TRANS ACTIONS

OF THE ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN SCHOOLS OF PLANNING

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2, DECEMBER 2021

SPECIAL ISSUE: CHANGING CONTEXTS FOR PLANNING EDUCATION

TRANSACTIONS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN SCHOOLS OF PLANNING

Transactions of the Association of European Schools of Planning is an international, bi-annual, peer-reviewed, open-access journal, produced and owned by the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP, www.aesop-planning.eu).

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ISSN: 2566-2147

Journal Cover Design

Cinzia Ferrara / ferrarastudio design.

Journal Layout Design

Kırmızı Tasarım, www.kirmizitasarim.com

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EDITORIAL

This issue (5.2) of Transactions of AESOP brings together a selection of papers which address current themes and issues in planning education. Two of the papers reflect on the experience of teaching modules submitted to recent rounds of the AESOP Excellence in Teaching Award (ETA), one reports on an experience of internationalisation in planning education, and one is an invited paper by Andrea Frank the present Chair of the AESOP ETA Committee. They all provide original and insightful contributions addressing key themes in contemporary planning education including, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, new technologies and modes of teaching delivery, the teaching of landscape in planning programmes, and, the internationalisation of planning cohorts and curricula.

Frank's paper explores 'higher education futures', offering reflections on the impacts of COVID-19, digitalisation, and the expectations of young adult learners ('generation z') regarding educational formats and delivery. It concludes that the pandemic has shown that new approaches and solutions are needed and that a reversion to previous modes of working may offer little more than the preservation of previous structures with all their attendant issues around equality, diversity, and inclusivity. The paper argues that there are now 'small windows of opportunity' for joint reflections and constructive dialogue between learners, educators, and institutional representatives to shape more innovative institutions which can deliver planning education which fosters the emergence of more sustainable societies.

The second paper by Ray shares experience from University College Cork (UCC), including that gained through the delivery of the module Landscape Character, Context and Change (AESOP ETA, Highly Commended, 2020). The paper observes that understanding the relationships between a development and its wider setting may be nothing new to planning, but that the ground-breaking *European Landscape Convention* (ELC) of 2000, and its interpretations in domestic law, act as a conscious reminder of landscape's value-laden and complex nature beyond being 'mere scenery'. In a world where rapid environmental change leads to more deadlines for decision-makers, it might seem idealistic to expect engagement with landscape on these terms. But the paper argues this is crucial and something that needs to be emphasised during the education of young planners. The paper explores methods for equipping students with the skills necessary to make efficient and objective, yet value-sensitive, judgements on landscape at strategic and project levels.

The third paper by Dockerill, Mell, and Nurse, explores the internationalisation of planning student cohorts. It focusses on the findings of a project conducted at the University of Liverpool (UoL) which examined how an enhanced learning experience might be delivered for undergraduate students transitioning to Liverpool from XJTLU - the university's partner institution in Suzhou, China. The paper considers the outcomes of certain pedagogic interventions such as, additional contact, and one-to-one guidance for students. These were implemented to promote complementary understanding of British and Chinese planning at XJTLU and UoL, and to improve academic attainment for XJTLU students completing their studies in Liverpool. The paper recommends managing the process of student transfer as well as ensuring that the planning discipline integrates 'soft skills' more effectively in its teaching.

The fourth paper by Roux reports on the experience of the international planning studio organized by the Urban Planning Institute of Grenoble (France) at Sfax (Tunisia) (Winner of the AESOP ETA, 2019). The paper describes how an initial project evolved into a long-term cooperation between French and Tunisian partners which now forms the focus of the teaching approach in both years of Grenoble's Urbanism and International Cooperation master's programme. The paper considers the theoretical, practical, and pedagogical contexts and characteristics of international planning studios and the planning concepts on which they are built. The lessons which can be learned from this experience and the potential for these to be applied elsewhere are then evaluated.

Collectively the papers reflect the current dynamism of planning education and its constant engagement with new challenges and practices. The Editorial Board of Transactions of AESOP thanks the authors and reviewers who contributed to this issue.

We would also like to remind readers that the journal is open to submissions from all those who would like to share their research in the planning discipline. We are excited to report that submission to the journal is now through the new dedicated Transactions of AESOP Open Journal Systems (OJS) website! This platform facilitates the work, and will improve the experience, of the Journal's, authors, reviewers, and editors, and the Editorial Board would like to acknowledge here the work that has been undertaken within the AESOP community and by the Open Access Provider to make this possible.

Happy reading!

Olivier Sykes

Editor in Chief of Transactions of AESOP

Transactions of the Association of European Schools of Planning • 5 (2021)
doi: 10.24306/TrAESOP.2021.02.001

HIGHER EDUCATION FUTURES?

REFLECTIONS ON COVID-19, DIGITALIZATION, AND GEN Z EXPECTATIONS

Andrea I. Frank[a]

(Received 1 January 2022; revised version received 25 January 2022; final version accepted 21 March 2022)

Figure 1 - “Lecturing to images from the kitchen table”
Source: Author

1. Introduction

Predicting the future is a difficult and inexact business and, generally, humans are more prone to focus on immediate problems and short-term problem-solving rather than long-range planning. In fact, long-range forecasts are tricky and often rendered wrong due to catalytic events. The dramatic changes in teaching, learning, and conducting research that have seemingly catapulted Higher Education (HE) institutions into a new modus operandi over the past 24 months are a case in point. Who would have predicted that higher education would be conducted by a great many institutions almost entirely virtually and over sustained amounts of time? That academics would teach from their homes lecturing to a screen of black boxes and images? That students would do fieldwork virtually via video, embedded questions and tasks, and that the practice of research teams discussing progress and findings in person would practically vanish?

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As we enter a third year of the pandemic with yet another variant of the virus, Omicron, and a consequent surge in infection rates, it may be valuable to step back and draw on a wider picture. What shape might HE take in the future? How does virtualization impact on learning and teaching and how might other university activities be affected by these trends? A raft of special journal issues and scholarly work is testament to the fact that many academics are trying to digest and get to grips with the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to force upon educational practices as well as practically all other aspects of how we live our lives and conduct business.

The pandemic's impact on teaching, learning, and research has no doubt been stark in many different ways, and, as such, is likely to veil trends and developments already underway since before COVID-19 restrictions were introduced from January 2020 onwards in most countries around the globe. Nevertheless, either one, and certainly together, these developments have the potential to substantially transform HE and its prevalent pedagogical and operational models. Take, for example, the silent but ongoing growth and promotion of postmodern pedagogies supporting learner empowerment which acknowledge multiple forms of truths (Rosenau 1992) and encourage greater flexibility of curricular choice (e.g., Lamb and Vodicka 2021); or the digitalization of HE replete with MOOCS, virtual learning platforms and micro-credentials (Evans-Cowley 2018; Tesar 2020; Barn 2020). At the same time, we notice growing racism and nationalism with implications for internationalization in HE (de Wit and Altbach 2020), as well as calls for more explicit engagement of universities with society (e.g., Barnett 2011) and industry partners. Focusing on training and educational delivery, García-Morales, Garrido-Moreno and Martín-Rojas (2021), for example, suggest that the crisis invoked by COVID-19 has brought the challenges and barriers around online learning into sharper view while digitalization in HE has gained greater attention and momentum.

This paper, then, seeks to bring together various strands of thought on the future shape of HE as strong arguments are made by national governments for the value of, and a return to, the traditional (pre-pandemic) modes of pedagogies (i.e., face-2-face teaching). The reflections were triggered initially by discussions with colleagues and scenarios drawn-up in the press of a post-COVID world (in education and beyond). Along the way, it became clear that other (disruptive) trends such as student expectations, technological advances, and internationalization and globalization may play roles in what futures may emerge and take hold. In particular, ideas focus on education and training in the field of spatial planning; they are subjective and personal, and still taking shape. Beyond some general scholarship on future forms and models for HE, reflections draw on:

1. experiences and lessons learned from online teaching and what seemed to work and not in spatial planning education and related subjects (e.g., human geography, urban design etc.);
2. discussions on the future mix of online and face-2-face teaching by university management and vanguard thinkers; and
3. student statements on the expectations of young adult learners (generation z) regarding educational formats and delivery.

This paper is structured around the perspectives of three key agents involved in the HE learning process, or ecosystem, to draw on Barnett's (2011) terminology: (a) Educators/Professors, (b) the institutions (universities), and (c) the learners/students. The order by which they are presented is random and does not indicate any ranking or hierarchy.

2. Spatial Planning Educators' Perspectives

Estimates by UNESCO suggest that the learning experience of over 1000 million learners in HE world-wide was affected by the closure of HE Institutions in 185 countries in April 2020 (Marinoni et al.,2020). Similarly, the teaching experience of millions of educators also changed. As the pandemic unfolded from March 2020 to December 2021 (and counting) – HE institutions put in place "emergency online education" driven by the need and desire to continue education provision while adhering to the physical distancing stipulated by most national governments. According to a survey by the International Association of Universities (IAU) from April 2020, 85% of responding institutions shifted classroom teaching to online mode (Marinoni et al. 2020). This in turn saw academics learn (not necessarily master) the art of teaching online. Academics worked tirelessly (see e.g., Kunzmann 2021), supported by IT staff and education development experts to adapt materials and

teaching approaches as best as possible, and institutions purchased new software licenses to facilitate online processes and collaboration after weeks rather than months or years of deliberation.

The achievement of shifting to online/distance-learning modes, more or less overnight, is remarkable. It illustrates what academia was and is capable of and represents a massive boost to the digitalization of learning in HE. The use of pre-recorded as well as synchronous live lectures or discussions conducted online became a common feature in this emergency. It demonstrated that online approaches can, to some degree, replace what lectures, small group seminars, one-to-one supervisory, or tutor meetings have traditionally offered. Although stressful and unfamiliar, the forced wholesale virtualization has worked in a good number of cases surprisingly better than expected; even in spatial planning education. Perhaps, this should not be such a surprise. Albeit the exception rather than the norm, there already exist spatial planning degrees which are entirely and successfully delivered online (Evans-Cowley 2018).

However, it must be stressed that the educational experience online is not the same as that based in a classroom. A (simple) shift from face-2-face to virtual teaching may be easier and works better for certain subjects and learning tasks than others (Mironowicz and Schretzenmayr 2020; Marinoni et al. 2020). Curricula and modules in online programs are specifically designed for this style of delivery and learning. In contrast, programmes traditionally taught in person are not. In the case of the pandemic, this meant that the delivery of (inter-)active learning activities common for spatial planning education required rethinking and adaptation. How can we re-create discussion enabled via in-class exercises, workshops, and ad hoc groupwork activities that gain momentum from presence in shared physical spaces? The presence and connectivity with the teacher and others which is important for learning is difficult to establish in virtual space and, as a result, social learning processes were starkly curtailed. Based on student feedback, online live (synchronous) lectures offer a comparatively superior experience and were preferred to pre-recorded material by learners as it created opportunities for immediate interactions with the speaker as well as peers. It also offered a schedule and structure for the days and weeks of the semester that many felt to be useful. Moreover, the synchronous interaction with students gives teachers an opportunity to check comprehension and re-explain concepts found to be unclear – at least in theory. In practice this was often hampered as students remained 'invisible' by choice or lack of access to bandwidth or equipment. This made it difficult to judge levels of understanding and actual presence (Figure 1).

The ubiquitous availability of suitably fast and stable internet, or rather the lack thereof, and unavailable equipment such as screen cameras were a key constraint in what could be delivered in practice. This created stark inequalities in student learning experiences across localities. Limited IT and network capacities did curb the ability of institutions to offer synchronous live streaming of lectures while in others, such as the UK and Switzerland for example, live-lectures were offered in parallel to pre-recorded materials.

Although Stepper (2021) highlighted the temporal and spatial flexibility that online modes created for all involved – workloads for educators generally increased. This resulted not only from their need to acquire online teaching skills, but also from having to develop new materials. For example, government-imposed lockdown restrictions meant that off-campus learning activities were prohibited and therefore replacements or surrogates for site visits and the like, which are essential in spatial planning and built environment disciplines, had to be developed. Creating new resources, such as virtual study trips, takes time. Readily available material including Google maps and street view are not necessarily suitable as they can be out of date in fast changing urban development areas. To overcome this, some educators created and narrated videos (see e.g., Mironowicz and Schretzenmayr 2020). Feedback from students on the usefulness of virtual field work and site visits is still sparse; the little that is available provides a mixed picture as to their effectiveness in understanding a development site. The notion is that this was "better than nothing", but students indicated that the material generally failed to convey size, scale, and the feel of a space. Whether in future - technology (e.g., augmented reality, camera drones, and so on) might enable more realistic experiences is an issue that will have to be explored. Thus far there seems to be agreement that these kinds of learning activities should be held in person rather than virtually.

Difficulties in adapting and challenges were also experienced in the delivery of design studios and group work. Greater understanding and learning seem to emerge from physically drawing lines, or adding to a sketch in

person, while explaining the rationale of suggested amendments. The technology exists to do this online via screen sharing, but this was certainly limited to better endowed institutions and their educators and students – where the institutions provided the requisite tablets and software to all who needed them (Marinoni et al 2020). Introductory design skills and competencies were particularly difficult to convey in remote learning settings.

As for group working, what emerged was that the technology savvy social media generation required considerable guidance in how to work collaboratively in an online, remote environment. Students practically growing up with platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp were unable to recognize the shortfalls of such tools for formal, structured teamwork. They needed coaching and encouragement to use Zoom, MS Teams, and similar platforms to collaborate, and share documents and resources for projects in a professional manner. Issues that normally create tensions and problems in group work were equally present in the virtual environment including differences in working styles and communication.

On the plus side, the new online modes also created new opportunities which were quickly recognised. Teaching remotely may enable individuals to reduce commuting times and costs, although physically separating work and non-work life also brings benefits. The new modes can clearly serve as equalisers of opportunity for students and staff with mobility issues who found it easier to participate in learning activities from home. Another substantial benefit was that it became far easier (cheaper and more sustainable) to get experts from far flung places to join an academic panel or give a guest lecture. The guest speaker did not have to travel, there was no need to apply for institutional funds to cover travel and subsistence, and the carbon-footprint became far smaller. Similarly, as congresses and academic conferences were moved online (Cermeno and Baldewein 2020), these networking and learning opportunities became accessible to larger numbers of budding academics and doctoral students as no travel, overnight stays, or associated costs were accrued. Finally, some students found recorded material helpful for their learning as they could review things multiple times, and study at their own pace.

3. Institutional Perspectives

While there were various degrees of existing digitalization in higher education mostly via educational platforms (Moodle, Blackboard, Canvas etc.) which functioned as data repositories, managed assignment submissions including marking and feedback, and supported independent learning in the form of activities such as tests; more active uses of digital technology for teaching remained the exception rather than the rule. Educators have sought to use blogging, discussion forums, and similar approaches for nearly 2 decades but they have generally not been mainstream elements in HE teaching. Other approaches have also been trialled such as Just-In-Time-Teaching (JITT) supported by teaching innovation grants (Grimm and Sinnig 2021). The pandemic has certainly sped up innovations in this area, and scholars believe that many of them will probably remain part of HE provision, albeit in moderated and refined form. Morales et al (2021) report based on a survey of institutions in the European Higher Education Area (EUA, 2020) that three quarters of responding institutions plan to enhance their digital capacity, and that 92% want to explore new ways of teaching.

Given that institutions have invested considerable amounts of time and money into the digitalization of programme provision – they are likely to seek to reap some (financial) return from their investments. Generally, labour costs are the main expense in HE, followed by estates. Space, i.e., buildings are expensive assets, and teaching rooms in many institutions are in short supply. Remote provision and academics working from home at least part of the time could help reduce space pressure and could also be beneficial for institutions which offer programmes at spatially disparate campuses. Hot-desking and sharing offices could significantly reduce demand, whilst streaming lectures and holding seminars remotely will lower pressure to accommodate activities in physical rooms.

There have also been suggestions that pre-recorded lectures could be re-used thereby freeing academics' time to engage in research, community engagement, or other student support rather than preparing and holding lectures in person – although there are legitimate counterarguments here. These include, practically, that not all skills can be effectively taught at a distance, and ethically, how would research-led institutions

justify the re-use of lecture materials especially in advanced level modules when research findings should be informing the content of modules? Moreover, in fields such as urban and regional planning where legislation and policies change frequently, re-using old content is considered to be unviable and to reduce students' employability. In sum, there may be opportunities for re-using material but realistically this is most likely to be the case with introductory lectures where there is little need for change. The approach, however, remains at odds with the fact that pre-recorded material for self-study starkly limits opportunities for interaction, and this is emerging as an important element in the learning and knowledge construction process. This creates an obvious dilemma: while basic material for starting semesters may require the least in terms of updating, it is at the start of their university studies that students appear to have suffered most from a lack of in person interaction with educators and their peers. For example, Alibudbud (2021), and Lischer, Safi, and Dickson (2021) recount that the forced online learning during the pandemic has impacted negatively on students increasing stress, anxiety, and absenteeism. The need to use new technology skills, issues of productivity, and information overload affected students from lower socio-economic backgrounds disproportionately as their limited financial capacity increased pressures to access gadgets and internet connectivity (Alibudbud 2021).

Given physical distancing needs, classical examinations in particular had to be replaced by various forms of alternative assessments, including open book exams. At an institutional level, this meant that new standards and protocols had to be developed that offered consistency as well as ensuring authenticity and preventing unfair practice (as far as possible) with students being in remote settings. Many assessment techniques used in spatial planning education such as oral presentations could be transferred reasonably well into a synchronous online environment and it seems, overall, that the use of formative feedback and self-administered online tests increased. An overall more diverse set of assessment approaches is certainly a positive effect as different formats suit different students and can thus help equalise performance.

Even pre-pandemic many institutions had strategic plans to expand digitalisation in their institution, and early discussions in teaching and pedagogy circles viewed the advances made during the pandemic in teaching technology as an opportunity to fundamentally rethink pedagogies and education provision in HE. Opportunities were seen in hybrid, and blended learning, that mix in-person and virtual learning in a more balanced manner. So, while in pre-pandemic times, 80-90% of the traditional university teaching was in person with 10-20% online material, this was flipped during the height of the pandemic (Figure 2a, 2b). With a gradual return to face-2-face teaching, a new ideal was envisioned that would see online and in-person teaching and learning elements complement rather than replace each other (Figure 2c). For instance, technology to enable virtual and in-person teaching at the same time exists and has the potential to create a more inclusive learning environment bringing together students from different parts of the world in a virtual session, or enabling students unable to travel to campus (illness, disability) to partake in on-campus teaching.

Ideally, teaching and learning, online and face-2-face would be closely integrated and collaborative in a postmodern sense, with teachers and learners exploring and learning together. This could truly simulate (current and future) working conditions in practice. For example, students could direct others who wear body cameras on site visits (possibly enhanced by augmented reality) and share this experience. Or, they could practise working like consulting firms with partners in different countries exchanging plans, organising virtual project meetings etc. Here, new areas of research would open by measuring and comparing virtual and in-person experiences, effectiveness and much more.

