

Research for Development

Nora Lombardini
Elena Fioretto
Angela Colonna
Federico Bucci *Editors*

Knowledge Models and Dissemination for Sustainable Development

Italian UNESCO Chairs on the 2030
Agenda for Sustainable Development
Goals



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Angela Colonna · Federico Bucci
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Editors

Nora Lombardini
Dipartimento di Architettura, Ingegneria
delle Costruzioni e Ambiente Costruito,
UNESCO Chair “Architectural Preservation
and Planning in World Heritage Cities”
Politecnico di Milano
Milan, Italy

Angela Colonna
Dipartimento delle Culture Europee e del
Mediterraneo: Architettura Ambiente e
Patrimoni Culturali, Chairholder, UNESCO
Chair “Mediterranean Cultural Landscapes
and Communities of Knowledge”
Università degli Studi della Basilicata
Potenza, Matera, Italy

Elena Fioretto
Dipartimento di Architettura, Ingegneria
delle Costruzioni e Ambiente Costruito,
UNESCO Chair “Architectural Preservation
and Planning in World Heritage Cities”
Politecnico di Milano
Milan, Italy

Federico Bucci
Dipartimento di Architettura, Ingegneria
delle Costruzioni e Ambiente Costruito,
Chairholder, UNESCO Chair
“Architectural Preservation and Planning
in World Heritage Cities”
Politecnico di Milano
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Mediterranean Landscape in Context of Emergency: People Looking for Places to Live



UNESCO Chair “Mediterranean Landscape in Context of Emergency”, Università Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria

Paola Raffa

Abstract The UNESCO Chair Mediterranean Landscape in Context of Emergency (MeLANinE) addresses the theme of the landscape as an expression of the close relationship between humanity and the environment and as an expression of the social, productive, and cognitive universe of communities. It intends to contribute to giving value to the physical and human landscapes that now are in strong modification. It aims to encourage and support local institutions and communities in the development and implementation of landscape management policies focused on building communities that inhabit, interpret, create, and operate within shared multi-ethnic and multi-cultural places. To do this were created Laboratories MeLANinE. They are thinking to develop new methodological approaches in landscape in the context of emergency design and training to promote alliances and collaborations with similar and complementary institutions, intellectual cooperation, learning, knowledge sharing, and dissemination.

Keywords Mediterranean migrations • Landscape • Quality education • Gender equality • Sustainable cities and communities • SDG 4: Quality Education—Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all • SDG 5: Gender Equality—Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls • SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities—Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

P. Raffa (✉)

Dipartimento di Architettura e Territorio, Università Mediterranea di Reggio Calabria,
Chairholder, UNESCO Chair, Reggio Calabria, Italy
e-mail: paola.raffa@unirc.it

1 Introduction

Mediterranean Landscape in Context of Emergency (MeLANinE) is a UNESCO Chair activated in 2021 at the Mediterranean University of Reggio Calabria; it is also a research project that deals with landscapes in emergency, i.e., territories and places to be inhabited in a shared way.

It deals with the problems connected to “crisis and transition response” focusing on landscape design as an expression of the close relationship between humanity and environment, and as expression of the social, productive, and cognitive world of the Mediterranean communities. The proposal contributes to response to conflicts that arise from the identity of the Mediterranean landscape and the ways to inhabit it.

The UNESCO Chair aims to encourage and support the institutions and regional authorities in developing and implementing policies for the management of landscape in emergency, characterized by communities that live, interpret, create, and operate in a multiethnic and multicultural context.

Since the end of the last century, the Mediterranean Sea became a place where emergency has become a permanent condition. A network of flows of displaced people is drawn daily between the North and the South and between the East and the West. Millions of people, relocated in new territorial contexts, are producing processes of physical modification of such territories on a very reduced time scale developing new practices and architectural solutions to inhabit these places. The main concern during these movements and reallocations is to meet the needs of inhabiting a place. In this accelerated settlement process, individuals are regarded just as numbers and the process of living simply as an occupation of land.

The Mediterranean University, because of its geographic location and historical and cultural vocation, is a strategic place to create the cultural and scientific conditions necessary to establish a useful bridge into the new “Mediterranean world”.

The project of the UNESCO Chair Mediterranean Landscape in Context of Emergency was born from the synergy of a group of researchers belonging to different disciplinary sectors, who in a network with scholars from Italian and European universities, local authorities, and non-governmental associations have joined together to study the forced settlements of families and individuals in smaller urban centers inhabited by consolidated communities and which for over 30 years have been characterized, among other things, by substantial depopulation phenomena.

It is placed in a context of close relationship between research and training, knowledge and cooperation, innovation and development, making training, research and technology transfer a system firmly linked to economic and social advancement processes of places and people. Mainly focus on the Agenda 2030 SDGs are: Goal 4—Quality education, Goal 5—Gender equality, and Goal 11—Sustainable cities and communities.

Furthermore, the research is in line with the objectives of the “Declaration of the Italian UNESCO Chairs on Sustainability” in which the environmental issue emerges as a multiplier of differences and inequalities and whose vision aims at the need for integrated knowledge, to be developed in a transdisciplinary environment that can



Fig. 1 Networks of mediterranean migration flows (graphic elaboration by the author)

be implemented through co-created knowledge by experimenting with “communities of knowledge” and “communities of practices” and promoting educational and knowledge processes, through dialogue and integration between different cultures and enhancing bio-cultural diversity (Fig. 1) (Colonna 2020).

