



Democratic Landscape  
Transformation

OLA

# Landscape Democracy and the making of a just city

A brief introduction on the intersections  
of environmental design, political  
philosophy, and civic engagement

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April 8, 2026



LD and the endless  
**struggle for Human  
Rights**





**"Shoes on the Danube Promenade" memorial (Can Togay with sculptor Gyula Pauer) 2005**

# Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

**“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.**

**They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”**

*Article 1 of the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

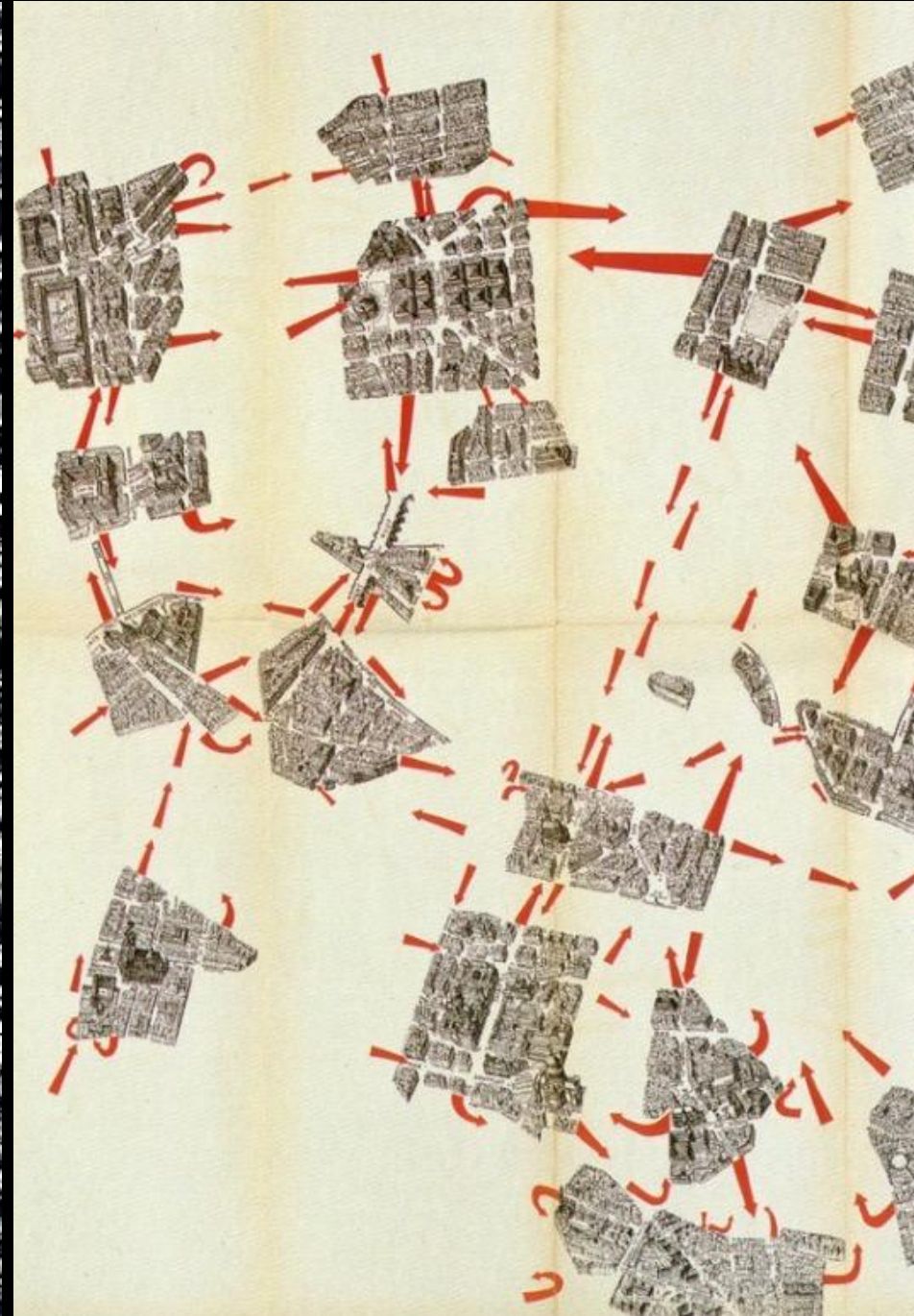
# The Right to the city

- Henri Lefebvre (1968) "*Le Droit à la ville*"
- Recognizes an 'estrangement' of many people from the city
- A call-to-action to reclaim the city as a shared space
- A never-ending struggle between conflicting visions of society
- **"the right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our desires"** (Harvey, 2008)





Georges-Eugène Haussmann's Paris (1853-1870).