Interestingly, there has been considerable push-back about 12-18 month into the pandemic against the continuation of (only) online, virtual teaching. Both governments and dissatisfied students demanded a return to in person teaching and as much face-2-face contact time as possible, following 3 semesters of almost exclusive online education. And as valuable and desirable as it may be that teaching does not entirely revert to the pre-pandemic state and that the advancements in online teaching and learning are built upon and its benefits not overlooked, at the time of writing institutions have largely complied focusing again on in-person teaching while limiting parallel online provision based on resource and logistical grounds. Discussions on how to creatively combine online and in-person education have largely gone quiet in a workforce exhausted by the efforts of the past 24 months.

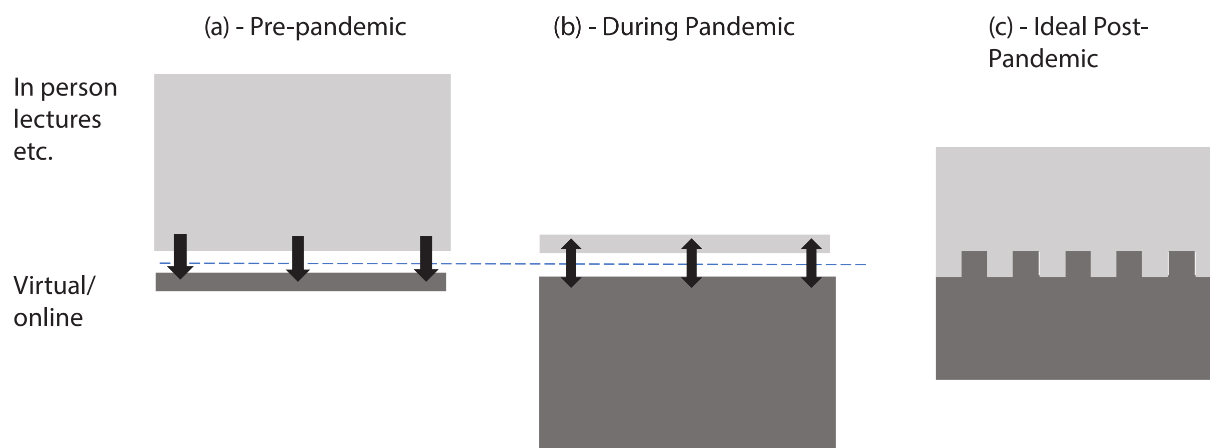

Figure 2 - Teaching Modes in "traditional" University: Pre-pandemic (a), Pandemic (b), and Ideal Post-Pandemic? (c)

4. Student and Learners' Perspective

Students currently enrolled in higher education belong to either the latter years of so-called Generation Y (also known as "Millennials") – born between 1981 and 1996, or to Generation Z (born between 1997-2012), which makes up the majority of the student cohort studying in HE in 2021/22. Generation Z is the first generation that grew up more or less entirely immersed in a digital world expecting ubiquitous availability of WiFi and internet access. It is the generation of "digital natives" (e.g., Riederle 2013) who effortlessly switch between virtual and real worlds. It is also a generation caricatured as "constantly clicking", said to be attached to their smartphones (more than cars!), and connected if not addicted to the internet and social media (Dolot 2018). In terms of knowledge acquisition, research by Chicca and Shellenbarger (2018) reveals a preference for practical information which appears relevant to a particular task. This is in line with a classification as self-learners and entrepreneurs. As learning modus - visually based material is preferred over reading (Vizcaya-Moreno and Perez-Canaveras 2020) including online tutorials or videos, interactive gaming, and virtual learning environments. Given these leanings, one could suspect that students of this generation may adapt to the online, remote learning environment rather easily, or even embrace it, if the teaching material is suitably adapted with a mix of lectures, video, seminar, and interactive exercises.

As always, one has to be wary of overgeneralization. Personal experience and discussions with colleagues, show that students have markedly different preferences. Individual learning styles, expectations, and personal situations matter. A few students who dislike teamwork expressed open satisfaction with the new modus operandi as it enables them to pursue a more individualistic learning approach. However, most students enrolled in traditional programmes had not chosen a distance-learning type education and were consequently disappointed by the remote learning experience. In fact, they expressed a strong preference for face-2-face interaction and longed for a return to the classroom. It's clear that studying at a university campus does provide more than an opportunity to study and expand one's knowledge and professional skills. It means meeting others and expanding one's social circle and developing a network of friends. Knowledge production and learning is a social and community-based activity. First year undergraduates especially were looking forward to making new friends. Yet, without being able to get to meet and know others, the study experience became an unexpected isolated one with many students struggling to focus, remain motivated or even suffering mental health issues (Alibudbud 2021; Lischer et al 2021). As such, many Bachelor students expressed a preference for face-2-face teaching, as this offered structure and organization to the day and week – even though they had to wear masks. Students who had progressed to advanced levels of their programme often had a circle of friends and peers who they knew well enough to continue to work and socialize online (at least for a limited period of time).

On the positive side, part-time master students, especially, those who had longer commutes quickly identified merits in online teaching as it saved on travel expenses and eliminated commuting. Yet, they also

acknowledged the value of spending a day on campus as giving them a useful separation from their normal work environment. Some also commented that working in groups around a table offered something that was hard to replicate with the collaboration software made available to them to facilitate collaborative learning.

Over the last few months, in fact, relevant research on the value of working or learning, making decisions, and navigating the world as a group in relatively close physical proximity has been re-visited. The chance encounter, the word or opinion from another student – perhaps only picked up in passing - can trigger new thoughts and ideas. Gossip and exchanges over coffee and lunch, often only marginally related to a certain problem can prove valuable to learning and knowledge acquisition. These incidences of intangible knowledge acquisition are difficult to replicate online where spontaneity is hardly possible due to the need to plan and pre-schedule meetings and activities (Tett 2021), although some software options that offer this are emerging. Nevertheless, there remain the technical issues of bandwidth and WiFi access.

And while we all had to learn how to work remotely and use new tools, it became clear that the digital natives might have expert knowledge on how to use Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Snapchat etc. – but they still had little experience on how to manage their time, or organise projects. Self-learning in that respect seems to be less successful as corroborated by a presentation by Philipp Riederle (www.riederle.de) for a *Teaching Awayday* at the University of Applied Science in Stuttgart, Germany. While the 26-year old Philipp suggested that his generation would relish access to MOOCs and greater freedom to choose courses for their own development (rather than following a prescribed and designed programme of study in a particular discipline or field), he acknowledged a need for coaching students on the practicalities of research and studying. Choice and a focus on practical aspects to successfully complete a project might befit the attitude of Gen Z students, yet, how can a rounded knowledge acquisition be ensured that encapsulates not merely popular thoughts and technologies but also alternatives and critical voices? This is particularly crucial as knowledge is regrouped by search engines with the frequency of access intimating relevance and best fit. Moreover, how do learners know what they don't know?

Another suggestion – such as learning from the "best" in the field and thereby reducing the number of educators giving lectures on a particular topic and freeing others to do "other" things sounds like an economic optimization strategy that could play into the hands of institutions and governments seeking to reduce costs of HE. It would mean online only access to these stars (at least for the majority) and one wonders if this might reduce resilience in the system and lead to an impoverishment of thoughts and ideas that might ultimately have a negative impact on innovation and change. On the one hand, star researchers might not be the best educators and vice versa and on the other, what if any one of these stars propagates authoritarian ideas? Nature is incredibly diverse and often – species and developments that appear less competitive and dominant – play a valuable role in keeping the ecosystem running. Finally – while many students have expressed a desire to return to in person education – some students, including those with intermittent health issues, or those unable to travel due to various international travel restrictions, or family issues, have voiced a desire to continue with remote learning.

5. Possible Futures for Teaching and Learning in HE

In closing, what might all this mean for HE institutions and the approaches that could be taken for teaching and learning in the future? Although this paper focuses on spatial planning, urban design and other related fields, some of its thoughts might also apply more generally. Broadly, several themes are emerging.

First, there are certain learning outcomes that are better achieved through in-person interactions and teaching – such as initial design instruction, or systematic analysis of development sites and vanguard projects. There is also a lot of construction of knowledge and valuable professional network initiation from intangible class-room based communities of learners and spontaneous mingling in person whose role in the personal development of graduates should not be underestimated. **Second**, there are unique opportunities that remote/online education offers such as more sustainable international collaboration and "bringing in" guest speakers and specialists or attending conferences; there is a potential here to enhance inclusivity. **Third**, institutions have invested a lot in the digitalization of HE teaching and learning, and are therefore exploring options to

economize on further employing such modes in one or another manner. **Fourth**, students (particularly from Gen Z) are longing for more practice-based, visual learning experiences which can immediately be related to projects or problems (i.e., problem-based learning). They are also keen to have more flexibility and choice to select their own learning path as well as a willingness to embrace online modes, with webinars and online lectures especially if these are provided by internationally known academics.

So, in response to themes one, two and four, HE institutions could decide to re-shape their programmes to be more flexible in terms of delivery modes as well as in terms of interdisciplinarity of subject choice/combinations.

a. *Fuzzier boundaries in delivery modes*

In the past, a fairly strict distinction existed between on-campus/residential programmes and remote/distance-learning programmes delivered nowadays predominantly online. In future, institutions may choose to soften these boundaries. Programmes that are being delivered in parallel online and in-person with some interaction between participants from both groups may become the gold standard in the future. This may include creative hybrid blends that offer some teaching online but also have blocks of teaching in residence. Additionally, a more flexible approach and fluid boundaries between part-time and full-time programmes can also be envisioned. A modular approach where students can flexibly enrol in a degree programme over a longer time, taking only a single module one semester, but a full load another used to be a valid possibility prior to the reforms that sought to create a common European Higher Education Area (Bologna 1999), but is now significantly hampered by regulations aimed to curb overly long student enrolment. A pay by credit approach instead of by semester (already available in the USA for example) may increase uptake by non-traditional students as flexibility and learning pace could be adjusted to individual learner's needs. Naturally – a drawback could be that students may struggle to complete their degrees at all as a consequence of being drawn away by work and other issues.

Nevertheless, for built environment/spatial planning degrees, the learning of certain topics and skills will likely remain, or return to, the in-person mode. It is quite certain that some institutions will excel in developing novel and innovative ways of creating collaborative learning environments by intertwining online and in-person experiences around new concepts. The most vanguard institutions will employ technology creatively to a) make education more inclusive and b) prepare students for new working models that have emerged in response to COVID19 in employment and practice – including extensive online collaboration, remote/online-diagnoses/analyses, and coaching and networking.

Flexible modes of delivery have helped international students to start or complete their degrees as their travel plans were disrupted by COVID restrictions. Given issues of, at times, hostile visa policies and racism as well as worries about sustainability and long-distance travel – one wonders whether the trend of students seeking to part-take in studies at overseas institutions remotely will continue in the future? This would change the meaning of "studying" abroad – i.e., significantly reducing the learning of cultural and social aspects over favouring access to international scholars and "expert". Given the contextual nature of spatial planning – this could proof problematic in a variety of ways including access to professional societies via accredited degrees.

b. *Fuzzier boundaries in terms of subjects/field of study*

Spatial planning from early on has been categorized as inter- or multidisciplinary (Schuster 1950), for example, between social and political sciences, engineering, landscape architecture, and urban design and architecture (e.g., Manley and Parnaby 2000). Spatial planners may also benefit from greater understanding of public health (e.g., Ford 1981), computer science and data management, biology and ecology. A completely open study programme may, however, be counterproductive and lead to a low level of understanding of a range of subjects without any real depth. Yet, greater choice and exploration of topics - particularly at more advanced levels of studies- should be encouraged. Fewer prescribed core modules and greater freedom stands in contrast to efforts from some scholars to define the discipline of spatial planning (e.g., Friedmann 1996). In some systems this will require re-negotiating accreditation requirements with government ministries and professional bodies, and there is a risk that professional accreditation of programmes may be lost. Key will be having students justify and reflect constructively on their choices and how these help them solve societal challenges.

c. Strengthening learning community and capacity for independent learning

As was admitted by Riederle (2021), students require support in the form of tutoring and coaching as it provides a sounding board, and assistance in reflecting on the consequences of different learning choices. There is a need to develop social skills as well as online working skills; trust and friendships are key and are easier to acquire in face-2-face settings. It is also likely that students in the future may require specialised support outside of their programme of study; this exists in some universities but is not a ubiquitous offer at present. Students, once they grow more confident, socially and with regards to their future plans, may be given the options to choose their study modus and subject fields.

One thing about the future is that it is not predetermined or faith, but through the choices we make – the future is shaped. In an age of uncertainty and supercomplexity (Barnett 2004), how and what we learn needs to change to enable future generations of students to cope effectively and to negotiate their contributions to society. The pandemic has shown that we cannot rely on previously developed solutions. If academics want to shape the future of HE, teaching, and learning – a retraction to the pre-pandemic modus operandi will offer little more than preserving prior structures with all their issues around equality, diversity, and inclusivity. The pandemic has opened small windows of opportunities and it will take joint reflections and constructive dialogue between learners, educators, and institutional representatives to shape more innovative institutions which can serve a sustainable society. Let's not waste this opportunity to innovate.

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Transactions of the Association of European Schools of Planning • 5 (2021)
doi: 10.24306/TrAESOP.2021.02.002

EMBEDDING LANDSCAPE IN THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG PLANNERS

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(Received 30 June 2021; revised version accepted 18 November 2021; final version accepted 03 December 2021)

Abstract

Understanding the relationships between a development and its wider setting is not new to planning. This often delicate balance has been contemplated by planners since well before the ground-breaking *European Landscape Convention* emerged in 2000. Nevertheless, and in the sustainable management of change, the ELC and its interpretations in domestic laws serve as conscious reminders of landscape as being more value-laden and complex than mere scenery. They support arguments for why meaningful engagement *must* and *should* be done - arguments that are most compelling during the education of young planners. In a world where rapid environmental change leads to more deadlines for decision-makers, and in which approaches to prescriptive environmental standards can result in mediocre compliance, it might seem idealistic to expect engagement with landscape in this way. Sharing experiences from University College Cork, this paper explores methods for equipping students with the skills necessary to make efficient and objective yet value-sensitive judgements on landscape at strategic and project levels.

Keywords

Landscape, Values, Planning Curriculum, Education, European Landscape Convention

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1. Introduction: Embracing the Complexity of Landscape

> For more than twenty-five years I have been trying to understand and explain that aspect of the environment that I call the landscape. I have written about it, lectured about it, travelled widely to find out about it; and yet I must admit that the concept continues to elude me. Perhaps one reason for this is that I persist in seeing it not as a scenic or ecological entity but as a political or cultural entity, changing in the course of history.
>
> (Jackson 1979, 153)

At the time of writing this statement, J.B. Jackson was an established writer and in-demand Berkeley and Harvard lecturer on American landscape studies. An influential mentor to, amongst others, architects and planners, he transformed how students and scholars understood their landscapes (Horowitz 2019). His primary influences were driven by a desire to comprehend, what he termed, the 'vernacular' landscape, where people and nature came together, often in the most ordinary of ways (Jackson 1984).

This was not about teaching skills on how to read contours or understand nature, nor was it about teaching geography, landscape architecture, or landscape ecology. While there would inevitably have been some overlap, Jackson's teaching was more of a call to students to 'go out into the world and really *look* at it, learning about the forces at work on the landscape, both historically and today' (Olin 2020, 8). If planning is chiefly concerned with the interminable transformation of all kinds of places at various spatial scales, it makes sense to embed a deep understanding of the everyday landscape into planning education and apply, what Selman (2006) calls, the 'landscape scale' to interpreting such changes.

Along with his peers, who included prolific geographers such as D.W. Meinig, Yi Fu Tuan, and David Lowenthal, Jackson resurrected discussions on the 'cultural landscape' (a term attributed to geographers Otto Schlüter and Carl O' Sauer in the early 20th Century) and brought them into contemporary teaching on analysing and improving places. His fascination with the ordinary, mundane, and repetitive actions of people, the patterns they created on the physical landscape, and how these exposed the intricacy of everyday cultures opened up perspectives that landscape could be as dull and monotonous as it could be rare and sublime. It could also be urban or peri-urban, as these were (and are) the settings where people live out their daily lives, interacting in endless ways with natural and non-natural environments.

Most importantly these landscapes were complex, and neither Jackson, nor his students, shied away from this. It would have been misguided to have young architects and planners equate the ordinary with simplicity. These were not designed landscapes – at least not in a pristine, site-specific landscape-architectural way. At the same time, Jackson rejected the idea that these quotidian processes were random. On the contrary, he saw patterns of repeated history as a revelation of the universal laws of human conduct (Jackson 1979). A meaningful order was manifested as a result of decisions and actions that reflected classicism, traditions, and values; an order shaped by people's not so varied perceptions of their physical environments.

Understanding these landscapes required thorough engagement; not just with physical markings, but with the values shaping them; the priorities, interests, needs, desires, concerns, attitudes and beliefs fuelling forces of change. The opening quote is a testament to this complexity, but Jackson refused to accept an understanding of landscape as anything less.

2. Taking Landscape and Landscape Values Seriously

When the first international treaty devoted to landscape emerged in 2000, it presented a definition that encompassed all of the complexities that Jackson and his peers not only recognised but celebrated. The *European Landscape Convention* (ELC), prepared by the Council of Europe, responded to decades of rich scholarly thinking on landscape that had, until then, largely slipped beneath the radar of official documents serving professional practice. Almost overnight definitions within legislation, policies, and guidance became outdated: where definitions had focused on the visual, the ELC now advocated 'perception'; where they had focused on the scenic,

the ELC advocated the inclusion of the 'everyday' and even the 'degraded'; where they had focused on natural and rural areas, the ELC advocated the inclusion of 'urban' and 'peri-urban'; and where they relied on landform, the ELC advocated an anthropological dimension within which cognitive and emotional connections would be accounted for alongside more substantive aspects.

It is this human perspective that is now widely accepted as determining the very existence of landscape. Newman (2009, 8) explains this using a metaphorical comparison, regarding it as 'the noise of George Berkeley's tree as it falls in the forest'[1]. From an Geddesian perspective, planning is concerned with people – or more specifically 'folk'– and how they interact with their surrounding places (Geddes 1949 [original 1915]). Failure to acknowledge this denies the essence of what proper planning is. Selman (2006, 52) identifies that 'many landscape plans … have been criticised for being "people-less". At the same time, development plans have often been accused of superficiality in relation to landscape issues'. In the years since Selman wrote this statement, the appetite for meaningful landscape policies has increased within planning practice and education, justifying planning as an appropriate home for teasing out landscape issues.

In the years leading up to the ELC, it was becoming very on-trend to interpret landscape in this metaphysical way. Such discourses continue to shape contemporary approaches to landscape research, education and training, and professional practice. They remain seated within a theoretical context of phenomenological justifications for landscape's inherent relationship with people's identity, imagination, and associated memory (a popular theme within writings from Ingold 1993; Newman 2009; Schama 1995; Taylor 2008; Tuan 1998; and Wylie 2007, for instance).

