A photograph of a group of people on bicycles on a path next to a body of water. The path is sandy and leads towards a grassy area and a body of water. The people are dressed in casual summer clothing and are either walking or riding their bicycles. The water is calm with some ripples. The sky is clear and blue.

Reflections on
Democracy Pedagogy:

The Open Landscape Academy

Blended learning
model and Its Impact on
Design and Planning
Students



OLA

Dr. Deni Ruggeri, Mary Christensen,
Caroline DeVries, & Dr. Ellen Fetzer

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?

"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

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



15 LIFE ON LAND



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE 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

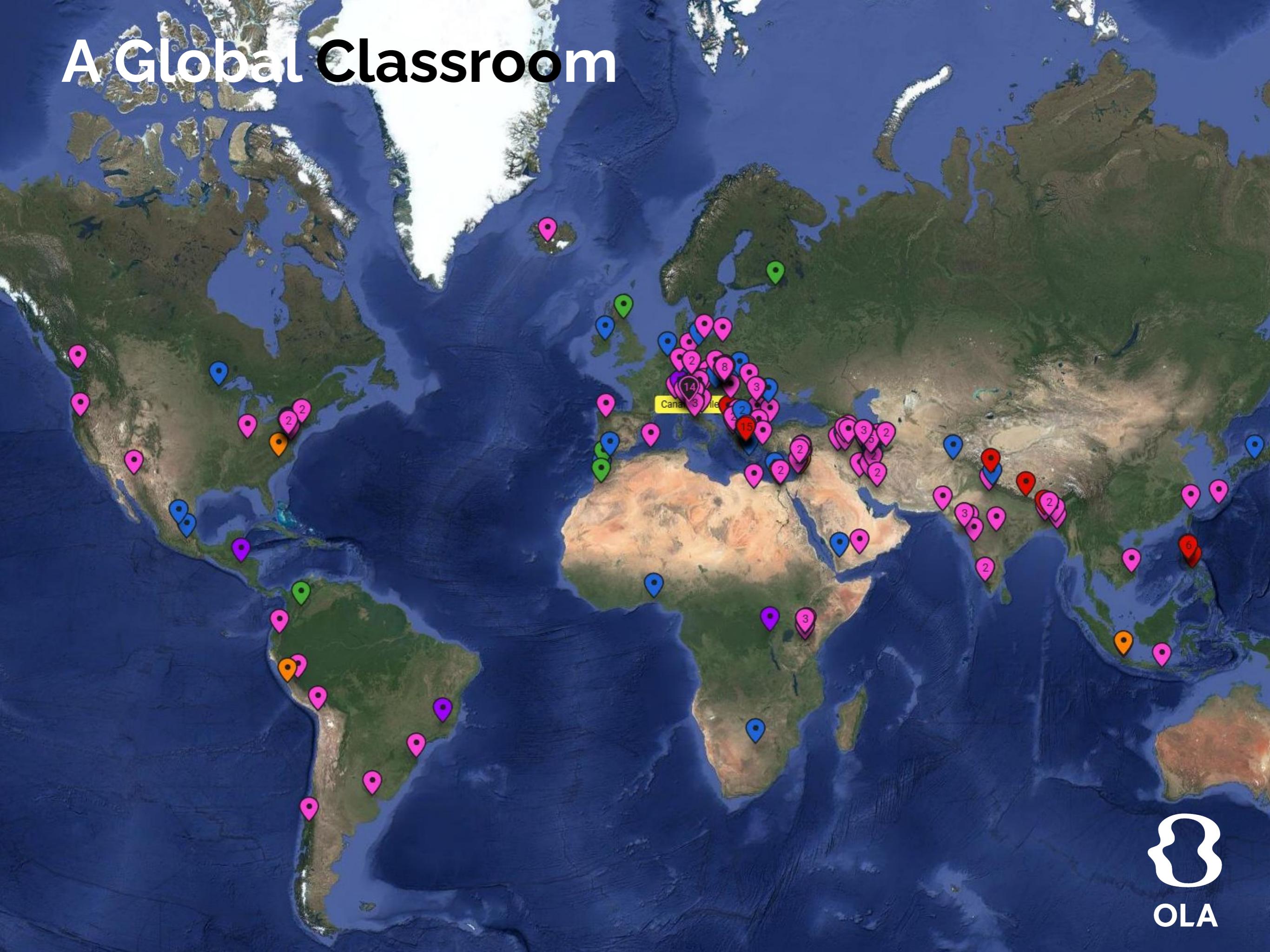
A(Design) Pedagogy of Freedom



“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

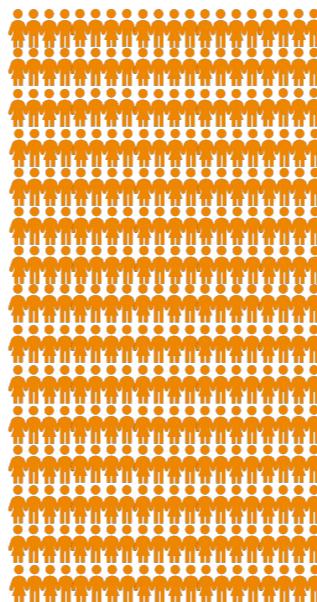
A Global Classroom



OLA Landscape Seminar 2023-2025



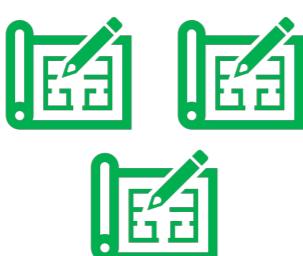
12
Class sessions



300
design and
planning
students



10+
Instructors per
year



3
Yearly summer
intensive on-site
workshops



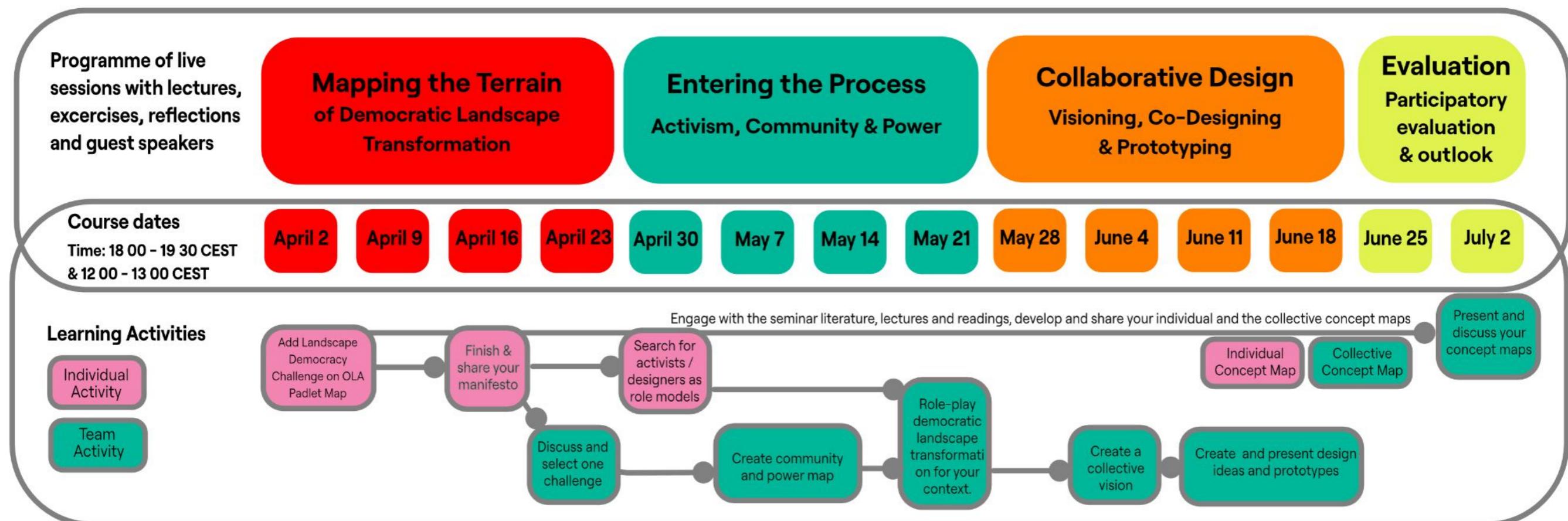