Guy Debord (1957-1972) Psychogeographic Paris Map



**Robert Moses**



**Jane Jacobs**



Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt 2011/2020

No Kings Day Protests in NYC's Times Square 10/18/25

An aerial photograph showing a highway interchange with several large concrete culverts cutting through a dense forest. The road is paved and has a few cars. The surrounding area is heavily wooded with tall evergreen trees. The text is overlaid on the top left of the image.

According to the **"Rights of Nature"** doctrine, an ecosystem is entitled to legal personhood status and as such, has the right to defend itself in a court of law against harms, including environmental degradation caused by a specific development project or even by climate change.

<https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2021/04/22/rights-of-nature-lawsuits>



Alexandre Dunouy painted Rousseau meditating in the Park of Rochemorand near Lyon in 1770.



The social contract guarantees equality and liberty as superior social values.

ROUSSEAU

*The Social Contract*



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IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

# A DECLARATION

BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,  
IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

**WE** hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

The Declaration of Independence - July 4, 1776

# Democracy

A short poll on your  
experiences with democracy



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# Democracy

noun

de·moc·ra·cy | di-<sup>l</sup>mă-krə-sē

## Definition of *democracy*

1a: government by the people *especially*: rule of the majority

1b: a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation

usually involving periodically held free elections

2: a political unit that has a democratic government

3 *capitalized*: the principles and policies of the

Democratic party in the U.S. from emancipation

Republicanism to New Deal *Democracy*— C. M. Roberts

4: the common people *especially* when constituting the source of political authority

5: the absence of hereditary or arbitrary class distinctions or privileges



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Democracy is an idea rooted in  
free debate in public space

The public landscape is the

spatial materialisation of

democracy. It is a physical

reminder and representation of a

community's identities, values,

and ambitions



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Democracy as reflected in the Greek Agora