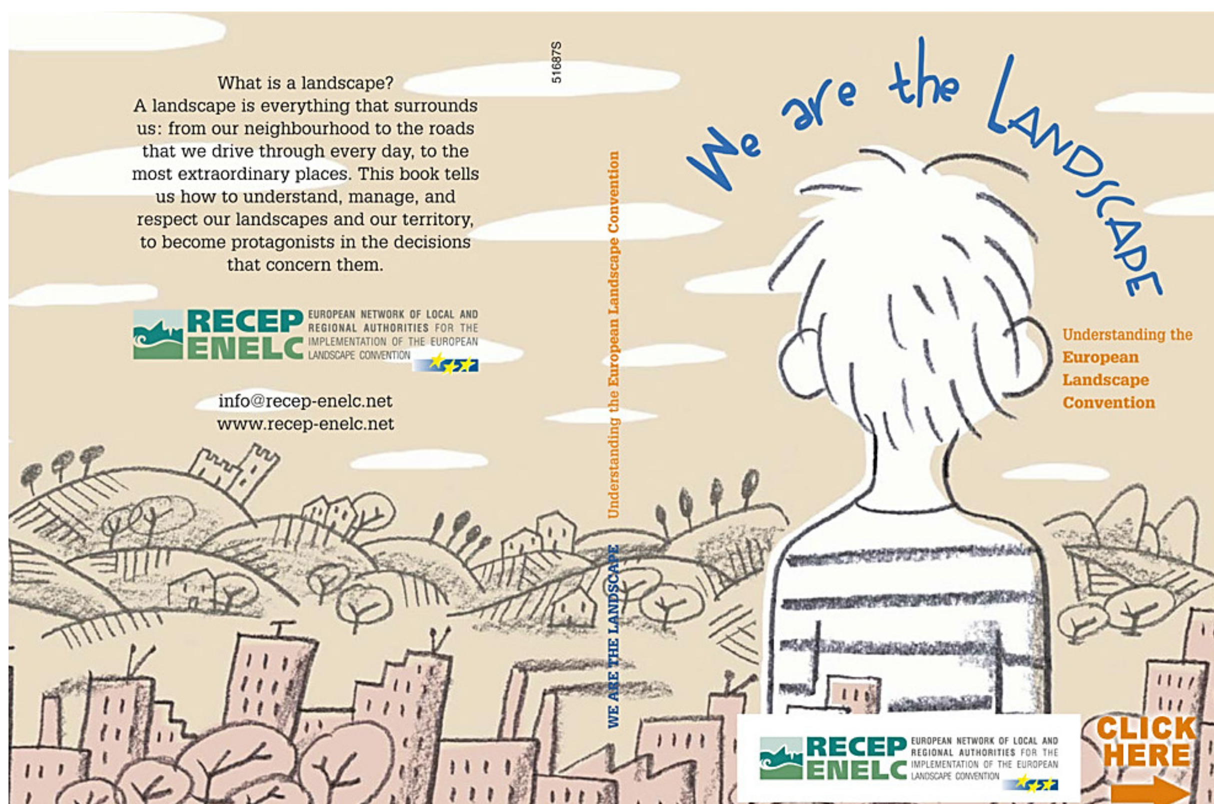

Figure 1: This image presents the cover of the former online handbook to the ELC and the all-encompassing, value-laden messages it adopted, at the centre of which was a deep-rooted human relationship with landscape. This would have originally served as a public engagement document rather than best practice for planners but still raised awareness on just how profound the meaning of landscape could be. Its phenomenological message encapsulated common themes in key literature emerging at the same time
Source: RECEP-ENELC, 2009.

1 Reference to George Berkeley (1700s), an Irish philosopher and Anglican bishop, to whom is attributed the famous philosophical question, 'If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?'. It is based on a metaphysical philosophy that queries the possibility of unperceived existence.

From a more directly practical perspective, the ELC responded to the growing social demand for better management, protection, and planning of all landscapes in Europe – or more specifically of 'the entire territory of the Parties' which ratified the Convention. As outlined in Article 2, this covers 'natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas' and includes 'land, inland water and marine areas' (Council of Europe 2000, 3) – none of which were immune to accelerating environmental changes. At a higher level, no country was, in itself, immune. The ratification of the Convention by 40 countries (as of April 2020) reflects the shared need for solutions to common problems facing Europe's landscapes and societies. These problems, largely driven by population growth, global market forces, the exploitation of natural resources, pollutants, and climate change, formed the backdrop to the sense of urgency in strengthening decision-making for landscape – a sense reignited at the time of writing this paper as world leaders gather in Glasgow for COP26 (2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference).

This spatial inclusivity (landscape being *everywhere*) is arguably the most defining characteristic of the ELC's contribution to managing landscape change. It sets the Convention apart from other international initiatives which had, up until then, only accounted for landscape as it existed within scenic or culturally rich and special areas (most notably the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's call in the 1970s for countries to compile inventories of outstanding landscapes, and the UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Landscape category introduced in 1992). The ELC complements these initiatives through its wider scope. Furthermore, it shares this spatial scope with that of planning and its concerns for sustainable development.

3. Everyday Planning Skills for Effective Landscape Management

3.1. Long Established Skills and 'Ways of Seeing'

Over 20 years on from the ELC its influence is still evident throughout Europe in legislation, policy, guidance, and best practice. Landscape is now a key concern of planning practice, not merely because planners are well-equipped to deal with landscape change, but because, legally, we are obliged to make it so. Once member states ratified the Convention, it became legally binding, chiefly through the requirement to recognise landscapes in domestic law, and usually through countries' own systems of spatial planning and land-use management.

This is not to suggest that good decision-making on landscape suddenly arrived on the planning scene - or indeed the planning curriculum - as a result of the ELC. As a discipline, planning possesses a strong history of wrestling with landscape, place, and environmental issues, even if the concept of landscape (especially as presented in the ELC), was often less explicit. It would not do justice to decades of planning practice and skilled practitioners to measure landscape awareness by the presence of the term alone. Engagement with the built and natural environment through holistic perspectives and a dissection of what creates a 'place' have long developed as fundamental concerns of modern planning; since at least the early 20th century. Planning, like landscape, 'has practical and scholarly traditions in the hard sciences, the humanities and the social sciences' (O' Sullivan 2016, 260). While geographers and landscape architects accelerated explicit discussions on landscape, globally influential planning writers such as Sir Patrick Geddes, Christopher Alexander, Gordon Cullen, Ian McHarg, and Lewis Mumford developed imaginative ideas on reading the character of places that overlapped with the comprehensive concept of landscape as it is understood today.

Alexander's (1979) 'quality without a name' concept reflects the often intangible and difficult-to-define values that underpin the principles of the ELC. Similarly, his fascination with repetitive patterns that give a place its character (1977; 1979) resonates with Jackson's work. Geddes' innovative perspectives on the *regional* landscape, its intricate interconnectivities, and the need to appreciate it holistically, underpin the contemporary rationale for adopting a wider landscape scale in understanding our physical surroundings. McHarg's breakthrough method of layering transparencies, each with different information about the land and landscape, defined the first anticipation of Geographic Information Systems or GIS. In his landmark text, *Design With Nature*, McHarg (1969) set out the details of this method which exhibited a deep understanding and appreciation of landscape. His exploration of landscape through its physical 'layers', followed by a comprehensive evaluation of their interrelationship, has had a profound influence on pedagogical approaches to landscape, and indeed on wider planning education and practice.

One of the most valuable aspects of these combined writings is what they offer for our continually weak or failed attempts to adopt ways of interpreting *urban* landscapes. In spite of the international consensus (driven

by the ELC) that landscape includes the 'urban', general landscape studies, writings, and university planning modules that include a focus on landscape remain excessively rural-based. Similarly, in spite of normative reflections and good intentions, best practice approaches to strategic investigations of landscape character (whether through LCA or as part of Strategic Environmental Assessment) mainly serve the rural landscape.

Cullen's (1961) model for apprehending urban environments through kinaesthetic experiences was the subject of his influential and pocket-sized guide, *The Concise Townscape*. This is a book about the urban landscape – or 'townscape'. Cullen adopted a 'scenery' perspective for towns to aid his observation; even today it is not a term commonly applied to the urban landscape. His 'serial vision' concept (how the townscape visually unfolds or reveals itself to the moving viewer) responds to urban form, composition, landmarks, elements, views and prospects, in a way that resembles the fabricated experience of the designed landscapes of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown – one of history's greatest landscape architects.

Planning students who spend much time acquainting themselves with such universally influential figures can be encouraged to draw on their observations and skill sets to adopt a language that can work for *urban landscape* appraisal – whether at strategic or project level.

Embracing the task of teasing out the deeper *values* of landscape should be well within the comfort zone of contemporary planners who have had the influence of more recent paradigm shifts over the last few decades – namely in relation to normative, communicative, pluralistic, and democratic assertions of what planning ought to be. Again, this influence must first be nurtured during education. The concern grew from the realisation of planning as 'a value-laden activity whose success or failure has consequences for the society encompassing it' (Forester 1993, 15) and how "we have to think more and more deeply about the values that should inform our practices' (Friedmann 2011, 212). The shift was quintessential of a radical postmodern conversion of public policy analysis.

Together these writings reveal how heightened skills of observation, a fluency in the language of design and setting, engaging with complex values, and synthesising competing priorities have long been part of the planner's skills-set. Good planning has long been characterised by a fascination for the composition and quality of natural and built surroundings, making informed judgements on how places should change and grow, environmental awareness, and, above all, knowing instinctively what good planning is regardless of any rules, regulations, or conventions.

3.2. Enhancing Skills in the Context of the European Landscape Convention

Despite the relative independence of good planning, the ELC provided a framework to aid decisions on landscape change. It offered a consistent approach for countries, helped defuse a more political view of landscape as restrictive towards development, and gave a legal standing to objectives within regional and town planning policies. It also gave values a central role. With this recognition that addressing landscape required more structure, depth, and focus, it came as no surprise that the refinement of certain skills would be included in the ELC's objectives.

Along with general measures to be adopted by each member state, specific measures were outlined in relation to training and education, with each Party undertaking to promote:

- a training for specialists in landscape appraisal and operations;
- multidisciplinary training programmes in landscape policy, protection, management and planning, for professionals in the private and public sectors and for associations concerned;
- school and university courses which, in the relevant subject areas, address the values attaching to landscapes and the issues raised by their protection, management and planning.

(Council of Europe 2000, 3)

The final point places particular emphasis on values, and implies the compatibility of the landscape topic with planning. From a pedagogical perspective, those skill sets and 'ways of seeing' that have shaped modern and postmodern planning substantiate the planning curriculum as an ideal vehicle for delivering the ELC's

objectives. Driving this forward, however, requires a committed framework at government level to unlock resources within universities, justify opportunities for landscape-based Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and training as a by-product to the curriculum, and streamline the shared goals among planning courses in relation to how the ELC's objectives are actually met.

When these national frameworks are not in place, or are deprived of the investment required to see them through, there are two main options for planning educators. The first is to pull back on incentives to deliver national responses to the ELC and keep them dormant until such a time arises when they are re-prioritised. This might include halting CPD outputs, side-lining aspects of the curriculum, or reducing study visits. The second option is to continue commitment to delivering the ELC's objectives regardless of national frameworks or policies, and to step up the training with the reminder that good planning can, and should, exist without them. Graduates can emerge from planning degrees with a rich understanding of landscape and the confidence to make firm calls or craft sound planning policies on how a landscape ought to change. In this way good management of landscape change is born out of good planning – and in most cases this is good enough.

This is not to say, however, that such frameworks and guidelines are needless. In reality, they ensure a certain standard, and act as incentives at local and regional levels for both education and practice. But their absence need not mean a death sentence for effective engagement with landscape. The adoption of the ELC's objectives through domestic planning and land-use legislation (which member states have been doing over the last 20 years) has been the most critical move at national level in Ireland. It sustains the legal requirement to formulate effective strategic landscape policies within development plans, even if further national supports are flawed, defunct, or non-existent.

The discussions ahead present an example of where failing national incentives for delivering objectives can be salvaged by the planning system (through firm legislation) and the planning curriculum (through the production of graduates with the necessary skills to make informed and tough decisions on landscape).

4. Delivering ELC Objectives: Ireland's Response

In 2015 a long-awaited document was published in Ireland. *A National Landscape Strategy 2015 - 2025* was to be the country's direct response to the objectives of the ELC. The NLS adopted the ELC's rich definition of landscape as 'an area as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (Council of Europe 2000, 2) and set out six core objectives (and associated actions) to ensure compliance, including an emphasis on education. In summary, these objectives are to:

- Recognise landscape in law
- Develop a National Landscape Character Assessment
- Develop landscape policies
- Increase landscape awareness
- Identify education and training needs
- Strengthen public participation

(Government of Ireland 2015)

Central to both documents was the assertion of the role of the planning system in delivering objectives, mainly by means of a continuous emphasis on the need to integrate landscape into regional and town planning policies, and through the primary role of planning authorities in decision-making. From 2000 onwards, Ireland had already begun to explicitly integrate the language of contemporary landscape discourses into its domestic planning law, demonstrating a direct engagement with conversations happening at European level, just as the ELC was emerging. Momentum was building around the realisation that, in a time of accelerating environmental pressures, a focused discussion on developing a robust and consistent approach to managing landscape change was urgently required.

Ireland's primary planning legislation began to adopt explicit requirements for landscape character within strategic plans; Section 10(2)(e) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000* requires, with regard to the content of development plans measures for:

> the preservation of the character of the landscape where, and to the extent that, in the opinion of the planning authority, the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it, including the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest.
>
> (Government of Ireland 2010)

The *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010* brought further refinement of landscape's position in planning law by expanding the interpretation (originally focusing on views and prospects, amenity, and natural beauty) to that of the ELC's definition. In addition, Section 7(p) of the Amendment Act removed the term 'preservation' as the sole method of enforcement and introduced processes of 'identification, assessment, protection, management and planning of landscapes'. This amendment responded to the theoretical consensus of landscape as a rich and spatially inclusive concept and could assist planners in exercising their skills (beyond purely preservative measures), in weighing up judgements on landscape change. It also had strong implications for the education and training of young planners. It was now a legal requirement to engage with landscape in everyday planning processes and formulate tailored policy responses for different landscapes.

The real impact of the ELC was felt at the level of strategic spatial policies – not because of the NLS, but because of this explicit legislation in the Acts requiring development plans to make ELC-styled objectives for landscape. For individual projects, planners continued to decipher potential impacts of change on a receiving environment and place, as they had been comfortable doing. Legally, strict European directives for environmental assessment of individual projects have been in place since the mid-1980s (and since 2001 for strategic plans and programmes) which require landscape (and the visual environment) to be assessed as one of several environmental indicators. However, these prescriptive assessments, while important for ensuring certain standards, are not required for every planning case, and even when they are, planners need to review them with a critical mindset. Furthermore, their scientific and measured format, while appropriate for indicators such as soil and water quality, does not always accommodate the contemporary value-laden understandings of landscape as presented by the Council of Europe (Ray 2013). They can, therefore, result in little more than mediocre compliance with environmental standards.

Unfortunately, Ireland has yet to initiate many of the actions set out in the NLS. With less than three years until the strategy expires (in 2025), there is little expectation that major projects such as the development of a National Landscape Character Assessment or the creation of new national ministerial guidelines for planning authorities will be realised within this time (Ireland's current guidelines for landscape assessment have remained in draft status since 2000).

Even though this strategy helped drive arguments for better engagement, it does not determine it, nor does it determine the quality of graduates emerging from university planning programmes. Just as planning had engaged with landscape well before the ELC, the education and training of planners can continue to progress regardless of any strategy. Again, the most important development in all of this was the Acts' (2000 and 2010 amendment) adoption of landscape legislation. It gives planners support in their commitment to assessing the many layers of landscapes and in the formation of policy responses and recommendations. Planning graduates can continue to embark upon professional careers with a heightened knowledge of how to engage with landscape in all its multi-faceted and value-laden complexity; how to tackle often contentious landscape issues; and make sound judgements on appropriate changes to a landscape's character. While new guidelines and a national Landscape Character Assessment would most certainly assist strategic level plans, programmes, policies and projects (e.g. strategic linear infrastructure), universities can still contribute to the delivery of the ELC's objectives by instilling the necessary skill-sets in students.

The following section continues the discussion on harnessing the potential of the ELC and planning legislation through planning education. In so doing, it draws on lessons from Ireland's newest planning school at University College Cork and its unique positions in fostering a new generation of young planners.

5. Landscape and Planning Education at University College Cork

5.1. Overview of the Cork Planning School and the Landscape Agenda

The Planning School at University College Cork (now known as the UCC Centre for Planning Education and Research [CPER]) was established in 2006, four years after Ireland ratified the ELC, and two years after it came into force. Since then it has accepted a diverse mix of students onto a two-year accredited[2] Masters in Planning and Sustainable Development (the M.Plan), bringing them face-to-face with planning in all types of environments – urban, peri-urban, rural, coastal – and at all scales of decision-making.

During its comparatively short lifetime, it has established a strong reputation throughout Ireland and the UK for the calibre of its graduates. The school has been in a unique position in this regard, seizing a rare opportunity to redesign the planning curriculum around the needs of contemporary practice worldwide. Practiced-based teaching is its forte, with the primary focus on professional education. With its core team of academic staff drawn from planning practice (both public and private sectors), it has expanded its research profile in a number of practice-related areas including: spatial planning at the metropolitan and regional level; housing policy and community needs; planning for local government reform; land use and employment; the relationship between landscape policy and planning; and an evidence base for sustainable settlement policies in planning (O' Sullivan et al. 2016). The variety of particular specialisms strengthens its teaching catchment, with expertise in areas such as regional planning, urban design, international planning, property and economic planning. Among these, the school is recognised for the emphasis it places on the landscape agenda, drawing on the extensive and specialised expertise of staff (this includes domestic and overseas experience at local authority levels and private consultancy, specialised doctoral research, and additional corporate membership of the Irish Landscape Institute).

Unlike other schools where planning is 'shared' with another discipline (e.g. engineering or environmental science), the CPER is a single discipline school defined by planning in its own right. For a subject like landscape, which is claimed by a multitude of disciplines (including, amongst others, geography, landscape architecture, art history and archaeology), the focus is clear with regard to what it means for planning. At the same time the M.Plan teaching acknowledges the delicate balancing act of looking at how landscape sits within the spaces *between* disciplines, rather than attempting to link them all together and unintentionally diluting the *planning* perspective. The teaching prepares students to engage with landscape as planners in the real world; to 'own' their planning voice in the weighting and interpretation of values and issues while respecting other interests; to recognise the planning tools at their disposal for shaping landscape character; and to realise their potential to predict and manage future change through their specific ways of seeing.

Cork also has a tradition of setting precedents for enhancing decision-making for landscape. Along with the creation of the country's first Landscape Character Assessments for *urban* areas, it has been pivotal in driving initiatives at national and indeed European level, notably through determined calls from Ireland's Landscape Forum, (located in Cork and led by landscape specialist Terry O' Regan of Landscape Alliance Ireland). Since the mid-1990s the forum led the way in calling for a national landscape policy for Ireland and was instrumental in the formation of the ELC itself in Florence in 2000. The planning school has jointly facilitated (with LAI) discussions on strengthening decision-making on landscape through conferences and study visits attracting professionals from across the country and has also actively contributed to conversations, conferences, and publications at European Level (most notably in relation to UNISCAPE – a network of universities committed to landscape research and education and the implementation of the European Landscape Convention).