5
Local Living Labs
in European Sites



5
Partner
Universities +
LE:NOTRE



OLA Course Development & Structure



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

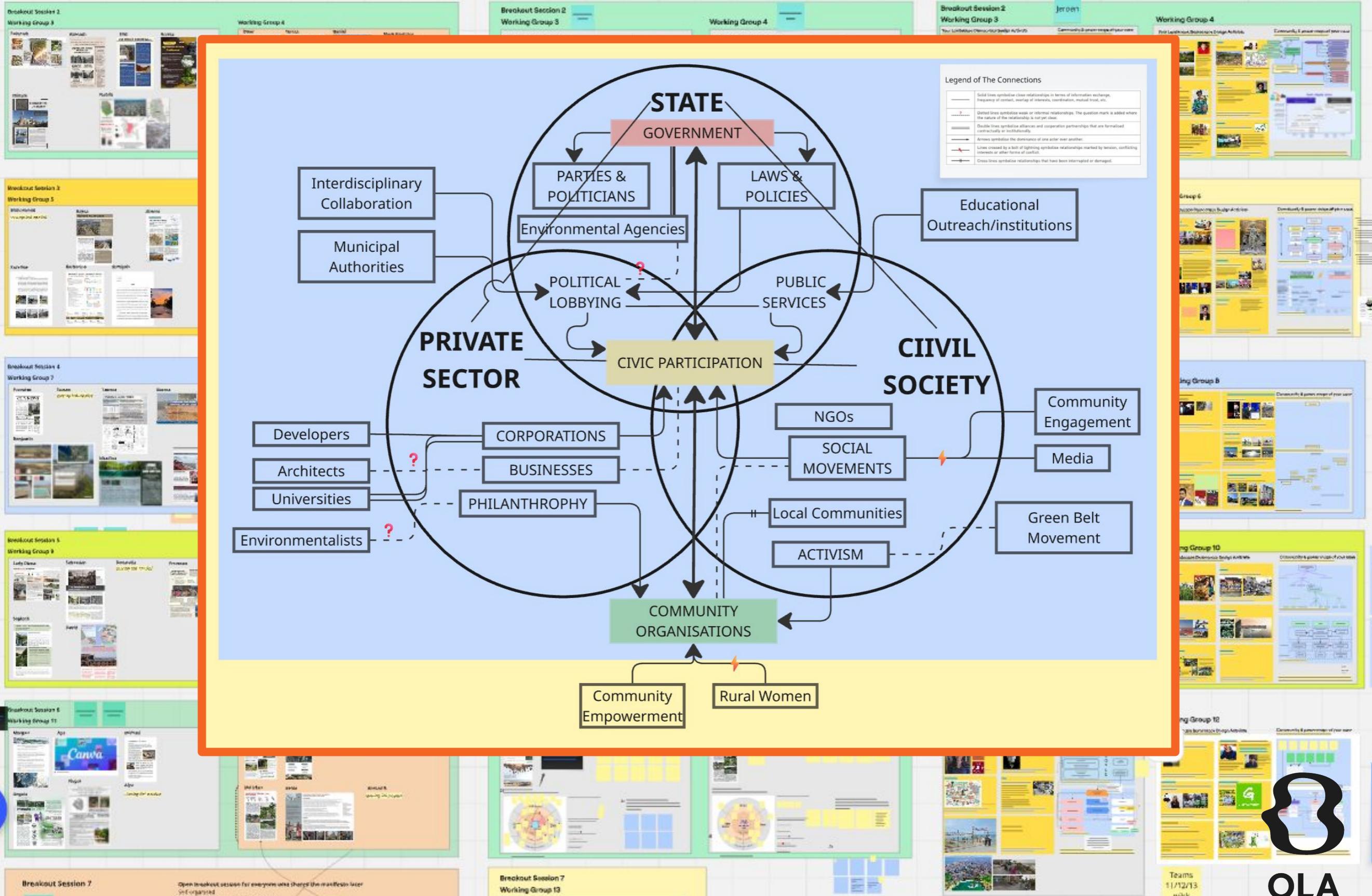
Living Labs: Solidarity Landscape

Lurano, Italy



Learn more

OLA Online Collaboration



8

OLA



Deni Ruggeri



Ellen Fetzer



Stefanie S



Michael ~ Uni...

Michael ~ UniBo



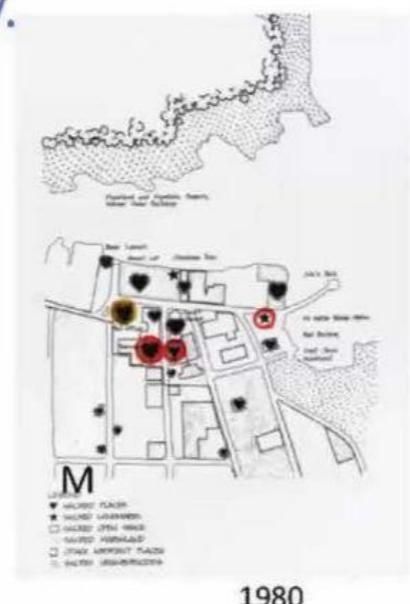
Randolph Hester



Sheida Alaei



2. Map the Everyday Sacred of the Community.



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

What do students report in terms of their learning?