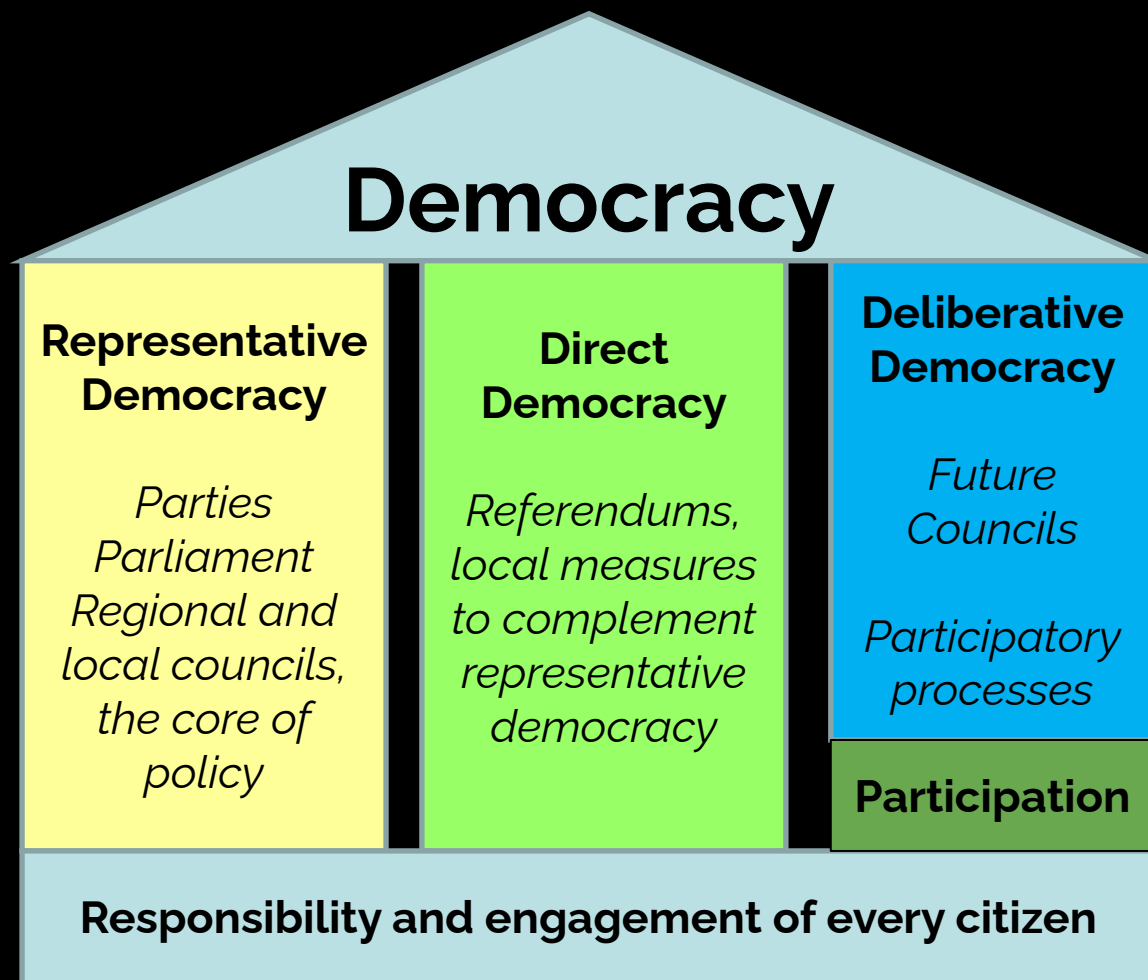
The Öxará River in Iceland intercepting the *Thingvellir* (assembly field).



The Allegory of Good and Bad Government by Ambrogio Lorenzetti (1338-1339)



Reidar Aulie (1950) "The labor movement's history" Rådhus Oslo, Norway



**Three columns model of contemporary democracy**  
Christian Felber (2010) *The economy of the common good*, 109

# representative democracy

Source: pixabay

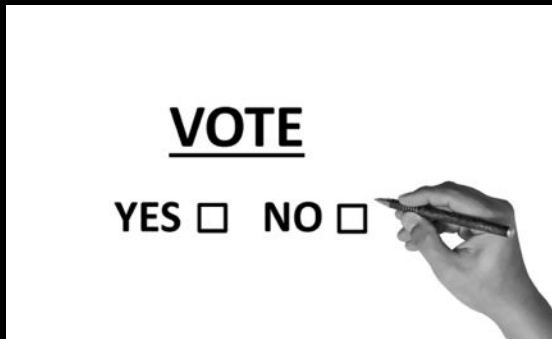


**Representative  
democracy**

Citizens delegate decisions for a defined period of time to representatives. Representation at the national, state/region/province, and local levels.

<b>Advantages?</b>	<b>Disadvantages?</b>

# direct democracy



**Direct democracy**

Citizens decide directly via referendums, propositions, and local ballot measures.

Mostly at the city level, but also at regional and national level

Advantages?	Disadvantages?

# Deliberative democracy

Source: pixabay



## Deliberative democracy

Decisions are made upon  
deliberation of all possible  
viewpoints

Decisions are made on the basis  
of debate and argumentation,  
not by vote.

This requires information, active  
listening, reflexive value  
construction

Advantages?	Disadvantages?

