

TOPIA IS A NETWORK OF RESEARCHERS AND PhD STUDENTS GATHERED AROUND THE THEMES OF GARDEN AND LANDSCAPE. THIS NETWORK EMBODIES THE COLLABORATION OF FIVE FRENCH SCHOOLS OF LANDSCAPE AND FOUR NATIONAL RESEARCH LABORATORIES IN RELATION WITH CORRESPONDENTS OF OTHERS COUNTRIES.

SPECIFICITY AND OBJECTIVES OF THE NETWORK

1. The specificity of the TOPIA Network is based on:

- **Its interest/opening to all the disciplinary fields** related to research and education in landscape, referring to arts, architecture, techniques or sciences.
- **Its historical and critical positioning.** This network is based on the Athens (1933) and Firenze (1982) Charters as well as the European landscape Convention (also known as the Florence Convention) (2000), which have nourished the reflection and the action in the fields of urbanism, garden and landscape during the twentieth-century. It aims to maintain a scientific critical positioning regarding the studies, the researches as well as the landscaping realizations developed after these fundamental texts.
- **Its epistemological dimension.** The network aims to produce an assessment of the researches and studies in order to analyze their strengths and weaknesses. This first step should support and enhance the production of new knowledge and practice. In this perspective, it has to be reflexive and speculative.

2. The objectives of the network are:

- **Facilitate a mutual knowledge and cooperation** between schools, laboratories and unities of research related to landscape, in order to increase their visibility and to promote the individual and collective works. It aims to facilitate and enhance the exchange between students and researchers at masters, PhD and post PhD levels.
- **Contribute to write the history of research and education in landscape.** This will allow to point out the weaknesses at theoretical and practical levels and to determine the weaknesses in landscape action. The network will also question, on a research perspective, the opportunity of the development of a "landscape doctorate".
- **Promote the scientific knowledge, without denying its demand, beside a larger public.** Beyond the researchers, the professors and the students, the network aims to inform all public actor and citizen who are interesting in issues related to landscape.

THE SCIENTIFIC PROJECT

1. Research object and axis of TOPIA network

The principal objects of studies of this research network are:

- Garden and landscape
- Landscape project, as source of their creation and design
- Space when it refers to the relations developed by human being with the space where he lives or not, which he will tend to protect or improve.

TOPIA is organized through four main research axes:

Axis 1. Analysis and critics of garden, urban and landscape projects

In order to gather research and education, TOPIA aims at highlighting the genesis and the historicity of landscape project. This axis mobilizes mainly history, sociology, geography and arts.

Axis 2. Sciences, Techniques and Engineering

TOPIA is concerned about the diversity of knowledge and savoir-faire required in landscape field. That's why it remains opened to various fields as mainly ecology, economy, demography, socio-geography, landscape engineering, agronomy, urbanism, per urban forestry as well as urban planning.

Axis 3. Public policies on landscape and heritage.

The creation of gardens and the design of landscapes lead TOPIA to analyze the public policies on landscape. The objective is to develop a research-action in order to analyze and monitor them. A special focus on the ethical nature of the public policies will be raised: questioning the value, the identity, the durability of landscapes and the legitimacy of the professionals subject to express their expertise on these points. This interest is notably shared with law, ethics, sociology, geography and ethnology.

Axis 4. Epistemology of history and landscape projects

The reflexive and speculative vocation of TOPIA requires the network to question the issues related to space in an epistemological perspective. This leads to a fundamental research aiming at questioning the concepts, the problematics and the theories related to garden, landscape and their creation and design. TOPIA objective is to produce a critical history of the disciplinary fields in between the object "landscape" has been shared.

This will allow to determine the times, in the recent history, when art and science have competed for the concept of landscape and to challenge the relevance of a "science of landscape". This vocation mobilizes the philosophy, the history of sciences and the arts.

2. First definitions

Landscape project:

- By referring to the landscaping conception: "the collection of the intellectual and plastic, theoretical and practical processes, by which or more precisely through which, an intuition is shaping whatever the complexity of its procedures, the number of technical mediations and the obstacles of material constraints which restrain and also encourage its expression¹".
- Or by referring to cultural geography and anthropology: "all human intention, spatial based, individual and collective, formalized or not, conscious or unconscious, injunctive or concerted, which leads to a material organization of the lived or perceived space and which is changing with the culture of the society which produces this organization and its collective meaning²".

¹ Gilles Tiberghien, « Forme et projet », in *Les carnets du paysage* n° 12, pp. 89-103.

² Pierre Donadieu. As developed by the landscapers, the project is an instrument of conception which engages the relations that the humans maintain with landscape; landscape being assimilated to space or nature. It carries a social and political dimension, as far as it is aimed to facilitate the production of new collective landscape projects by the population who desire changes.