CONCRETE IMPROVEMENT

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

BUILDING ON MOMENTUM

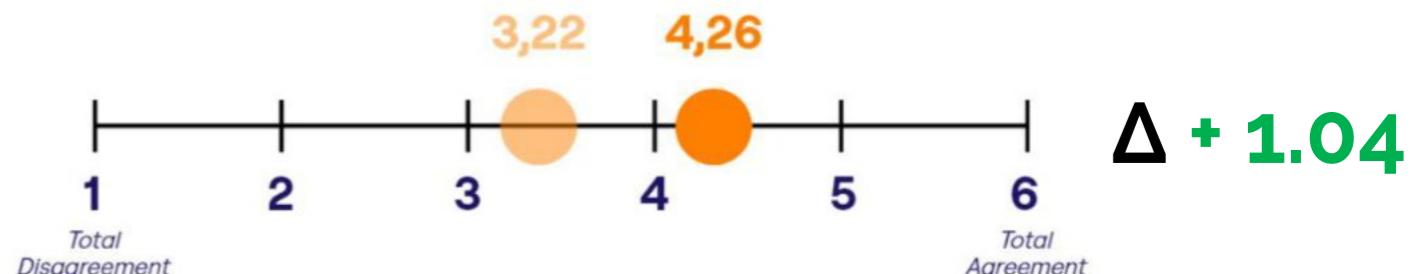
How do we empower students to continue on this path?