2 Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and Irish Planning Institute (IPI)

The unique metropolitan region of Cork City, with its varied landscape types (from cityscape areas to coastal rural areas) has also been utilised by O' Regan (2008) as a backdrop to his valuable guidance document for community-led local landscape assessment – a template which is adaptable for all landscape study areas. The influence of this setting on the planning school's teaching is discussed further on.

With regard to actively engaging with ongoing national discourses, the planning school represents the university presence (and indeed a key *planning* presence) within the recently established Landscape Strategy Working Group – a national group comprising a small number of specialists set up in 2021 to target the Irish Government on progressing with the National Landscape Strategy.

Figure 2: M.Plan students and staff (including contributing lecturers from other professions and faculties) on an annual boat trip at the start of term. Students are introduced to a whole range of planning considerations and key developments in the context of the expansive Cork City harbour and estuary.
Photo: Ray, 2019

5.2. Landscape Education in the Cork Planning School

Landscape has always been included as an important component of Cork's M.Plan programme. Its development over the years has been further influenced by the ELC and its impact on planning legislation (and to a degree the NLS). Accreditation reviews by the planning institutes (IPI and RTPI) are a continuing requirement, part of which is an opportunity for students to meet with representatives in the absence of the teaching team. The institutes frequently report how students remark on the complementary relationships between subjects taught, and how landscape, like many cross-cutting themes in planning, emerges in subjects beyond the core module (such as rural housing, infrastructure, built heritage and design). This is also evident in annual module feedback forms disseminated to the classes.

Figure 3: Second year M.Plan students exploring landscape character and issues in a new context in the Spanish Pyrenees. Students wrestle with different land use trends and pressures to those normally found in Ireland. In this image students are examining the sensitivity of the landscape to further changes such as low-volume high-head hydro power (a common energy source in the north of Spain), ski resorts, individual dwellings, small village settlements, and road and avalanche infrastructure.
Photo: Ray, 2019

The landscape topic is also a focus of several local and international study visits (including. Spain, Denmark, England, France and Belgium) during which students can apply learning on the ground and carry out assessments of varied landscapes. Outside of Ireland students apply learning in wholly new contexts where landscape assessment, protection, management and planning might encompass quite different approaches and reveal location-specific issues.

Building on its specialism in landscape, the school has developed a second one-year masters in Landscape, Built Heritage and Design, which has produced two successful cohorts to date.

The core landscape module takes students on a deep exploration of landscape change and resilience, and introduces them to natural and built *physical* layers of landscapes in various contexts: urban; peri-urban; industrial; rural; coastal; remote; typically outstanding; ordinary; and even degraded. While a highly visual module, it also requires students to engage with intangible layers and associations (such as those arising from poetry and literature, art, history, memory, identity, folklore, myth, and religion). It explores real-world cases where seemingly 'soft' values are not only addressed within the statutory planning processes but hold firm within legal and procedural discourses, often in the face of powerful competing interests. Examples include the imaginary and literary values crystalised in light of wind energy proposals in the Yorkshire moors; the profound obtrusion to the character of the Dublin cityscape by the original design for the National Children's Hospital, or the rerouting of part of a major inter-urban motorway in County Clare due to the presence of an unassuming little Irish fairy fort). It explores planning policies in Ireland and abroad where landscape character is protected or managed through considered objectives, and where it is open to misinterpretation or even manipulation by influential players. In this way students not only engage with landscape issues in real-world scenarios but obtain insights on how planning itself actually works.

5.3. Ideals of Planning Underpinning the Teaching

The module continues the understanding of planning as it shapes the M.Plan programme. It celebrates planning as a discipline - not solely as a practice or a theoretical expanse of ideas. It values and nurtures the role of the planner as continually reflective; influenced and challenged by established and contemporary theories, while also having a competency to tackle everyday and exceptional environmental challenges on the ground – and at various spatial scales. Within this pedagogical philosophy, students are encouraged to take risks in

presenting original thought and to maintain normative reflections as they progress to more applied work and study visits. For the landscape module, this rationale is evident in the list of themes in the following section.

The concept of sustainable development is never engaged with as a separate 'lesson', nor is it addressed in a self-conscious or self-contained way. Instead, it underpins everything that the M.Plan teaches, and encourages students to think and act according to what is most sustainable in every decision they consider.

5.4. Key Components of Teaching and Learning

5.4.1. Structure and Themes

The teaching of this topic is based on the overarching themes of landscape character, its wider context (be that spatial/physical, cultural, economic, or political for instance), and the forces of change that may, or may not, affect this character. Underpinning this structure is the objective of helping planning students to develop a holistic understanding of the principles of, and approaches to landscape character assessment, preservation, and management. This is further grounded by the real-world application of these principles and their theoretical foundations to the practice of integrated forward planning and the sustainable management of development.

- The core module is orchestrated around a focussed but comprehensive checklist of sub-themes as listed below:
- Perspectives of landscape in theory and practice;
- Identifying and understanding landscape/place values;
- Tangible and intangible cultural associations;
- Reading physical landscape narratives;
- Conflict and power relations around landscape issues;
- Legislative requirements and best practice for landscape assessment, management, planning and preservation at European and national levels.
- Decision-making for future changes in various landscape types (strategic plan level and project level scenarios);
- Abrupt to incremental: various paces of landscape change;
- Practical tools for assessment, management, planning and preservation;
- Applications in everyday forward planning and development management;
- Sensitivity and capacity evaluation for landscape change;
- Consultative processes in landscape policy making;

5.4.2. Learning Objectives and the Cork Laboratory

The specific learning objectives for the landscape topic encapsulate the overall learning outcomes for the M.Plan programme, albeit at a more nuanced level. On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- Meaningfully 'read' the physical landscape: Identify and articulate different landscape types, character, patterns, features, and elements within urban and rural settings and at different spatial scales;
- Apply effective skills in carrying out a robust Landscape Character Assessment, including collaborative processes and engagement;
- Carefully and respectfully listen to, identify, engage with and weigh people's values associated with a specific landscape;
- Formulate informed judgments about landscape impacts, sensitivity and resilience towards a range of development types and environmental changes;
- Identify and debate core issues and challenges facing contemporary urban and rural landscapes;
- Draft appropriate policy and decision-making responses;
- Engage reflectively and creatively with the varied theories and perceptions of landscape from different disciplines and debate these in the context of best practice.

As students explore landscape changes and sensitivity levels, they are repeatedly asked to identify and *question* the forces which drive them. They are encouraged to delve into each layer, from the structural to the cosmetic, and enquire as to how that landscape is experienced and valued. They are taught to take nothing at face value; to approach each perceived force of change with a critical mind. Examples of the forces of change include:

- hydrological and quaternary processes in carving striking landforms;
- traditional farming practices in the establishment of a hedgerow network;
- local politics in a distinctive pattern of one-off houses or in the building on flood plains;
- market-forces shaping a city skyline through residential/commercial trends;
- private interests in a 'green' energy landscape;
- cultural shifts in the spire-less roofscapes of new towns;
- climate change impacts in altering the urban form of coastal cities;
- scenic appeal in an accumulation of second homes alongside a dynamic coastline;
- powerful players in a controversial development or policy decision where landscape is a concern.

The Cork planning school benefits from having a truly unique setting for its laboratory – one which maximises the scope for exploring an extensive range of landscape types, values, sensitivities, and issues. Being within a non-capital city region, the school draws much of its teaching and learning from a wider metropolitan region, which includes everything from striking glaciated and river valleys, deeply rural areas, farmland and settlements, peri-urban edgelands, an interconnected network of defence heritage sites, a distinctive maritime cityscape, and a vast and busy harbour and estuary where rural areas sit directly alongside intensely urban areas and major industry. This varied setting lends itself to exceptional levels of exploration for landscape; students apply the landscape lens to each of these settings and ultimately formulate tailored policy responses for spatial planning.

The harbour is also a place where a wide range of designations and policies have a direct bearing on its character, from green belt policies to high value landscapes. It also includes traditionally 'ordinary' as well as degraded landscapes (e.g. Seveso sites around former industry) which enrich students' understanding beyond more usual rural studies.

Cork Harbour is the backdrop for heavily politicised and controversial planning cases where local communities and powerful industrial players bring competing interests to the planning process. In a setting where such an extensive range of land-uses have developed alongside one another, their attempts to co-exist in harmony have at times resulted in highly contested issues emerging – issues which are often triggered by discourses around the unique and culturally rich maritime landscape.

5.4.3. A Spatially Inclusive Approach for Landscape

Within this metropolitan laboratory, with its varied landscapes and issues, students are introduced to the spatial inclusivity of landscape, covering all areas, not just those protected by designations. This aligns with the holistic understanding of place-making and environmental considerations that shape urban agendas and sustainable development goals at a European Union level. Students are taught to embrace understandings of landscape that are very much 'lived in', and might be considered to be quite ordinary. Such areas may be deceptively vulnerable, and also possess inconspicuous sensitivities to even cumulatively small and moderate changes. Very often these landscapes are not nearly as resilient as they may at first appear, lacking 'obvious' values – values which generate designations and an awareness of a landscape's sensitivities. A visually striking and popular landscape is unlikely to have its values eroded by poor management of change.

Best intentions frequently fail to progress meaningful decisions for urban landscapes. Adopting a 'landscape' view of cities and other urban settings allows students to foster an all-encompassing awareness of sensitivities – whether these be around issues such as generic building design eroding a place's identity; sterilisation of urban form; the protection of key views and prospects; the attractiveness of a city; the iconography of the skyline; or clashes of values over hard engineering responses to flooding in coastal cities. This urban focus of the landscape lens is a critical component of the teaching and adds to its distinctiveness as an approach within third level planning education.

5.4.4. Preparedness for Pluralistic Realities

Throughout the core landscape module, time is spent on ensuring clarity of purpose and avoiding duplication of other complementary but separate sub-topics (for example biodiversity and built heritage). At the same time the module opens itself to perspectives from a range of stakeholders and members of the public; primarily through its engagement with values, interests, conflict, and power-relations. This approach complements other modules which facilitate perspectives from a range of stakeholders. Students are required to consider all relevant perspectives in a balanced and objective way.

The topic of landscape draws on a multitude of disciplines. Early on, students are introduced to the ways in which these various disciplines engage with landscape. This sets a foundation for later on when students consider how different professions and members of the public engage (or avoid engaging) with landscape issues. What sets this approach apart is how these perspectives are weighed against the planning perspective. This is enhanced by the single-discipline structure of the planning school. While engaging with these perspectives is essential preparation for when they inevitably come together in the planning arena, the planning perspective remains central. It avoids what Frodeman (2014, 3) describes as 'a side-by-side juxtaposition of different types of knowledge'. Ultimately, what it all means for planning considerations is the focus.

In addition, through their training on values and conflict, students familiarise themselves with the typical considerations of local communities and other various stakeholders. Landscape thus becomes a lens through which wider planning processes are scrutinised. Major Irish and British case studies are explored through class discussions which identify key players and their interests, and recognise the pluralistic realities of public and stakeholder engagement. Students are advised to pay particular attention to the language and evidence used in the construction of arguments by different players.

Figure 4: M.Plan students leading an authentic real-world public consultation for a local village as part of a major project that feeds into many strands of learning on the course. This image shows one of several exhibition areas at the venue, with the specific theme here being landscape values and surrounding context
Photo: Egan, 2018

5.5. Exercises and Assessment

5.5.1. Thinking about Landscape Meaning

Alongside unmarked tasks, students carry out assignments that demonstrate their understanding of the topic from theoretical to applied levels. On completion of a scholarly and reflective essay on key philosophies, debates and discourses in literature, students apply their learning through more unique assignments that tie to real-world planning considerations.

5.5.2. Listening to Expressions of Landscape Value

> We are diverse people living in complex webs of economic and social relations, within which we develop potentially very varied ways of seeing the world, of identifying our interests and values, of reasoning about them, and of thinking about our relations with others.
>
> (Healy 2003, 239)

The capacity of a landscape to absorb change without adversely affecting its character is measured by visual evidence ever before values are taken on board. However, the resilience of a landscape might very well be determined by imperceptible or intangible values, or those born out of other sensory experiences (such as the olfactory imagery conjured by the brewery industry in Cork City). In a bespoke assignment, students are required to listen to interviews with different people where landscape and place values are expressed in various ways, and sometimes in response to controversial developments.

This audio-based work introduces students to landscape and place values that can be intrinsic to the sustainable future of a given city, town, village, neighbourhood or remote area. It rests on the rationale that change can only be resilient if it resonates with the depth of how people value their surroundings.

Each student is assigned a different 30-40 minute radio podcast in which individuals express their perspectives on landscape/place, often in relation to an emerging or past change. The student adopts the role of a planner listening to these expressions and is tasked with drawing conclusions as to how that given locality might change – without experiencing it directly. It encourages active listening without the intent to reply and gives time and respect to the perspectives of others (e.g. communities, developers, government officials, and experts). It nurtures interdisciplinary, as well as democratic, insight and pluralism as championed within national and European pedagogical planning discourses.

Aside from students genuinely enjoying this assignment and the novelty of its approach, it tends to generate some of their strongest marks. As this assignment occurs in their second year of the M.Plan, the decision of which student receives which podcast is by no means random. At this stage the teaching team knows each student quite well – their opinions, outlooks, biases, strengths. Students are therefore intentionally given podcasts that will challenge their views or harness their potential. The pedagogical rationale behind this approach is relatively simple, but born out of a major planning paradigm shift of the 1980s. This notable shift, as defined by such theorists as Susan Fainstein, Patsy Healy, John Friedmann, and John Forester, championed an openly normative approach to planning, and was 'driven by value propositions … initially inspired by the Habermasian theory of communicative action' (Friedmann 2011, 208). In recognition of the pluralistic societies within which we live, contemporary planning is now bound to participatory and communicative processes and recognises that our values are not isolated within ourselves – they are, in fact, dialogically constructed. Contemporary planning students must also embrace these realities or face difficult challenges in practice when dealing with competing interests, varied values and powerful interests. As the M.Plan programme is intent on fostering the development of what Schon (1983) famously termed 'reflective practitioners' the approach of this assignment forces students to step back from the action, park biases, and embrace a critical reflection on events, processes, discourses and power relations that may disguise or exaggerate real-world values.

This is where the learning is most valuable, evident in the trend of honest – and at times almost moving – reflections from each student within their reports. Tapping into this Habermasian philosophy, the students who receive the highest marks usually demonstrate an ability to recognise their own biases, strip them back, and

truly engage with the values being expressed; finally emerging with more balanced and richer perspectives on how these values shape their understanding of a given locality.

5.5.3. Looking at and Reading Landscape

The whole landscape a manuscript
We had lost the skill to read,
A part of our past disinherited;

Montague (1972), Extract from *The Rough Field*

Studio sessions begin early in the semester and serve to develop skills for forensically 'reading' the physical landscape in advance of site work. Sessions are highly applied with repetitive tasks of looking (slowly) at different landscapes, describing them in great in details. Within these, students focus on developing a language of observation for professional practice.

Ever before students embark upon ground-level, outdoor validation and assessment, these sessions resurrect the often lost skills of 'reading' cartographic and aerial representations. At this two-dimensional level they decipher terrain and vegetation, types of land use, ordinary and unusual landforms, types of woodland and farmland, archaeological elements, infrastructural networks, drainage, coastal vulnerability, settlement patterns, areas of development pressure, and other patterns and trends that unlock a landscape's past, present and possible future narratives. Only then can they make preliminary but educated calls on character and resilience. They are also more informed on what to look for and identify during fieldwork.

Students benefit from lighter group exercises around 'reading' landscape clues from ground-level images, repetitive tasks describing the elements of what they see, and virtual 'drives' for assessing the visual landscape experience along local, regional and national road networks. Here they learn not only to be conscious of how a landscape unfolds, but more importantly, to be critical of any existing policies or designations that relate to the experience of the landscape from these networks and whether or not such policies are effective or outdated. These sessions prepare students for work during study visits as well as for their final project – a local level Landscape Character Assessment.

The final weeks comprise intensive preparation for a local level LCA of a landscape experienced on one of the study visits (the visits cover city, city edge/peri-urban, rural and coastal landscapes). Students spend several weeks experiencing the landscape from substantive, cognitive, emotional, and sensory perspectives. They are also encouraged to revisit their study areas and apply further survey work a few weeks after their first visit to account for local and seasonal changes.

Figure 5: A view of the dynamic City Edge landscape taken from the top of Cork County Hall during one of the local fieldtrips. Students examine the landscape elements that define these transitional areas, examine specific policies (for example strategic settlement gaps, green belt ridges, city setting) and identify spots of very particular kinds of ongoing pressures that these edgelands face.
Photo: Ray, 2019

LCA has been used in practice since the 1990s, and more so after the ELC came into force. It is, however, more unique as an applied learning tool for planners. Students are required to address scientific and values-based environmental aspects, and to systematically document multidisciplinary evidence to better plan for change. Rather than adopt a generic LCA format, a bespoke template for the course ensures a consistent standard while also being sufficiently flexible to enable students to make the work their own. It combines elements of worldwide best practice and from professional and academic experience. Students drive this further than typical LCAs and include a detailed sensitivity and capacity study before developing a set of firm yet adaptable 'Policy Recommendations' for the sustainable future of their ever-changing chosen landscape.

The types of LCAs produced by the students are those composed by planners for planners, utilising specific planning skills-sets and maintaining control over the information required for effective policy-making. The learning also helps graduates to carry out assessments on the receiving environment for individual projects during their careers. Some graduates have specialised further in these areas due to their competencies on entering the workforce, practicing as planners who can efficiently tackle landscape assessment at various spatial levels.

Figure 6: Students exploring the very different and rare landscape of The Gearagh, County Cork. This post-glacial flooded woodland is one of only four inland deltas in the world. However, beneath the surface (figuratively and literarily) are hidden layers of rich narratives and values that tie to a time when the surrounding river valley was intentionally flooded in the 1950s as part of a major hydroelectric power scheme. The students here are positioned on one of the few remaining pathways. The rest, along with old foundations of houses, the remains of heritage structures, and the remnants of an ancient oak and yew woodland are now submerged, giving rise to a unique and memory-laden landscape.
Photo: Ray, 2018

6. Reflections on Teaching Landscape Skills to Young Planners

The pedagogical approaches discussed have been refined over a number of years. Their success in equipping students with valuable skills and insights is evidenced in the coursework produced, and in the reflections voluntarily shared by graduates and employers from both public and private sectors. Different external examiners for the programme have continually commended the approaches, with a 2017 report drawing particular attention to the landscape component of the course.

> Another excellent example … was the landscape character assessment (including the Gearagh and other landscapes) and the values assignment (where students had to discern people's place-values from 'deep-listening' to an archive radio documentary) which were included in module [PD 6120] Landscape Context Character and Change. The staff involved is to be highly

> congratulated on this innovative module which could certainly be submitted for competition to an external teaching award (e.g. the annual Association of European Schools of Planning Excellence in Teaching Prize)

The specific landscape module was highly commended for the AESOP Excellence in Teaching Prize in 2020 with the following feedback:

> Most universities teach design skills as part of an urban design architecture-centric course. This associates design with the aspects of construction and building something new. By putting the landscape in the centre of the design course, they are able to explore the value of design methods for aspects of preservation, resilience, and maintaining certain qualities. This is a unique twist to design-based education in planning that many universities don't do.