# Democracy

## Representative Democracy

*Parties  
Parliament  
Regional and  
local councils,  
the core of  
policy*

## Direct Democracy

*Referendums,  
local measures  
to complement  
representative  
democracy*

## Deliberative Democracy

*Future  
Councils  
  
Participatory  
processes*

**Participation**

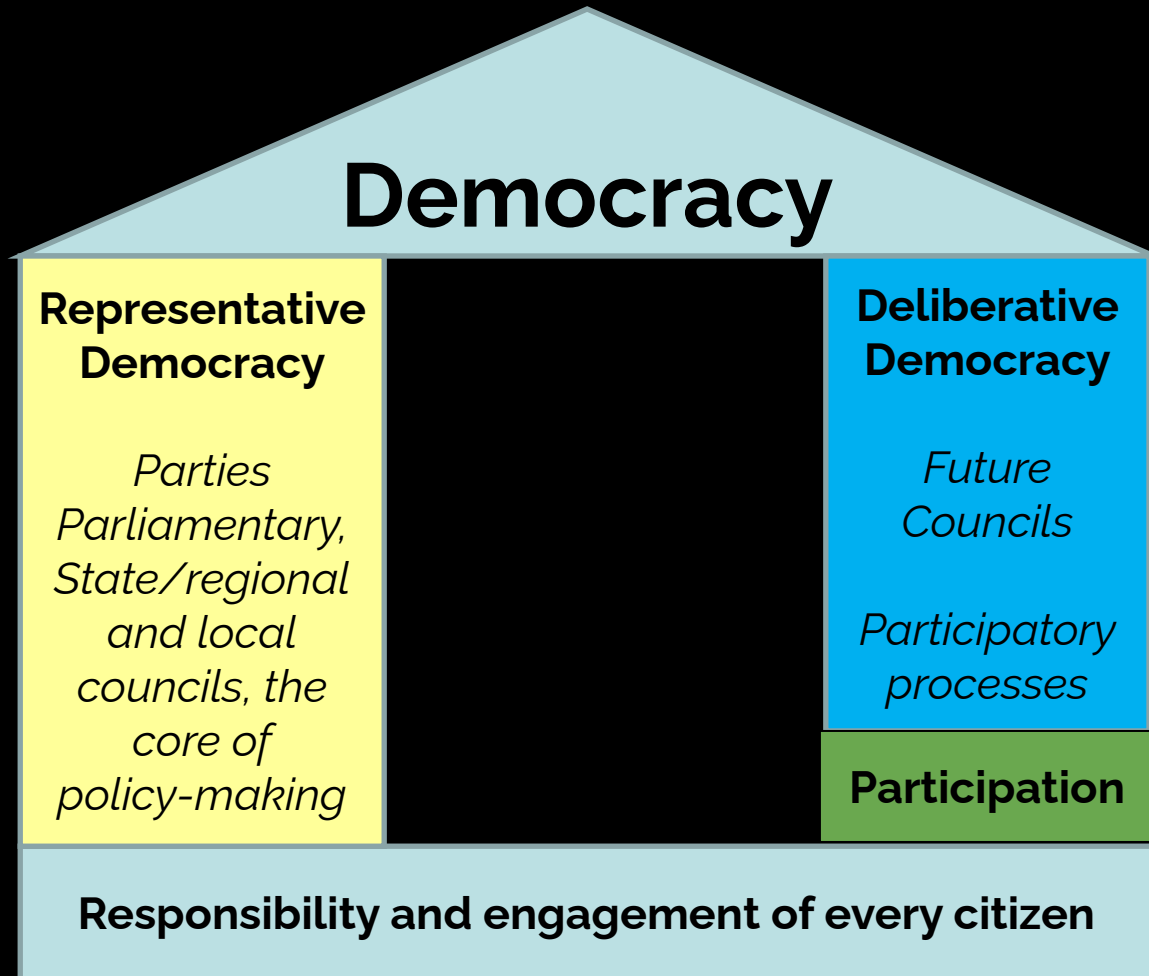
**Responsibility and engagement of every citizen**