2024 OLA Course Student Pre & Post Survey

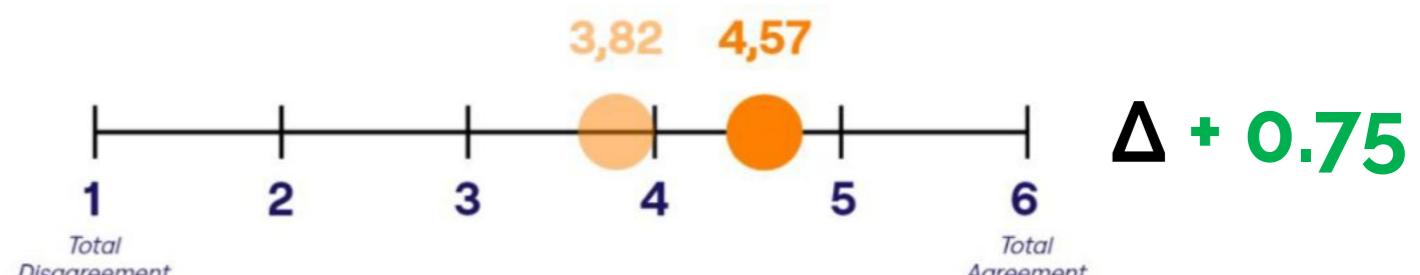
COURSE IMPACT

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

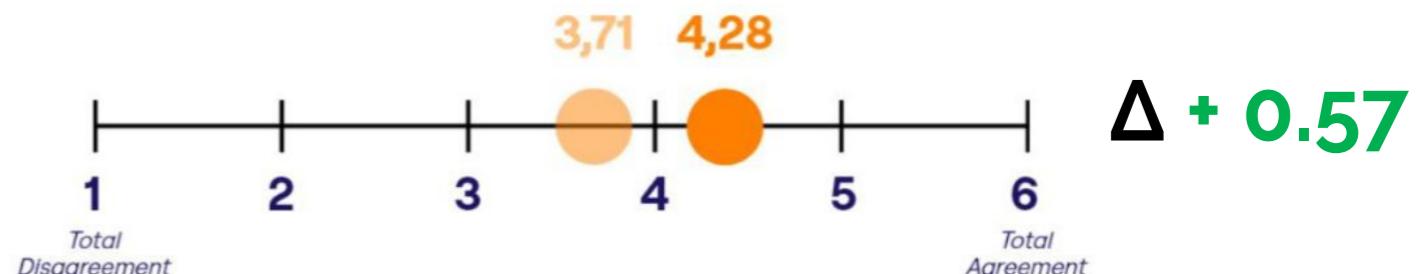
Pre-survey N = 93 Post-Survey N = 53



"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

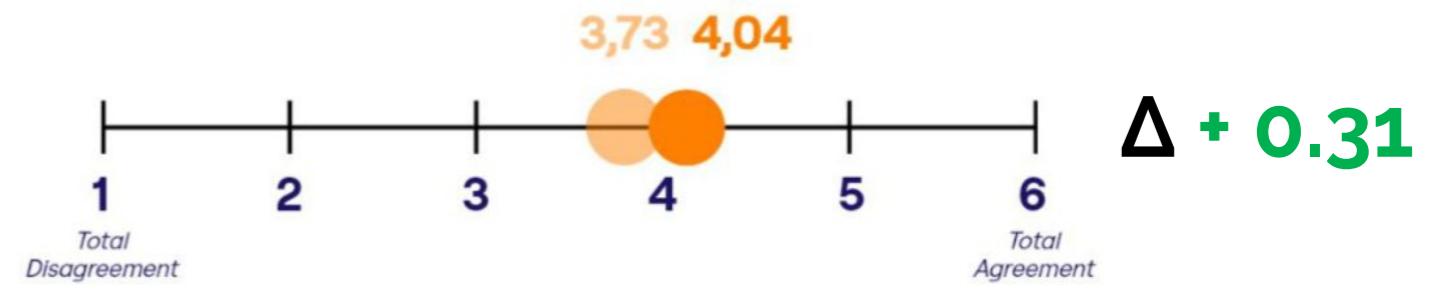


Highest Growth Areas Pre & Post Survey

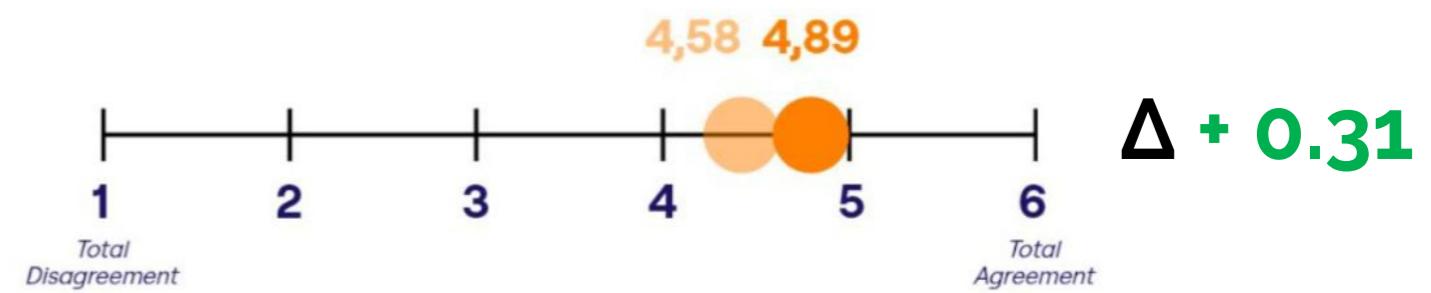
COURSE IMPACT

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

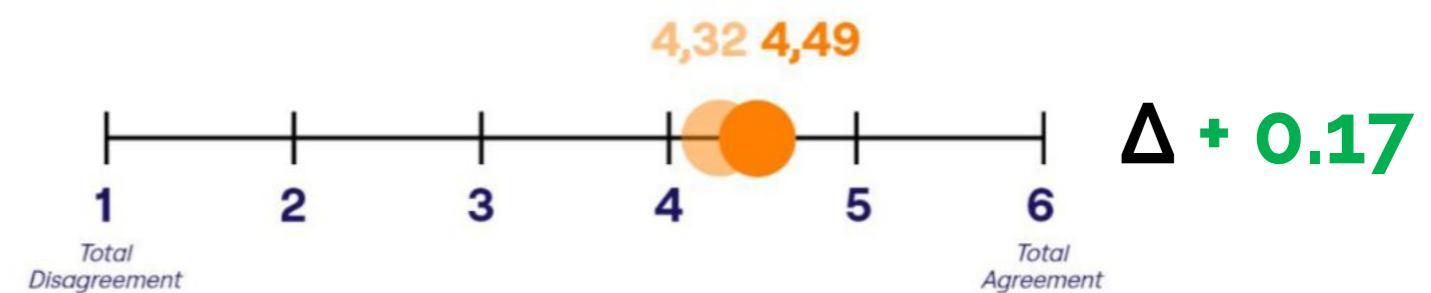
Pre-survey N = 93 Post-Survey N = 53



"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

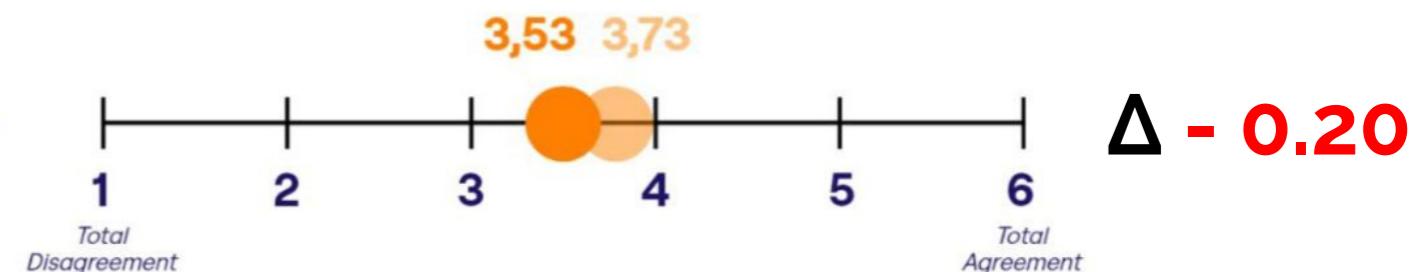


