

**"I learned about typologies and prototypes and I evolved my ability to collaborate with people from different cultures and learn about their country's challenges. It was an eye and mind-opening experience."**

**"I actually had have about this topic with other participants all over the world."**



OLA



# 2024 OLA Top Learning Outcomes - Post

## COURSE IMPACT

Pre-survey N = 93 Post-Survey N = 53

### Tools in Collaborative Design

"Prototyping, workshops, software, storytelling, drawings, mapping, activities, as tools of collaborative design."

participation and documentation"

"Mind maps are a useful tool"

### Exchanging ideas and accepting

"The relevance of participating and opening our own thoughts to others. Furthermore, realizing how we as a community still have to work and share all of these concepts."

"Everyone goes a different way. There are a lot of possibilities to become active. We are not alone."

### The complexity of democratic

"I think we all feel like sharing the landscape, but having a lecture about it reassured me that even non-living things, like a river, can have a right to exist and we should think of all the elements within the landscape..."

"I think we all humans feel like sharing the landscape, or responsible, but having a lecture about it, reassured me that even non living things, like a river can have a right to exist and we should think of all the elements within the landscape and it's different uses for animals, ecosystem, etc."

### Learning about landscapes democracy

"That no matter our background, most people face similar challenges when it comes to implementing democratic landscapes."

10 Responses

"Democracy is different in each country and not all mean the same when talking about it."



# Building on What Went Well

## CONCRETE IMPROVEMENT

Pre-survey N = 93 Post-Survey N = 53

### 1 MORE TIME FOR

**"More interaction with the groups [...] It's hard to manage, but time management - we sometimes didn't really have time to talk about what we did or the perspective of the other teams."**

"The time sessions were enough for us to have a good experience"

"More time for sessions"

"Everything went a bit rushed, the guests were good and the best breakout rooms were the ones with a tutor or guest in them"

"With the group. [...] interactions while the [...] say and even [...] ge, but time [...] e sometimes [...] e to talk about [...] aid or how the [...] perspective of other teams was"



### 2 APPLIED PRACTICE +

**"Having an opportunity to practice what we are learning about Landscape Democracy - at least 30% practice opportunities or internships + 70% theoretical online lectures."**

"Practice what we are learning about Landscape Democracy - at least 30% practice opportunities or internships + 70% theoretical online lectures"

"Personally, I would like to see more open up the labs, everyone has their own local lab, a loving lab that is the landscape democracy transformation process."

"Studies that illustrate the practical processes of each subject"

"Distance from the step by step by change the area"



### 3 IMPROVE TIME MANAGEMENT DURING CLASS SESSIONS

**"The time limit of the breakout sessions was usually not enough, and most of the time we weren't able to finish the assignments."**

"make it shorter, for debate"

"Respect the limits"

"bre"

"ones with in them"

"useful but perhaps they could have been introduced and been more effective"

"into lectures (pushed)"

"control their own [...] seemed to [...] after professor [...] to death."

"More relaxed schedule and better coordination"



### 4 STUDENTS WANT TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER MORE

**"It would be great if you could provide a platform where interested participants can connect with each other to perhaps share their knowledge or apply for future work or study opportunities."**

"It would be great if you could provide a platform where interested participants can connect with each other to perhaps share their knowledge or apply for future work or study opportunities"

"Social Media Periodic Seminars (Foster [...] on solving landscape democracy media and per"

"used on social"

"Fixed Shared Space for Yearly Updates and Networking (Create a sustainable platform for students to share their work, network, and collaborate on future projects)"

"HER"

"not the only region, I backgrounds. I commend use seminar, also I"





# Building On What Went Well

## CONCRETE IMPROVEMENT

Pre-survey N = 93 Post-Survey N = 53

5

### CLEARER COURSE STRUCTURE

"Clearer structure and a timeline of the contents of the lecture for the whole seminar, and a checklist with dates telling them what was expected."

"Clearer content seminar dates telling"

perhaps introduced

ive"

participants, I noticed that over the course of the lecture, numbers started dropping along the way."

DATES COURSE

the various of the improved"



6

### THE CLASS TIME WAS DIFFICULT TO ATTEND

9 individual mentions by students

"Grouping people earlier and creating breakout rooms so we could get to know each other better before embarking on a collaboration."

team began

teaching my team members"

each importance as was the concept map. At least 2 of the break-out rooms should be with the groups of the final project."



8

### LESS EUROCENTRIC EXAMPLES

"It would be great if we could hear the voices of Asia, Africa, and America (not just Europe) in the lectures and stories about landscape democracy."