**Three columns model of contemporary democracy**

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# Democracy

## Representative Democracy

*Parties  
Parliamentary,  
State/regional  
and local  
councils, the  
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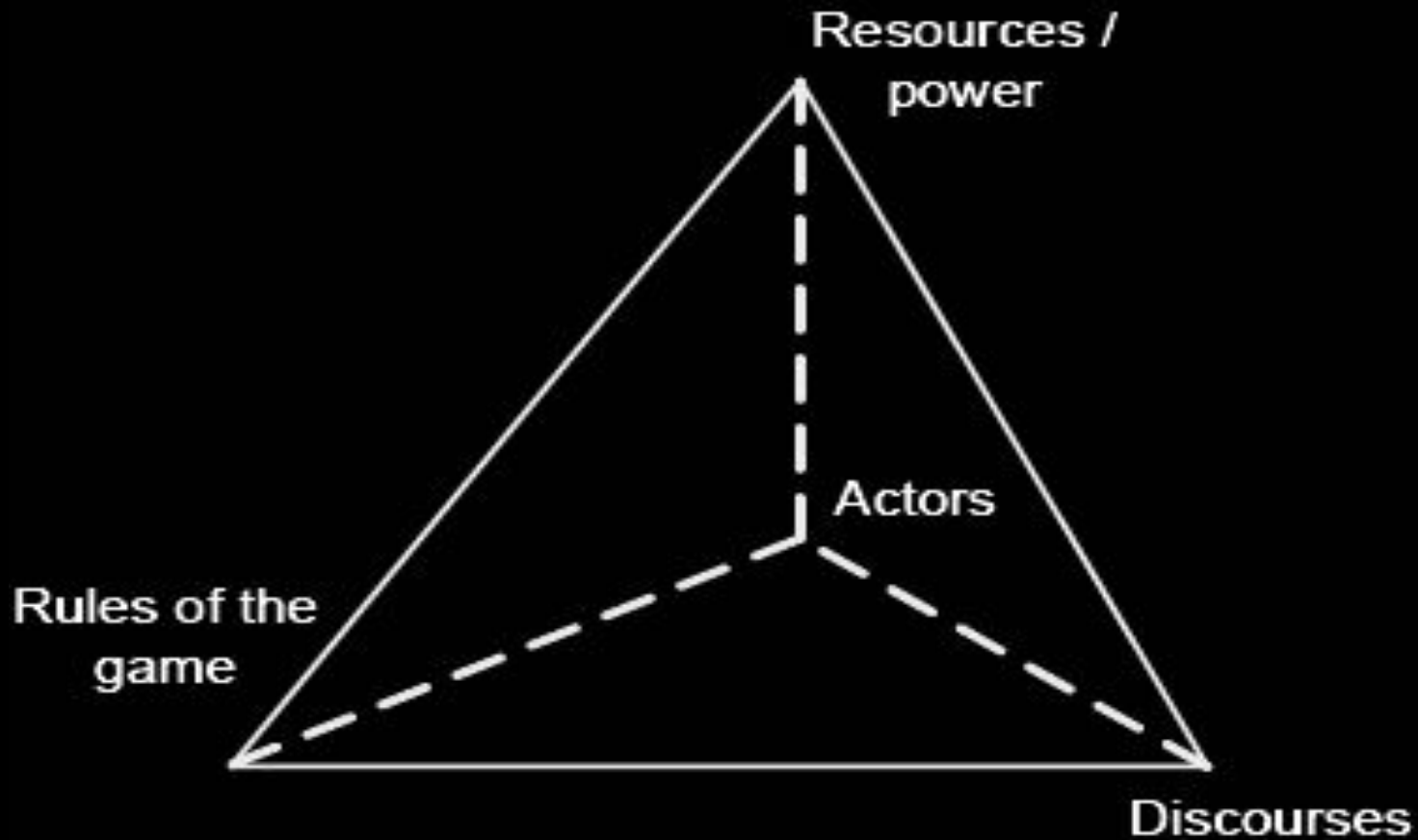
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# Landscape democracy as policy arrangement



Policy arrangement visualized as a tetrahedron from Duncan Liefferink (2006).



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# Landscape

# Short interaction on Menti

## “Landscape in your own language”

Go to Menti:

<https://www.menti.com/alazdbtpjayq>





Council of Europe Landscape Convention  
"Landscape" definition (2000)

**"an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."**





"LANDSCAPE is a key element of individual and social well-being and ... its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone."