Pre & Post Survey Change in Value

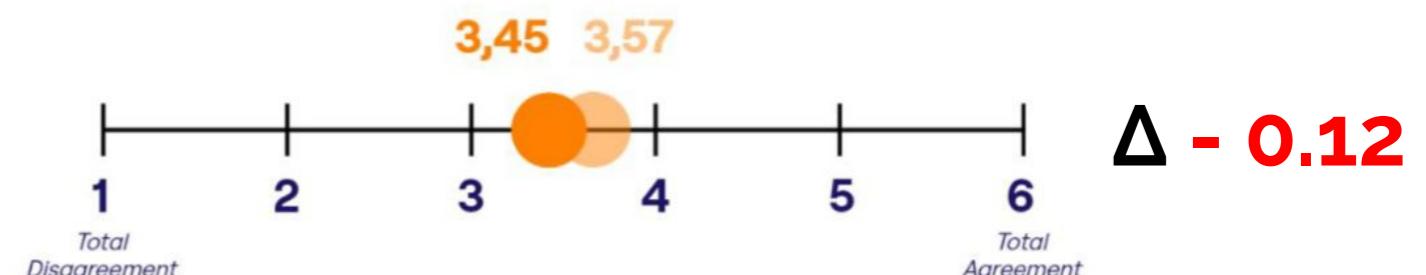
COURSE IMPACT

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

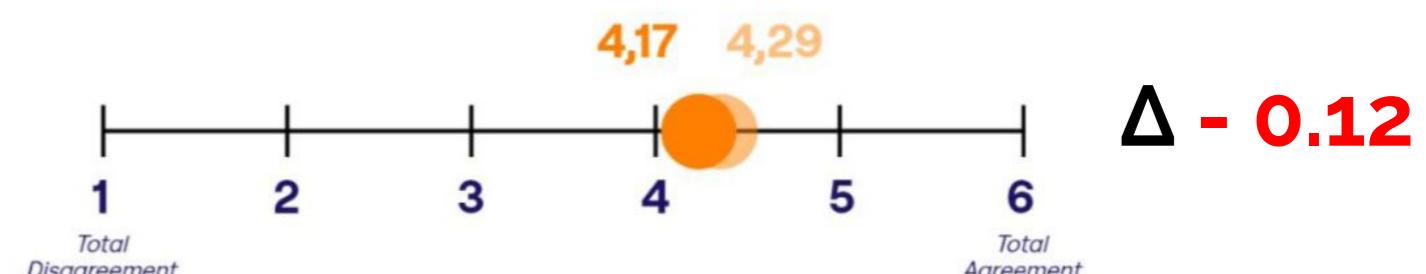
Pre-survey N = 93 Post-Survey N = 53



"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

Individual, Interpersonal, and Organizational

“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 did have a conversation about this topic with other participants all over the world.”

2024 OLA Top Learning Outcomes - Post

COURSE IMPACT

2 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”

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

3 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.”