Reflecting back to Jackson's thinking, in an interview with Robert Calo in 1988, Jackson explained his rationale for sharing his views on landscape:

> I see things very clearly, and I rely on what I see …. And I see things that other people don't see, and I call their attention to it.

His advice to young planners and architects to really 'look' at the world around them offers an elegantly simple approach for understanding complicated things. At a time of increased deadlines for reports and decisions tied to rapid environmental change and development pressures, taking the time to 'look' (and in the case of values, to listen) is probably the best advice we can take. Yet this can also only take us so far; in order to really see, we need to know what we are looking at, what we are looking for, and what questions to ask of the narratives shaping landscapes. This is where having a fluency in landscape observation and articulation is key. Such skills are only effective when they become automatic and engrained into the everyday psyche of practitioners, driving firm and bold decisions on landscape change.

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Transactions of the Association of European Schools of Planning • 5 (2021)
doi: 10.24306/TrAESOP.2021.02.003

FACILITATING THE SMOOTH TRANSITION OF SECOND-YEAR XJTLU STUDENTS INTO PLANNING PROGRAMMES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL:

RESULTS AND REFLECTIONS FROM AN ONGOING SERIES OF INTERVENTIONS

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(Received 10 September 2018; revised version received 26 September 2019; final version accepted 18 April 2020)

Abstract

Increasingly internationalised student cohorts within planning schools offer opportunities to enhance existent student learning, but may also present potential issues, such as language difficulties, cultural disorientation, and the need to assimilate learning styles, internationalise curricula, and varying pedagogic teaching styles, all of which can impact staffing and costs. In 2016 the Department of Planning and Geography at the University of Liverpool obtained a Learning & Teaching (T&L) Award to develop projects examining the potential for a more meaningful learning experience for undergraduate students transitioning to Liverpool from XJTLU - the university's sister institution in Suzhou, China. This intervention primarily sought to promote complementary understanding of British and Chinese planning at XJTLU and UoL to facilitate improved academic attainment for XJTLU students completing their studies in Liverpool. Evaluating those aspects of the intervention focused on additional contact and one-to-one guidance for students, this paper reflects on this project and develops recommendations on managing the process of student transfer as well as ensuring that the planning discipline integrates "soft skills" more effectively in its teaching.

Keywords

Planning pedagogy, student learning and teaching, reflective practice, authentic assessment, University of Liverpool, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University

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1. Introduction

The "internationalisation" of student cohorts is a trend which will be familiar to academics who, over recent years, have seen a shift in the composition of the classes they are required to teach, and the challenges that this brings (Lauridsen 2020). Of course, internationalisation is not, necessarily, a new phenomenon. For example, students have long-sought opportunities to study abroad as a means to broaden their experience, and have been aided by schemes such as the Erasmus programme (Otero 2008) which has facilitated student exchange programmes since the late 1980s. Similarly, the Bologna Process, which sought to rationalise educational principles, outcomes and qualifications across the European Union (Davies 2008; Keeling 2006; Reinalda and Kulesza 2005), also made it easier for students to undertake study in other countries. This has taken the form outlined by de Wit et al. (2015:29) who noted that:

> 'the [Internationalisation of Higher Education is] the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society'.

Latterly, however, new forms of internationalisation have emerged which are underpinned by different rationales. In particular this has occured when universities have identified opportunities to capitalise upon emerging economies – e.g. India, Malaysia, and China. Here, and whilst the arguments of broadening student experience certainly underpin the marketing, such schemes are often underpinned by a hard economic reality – not least because non-EU students entering higher education from those countries are liable pay higher rates of fees – often three-to-four times those of domestic students (Chankseliani 2017).

The result is that, in many cases, non-EU or broader international students from outside of the UK represent an important revenue stream for universities (Creso and Sabzalieva, 2018), and such is the economic viability of these revenues that we can also observe a proliferation in universities establishing 'sister' campuses in those emerging markets as a means of maximising the opportunities that those markets present (Cantwell 2015; Kraal 2017). This can be a pervasive view within the UK, as well as in North America and Australia – places that receive the highest intake of international student enrolments. Crucially, whilst in many cases those campuses act as standalone institutions, many also provide opportunities for transfer – for example to complete all, or part, of a degree within the original UK or North American based Higher Education Institution (HEI).

The institutional-financial incentive of those opportunities can have consequences for the composition of student cohorts. Whilst traditional forms of student internationalisation might often result in classes where a minority of students of varied nationalities are mixed with a largely domestic cohort, often this newer form of internationalisation can lead to bi-national, or in extreme cases mono-national (Groeppel-Klein, Germelmann, and Glaum 2010) cultures in which domestic students are outnumbered by international students. Going further, the combination of these two elements can create a strange dynamic for universities and, ultimately, host departments to navigate – not least as they seek to maintain the core function of being education providers in a competitive environment. For example, whilst there is an ongoing need 'to engage with the complexities of diverse cultural contents, [in order to] design and deliver quality learning experiences for all' (Clarke, Johal, Sharp, and Quinn 2016: 253), any meaningful integration of learning experiences 'requires time and patience' (Kunzmann and Yuan 2014: 69).

Taking the time to contextualise teaching materials to specific cohorts (Ryan 2011), and especially with regards to the creation of internationalised curricula that are appropriate, detailed, and nuanced to diverse student needs requires universities to consider the financial implications of extra resources (and the extent to which these neutralise the income derived from additional student numbers), and unseen resource implications; staff delivering those extra facilities may be forced to divert their time from research and other associated activities (Sawir 2011). This requires an increased level of engagement with the political and socio-economic specificities of international student cohorts, especially those from developing countries, North African & the Middle East (MENA), and south and east Asian nations. Moreover, there is a need to appreciate the academic culture that students have previously been taught within. All of which may be invariably different to the structures, learning styles, and expectations of higher education in the UK or other parts of Europe or North America (Kraal 2017).

These challenges are particularly acute in British universities, which as Walker (2014: 235) notes, 'host both the second highest number of international students in the world and the second highest proportion of international students in the student body'. The expansion of higher education and access to international study in China has been of particular importance in this. To explore how universities respond to some of those challenges, this paper reflects on the experiences of the Department of Planning at the University of Liverpool – a place that embodies many of the pedagogical issues surrounding internationalisation discussed thus far. To examine these phenomena, we focus our analysis on the research questions:

1. To what extent has internationalisation led to a rethinking of teaching styles, curricula development, and assessment to meet the needs of international students?
2. What types of teaching innovations can be used to effectively engage international students with UK based curricula?
3. What added-value do teaching interventions focussed on soft skills and interaction with international students have for wider teaching approaches in UK HEIs?

The discussion of these questions centres on the need to deliver a high-quality teaching and learning experience for all students regardless of their country of origin. They also focus on a contemporary issue for UK, and international, HEIs – how to successful integrate diverse student cohorts, and what best practice exists to meet the academic, soft skills, and employability of graduates who are more mobile than student bodies were historically (Robson and Turner 2007). These skills are prominent in the University of Liverpool case study as urban and environmental planning (and its cognisant disciplines of urban design and real estate) are vocational subjects, like architecture, engineering, and medicine, that require a set of skills that go beyond the academic (cf. Schipper and van der Steppen, 2018).

This paper aims to outline potential interventions open to HEIs in the UK, and internationally, to act in a more responsive manner to the needs of international student cohorts. These react to, and acknowledge that, the changing composition of student groups may not engage as readily with more traditional lecture-based teaching, and that therefore more interactive and bespoke teaching practices that address specific concerns of the student body may be a more appropriate teaching pathway to explore (Cooner 2010).

2. Internationalisation within Planning at the University of Liverpool

Established in 2006, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) is a joint venture between the University of Liverpool (UoL) and Xi'an Jiaotong University. With a campus located in Suzhou, 60km west of Shanghai, students enrolling at XJTLU have the option of completing the entirety of their degrees in China, or embarking on a '2+2' in which the students complete two years at XJTLU, before transferring to Liverpool and 'complet[ing] the rest of their undergraduate studies in the UK' (Sykes et al. 2015: 81). Crucially, those final two years would be completed on the UoL campus, and in near-complete parallel with home/EU students. The strategic thinking behind this venture was to provide access to the highly sought after UK higher education market at an undergraduate and postgraduate level (cf. Yuan et al. 2016), to ensure revenue entered the University of Liverpool via additional student fees, and to forge research and institutional links between the UK and China; the latter being especially significant in an era of fluctuation in university enrolments from the UK, EU and globally (Kraal 2017).

The financial returns associated with HEI internationalisation have driven investment in both UK and overseas infrastructure including increased levels of staffing, the creation of new programmes of study, and the construction of overseas satellite or sister campuses (Elkin, Devjee, and Farnsworth 2005). Investment in capital infrastructure could be viewed as a mechanism to future proof student exchange via the creation of new institutional links. They also benefit from their role as an 'anchor institution' whereby research, teaching and outreach/development activities can take place with local stakeholders – an issue that has economic and socio-political relevance locally and internationally (Goddard et al. 2014).

Upon its inception some, but not all, UoL courses were offered to prospective 2+2 students – reflecting a mixture of market strength and the capacity and willingness of UoL departments to potentially expand

their programmes. Departments that participated include: Computer and Electrical Engineering, Chemistry, Architecture, Business, and the focus of this paper, Urban Planning. A common thread between each participating department was their individual (and collective) focus on the education of graduates within vocational subjects, who would then utilise their experiences at UoL/XJTLU in practice.

The first cohort of Planning 2+2 students arrived at the beginning of the 2008/9 academic year and in doing so, turned the undergraduate cohort from a largely Home/EU cohort with modest internationalisation (i.e. approximately 5%) to an effectively bi-national cohort where international students comprise the overwhelming majority. For example, of 2016/2017's second-year cohort of 109 students, over 95% were from XJTLU with the remaining 5% comprising UK, EU, and other overseas students.

From the very beginning, alongside delivering graduates capable of working as planners either in the UK, China, or beyond, the Planning 2+2 curriculum was designed with integration in mind. For the first two years at XJTLU students would complete modules which focused on providing a foundation of planning-related knowledge. This focused on planning in the UK, China, and within a global context addressing the history, theory, socio-political, economic, and environmental examination of development, so as to ensure that students opting to come to the UK would have a comparable academic knowledge[1] to students taught at UoL, whilst those opting to remain in China could similarly progress.

Within academic literature there is a corresponding discussion of how curricula can be more effectively aligned illustrating the complexity of ensuring that all students have are able to learn from a comparable academic basis. To do this effectively requires, as noted by Leask (2013:115), a better understanding of the 'mindset, skillset and heartset' of international students, as well as academic/teaching faculty and an institution's ability to react effectively to the changing needs of the student body. This includes reflecting on teaching and assessment type, and as noted previously engagement with culturally normative understandings of socio-cultural and political issues (Wylie 2008).

When registering for study at UoL, 2+2 students would be required to register on one of two pathways: *Urban* or *Environmental* planning. Crucially, in administrative terms, this was identical to the pathways on offer to those who had been at UoL through year one, although the terms of the 2+2 agreement meant transferring students would be prohibited from transferring to the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)-accredited *Master of Planning* (MPlan)[2]. Alongside two specialist modules relating to the selected pathway, as an RTPI accredited department, the second and third year curriculum also afforded opportunities to study urban design, rural planning, and to undertake an international fieldtrip. Transferring students would also be expected to complete a research-focused project in their third year (the only major pedagogical deviation is that MPlan students would complete this work in their fourth year of study).

The development of academic, research, and communication skills aimed at professional occupations has been a significant issue in the internationalisation process. In a UK context, delivering the professional competency framework of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has been central to planning teaching. Moreover, across the built environment the adherence to the practical needs of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) or the Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE) needs to be embedded within teaching programmes to ensure that graduates have the requisite technical, legal, and practical skills to translate their learning in practice. Such issues are not limited to the built environment but are evident in all vocational subjects, for example, education and medicine (Sumsion and Goodfellow 2004; McGarvey et al. 2015).

1 The academic Urban Design and Planning programme in Suzhou was designed, and has developed, to mirror the structures and focus of its sister degrees at the University of Liverpool. Students are taught planning history, theory, and digital, communication and practice-based skills in each year of study due to the vocational nature of 'planning', as a discipline. The most significant difference in approach is the adherence to established teaching metrics, assessment and styles with Suzhou drawing more frequently on North American approaches to marking and attainment than in the UK.

2 Although RTPI accreditation is mainly relevant to UK based planners, a number of former Commonwealth countries, i.e. Malaysia and Singapore, also place emphasis on the process. Within an internationalised market the RTPI accreditation is less instrumental in attracting students to the UK, compared to the wider benefits of studying overseas.

From an institutional perspective, the logistical integration was successful, and issues such as timetabling larger rooms and increased marking loads were broadly anticipated and ameliorated – for example the faculty within Planning expanded from 9 full-time teaching staff to 15 between 2009 and 2017. However whilst there was recognition that, in the first years of the XJTLU partnership, Planning at Liverpool had done much to 'meet the needs of both the larger international student intake… [and] Home and EU students' (Sykes et al. 2015: 82), student feedback – received through a combination of Staff-Student Teaching Committees, tutorials, and informal discussion with teaching staff, suggested that the transition and integration of a significant cohort of XJTLU students from Suzhou to Liverpool could be managed more effectively. The research of Ryan (2011), Sumsion and Goodfellow (2004), and Robson and Turner (2007) discuss examples of these issues assessing the mechanisms needed to successfully integrate students into 'new' ways of learning via discussions of co-learning techniques, the promotion of soft skills, and greater reflection on effective pedagogic approaches to large and/or diverse student cohorts. Over consecutive years, this message was relatively consistent: physical transference does not always mean that students are prepared for the learning styles and expectations of a UK planning degree. Perceived shortcomings centred on two closely linked areas (a) academic feedback and support, and (b) the need to prepare students for a life beyond graduation, i.e., employment, or postgraduate study.

Acknowledging this divergence, and as a means to facilitate the development of a more 'employable' and meaningful teaching experience for students making the transition to Liverpool from XJTLU, as well as addressing consistent commentary in Staff-Student Teaching committees a £5,000 Learning and Teaching (L&T) award was obtained for the 2016/2017 academic year by the then-Director of Undergraduate Planning. In doing so, the L&T intervention was premised on the following three research questions, which not only reflect the why and how approaches to teaching, but subsequently also address the what can be done question:

> Is there a need for [Planning at UoL to make] tailored interventions to better prepare and accommodate the needs of students transferring from XJTLU?

This was supplemented by a number of related issues:

a. If students do need more support, what alternate teaching strategies could be deployed?
b. Are skills-based interventions needed throughout the duration of a module?

Although focussed on the transition of Planning students the T&L project was premised on an understanding of wider institutional discussions pertaining to the successful integration and attainment of students transferring to UoL from XJTLU. Existent research literature focussed on internationalisation highlights that this issue is not unique to planning students at UoL or indeed to UoL. Rather, it is a phenomena that is directing innovative thinking about teaching and learning in North America, Australia and other parts of Europe. Interestingly, the real time needed to develop alternative strategies to maximise the effectiveness of learning is leading to greater innovation in practice across the HEI sector (Bowles and Murphy 2020; Bretag et al. 2014; Azmat 2013; Kraal 2017). The redevelopment of teaching materials to establish a more global, or Chinese, focus was paramount in such debates to ensure that graduates were able to apply their learning outside of the UK. The relevance of UK-centric curricula for a predominately non-UK student cohort required a systematic reflection on how, what, and why specific 'planning' topics were taught (see also the discussion of the teaching of law by Kraal (2017) for a comparison). UoL also aimed to ensure that graduates were receiving the most appropriate digital, i.e. urban design and cartographic, and communication skills required of an evermore demanding internationalised job market. Moreover, the ongoing transfer of students fluctuated yearly, and thus UoL had to consider what makes the university an attractive proposition for students: academically, socially, and in terms of employability.

The project was premised on four interventions into the teaching materials based on additional contact time and seminars associated with the second year module ENVS205 People and Place (Research Skills) module. The interventions were split between activities on-campus in Liverpool (Interventions One and Two), and those delivered online or in China on the XJTLU campus (Interventions Three and Four).

2.1. Interventions One and Two

First, a survey of 12 statements and 3 questions (numbered consecutively from 1-15) was administered to all students within the second-year cohort to obtain a base-line of students' perceptions of their key skills and competences, as well as their cultural expectations to generate baseline understanding for transferring and progressing students. Secondly, contact hours were doubled within the compulsory *ENVS205* module, through fortnightly non-compulsory workshops, focused either on developing key skills or reinforcing the learning objectives covered in previous lectures. Crucially, so that the students might take greater ownership of their own learning and development (Levy and Petrulis 2012; Winstone, Nash, Parker, and Rowntree 2017), the focus of over 50% of the workshops was informed by emerging student concerns rather than having being predetermined by course facilitators prior to the module's commencement.

2.2. Interventions Three and Four

Thirdly, an exchange of senior staff between XJTLU and Liverpool provided an opportunity to discuss curriculum development and synergy (informed by the results of the survey). Fourthly, a one-week crash course on key principles of UK planning was delivered to students at Suzhou prior to their arrival in Liverpool3. In addition, a growing pedagogical exchange developed between staff at UoL and XJTLU due to engagement with cross-institutional T&L development, module development and moderation, and joint supervision of student research projects.

The proposed interventions aimed to increase contact time, academic discussion related to study materials, and promote improved dialogue between 'UoL' and 'XJTLU' students and staff. Being partially student led allowed the facilitators a greater level of reflectivity in teaching practices to address both structural issues and the application of understanding within the student cohort. The reactive nature of the additional workshops provided a secondary mechanism to teaching in addition to traditional 'chalk and talk' lectures and group seminars.

3. Methodology

This paper deals with the interventions that specifically provided additional contact and one-to-one guidance for students in Year 2: namely, Interventions One and Two. With Interventions One and Two directly informing and being informed by the 'exchange' elements of Interventions Three and Four, careful design was required to maximise the efficacy of the data collection. Accordingly, the interventions were conducted as follows:

3.1. Intervention One: Surveys

To obtain baseline data of student perceptions of their key skills, an individual survey (Figure 1) was administered in the first session of ENVS205 (Week One, Semester One, 2016/17). Comprised of fifteen questions, and reflecting the work of Nunes (2004), the survey was designed to enable students – International and Home/EU alike – to reflect on their expectations of studying Planning at UoL, studying in the UK, and assess their own perceptions of the key skills they would require in doing so.

3 The one-week programme of lectures focussing on the structure and focus of the UoL Planning course, workshops discussing the transition to Liverpool, and a talk on student expectations was delivered in Suzhou in Semester Two of Year 2 for XJTLU students/by the former Head of Undergraduate Programmes via UoL/XJTLU staff exchange funding.

1. I want to study Planning in Liverpool because I want to improve my English language skills.
2. I easily understand what university staff are saying to me.
3. Often I have trouble understanding the Liverpool accent when I am visiting shops and restaurants.
4. I try to speak and write in English for at least three hours each day.
5. I feel that my studies in China have prepared me well for this experience
6. I believe that international students should not be penalised for making more writing mistakes than UK students
7. I have worked in small groups of four or five students on university projects in the past.
8. I am looking forward to group work with students from all over the world.
9. I am worried that I will not understand what the other members of my group will want me to do.
10. I feel confident that lecturers and other staff will make time to see me and listen to my concerns.
11. I feel embarrassed asking for help when I do not understand something.
12. There is a lot of learning support available to me if I need to access it.
13. Why did you want to study in the UK and at Liverpool?
14. What do you hope to achieve through this experience?
15. What else could the University of Liverpool do to help support your learning?