2 Mediterranean Sea: Crossroad of Migration

In the twenty-first-century, the Mediterranean Sea has transformed from a place whose borders were well-defined and almost impassable (the Euro-Mediterranean area was significantly separated from the South) into a place where the migratory emergency has become a permanent condition.

A sea between lands separated by borders and antagonistic religions, in which the difference in wealth has played a fundamental role.

As a catalyst for not only commercial but also above all cultural exchanges, the Mediterranean Sea today is mainly a place of “crossings” of men, women, and children, a promise without tomorrow, a confused dream, a place where “separations” are outlined, violence and hatred dwell there (Alessandro 2007).

The Arab Spring (2010–2012) marked a radical political and social change, freeing some Arab countries, North Africa (Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia), and the Middle East (Syria, Iraq, and Yemen) from consolidated dictatorships, in the name of a democracy, which it has always proved to be so. Popular and intellectual disorientation, increasingly close agreements with Western countries, have in fact contributed to the rooting of groups whose main reference has been religious fundamentalism. The civil wars fought in the sub-Saharan countries and in the Middle East generate phenomena of mass displacement of people fleeing from contexts in which human life is not considered a human right.

The countries of Southern Europe, whose coasts are lapped by the Mediterranean Sea, are directly affected by the tumultuous and incessant flows of migrants

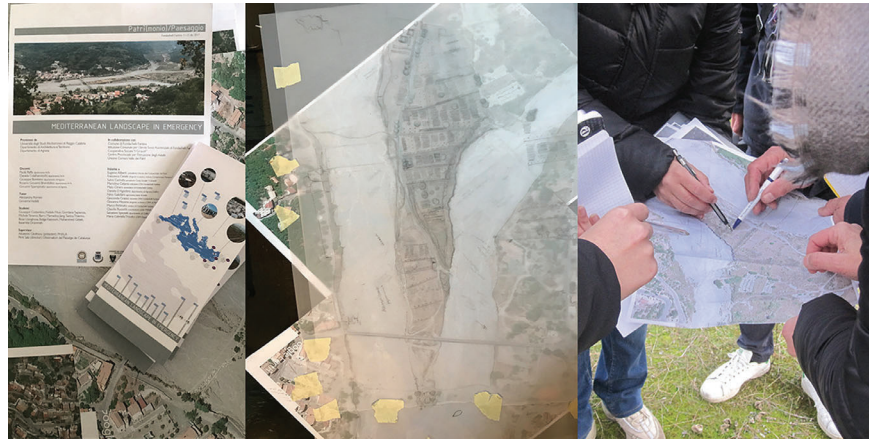


Fig. 3 Design for the recovery of an abandoned area (photo by the author)

Landscape architecture must become the essential tool changer in terms of not only reshaping the earth's ecological systems in practice but also transforming the fundamental habitation of the planet through broader systemic thinking (Fig. 3).

3 The Reason for the Reception

The environmental impact and the related crisis resulting from the distribution and integration of the large number of people in motion are still underestimated. These displacements are creating territories that are the result of improper use of space and waste of natural resources. They complain about the lack of landscape planning. Rejected landscapes are generated which are earth reserves, consumed but recyclable, areas waiting to be recognized, in which the project can detect unexpected landscapes (Trovato 2019).

The UNESCO Chair MeLANinE addresses the theme of the landscape as an expression of the close relationship between humanity and the environment and as an expression of the social, productive, and cognitive universe of communities. It intends to contribute to giving value to the physical and human landscapes that are undergoing strong modification in this historical moment.

The European Landscape Convention designates a part of the territory as perceived by the populations, whose character results from the action of natural and/or human factors and their interrelationships, and in which the desire to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced relationship between social needs, economic activities, and the environment, becomes the indispensable tool when the territory is linked to the social emergency and inclusion, or when there are incidences in the inhabited space, especially in the transitory cyclicity of daily living.



Fig. 4 Design for inclusive agricultural activities (graphic elaboration by the author)

The modification of the identity of the new landscapes assumes (or imposes) an innovation of the technical tools and their use. Starting from the analysis of places, or the way of reading the different spatial declinations of an apparently spontaneous nature but which instead are the manifestation of addictions and rules established by communities belonging to different groups or ethnicities (Indaco 2016).

Inhabited places, whatever their nature, are the places where new landscape identities are generated on the basis of the relationships that exist between people and the configuration of the space (Fig. 4).

4 The Laboratories MeLANinE

The UNESCO Chair in Mediterranean Landscape in Context of Emergency aims to be a laboratory of ideas and a place for experimentation on the theme of landscape in emergency design as an opportunity for the sustainable development of inhabited places and to guarantee an environment for all human beings worth living, so that knowledge and the ability to govern territorial and environmental phenomena connected to the relationship between man and habitat and between different cultures grow.

According to UNESCO priorities, the aim of laboratories is to contribute to reconstruction, in countries in crisis and in transition, in the sectors of education and promote freedom of expression towards shared landscapes, responding to the contemporary culture of emergency; generate processes of social interaction and sharing of living in order to eliminate all forms of tangible and intangible boundaries and trigger processes of recognition of the new identities of places; contribute to the social advancement of migrants.



Fig. 5 Design of scarecrows for productive gardens (photo by the author)

and production of a shared project responding to the contemporary culture of the emergency.

They are intended to support institutions and local authorities in implementing land management policies and provide tools to address the continuing demand for shared living places; train professionals capable of independently managing the cultural and socio-economic processes in emergency and enable them to promote, for their part, the training of other people who operate, work, and live in similar contexts (Vadalà 2016; Enckell Julliard 2013) (Fig. 5).

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