4 The complexity of democratic landscapes

“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...”

10 Responses

“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.”

5 Learning about landscapes democracy

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

“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 enough we we

"More sess

Everything was 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. tions while the al interactions? say and even ge, but time sometimes e to talk about did or how the perspective of other teams was"

2

APPLIED PRACTICE +

INTERNSHIPS

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

actice what ape of actice %70% re)"

"studies that illustrate the practical processes of each subject"

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 sessions shorter, for debate"

"Respect the limits"

"breaks in the sess

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

"into lectures flushed"

"rol their own ys seemed to after professor to death."

"More relaxed edule 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."

HER

ot the only region, I backgrounds. I recommend use inar, also I

"It would platform w connect w their know

"Social Media Periodic Seminars (Foster on solving landscape dem media and per

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

Building On What Went Well

CONCRETE IMPROVEMENT

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 structure, students dates telling them what was expected."

"perhaps introduced a timeline of the course."

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

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

6 THE CLASS TIME WAS DIFFICULT TO ATTEND

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

9 individual mentions by students

7

"team began to teach my team members"

"such 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 and democracy"

"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."

"and set the path towards healing."

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."

"Community landscape through social media and periodic seminars"

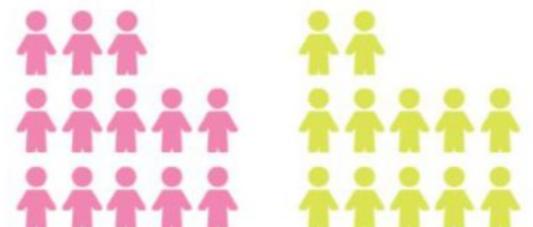
2024 OLA Building On Momentum

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?

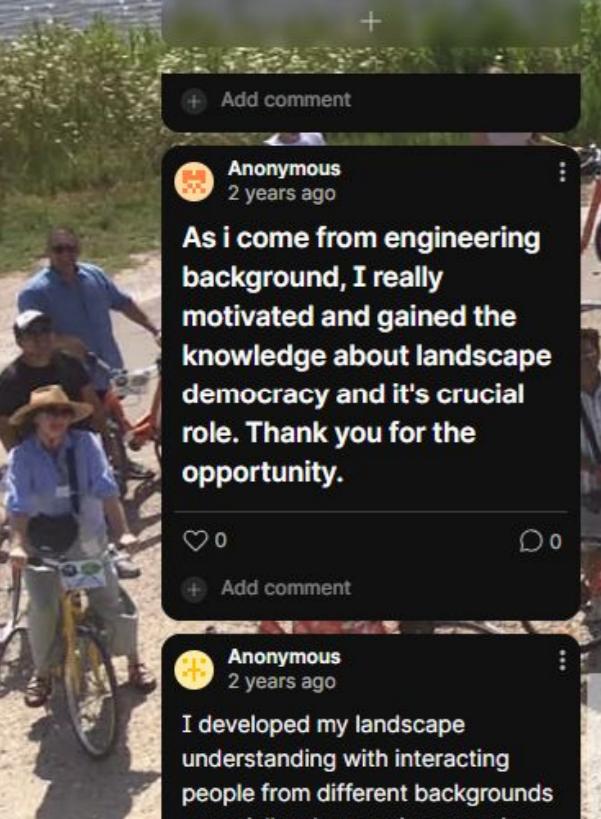
Post an image of your most meaningful experience as a landscape democracy and participation ambassador. Explain in a comment

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!

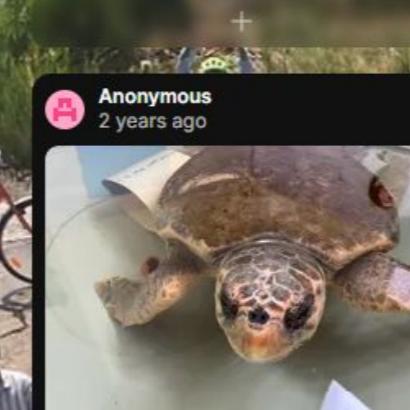
Add section

+ 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.

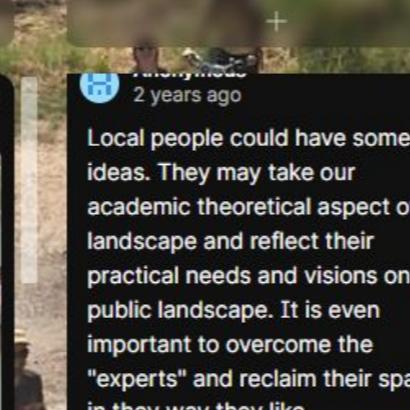
0 Add comment 0 Add comment

+ Add comment

Anonymous 2 years ago

I found the sea turtle encounter to be quite meaningful.