Preamble to the Council of Europe Landscape Convention



Constitutional ideals of democracy,  
human rights, equality and freedom  
have a tangible spatial dimension in  
the **landscapes of our communities,**  
**activated** and rendered **operational**  
through **shared practices and**  
**experiences.**



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# LANDSCHAFT / LANDSCHAP / LANDSKAP / LANDSCAPE



A dutch "landschap", originally defined as a self-reliant unit of civic and communitarian life



"Osmington Village," oil on canvas by John Constable, 1816-17. Yale Center for British Art



André le Nôtre (late 1600s) The Gardens of Versailles, France



The Merced River flowing through Yosemite Valley



Community Kitchen

Cob on Wood home-challenged camp, Oakland, CA (2021) (photo by Nico Oved) Demolished April 2023



**“defiant” garden in a psychiatric hospital in Riga, Latvia.**



Taiwan's Tainan City tidal marshes are wintering sites for endangered black-faced spoonbills (Courtesy Wang Cheng-chi)

# tangible & intangible landscapes

- The landscape is both the physical entity and the **values, meanings, and stories** people have imbued it with
- Landscape meaning is **socially constructed**
- Landscape also includes the heritage of everyday practices and rituals we construct around it
  - **Democratic, participatory practices of stewardship**





"...people from different walks of life encounter one another and so acquire enough of a sense of a shared life that we can meaningfully think of one another as **citizens in a common venture**"

Michael Sandel, Political Philosopher, Harvard University (2009)

# The "Right-to-landscape"



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TANGIBLE

Physical  
elements  
and resources

INTANGIBLES

social,  
economic and  
cultural  
values

**RIGHT TO  
LANDSCAPE**

RIGHTS THAT  
SUPPORT  
EXISTENCE

RIGHTS THAT  
SUPPORT  
DIGNITY

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

## **LANDSCAPE as CULTURAL REALM**

### **HEALTH & PHYSICAL WELLBEING**

clean air and water,  
food security, nature in  
cities, natural heritage

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL & SPIRITUAL WELLBEING**

sacred sites, scenery, aesthetic  
fulfillment, sense of belonging  
and identity, cultural heritage

### **SOCIAL, ECONOMIC & POLITICAL WELLBEING**

social justice, equal  
livelihood opportunities,  
freedom of expression

## **THE RIGHT TO LANDSCAPE**

individuals, communities, nations, the  
economically disadvantaged, the politically  
powerless, indigenous people, the marginalized

**SAFEGUARDING NATURAL PROCESSES  
SECURING ECOSYSTEM HEALTH**  
terrestrial, marine, riparian, eco-diversity

**SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT  
OF NATURAL RESOURCES**  
soil, water, air, biodiversity

## **LANDSCAPE as NATURAL SETTING**

# Landscape + Democracy



“Defining Landscape Democracy” Conference June 2015, Oscarsborg, Norway

Egoz, S., Jørgensen, K., & Ruggeri, D. (Eds.). (2018). *Defining landscape democracy: A path to spatial justice*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

# From R2L to Landscape Democracy

- **Landscape democracy** builds on the right to landscape to promote human/ecological health, well being and **empower personal & collective capabilities**

**Landscape Democracy as RIGHT TO LANDSCAPE**

+

**landscape democracy as RESPONSIBILITY**

practices of participation towards equality, inclusion, healing, reparation, and justice



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Right



Right



# Responsibility





# Responsibility

Bjerkedalen Park and the Daylighted Hovin River



to be continued...