Figure 1: Survey of statements and questions administered to ENVS205 students at the start of Semester One

The survey comprised a mixture of closed Likert Scale answers, and more open qualitative reflection used to encourage students to proffer more substantive and contextual comments. Student participation was voluntary, and staff made clear that the survey was both anonymous, and not linked to a formative or summative assessment. This acknowledged the work of Bryman (2012) who observes that anonymity gives respondents more confidence to be frank and is considered to be less threatening. 91% of the class completed the survey proffering a wide range of well-considered comments suggest the students felt sufficiently assured to be candid.

3.2. Intervention Two, Part i: Workshops

The fortnightly workshops ran for the duration of Semester One, with each taking a theme broadly aligned to the previous week's lecture content. The workshop provision was principally motivated by the findings of Cuseo (2007, 6), who suggests that students may feel unsupported in traditional lecture environments, and may therefore be susceptible to a 'reduced depth of student thinking' and 'lower levels of academic achievement'. Thus, the fortnightly workshops funded through the L&T award gave students an opportunity to revisit themes and concepts discussed in the lectures and reinforce their existent learning. The format of the workshops varied between sessions, but centred on self-selected groups (of c.8 students), and provided opportunities to present and discuss their work, either individually or as a group, and receive peer feedback – reflecting Harland, Wald, and Randhawa's (2016, 2) contention 'that 'feedback is most effective when students are actively involved in the process'.

During Semester Two, the tone of the fortnightly workshops shifted to focus on a range of study skills issues that the students had themselves identified during Semester One – either through the survey administered under intervention one, or through discussions with facilitators. In this way student-led opinions and concerns directly shaped the content of subsequent sessions, and thus enabled the further reinforcement of 'inclusive practices [that]… overcome barriers to the participation and learning of students'(Ainscow 2015, 114), as well as creating a two-way process of dialogue in which student feedback is interpreted and acted upon (Nixon, Scullion, and Hearn 2016).

3.3. Intervention Two, Part ii: Drop-ins

Further to the workshops, one-to-one drop-in sessions were held during Semester One. Held after feedback for the first summative assessment for ENVS205 was made available, the 15-minute sessions offered students an opportunity to seek specific guidance on how they could have improved their assignments, as well as acting as a vehicle to ask questions regarding specific learning and teaching concerns. Although offered to all students in the ENVS205 cohort, all those who chose to attend the drop-in sessions were XJTLU students.[4]

4. Interventions One and Two: Findings and Analysis

4.1. Intervention One

Of the 96 respondents to the survey, when asked about their motivations to study at Liverpool, (Statement 1 and Question 13) 65% suggested that Liverpool's strong history, as the world's oldest planning school, was a motivating factor. In addition, a substantial majority (69%) of transferring students believed that they were relatively well prepared for their time abroad, that they possessed a good level of time management skills, and viewed the more theoretical Planning course offered by UoL, as a complement to the design-led courses that they had already studied at XJTLU. Away from this, a substantial majority (72%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they wanted to study Planning in Liverpool to improve their English language skills (Statement 1). However, the first survey also suggested that transferring students believed their English-language skills were good, with most either agreeing (40%) or ambivalent (43%) that they easily understood what university staff said (Statement 2).

Though responses to these questions highlighted students' self-perception of their confidence in spoken and written English, other responses suggested that this confidence had its limits. Though more than 80% of students said they could easily understand university staff, many observed that lecturers speaking either too quickly, or in non-standard accents (both regional, and international), presented them with the greatest difficulties (Statement 2 and Question 15). This was a comment that was further expanded upon in the qualitative comments made by five students who noted that they experienced particular difficulties when trying to communicate in local shops with Liverpudlians as a consequence of the latter's accents (Statement 3). This suggests that there may be merit in transferring students being afforded opportunities both within classroom and ex-curricular activities for further immersion into their host country's language and culture. In addition, greater reflection on how students can be exposed to 'native English' speakers in Suzhou by XJTLU could facilitate a greater understanding on arrival in the UK, i.e., greater staff exchange between UoL and XJTLU to teach students in China before they transfer to Liverpool.

In a similar manner, there are clear teaching and learning implications that only 22% of respondents agreed to the statement posed in Statement 4 that they 'try to speak and write in English for at least three hours each day', not least given that the most common written statements accompanying this answer noted how individual students were either too busy to achieve this or that most of the people they knew (e.g. roommates) were Chinese. Indeed, the perception that, despite the internationalisation of both the curricula (in terms of the literature, examples, and skills discussed) and cohorts, full integration remains difficult to achieve, was further exemplified by the fact that 50% of the transferring students indicated that they had either little or no contact with English students. Given, the benefit of total immersion and cultural interaction in second language skills noted by Kormos, Csizér, and Iwaniec (2015), and in light of clear indications that this was not occurring naturally, these findings suggest that there is a need for universities to be more proactive in giving students opportunities both within and beyond the classroom through which to engage with language and cultural transfer. This was discussed by Robson and Turner (2007) who called for a more holistic approach to internationalisation that challenged established practices (nominally those of male Anglo-Saxon staff) to embrace new forms of pedagogy and integrate them into practice.

4 Interestingly the additional non-UK students within the cohort choose not to attend any sessions. This suggests that (a) they felt confident in their academic learning; and/or (b) that non-XJTLU students felt the sessions were aimed as students transferring into UoL from XJTLU and not for progressing students.

Notwithstanding such linguistic obstacles, almost all of the students surveyed had, according to their answers to Statements 7, 8, and 9, previous experience of working in group projects (97%), with the majority either strongly agreeing or agreeing that they were looking forward to doing so with students from all over the world (80%).[5] The notable exceptions to the latter question were the five English students who completed the survey, all of whom either strongly disagreed or disagreed that they were looking forward to the experience. This gave insights into the issue of language (and wider ethos of group work/participation between mixed cohorts, Turner 2006; Gabb 2006) from another perspective where, with regard to worrying whether [other students] would understand what the other members of a group will want them to do, 32% agreed, with only 20% disagreeing (Statements 7, 8, 9). Here, almost all of the Home-EU students who completed the survey spoke of their concerns about their overall marks – particularly given that their second-year marks count towards their overall degree classification. Although these concerns related to issues around student grades, and the utility of the learning process, (Black et al. 2004), they suggest a degree of 'othering' is visible by Home-EU students with regard to transferring XJTLU students (see Hayes 2017 for a more detailed analysis of 'othering' and it's socio-cultural, political and financial meanings in UK HEIs). In turn, this suggested that further guidance, support and encouragement, as to the benefits of active cross-cultural working – both in terms of learning, and authentic experiences in the workplace – is necessary.

Statement 6 - whether international students should or should not be penalised for making more writing mistakes than UK students demonstrated the most widely distributed responses, 36% either strongly agreed, or agreed – each with 18% of responses. A further 35% were neutral on the matter, and 20% disagreed (9% strongly disagreed). Commentary included that 'ideas are more important than spelling', and that 'all students are equal', particularly 'if choosing to study in English'. Here, students recognised the importance of this issue, and welcomed dialogue with one comment [Respondent 41], saying that this was 'a good question which we should talk about'.

When asked about perceptions of pre-existing institutional support (Statements 10 and 12), most students were confident that lecturers and other staff would make time for them (45%), although a substantial number remained ambivalent (37%). Additionally, 65% believed there was substantial learning support available if needed. However, 26% neither agreed nor disagreed, and several comments suggested that the various mobile apps and UoL's online teaching portal were not sufficient, as more personalised support was important. Encouragingly, from the perspective of facilitating learning, a majority of comments noted that that there were no negative connotations in seeking assistance and that students felt comfortable approaching lecturers for assistance (Statements 10, 11,12).

The three, more open-ended, questions, which closed the survey, allowed students to return to some of these issues in more depth. For example, in Question 13, which asked 'Why did you want to study in the UK and at Liverpool?', the positives of having an international experience was a motivating factor (38%), but others spoke of broader pressures including parental/familial wishes, and longer-term career-focused positioning, e.g. the experience would better equip them for undertaking postgraduate study elsewhere in the UK. Building on many of the career-oriented issues raised thus far, Question 14, asked participants what they hoped to achieve through the experience of studying at UoL, providing a platform for respondents to go into greater depth. Again, whilst a majority (36%) discussed improving their English competency, improving professional skills was also a prominent aspiration (30%), with two detailed comments indicating that students hoped that studying Planning at Liverpool would help them get a better job. Although international experience (7%) was an existing theme, here answers put a culturally specific perspective on it, with two particular replies: 'to build a better China' and to determine 'how a capitalist country is different from a socialist country', indicating how this would be put to practical use after graduation.

Students also spoke of life beyond study, indicating the importance that students place on work-life balance. Here, numerous respondents commented that making a 'happy life with friends' was important. One ambitious student thought that the year abroad would help him 'to be a better man, positive, helpful, who never gives

5 It is noticeable that those students reading Planning at the University of Liverpool are predominately British or Chinese/Hong Kong nationals. Only a minor proportion of students taking undergraduate planning degrees are from a wider European or international background.

up'. This is important, and shows that for many students university study is more than grades; which may raise potential areas of conflict between students who see university principally as a 'means to an end' – i.e. are focused exclusively on grades as extrinsic learners – and those who see the opportunity as one for general betterment (Bretag et al. 2014).

Finally, Question 15 (What else could the University of Liverpool do to help support your learning?) elicited the greatest number of comments, and again revisited many of the issues discussed above. 9% of participants wanted more support for Chinese students, with Respondents 8 and 94 wanting more English conversation to be facilitated. Respondent 2 issued a plea for staff to speak more slowly, which echoes earlier comments made regarding Statements 2 and 3. Speaking to both pre-and-post-submission concerns the request for more guidance on progress was voiced by Respondents 38 and 39, whilst Respondent 22 also suggested that a group could be set up to check and advise students on grammar and spelling in coursework. This was a concern that would be further noted – and addressed – in the drop-in sessions that were subsequently held. These responses also give further credence to the previously noted opinions of Harland, Wald and Randhawa (2016) with regard to the need to increase peer-review learning and feedback opportunities. Here, there was also a clear desire to have more one-to-one contact with lecturers, as three respondents believed that face-to-face talks between students and staff would be helpful; Respondent 9 would even like to 'make friends with lecturers', as well as obtain 'good references for postgrad study'. Beyond this, other students (14, 90) spoke of their desire for self-supported study, and in a similar manner, six participants suggested that it would be useful to access beforehand the key readings for a lecture (5, 12, 50), arguing that this would allow them to 'check the difficult work before class'.[6] This concern by a limited number of students suggests, however, that further – and continual – reinforcement of the availability of such resources is needed if facilitators are to ensure that learners' potential is always maximised.

4.2. Intervention Two, Part i: Workshops

Through the L&T workshops, alongside informal information gathered in conversation with the students and observations during both lectures and tutorials, it became apparent that transferring students desired more written and directed feedback. Here, international students in particular sought greater guidance and informal formative feedback on either drafts of their summative assessments, or reassurance that their work conformed to the demands of the assessment. This was especially evident in those workshops that focused on the module's first summative assessment.

Prior to the intervention, it had been assumed, in line with the findings of Rowe (2011), that students – especially within the more marketised setting of higher education, merely desired more feedback *per se*. What was surprising, therefore, was the extent to which students across the cohort sought *further* guidance, not only on individual assignments themselves but also more general academic skills. This was exemplified by the fact that, as Semester One developed, students asked for workshops to be held on, for example, the differences between reports and essays, conducting a literature review, using archival sources, and practical advice on group work scenarios. Students also wanted to receive feedback on the practice presentations that they were undertaking in preparation for future group-based oral presentations delivered in Semester Two.

With regard, therefore, to how the L&T grant could shape and enhance future teaching and learning, such student comments revealed a clear need for the incorporation of learning environments beyond that of the traditional lecture hall in order to address significant skill gaps and thus leave *all* students feeling adequately prepared for their assignments. Additionally, the number of topics requested far exceeded the workshops timetabled (and costed) for Semester One. This may therefore suggest - and it is accepted that the results from an L&T grant focused on a single module cannot be generalisable - that students themselves see degree programmes as not only needing to deliver subject-specific knowledge, but also as needing to train them in an array of skills that, in previous generations, were left to be developed outside the classroom. Thus, a process of osmosis is visible whereby students engage in a dual form of learning: academic and socio-cultural, that

6 Well before the present outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the dissemination of teaching resources, it was already established practice within the discipline at Liverpool that core readings, lecture slides, and other learning resources were placed online at least 24 hours before a given lecture takes place.

allows them to develop new capabilities (Lauridsen, 2020). However, this process requires a level of curation by academic staff that goes beyond merely conducting assessment to ensure that a balance is established between academic attainment and life skills (Bretag et al. 2014; Lee et al. 2018).

Such student-based changes of emphasis are especially pertinent for courses such as Planning where curriculum content is governed not only by internal departmental and university considerations but also issues of professional accreditation and delivering an education programme that maps effectively onto the competencies required for practice. In terms of planning education this relates to the RTPI and the RICS, but is also pertinent to other vocational subjects such as teaching, social work or medicine (Crooner 2020; McGarvey et al. 2015). Here, these student-driven changes reinforce the contentions of, amongst others, Duhr, Cowell, and Markus (2016, 21) who urge Europe's planning schools to reflect in their curricula the increasing internationalism of the profession, not only in terms of practitioners. Such statements provided space to reflect on the composition of Planning degrees at UoL, the alignment of professional accreditation competencies within the curriculum, and the appropriateness of the teaching programme to a bi-national student body. These additional activities were actioned by the new Head of Undergraduate Teaching during the 2016/17 academic year, asking all Planning staff to consider whether the programmes still reflected the department's teaching ethos and expertise, and whether they were suitable for a largely overseas student cohort. It also gives credence to the rejection of that traditional orthodoxy of planning teaching, whereby a planning course 'should be made up of a little bit of everything that a planner ought to know' in terms of subject discipline knowledge (for further details see Perloff 1957, 170, cited in Batey 1985, 414), in favour of the development of courses that incorporate wider soft skills that are not profession specific including communication and digital literacy (Hirt 2002). This complements UoL's policy on authentic assessment discussed earlier, which specifically promotes these principles so as best to prepare graduates for work.

Though the L&T funding for the additional workshops was only in place in Semester One, the positive results, perceived student demand for the project's activity, and as a consequence of the issues that had arisen in both the surveys and workshops, it was decided by the ENVS205/ teaching team that the intervention should be rolled forward into Semester Two. To this end, therefore, a second programme of intervention was initiated. Further workshops were held in Semester Two alongside another series of optional and voluntary one-to-one drop-in sessions. Finally, and as a means to capture the effects of this work, a second survey was administered at the end of the formal teaching period of Semester Two to f gauge students' perceived changes in their skills over the course of the module, and the utility of the interventions made.

4.3. Intervention Two, Part ii: Drop-in Sessions

The 15-minute drop-in sessions were popular amongst students. The sign-up sheets for the drop-ins were filled within two days of them being made available, and without exception, each overran. This response level gives credence to the observations of Gibbs and Simpson (2004) in that the perceived value of face-to-face contact time remains high amongst today's students.

Within the drop-in sessions, two particular soft-skill/generic academic skill questions arose. First, 75% of attendees (41 students), asked for guidance on referencing and how to add critical analysis within a Western context of academic writing. In particular, concerns focused on issues of plagiarism and how and where references were needed, the differences between a descriptive narrative and critical analysis, and how best to achieve the latter. Indeed, in every drop-in session, staff were asked line-by-line, highly specific questions as to how to phrase planning ideas and concepts, demonstrating that the questions went well beyond the mere mechanics of writing. This may suggest, though further research is needed, that despite institution-wide support services such as the English Language Centre (ELC) providing invaluable support to students in *how* to write, there is a gap between such generic training and the academic demands of planning as a discipline, which require additional interventions that are subject- and student-specific. As one student commented, although she had learnt how to write through both her studies at XJTLU and the sessions she had attended in the ELC, the drop-in session allowed her to understand the 'careless errors' that she had made and to realise that she 'needed to check work more thoroughly before handing it in'.

Other topics of interest in the drop-in sessions included discussions on the use of language; maintaining a formal tone; how shorter sentences can improve meaning; the excessive repetition of words or concepts; padding; and the differences between a report and an essay. Accordingly, the drop-in sessions not only informed the students' practice, but also permitted the further communication of needs and wants that could directly impact upon future curriculum design and, through so doing, promote enhanced teaching as well as ongoing practitioner reflection (Nixon, Brooman, Murphy, and Fearon 2016; Brooman, Darwent, and Pimor 2014).

4.4. Intervention Two, Part iii: Second Survey

1. I have improved my knowledge and skills in key areas.
2. Were you happy with the grades you have received?
3. How did the seminars help you to understand the lectures?
4. The feedback I received was helpful.
5. I would like more one-to-one time with the lecturers to understand the course better.
6. The seminars helped me to make sense of the lectures.
7. I was surprised how many errors I made in written work and referencing.
8. I have been well prepared for my studies at UoL and am able to organise my time effectively.
9. Did the team work presentations develop your skills?
10. Did you feel confident about the group presentation?
11. Did you learn useful skills in the CV exercise?

Figure 2: Second Survey Questions – Administered to ENVS205 students at the end of the module

These student-led concerns were repeated in the responses received from the 85 students (78% of the module's/ENVS205's total cohort) who completed the second, end-of-module, survey (Figure Two). As with the first survey, this survey also contained a range of statements and questions. That those students who completed the second survey wanted reassurance and advice on such matters demonstrates the importance of the intervention: according to the students themselves, they believe they need more support, thus answering the primary research question of the original L&T intervention.

To Statement 1, 69% of respondents were either confident or very confident that they had improved their skills on the course, with 85% of respondents to Question 2 noting that they were either 'happy' or 'very happy' with the grades that they had received. Question 3 sought to relate the fortnightly seminars to the lectures (also fortnightly); 89% either agreed or strongly agreed that the seminars had helped reinforce their understanding of the issues addressed in lectures. Within their additional comments, 27 students suggested that the seminars added context, with 19 remarking that the 'less traditional' format and atmosphere of seminar teaching had aided them in gaining valuable skills. This is a finding that can be seen to reflect the views of DeNeve and Heppner (1997, 232) with regard to the need to move away from the passive learning environment of lecture halls in favour of more interactive learning environments.

Furthermore, Rowe (2011) notes that students across the higher education sector want more written feedback. This was corroborated by 67% of respondents in Survey Two (Statement 4). Notably, a third of those seeking extra comments wished for feedback that *explained* rather than merely *noting* the errors they had made because they needed help *understanding how* to correct errors and *where and how* they could improve. In other words, the students wanted feedback that not only commented on the assessed piece of work but also gave them the tools to remedy such problems in future pieces of work. Whilst it is already established practice within UoL that the written feedback given to students goes substantially beyond 'evaluative feedback' (Schinske and Tanner, 2014), such student-voiced concerns suggest that more still needs to be done if we are to ensure that students are empowered to take ownership of their own learning and progression within a course or programme of study by applying that which they have done well in one assessment to subsequent assessments. Providing all students with such additional drop-in sessions and verbal feedback would, however, significantly impact staffing and the allocation of time to additional teaching sessions, and cannot be acted upon in isolation. However, that the students themselves raised such an issue potentially raises significant issues regarding the nature and scope of feedback provided in a marketised higher education sector.