"More landscape"

"It would be great if we could hear the voices of (not just Europe), in the lectures and stories about landscape democracy."

and set the path towards healing."

GS

tical (or etc.) national s."

input side USA."



9

### STUDENTS WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN THE FUTURE / STAY ACTIVE

"Foster a global community focused on solving landscape democracy issues through social media and periodic seminars."

"It would be great if a platform could connect students to share their future work or study opportunities."

community landscape democracy through social media and periodic seminars"





# 2024 OLA Building On Momentum

What role(s) could you see yourself in? *Students wrote that they want to...*

be in the know/  
kept informed and  
in touch



be a local leader  
(advocate,  
activist,  
communicator,  
organiser)



do research in  
landscape  
democracy



be a guest  
speaker and  
share my  
experiences



participate in a  
design  
competition for  
landscape  
democracy



participate in  
local workshops

take more  
seminars

be a  
tutor

find career / internship  
opportunities in  
landscape democracy



# 2024 OLA Building On Momentum

Students wrote that they are motivated by...





**The OLA Impact:  
Student Reflections  
2023 Ravenna Intensive**



# 2023 Ravenna, Italy Intensive Reflections

How has your understanding of landscape democracy evolved as a result of your engagement with intensive activities?

Post an image of your most meaningful experience as a landscape democracy and participation ambassador. Explain in a comment

How do you hope the work you performed during the intensive will help the local community take charge of its own future?

How has your understanding of your role as a change maker evolved as a result of your attendance?

Reflect here on the collaborations and mutual learning you have experienced in the intensive. Add a pic if you like!

Add section

+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

As i come from engineering background, I really motivated and gained the knowledge about landscape democracy and it's crucial role. Thank you for the opportunity.

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

I developed my landscape understanding with interacting people from different backgrounds especially when are in a amazing city like Ravenna

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

A new context and gathering people from all around the world deepened my passion for landscape democracy!! I feel that the vision is stronger after this workshop

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago



I found the sea turtle encounter to be quite meaningful.

0 0  
+ Add comment

**E. Fetzer**  
2 years ago

Starting in a circle



This circle gave a good start to our process.

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

Each person ans stakeholder has their own

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

Local people could have some ideas. They may take our academic theoretical aspect of landscape and reflect their practical needs and visions on public landscape. It is even important to overcome the "experts" and reclaim their space in they way they like

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

I hope the community can understand the unique heritage, landscape, people, and ecology they have here. I hope they would learn from what we've proposed and find their own way to be good stewards of this beautiful place.

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

I hope that someone uses our ideas for local restoration

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

next steps are already on the way.

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

Everyone has a role to play. I would be hesitant to call myself a change maker, but I would love to be considered a partner in change and help empower others to do so as well.

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

I loved my team. Finding the right team makes a big difference I found!! I will work to find good teams like this in the future

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

Being present gives the chance for collaboration and makes the process more interesting by merging different ideas and the perspectives.

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago

It was humbling to be with such a passionate and educated group. I hope to keep in touch with many.

0 0  
+ Add comment

**Anonymous**  
2 years ago



I think our team worked really well together from the get go! Cooperation, listening and communication has been so important as we are all coming from different backgrounds, languages and counties.

0 0  
+ Add comment

**E. Fetzer**  
2 years ago

Prototyping as a participatory approach





# 2023 Ravenna, Italy Intensive Reflections

**It is more challenging than I  
thought to activate  
Landscape Democracy!**



# 2023 Ravenna, Italy Intensive Reflections



**“It helped me understand the role of a landscape architect in a much broader sense. It’s thrilling to consider the possibilities of this role.”**



# 2023 Ravenna, Italy Intensive Reflections

**We hope this planted a seed. There is a lot of desire to change and perhaps seeing others interested as well strengthens this. I hope our work is shared with the community.**



# Final Reflections and Questions

Testing learning of Landscape Democracy competencies is complicated and nuanced. It requires a gestalt of assessment tools.

- What are the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of our assessment?
- Do you have any **suggestions** or experiences that can improve our assessment?
- How can we design a reflection and assessment methodology that can follow the students in their **future** careers?
- Do you have suggestions for how we could assess the learning and shifts in perceptions in our **communities** we work with?  
What questions would you ask?
- Would you like to be involved in **OLA**?  
<https://www.openlandscapeacademy.org>







**OLA**

**Thank you from the OLA  
team!**

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<https://www.openlandscapeacademy.org>