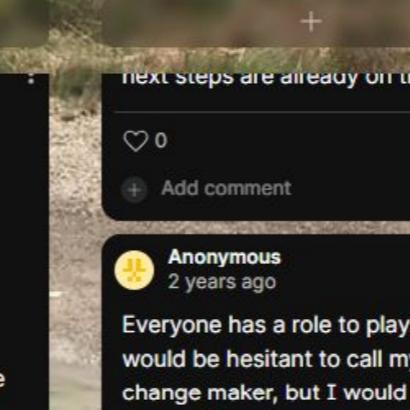
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+ Add comment

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

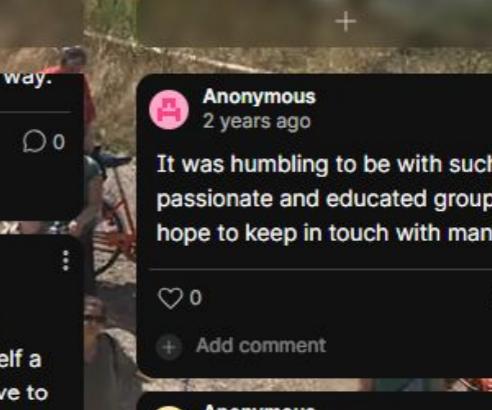
0 Add comment 0 Add comment

+ 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 Add comment 0 Add comment

+ 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 Add comment 0 Add comment

+ 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

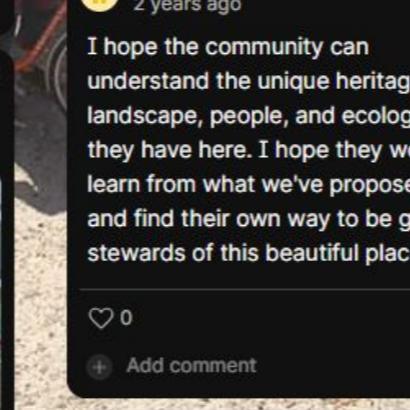
0 Add comment 0 Add comment

+ Add comment

E. Fetzer 2 years ago

Starting in a circle

0 Add comment 0 Add comment

+ 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 Add comment 0 Add comment

+ 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 Add comment 0 Add comment

+ 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 Add comment 0 Add comment

+ 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 Add comment 0 Add comment

+ Add comment

Anonymous 2 years ago

This circle gave a good start to our process.

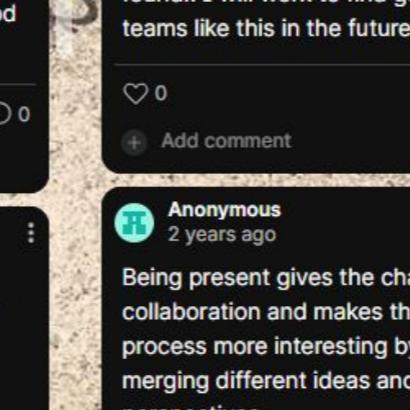
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+ Add comment

Anonymous 2 years ago

I hope that someone uses our ideas for local restoration

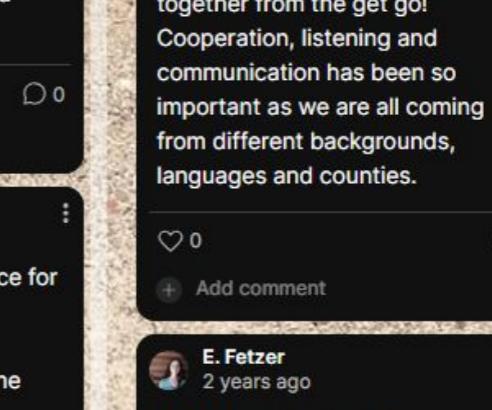
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+ Add comment

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 Add comment 0 Add comment

+ Add comment

E. Fetzer 2 years ago

Prototyping as a participatory approach

0 Add comment 0 Add comment

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!**

Deni Ruggeri: druggeri@umd.edu

Mary Christensen: mchrist5@umd.edu

<https://www.openlandscapeacademy.org>