Survey Two also revealed differences between what students perceived as their strengths as recorded in the survey at the start of the year, and the realities of these strengths once they had reflected upon their marked assignments. In responding to Statement 7, for instance, 58% of students were surprised or very surprised how many errors they made in referencing and writing, although 19% felt that they had improved over the course of the year. This suggests that variation exists in how the University of Liverpool regulations on academic practice, i.e. referencing and plagiarism, are employed at XJTLU, which may indicate why the transition is difficult for some students.

Providing learners with the means to develop through reflection was a primary element of this second intervention. As Power (2016) notes, students may have less experience in formulating a reflective framework, and thus this intervention sought to develop student reflections on their learning environments. As the results of the intervention show, there is also a need to provide them with opportunities to revisit and refresh skills, even as their programmes of study develop. Given differing cultural and academic norms, this is particularly pertinent for English as a second language (ESL) students within the UoL context, and demonstrates that the research question – whether more support is needed – was valid.

The students were asked in Survey Two, Statement 8, to reflect on the extent to which previous study had prepared them for the rigours of undertaking a Planning degree at UoL, as well as the time management skills that they had developed over the two semesters: the percentage of those who felt confident in their time management abilities was, at the end of the course, only 57%. Two aspects of this result are worthy of note. First, in Survey Two, 32 students (38% of respondents) opined in their qualitative comments that XJTLU/UoL needed to provide greater guidance and expertise in these areas prior to their commencing studies at UoL. Individual comments included that students required greater guidance on referencing prior to enrolment at UoL (5 students), that guidance on 'how to improve writing, find resources [both in libraries and online] and use feedback more efficiently' could be improved (3 students each), and there was a need for lecturers to introduce more relevant reading to students both prior to, and after, individual classes (5 students).

Such comments reinforced the appropriateness of the aims of the initial and subsequent interventions and confirmed the validity of the initial research question:

> Is there a need for [Planning at UoL to make] tailored interventions to better prepare and accommodate the needs of students transferring from XJTLU?

Secondly, two entire lectures and one workshop were devoted to this issue. This confirms evidence that students might benefit from techniques such as spaced repetition (Desy et al. 2017) in the development and harnessing of such key skills. If so, again, either enhanced contact hours or revisions to the curriculum whereby key skills are incorporated throughout the delivery of modules would be necessary. Consideration of spaced repetition techniques in planning also demonstrates how the discipline could benefit from applying pedagogic techniques that have, traditionally, been found in other disciplines, especially medicine (Cecilio-Fernandes et al. 2017; Brown 2017) and would further underline the extent to which there is a need for facilitators to be aware of pedagogic developments outside their own specialisms and the benefits of being open to new teaching methods.

Survey Two also revealed issues regarding contact hours, teaching, learning, and assessment styles. Despite more than doubling contact hours through the L&T workshops and subsequent drop-in sessions, 64% of students wanted more designated (and specifically one-to-one) contact time. Most students had also attended designated office hours and thus it was not because they had failed to use support already available that they attended the drop-in sessions. The survey and take-up of the drop-in sessions offered may indicate that there is a disparity between the contact hours desired by students and those presently afforded. That the specific focus of these extra time requests is related to one-to-one time rather than general 'class' time is also significant because it suggests – in keeping with the anecdotal evidence accumulated through both intervention programmes – that targeted help is sought in privacy, away from the potential judgement of peers. This finding reinforces a cultural dimension noted in Survey One, that 65% of XJTLU students felt a form of embarrassment at having to ask for help publicly. This corroborates research stating there is a need to embed mechanisms by which students can readily seek additional guidance without undue stress, be it

through the use of email, Post-it notes or clickers during lectures (Wentao, Jinyu, and Zhonggen 2017), or through the use of other (non-lecture hall) learning practices (Singh, Hachemi, and Pena-Fernandez 2017).

Finally, Survey Two asked students to reflect on their group work experiences within the module, especially the usefulness of the CV/letter exercise (Semester One), and the group oral presentation that students were required to deliver upon different aspects of the Northern Powerhouse (see Nurse 2015 for a discussion of the development of this terminology), in Semester Two. A significant majority – 87% – of respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the CV exercise had taught them important life skills; and, 23% of respondents commented that exposure to actual CVs in the workshops and discussing different CV approaches had been very helpful. Moreover, 85% respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the group oral presentation had improved their communication and presentation skills, with some noting that peer-encouragement and feedback in the second set of workshops had helped them. Such findings have direct implications for developing future approaches within the module so that it can be delivered in a manner that always maximises learning potential. Students' perceived preference for active learning environments such as workshops confirms research by Schumm et al. (2014) that traditional lectures need to be substantially supplemented by alternative delivery protocols, such as workshops. Indeed, as Singh, Hachemi, and Pena-Fernandez (2017, 1193) submit, the 'traditional lecture…is a relatively poor instructional approach' to learning. A substantial number of respondents (62%) preferred the group work and CV exercise to more traditional (essay-based) forms of assessment. This finding confirms that moves by UoL towards embedding realistic assessment techniques over traditional learning formats are attractive to students.

5. Implications of the Research

From the evidence attained from XJTLU students in the ENVS205 module 2016/2017 cohort there appears to be a demand for tailored subject- and skill-specific support sessions. These are not proposed as a replacement for existing teaching mechanisms but should be planned to provide additional learning/assessment outcome led activities and be focused on the acquisition and reinforcement of individual skills. The responses from students at UoL are not unique and represent a wider set of challenges facing HEIs as greater numbers of international students continue to study overseas (Robson and Turner 2007; Bretag et al. 2014). Support therefore needs to be given in an active learning environment where students are engaged in a two-way (staff-student) or multi-directional (staff-student-peers) process of learning, as opposed to the passive environment of the lecture hall (Haidet et al. 2004). This confirms the assumptions that informed the original research questions and justified the interventions. Mechanisms whereby students can seek guidance and support without feeling embarrassed or judged by their peers are also essential.

Secondly, in a more commercialised and internationalised higher education environment students expect greater one-to-one contact with staff and more feedback (especially written), including opportunities to learn from their peers (Lee et al. 2018). This suggests the existing dominant method of module delivery (lectures) should be supplemented by workshops, seminars, and one-to-one contact to enhance educational opportunities. Questions though remain regarding whether HEI will continue to fund new teaching and/or faculty posts or invest in technology or physical infrastructure to meet the added capacity needs of growing student body Elkin, Devjee, and Farnsworth 2005; Goddard, Coombes, Kempton, and Vallance 2014). The continuing expansion of student numbers suggests that such investment would be prudent. By maintaining the infrastructure supporting the quality of the academic and living environment international students are more likely to continue to engage in learning outside of their home countries (Cantwell 2015). An ongoing evaluation of student needs and institutional capacity is therefore needed across the HEI sector.

Thirdly, as evidenced in the answers to Survey Two Question 8, whilst XJTLU does prepare, to some extent, transferring students well for undertaking study at Liverpool, improvements could be made so that, for instance, students are more aware of the specific referencing and analytical demands of the course prior to commencing their studies. Moreover, a greater emphasis could be placed on mapping the intended learning outcomes of Year 1 UoL modules onto Year 1 and 2 module at XJTLU to ensure complementarity and continuity of learning. If such an intervention in study skills could be made, students could progress throughout the course, rather than 'stalling' and then progressing. Thus, the proposed one-week crash course suggested in

the original intervention could, if continued in coming years, provide greater insight into the process students undergo in preparing for their year abroad.

Finally, there was an unexpected issue that arose during Intervention Two, which should, arguably, be investigated further. The workshops on preparing for the oral presentations were not attended by any Home/UK registered students. As an adjunct to the intervention's focus (given issues of time and cost), a small group of the Home students were asked why they had chosen not to attend; they were assured that their responses would remain anonymised. Reasons given included comments such as 'I didn't need to, I know how to speak the language', and 'it's a session that only the foreign students need'. The belief held by some Home students that their natural advantage in terms of language proficiency was such that they would not benefit from further preparation and guidance was, in many cases, misplaced. In Semester Two's group oral presentation exercise, the three top performing groups were all exclusively comprised of XJTLU students. Each XJTLU-based group had applied themselves diligently, received initial feedback from their peers and staff, and spent several hours within those workshops refining their presentations; these were aspects notably absent in the preparations from the approach adopted by their Home counterparts. Notwithstanding potential underlying issues of cultural entitlement (see the discussion of 'othering' by Hayes 2017), the Home students did not perceive a need for them to avail themselves of an intervention that was designed for all. In considering a penumbral issue to the research question, it is evident that their skills also needed to be enhanced throughout the module. Although the interventions were cognisant that XJTLU comprised the majority of the cohort, they offered significant benefits for all students and it could, at first sight, be seen as a failing on the part of facilitators that this was not adequately communicated (Ryan,2011). This, and the cultural 'othering' inherent with the comments of the Home Students is, however, a greater issue than this paper can address, and further research would be needed before an approach to resolving such emerging issues could be developed.

6. Conclusion

The transfer of a large, and homogenous, cohort of international students between institutions raises interesting and complex questions about teaching, curricula and how student support are managed. At an institutional level the transition is simply a mathematical issue of registering students, finding them accommodation and integrating their numbers into timetabling. However, at an operational and departmental level the integration of a high number of English Second Language (ESL) students, even those educated for two years at a sister institution, presents problems. The L&T project sought to smooth the transition of XJTLU students from Suzhou to the University of Liverpool by recognising that there are logistical, staffing and socio-cultural elements to the move that are not necessarily addressed by either institution either before students' departure, or on their arrival (Ryan 2011; Kraal 2017; Azmat et al. 2013). In addition, the L&T project identified a need within the student body to receive a greater proportion of one-to-one teaching about *how* to improve performance and not simply on the substantive *'what'* of module content. It was also proposed that the level of preparation of students prior to the transfer could be improved to ensure a continuity of approach is used to structure and grade assessments in the UK and China. A further dilemma for teaching staff in Planning at UoL was whose responsibility is it to ensure that students are prepared for the move and how do staff ensure that all transferring students gain the most effective education form their two years in Liverpool? Again this is not unique to planning, or to planning staff and students at UoL, but is an issue that requires ongoing reflection to ensure the learning environment is appropriate and equitable (Kelly and Moogan 2012). To date neither XJTLU nor the University of Liverpool have addressed this issue effectively at an institutional level, and it has fallen to individual departments to ensure that the transition is smooth.

To address these issues the interventions planned and undertaken via the L&T project in 2016/17 highlighted a series of issues that should be addressed if the transition of planning students from XJTLU to the University of Liverpool is to be improved.

1. Both institutions need to place more emphasis on preparing students for transition. This should incorporate an increased engagement with the types of learning employed at the University of Liverpool, regulations regarding academic practice, i.e. plagiarism, and more specific guidance on life in the UK. Within the L&T project the then Head of Undergraduate Programmes visited XJTLU twice and gave talks on the programmes, life in the UK and what to expect from the transition. This was

not a common practice from individual departments or at an institutional level, due to logistical and financial costs, at the time and the student responses to discussions of assignments, expectations of group and individual work, and the wider pedagogical approach taken by the University of Liverpool were not known.

2. An acceptance by XJTLU and the University of Liverpool that, although sister institutions following the same academic model, education in China and the UK is different, and that students need to be trained in working in both systems. The aim of such activities is to balance the expectations of students transferring to Liverpool and smooth the transition between institutions. To achieve this funding should be made available for departments to create bespoke training/classes to facilitate this process, as originally planned within the L&T project.
3. Students need to recognise that they have moved institutions and are now working within the University of Liverpool system. This includes recognition of their own limitations, expectations from their time in Liverpool, and preparedness to up-skill with the academic and personal approaches to life in a foreign environment. Within the L&T project transferring students engaged extensively and effectively with the additional support provided and used the sessions to address short comings that were identified once they arrived in Liverpool.
4. An ongoing development, funding, and delivery of targeted interventions would be beneficial to international and home students in preparing their soft skills, which are becoming increasingly valuable to employers. From the analysis presented previously we can highlight the improvements made in student attainment when engaging with the additional sessions provided.

Overall, the L&T project was deemed to have effectively aided the transition of students from XJTLU to the University of Liverpool in 2016/17. Through additional contact sessions and one-to-one guidance, students concluded the ENVS205 module with a greater awareness of their skills and importantly areas in need of improvement, which was absent at the commencement of the project. The project also highlighted a lack of effective preparation for students moving to Liverpool, which could be addressed through further engagement between departments in Suzhou and Liverpool. The L&T project also highlighted how students transferring to Liverpool were prepared to engage with additional skills-based activities when they were linked to their degrees (and their attainment). It therefore seems viable to ensure that soft and employable skills are integrated more effectively into the teaching of planning students. Finally, we conclude that the transition of a large cohort of students from XJTLU to the University of Liverpool is a complex process. Therefore, through more directed interventions in preparing students for the move their expectations can be managed and subsequently, by engaging them in soft skills sessions on arrival, the transition from a Chinese system of university education to a UK centred practice could be more effectively managed.

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Transactions of the Association of European Schools of Planning • 5 (2021)
doi: 10.24306/TrAESOP.2021.02.004

THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN PLANNING STUDIO AS A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH.

EXPERIENCES FROM GRENOBLE & SFAX (2012-20)

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(Received 06 July 2021; revised version received 29 November 2021; final version accepted 20 December 2021)

Abstract

In 2012, an international planning studio was organized by the Urban Planning Institute of Grenoble (France) at Sfax (Tunisia). What could have been a one-off project evolved into a long-term cooperation between French and Tunisian partners. The international cooperation in urbanism studio is now the focus of the teaching approach in both years of the Urbanism and International Cooperation master's programme. This paper firstly considers the theoretical and practical contexts in which these studios developed. It then goes on to explore the planning concepts on which they are built. The main pedagogical characteristics are then drawn out. Finally, the lessons which can be learned from this experience and the potential for these to be applied elsewhere are evaluated.

Keywords

planning pedagogy, planning studio, studio abroad, Grenoble & Sfax, international cooperation

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1. Introduction

Together with professional experience, internships or apprenticeships, and the mastery of a multidisciplinary culture and the dissertation, the studio – or workshop – is a basic element of training in urban planning or urbanism (Heumann and Wetmore, 1984; Guttenberg and Wetmore, 1987; Wetmore and Heumann, 1988; Higgins et al, 2009; Grant Long, 2012; Bastin and Scherrer, 2018).

After pioneer experiences of "cross-cultural learning" design studio from the 1980s onwards (Banerjee, 1990), a new type of studio emerged in the early 2000s, seemingly at the same time in the Anglophone and French speaking worlds: the "international studio", "travelling studio" or "studio abroad" (Abramson, 2005). This new form of studio has only been the subject of a limited number of scientific articles (Macedo, 2017; Bastin and Scherrer, 2018; Cremaschi, 2019; Jones, 2019). These international live experiences are seen as a good thing for two reasons: professionally, they can effectively prepare students for a professional world that is increasingly globalised. Second, they allow students, by opening up to other societies, cultures and ways of working, to reconstruct their relationship to the world around them, which, beyond professional knowledge, can have profound repercussions on how they perceive themselves (Abramson, 2005; Dandekar, 2009).

This paper focuses on a particular sub-type of international studio: the *international cooperation in urbanism studio*. The paper explores a number of questions. Being a sub-type of a sub-type of planning studio, how far is this type of studio like other examples of the international, or travelling, studio? What are the main characteristics of the Grenoble and Sfax case study in terms of teaching concepts and approach the type of learners? What are the difficulties in comparison with other studios? What are the effects of such experience on students? And finally, what lessons can be learned from it?

This paper draws predominantly on observations of a series of eight studio experiences, from 2012 to 2020, which contributed to a more complex collaborative relationship between two cities and their respective universities and municipalities[1]. The experiences are evaluated from the point of view of the students from a complete series of deliverables: written final reports, public presentations of projects (slide shows in pdf/ppt and video formats), and public exhibitions. Some 25 students, from both countries, provided written feedback at the request of their professors, either at the end of the course (about one month after returning home) or several years after, for the purposes of this research. This feedback covers five out of eight of the studios, from 2015 until 2020. For each of the eight studios, the students have contributed their private archives. These documents provide access to their personal daily experiences through photos, recordings, videos of the fieldwork, drawing books, in situ testimonies, and even a master's thesis in the form of a comic strip (Rajic, 2020).

The author played a number of roles in this international cooperation: co-director of seven studios, deputy-director then director of the Planning Institute, inviting professor for Tunisian colleagues and doctoral students in France, and co-author of an illustrated trilingual book on the two cities' urban life (Roux et al, 2019). The relationship is continuing. At the time of the writing, a 10th studio is in preparation for 2022, after an experience of a distance-learning studio due to the COVID pandemic. A collective atlas about Sfax metropolis is in development, under the supervision of Tunisian colleagues (Bennasr and Ben Fguira, forthcoming). The studios observed in this article were organised in Sfax. In Grenoble, Tunisians have been involved, every year, in a variety of teaching and research activities as professors and PhD or master students, but with only two proper studios; that experience is not reported here.

1 Sfax is a port city in the east of the country, located about 270 kilometres from Tunis. It is the second largest Tunisian city, and a leading economic and university centre with a population of 272,801 in 2014 within an urban area of approximately 600,000 inhabitants. Grenoble is a university town in the Alps, specialising in high technology, located 550 kilometres from Paris. It is the second largest agglomeration in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, with 157,650 inhabitants in 2018 within an urban area of 451,096 inhabitants. The two municipalities have been cooperating since 1968 and the two universities signed a partnership agreement in 2016.

2. Characteristics of the International Cooperation in Planning Studio

The emergence and development of international planning studios can be seen in the more general context of the internationalisation of higher education which began in the early 21st. century (Pezzoli and Howe, 2001; Gacel-Ávila, 2005). Opening up to the international arena was identified as a strategic objective for higher education institutions. It is widely believed that the students of tomorrow must be prepared to work in an increasingly international, intercultural, and globalised world, and that the internationalisation of universities must be conducted in an intentional and inclusive manner:

In sum, the modern internationalised university: (a) serves a global community by welcoming and attracting talented, international students and scholars, (b) addresses local as well as global problems, which often cannot be investigated in isolation, through research and social engagement, (c) ensures inclusive, intercultural learning and competency development in and through the classroom and curricula, and (d) fosters a more peaceful world by increasing mutual understanding. (Frank, 2019, 8)

The paradox is that actors do not hear the same thing when they talk about internationalisation. For some, it is an essential lever for attractiveness and competitiveness, understood in a neo-liberal and quantifiable sense (the number of foreign students, exchange students, international agreements, and so on), while advocates of a form of internationalism hope that it will increase the intercultural skills of everyone. Even if universities opt for the latter, experience shows that the increase in the proportion of foreign students does not have an automatic effect on intercultural learning.