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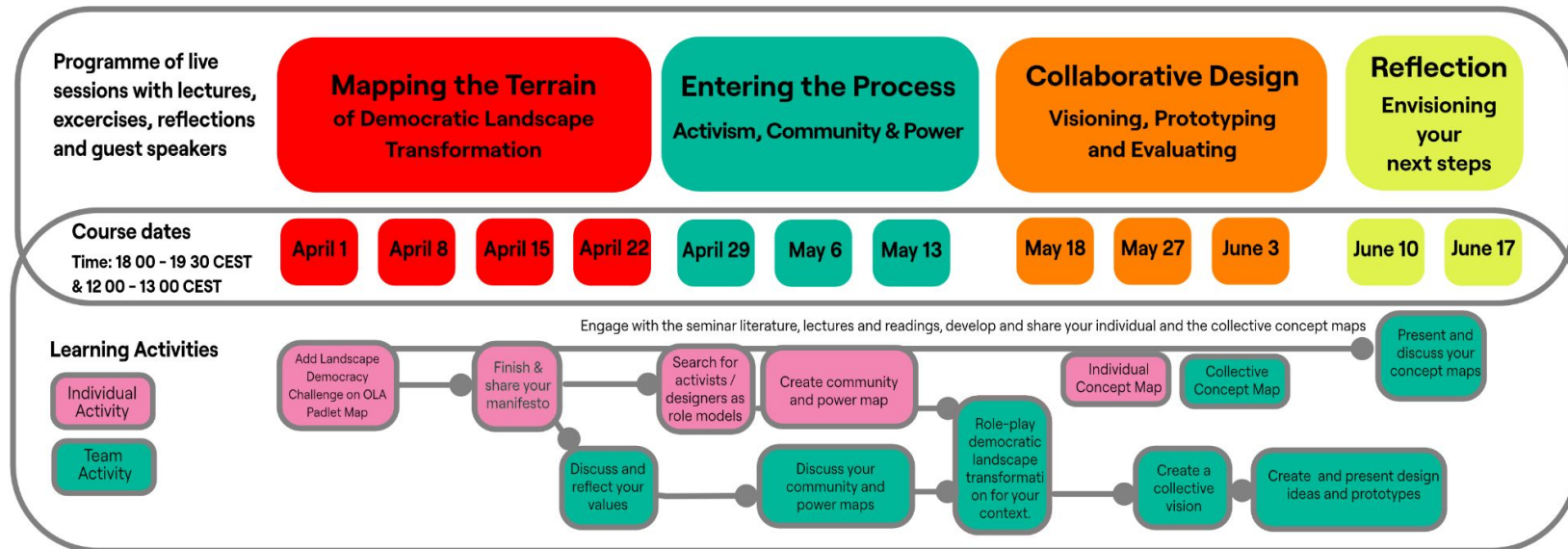
# Overview of Course Activities

Weekly Online Meeting with lectures, discussions and learning activities

Course period: April 1 - June 17, 2026, Wednesdays, 18 00 - 19 30 pm CEST

Reflection hour

Wednesdays from 12 00 - 13 00 CEST, live participation from Asia-Pacific possible



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

OLA Workshops in Villaggio Solidale (June), Guimaraes (May) and possibly Lucca (end of August)

# Learning Goals of Unit I

- 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 community.
- Get introduced to the concept of **Participatory Action Research** as a research strategy relevant for transformative science



# What are your next steps?

## Assignment from part A:

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. We will share the manifestoes on the seminar wiki. **Due date: 22.04.26**
- Part 2: Working in transnational trios, 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.

**Due date: 17.06.26 (last session of seminar).**



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# Add your manifesto on our MIRO board:

[https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVG1q88D0=/?share\\_link\\_id=344983403490](https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVG1q88D0=/?share_link_id=344983403490)

The image shows a Miro board interface. At the top, the browser address bar displays the URL: [https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVG1q88D0=/?share\\_link\\_id=344983403490](https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVG1q88D0=/?share_link_id=344983403490). The Miro logo and the board title "OLA Seminar 2026 - Process Board" are visible in the top left. A central text box contains the following information:

### Collecting your Landscape Democracy Manifestoes

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.

Below this text, there are eight sticky notes arranged in a 2x4 grid. Each sticky note has a header "Your name:" followed by a green rectangular input field, and a body "Your manifesto:" followed by a larger rectangular area for text or images. The sticky notes are color-coded: the top row has a pink, a yellow, a white, and a yellow note; the bottom row has a yellow, a pink, a yellow, and a white note.

# How will the teams work?

## Collaboration in groups of three

- You will be mixed in transnational trios.
- In that constellation, you will gradually build up your concept map of democratic landscape transformation.
- You will also share and discuss your individual manifestos.
- Everyone who has submitted a manifesto will be linked to a team of three.
- Within the teams, you decide on one challenge to explore further for the visioning, ideation and prototyping phases.



# Readings for phase “A”

## Required 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 European Landscape Convention](#)
- Shelley Egoz, Karsten Jørgensen, Deni Ruggeri (2018): [Defining Landscape Democracy](#) (Intro + chapters 1-2)
- LED Team (2019):[Landscape Education for Democracy](#) (Chapters 1-3, InBo Special Issue)
- Kühne, Olaf (2015): [Landscape Concepts](#)

**Please refer to the course syllabus for links!**



# Our OLA seminar wiki



OPEN  
LANDSCAPE  
ACADEMY

Online Seminar 2026

OLA Seminar 2026  
Learning Objectives  
Seminar Assignments  
Working Groups  
Reading List  
Concepts  
Editing Help

The OLA Project  
(2022-2025)

About OLA  
OLA Team  
Monitoring

OLA Living Labs  
Romagna Living Lab  
Athens Living Lab  
Budapest-Vác Living Lab  
Villaggio Solidale Living Lab

Past seminars

OLA Seminar 2025  
OLA Seminar 2024  
OLA Seminar 2023

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## Seminar Democratic Landscape Transformation 2026

Dear landscape democracy enthusiasts,

We invite you to another journey across landscape, democracy, co-creation and collective visioning!

- Are you a planning or design student interested in learning how to create more inclusive, open and democratic landscapes?
- Are you educating planners and designers and interested in meeting peers with similar interests?
- Do you want to make your own local landscape a more inclusive, socially productive and resilient space?

Then participate in the [Open Landscape Academy](#) seminars: an exciting way to earn credits and strengthen important professional skills.

[Register now](#)

### Upcoming online seminar:

- Our next open online seminar will start on **Wednesday, April 1, 2026** and finishes on **June 16, 2026**
- Live sessions will be on Wednesdays from 18 00 - 19 30 CEST
- In addition, we will meet weekly from 12 00 - 13 00 CEST for discussion and recap, and involvement of participants from other time zones
- [Meet our team](#)
- The 2026 onsite programme (optional) will take place in Guimarães Portugal, from May 4 - 9, 2026 as part of the Landscape Forum and the CABULAND project.
- We invite interested universities to join our annual platform together with their students and local communities.
- For any further information please email us under [info\(at\)openlandscapeacademy.org](mailto:info@openlandscapeacademy.org)
- For more details and an overview of the program, see another section of this Wiki: [Towards the Open Landscape Academy](#)

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1 [Collaborating for Democratic Landscape Transformation](#)

**Online Seminar & Guimarães Workshop**

**Democratic Landscape Transformation**

Online from April 1 - June 16, 2026  
Wednesdays 18 00 - 19 30 CET  
Reflection time for other time zones: 12 00 - 13 00 CET  
Onsite during the Landscape Forum in Guimarães from May 4 - 9

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](http://openlandscapeacademy.org)

Supported by the European Union CABULAND OPEN LANDSCAPE ACADEMY

Course announcement 2026

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

Course dates: Tue 18:00 - 19:30 CEST & 12:00 - 13:00 CEST

Session	Date	Topic
Mapping the Terrain	April 1	Mapping the Terrain
Entering the Process	April 8	Entering the Process
Collaborative Design	April 15	Collaborative Design
Reflection	April 22	Reflection
Mapping the Terrain	April 29	Mapping the Terrain
Entering the Process	May 6	Entering the Process
Collaborative Design	May 13	Collaborative Design
Reflection	May 20	Reflection
Mapping the Terrain	May 27	Mapping the Terrain
Entering the Process	June 3	Entering the Process
Collaborative Design	June 10	Collaborative Design
Reflection	June 17	Reflection

Learning Activities

**A digital resource with a lot of heritage. Do not get confused :-)**  
**The wiki supports the course activities.**  
**Every team will have its own page. Editing access will be shared soon.**

[https://ledwiki.hfwu.de/index.php?title=Seminar\\_Democratic\\_Landscape\\_Transformation\\_2026](https://ledwiki.hfwu.de/index.php?title=Seminar_Democratic_Landscape_Transformation_2026)



**When we meet next**

**April 15, 2026 @18:00 CET**

**Roots of Community Participation  
& Stories from the Living Labs**