Frank examines five types of innovative international planning collaboration initiatives: (a) comparative research network, (b) international doctoral college, (c) co-diplomation, (d) bilateral agreements and (e) the international planning studio, which she describes as a “collaborative international live project”:

> While highly valuable for learning, ‘live’ projects are resource intensive (e.g., Forsyth et al, 2000; Kotval, 2003) and international live projects incur additional complexities in their delivery. Nevertheless, with planning schools under pressure to increase the level of international experiences for students while also having to offer practice-based curriculum elements, international live projects represent a promising pedagogical approach that can satisfy both needs by bringing students from different cultures together for one-two weeks of project work. (...) They are generally run once or twice but often cease once project funding runs out. (Frank, 2019, 14)

2.1. Definitions

An urban planning studio is an integral, intensive and live teaching course that allows students to put their theoretical knowledge, know-how, and interpersonal skills into practice. Under supervision of a group of teachers, students work together to provide a response through periods of study, observation, analysis and project development, with constant iterations. A report to the sponsor - most often in the form of an oral presentation and/or a written document - generally concludes the studio. Thus defined, the urban planning studio normally involves fieldwork, unless there are financial, geopolitical or health constraints. A studio can be carried out *pro bono* or be subject to a financial contribution by the client. It is supervised by a small teaching team which provides a complementarity of disciplines and professional status (teacher/researcher/practitioner). In contrast to studios in architecture or landscape, students are put in a position of working together on a collective response. This does not, however, prevent them from being organised into sub-groups during the study or project phases in order to test different hypotheses or scenarios. The larger the number of students, the more difficult it is to maintain such a system.

An international cooperation in urban planning studio is first and foremost a collaborative effort between students and teachers which contributes to the production of a “studio work”; there is a strong notion of peer learning. The studio takes place with one or more delegations of students from foreign partner universities.

This kind of studio may be referred to as a "studio abroad", a term possibly coined by Abramson (2005, 89), and defined as:

> A subtype of education abroad that results in progress toward an academic degree at a student's home institution. Students generally enrol in academic coursework for a traditional classroom-based experience abroad. Depending on the selected program, academic credit will be earned via the host institution or via the home institution (Ogden, 2015).

This meaning, which has become standard among international educators in the U.S., excludes the pursuit of a full academic degree at a foreign institution. It can also be referred to as a "community-engaged form of learning" or as "community service-learning" which is defined as:

> A course-based, credit-bearing education experience in which students (a) participate in organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995, 112; see also Levkoe et al., 2020; Roakes and Norris-Tirrell, 2000).

2.2. Genesis

Studios abroad in French urban planning have been strongly connected to the development of international cooperation between cities, regions, and states from the 1980s onwards and the subsequent development of international tracks in planning masters degrees. In Grenoble, the master's degree has specialised in international cooperation since 1990 under different names (see Table 1).

Table 1: Successive international tracks in planning masters degrees

Academic year	Title of the master's degree	Tracks
1990 - 1999	DESS Urbanisme & Aménagement *Urbanism & Planning*	Villes et Développement *Cities and Development*
1999 - 2004	DESS Urbanisme & Aménagement *Urbanism & Planning*	Villes et Développement & Coopération Internationale *Cities and Development & International Cooperation*
2004 - 2016	Master Sciences du Territoire *Territorial Sciences*	Urbanisme, Habitat & Coopération Internationale *Urbanism, Habitat & International Cooperation*
2016 - 2021	Master Urbanisme & Aménagement *Urbanism & Planning*	Urbanisme & Coopération Internationale *Urbanism & International Cooperation*
2021 onwards	Master Urbanisme & Aménagement *Urbanism & Planning*	Transformative Urban Studies[2]

DESS: Diplôme d'Études Supérieures Spécialisées (Diploma of Higher Specialized Studies)

The first studio abroad, in the form of an "international urban project studio", was not run until the 1999-2000 academic year. Until 2003, these studios were held in partnership with the local municipalities of El Jem, Monastir, and Sfax in Tunisia; and Taroudannt in Morocco within the international cooperation schemes of the Rhône-Alpes region and Romans-sur-Isère municipality. In 2003-04, a six-month long studio was organised in Mali with the Municipality of Timbuktu as part of its new development plan which was supported by the Rhône-Alpes region and Handicap International.

These studios insisted on horizontal relationships with the other country in order to carry out an *exchange of competences*. Students were invited to cooperate with their fellow students, university teachers, local elected officials, artists, and civil society. They also emphasised giving elected officials a real piece of work in urban planning – from urban study to urban design - including analysis and project. The studios relied on broad skills ranging from hand and computer aided drawing, communication, writing reports, to organising public exhibitions.

2 This new master's programme was created in September 2021 through the merging of three international degrees: the one discussed in this paper, the English-speaking Planning track, and the International Development Studies masters in Geography. The new programme will be bilingual and named TRUST for "transformative urban studies".

This early period was a kind of 'golden age' characterised by a great deal of organisational freedom, very small groups of students (maximum 12), and local authorities being ready to commit themselves politically and financially to decentralised cooperation via their respective universities. It did not last beyond 2004. The teachers then had to constantly find new sources of funding and partners. The quality of the studios suffered. The commission, money for travelling and accommodation, and reliable or understanding local partners were often missing. Sometimes the students themselves were absent when visa or logistical problems had not been sufficiently anticipated. The teachers became almost 'hunter-gatherers' who had to travel with their students, from town to town, relying on personal networks or flair to source some funding to support the work.

2.3. The Institutional Setting of the Grenoble-Sfax Cooperation

In Mid-September 2012, the studio scheduled for mid-November in Constantine (Algiers)[3] was cancelled. A fall-back solution had to be found urgently. The technicians of the decentralised cooperation department of the City of Grenoble offered to contact a twinned city in Tunisia: Sfax. Contacts were made, upstream, with Tunisian representatives of the twinning steering committee and, on site, with municipal technicians and a development company. An ad hoc commission was drawn up. Although it was not known at the time, this was to be the first studio in a series of nine consecutive workshops. The 'hunter-gatherers' were to become more sedentary 'farmers'.

The studio took root in Sfax because of a favourable institutional context. It is based on decentralised cooperation between the two cities, which is one of the most effective and long-lasting such cooperation initiatives in France; being in place since 1968. The studios are financially and technically supported by the City of Grenoble's Office for European and International Action.

The studio, because it is a university-based project, has certain geopolitical qualities. During the first years of the democratic transition in Tunisia, from 2012 onwards, the government-appointed mayor of Sfax was challenged in court. The City of Grenoble used the studio to maintain an informal link with its counterpart and even theorise a new form of international cooperation between local government and civil society. The studio was also a medium for re-establishing political ties from the moment of the democratic election of the municipal government of Sfax in 2018. The Spring Studio (in Grenoble) and the Fall Studio (in Sfax) habitually start at the University with the presentation of the municipality's commission to the students, and conclude at City Hall for the submission of the work. The Consuls of France in Sfax and of Tunisia in Grenoble participate fully in the studios by welcoming students, providing logistical and consular assistance, and participating in the presentations.

2.4. Planning Concept and Learning Objectives of the Masters Programme

The masters programme is based upon some core planning concepts. Educated planners are as essential for developing countries as they are in developed countries. Countries everywhere are confronted to differing degrees with issues such as unemployment, social and economic crises, urban violence, segregation, and aging populations. Responses are also needed to general urban issues such as transportation, ecology, and social justice. Moreover, with the ever-growing importance of the global perspective, international cooperation skills have become more essential than ever. International cooperation practices must evolve accordingly. It is important to replace predominantly 'overhanging' views of expertise (notably where Western or Northern countries may consider Southern ones as being mere recipients of planning knowledge) with horizontal ones which favour the sharing of experience, practices, methodologies, and innovations. International cooperation between cities and/or universities must become truly multilateral.

International cooperation is an essential condition for urban transition towards solidarity and sustainability. More than 'merely' a professional specialty, it is an important human need. In the first instance, it is necessary to train students as urbanists or planners and offer the possibility for those who are interested to focus on

3 Ville de Grenoble, Maison de l'Internationale, archives of the file « Jumelage avec Sfax (Tunisie) », "Sfax 2012, Institut d'Urbanisme. Accueil d'un groupe de 30 étudiants + 2 encadrants, Atelier « réhabilitation du quartier Cimer »".

international cooperation. Grenoble's planning school offers a programme in Urbanism that can take up to five years, starting with a three-year undergraduate diploma (Licence Géographie et Aménagement, parcours Urbanisme; Bachelor in *Geography and Planning* with specialisation in Urbanism) followed by a two-year master's in *Urbanism*.

Eighty percent of the first year of the masters is comprised of courses and tutorials which are followed by all the students; they provide a basis of knowledge and know-how for urbanists. The students acquire a basic knowledge of urbanism (Planning theories and doctrines, History of Architecture, Planning legislation, Spatial planning, and so on). They learn to use the social sciences to consider critical issues such as mobility and transportation, sustainable cities, and new urban dynamics. They develop or complete their skills in hand drawing, computer aided drawing, and foreign languages. The remaining 20 percent is devoted to International Cooperation and takes the form of two courses ("International Urban Dynamics" and "Geopolitics of Cooperation") and two studios, one of which is the Spring Studio.

Orientated to specialisation, the second year is organised around courses related to international work-contexts: "Project Management", "Urban Networks and Services", "Real Estate and Housing Policies", "Ecologies", "Inclusive Cities", "Urban Risks and Crises", "European Programmes and Trans-Border Cooperation", "Participation and Shared Expertise". The knowledge dispensed by these courses is applied in up to four international studios (Sfax, Cracow, Lausanne, and a rotating location such as Madrid, Jezzine, or Cluj).

3. Grenoble and Sfax: A Case Study

The four studios are moments of learning by doing and experimentation. In each case the students are confronted with real cooperative urban projects, and they gain first-hand experience in professional practice by working in binational teams on genuine commissions. They learn how to structure a project and see it through in an intercultural and multilingual context. They acquire an urban project culture along with the technical tools required for heading-up complex international projects.

The students develop their capacity to see and work in space, following an approach that is both contextualised and pluri-disciplinary. They explore the physical and spatial dimensions of a given territory in order to determine how they can be reconfigured. In order to do so, they must learn to articulate economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions with one another. The studios abroad are of two kinds: those dedicated to students on an apprenticeship and run through a one-week session without any specific preparation, which are organised in Europe and/or Asia; and the international cooperation in urban planning studio between Grenoble and Sfax.

3.1. An Experience Over Two Years

Since 2012, the *international cooperation in urban planning studio* has been the central feature of the Urbanism and International Cooperation master's programme at the Planning & Alpine Geography Institute in Grenoble.

The studio is based on the decentralised cooperation that exists between the two cities. The students work on urban planning commissions relating to mobility and accessibility, waste management, urban agriculture, air pollution, urban heritage (*medina* or historic city, *ville européenne* or colonial city, traditional orchards and housing), access to public space for disabled persons or children, and urban projects about sites like the port, the railway station, and the main stadium. Working in mixed project teams, they collaborate with the Tunisian partners (students, professors, elected representatives, and civil society).

The first-year master's Spring Studio is comprised of weekly sessions from February to May with an intensive week held in May. It constitutes a complete teaching unit corresponding to 6 ETCS and is conducted by two professors (representing 13% of a full annual teaching load). Through it, approximately 20 students develop their project practice abilities through work on a commission from the City of Grenoble, about Grenoble itself. When it is feasible, an intensive workshop phase, allows participation of their Tunisian counterparts in this work. At this moment, French students discover the importance of an international point of view; such as in

2019 on the issue of air pollution in Grenoble. Reflecting on their interaction with participants from Sfax, a student noted that:

> The exchanges with them were interesting since Grenoble's situation was not unlike that of Sfax, in which phosphate chemical factories cause significant pollution. Independent of the pollution issue, the urban dynamics and architectural and urban forms of Tunisian cities have been sources of inspiration for us. For example, our group constructed its approach based on air circulation techniques used in North African architecture, in particular the *moucharabieh*. This idea arose from our discussion with the visitors, which we very much appreciated (Eva, Spring Studio 2019).

At the same time, they familiarise themselves with Sfax through previous years' reports. They are acculturated to the logic of international project and international cooperation with Tunisia through a series of courses, tutorials, meetings with professionals in such fields as orientalism, history of colonization and decolonization, Tunisian history, and the geopolitical context of the Tunisian revolution.[4]

About ten additional students join the class in the second year of the master's programme and participate alongside the others in the Fall Studio which runs from September to January. It is weighted at 9 to 18 ETCS according to the status of the student in question: first degree or continuing education. The studio belongs to a part of the second-year programme entitled "Project methods". It is offered by the two same professors (20% of an annual teaching load).

The *international cooperation in urbanism studios* require the involvement of both the teaching team and students on the one hand, and various partners of equal commitment on the other. The two teachers in charge are responsible for coordinating the whole process and ensuring that the professional commissions meet pedagogical requirements. Each year, the studio involves about three commissions from either the City of Grenoble or from the Tunisian partners: university, municipality, public-private consortiums, or civil society.

3.2. Strengths and Weaknesses of Mixing Learners

The students of the Fall Studio in Sfax fall into two groups. The first one is comprised of Grenoble students, in the second year of their Masters (approximately 30 students). A third of these come from the local bachelor's program, whilst the rest are from other urbanism institutes, or from programmes in related disciplines (Political Science, Architecture, Geography, Law, etc). Currently standing at 25 percent, the number of foreign students, mostly from North and Sub-Saharan Africa and South America, has been steadily growing. The second group is comprised of students from Sfax. Their number was very limited - below ten - for the first iterations of the studio. Initially there were only Geography students drawn from Masters or Doctoral programs. However, over time the studio has attracted more and more students, with up to 40 now participating; they come from Geography courses as well as Design and Logistics courses at the University of Sfax and from a private Architecture school. There is no School of Planning in Sfax, but more and more students from the planning schools in Tunis and Carthage are now involved at their request. French students, who comprised the vast majority of the cohort at the beginning, are now a minority in their "own classroom"; this is sometimes challenging.

If the professors from Architecture and Design can adapt the "French studio" to their own programme (studio and fieldwork), there is no official place dedicated to the experience in the curricula of Geography or Logistics. For all Tunisians students the studio is challenging. They have to join an experiment in their own city, run by foreign students, without any cultural or technical preparation. They have to do it alongside their other daily life activities; this can cause some difficulties:

> I thought it was a pity that the Tunisian students could not be integrated into the project before we arrived in Tunisia. They had to join in, without necessarily agreeing, and didn't really have a

4 France was the colonial power in Tunisia between 1881 and 1956 (French Protectorate of Tunisia). The Tunisian revolution, sometimes called the "Jasmine Revolution" was a revolution which, through a series of demonstrations and sit-ins during four weeks between December 2010 and January 2011, led to the departure of the President of the Republic of Tunisia, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali who had been in office since 1987.

> say in it. They did help us and that was useful for our work, but I'm not sure that we were useful for them. All decisions about the project were made in the evening in a hotel room when we were debriefing our day, therefore without them (Marjorie, Fall Studio 2015-16).

About 20 of the second-year students are in initial training while the others are registered as employed students with an apprenticeship status (bringing a full waiver of registration fees and a one-year contract in a firm or local authority). The rhythm of their involvement in the programme differs. The first students follow the full course programme in the first term and go abroad for an internship in the second. Those with the status of employed students are in their professional contexts three weeks per month and follow a course in the remaining one. The two groups have a common calendar during key moments, notably the Fall Studio. This desynchronised rhythm brings certain issues:

> The upstream phase of the studio was somewhat frustrating, as I would have liked to have been more involved in the project, but with the rhythm of the work placement, it was sometimes difficult to keep up with the daily work of our fellow students. Nevertheless, we managed to meet occasionally to discuss the progress of our group. We also had a meeting altogether before leaving for Sfax so that everyone could be 100 percent operational during our fieldwork (Alexis, Fall Studio 2015-16).

3.3. Posture and Methods of Teaching

The students are positioned as active agents of their own education. The programme seeks to develop their capacity for critical analysis of project methods and objectives. The students are also encouraged to evaluate group work as it is being carried out.

The focus of critical reflection in the first year is on the notion of international cooperation itself. It is structured around *Forum Theatre* or *Theatre of the Oppressed* exercises and fundamental critical theory texts such as Franz Fanon, *Peau noires, masques blancs, (Black Skin, White Masks, 1952)*; Paulo Freire, *Pédagogie des opprimés, (Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 1970)* or Edward Saïd, *L'orientalisme (Orientalism, 1978)*. At the same time, they organise, alongside their professors, the Spring Studio (logistics and budgeting) which involves up to twelve Tunisian students:

> The programme familiarises its students with the full diversity of urban contexts in the world; from Inland China, to the Brazilian coastline, to the area around the large rivers of Western Africa. We were given means to understand these distant urban contexts and in doing so, to deconstruct our Eurocentric viewpoint. This international perspective starts with the group of master's students itself, which is made up of people of diverse origins and native languages. Throughout the year, our student association City Trotters contributed significantly to the financing, communication on, and events organisation for, the studio. Our first mission was to welcome the delegation of students from Sfax in Grenoble (Théo, Spring and Fall Studios 2018-19).

Students in the second year participate extensively in the co-construction of the studio work. It is up to them to make a critical analysis of the commission they are to work on and, if necessary, to reformulate the problems that have been addressed to them. Before starting the field research, their understanding of, and thoughts about the commission are reviewed by the various partners involved in the studio. They work with their professors to develop a methodology for the field work. Where possible, they also integrate into their approaches the work done by students in previous years on themes close to those that they are studying. Finally, through the student association, they participate in the co-financing of their studio via a municipal subsidy and fundraising (cf. fig 1).

Tombola atelier Sfax 2013/2014

Master 2 Urbanisme, Habitat et Coopération Internationale
Institut d'Urbanisme de Grenoble/Ville de Grenoble/AURG

Cet atelier a pour objectif de travailler sur le Grand Sfax et ses enjeux de développement et d'aménagement, dans la perspective de la création d'une Agence urbaine à l'échelle de son agglomération. Il se déroulera sur 10 jours durant le mois de novembre 2013. L'atelier réunira 30 étudiants de l'Institut d'Urbanisme de Grenoble et 10 étudiants du département de Géographie de l'Université de Sfax.

En parallèle, et pour profitr d'une synergie équivalente de part et d'autre de nos territoires, la même équipe reproduira à Grenoble, en mars-avril de l'année 2014, un atelier sur les problématiques de développement et d'aménagement à l'échelle de la communauté d'agglomération de Grenoble.

Ainsi cette tombola vise à finncer une partie de cet atelier.

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20

Figure 1: Student's lottery for Sfax

From the outset, the students are familiarised by their professors with the know-how and behaviour that international projects demand. On arriving in Tunisia, this acclimatisation is reinforced by a visit to the French Consulate.

Once the fieldwork begins, the students are divided into multiple sub-groups to meet the different objectives of the assignment. The teachers then move from group to group and make collective progress reports each evening. They give the students a great deal of autonomy and never try to direct the final proposals. Instead, they simply ensure that the ideas and projects are well constructed. The approach adopted has been variously evaluated by the students as: too much autonomy, a lack of method and leadership, a disorienting but very formative method, an effective immersion technique, and as a chance to organise the studios they wanted. Some even end up considering the teacher to be just another partner in their project with one student remarking in feedback to the two professors involved that:

> I now have much more compassion for all the forgotten and invisible people without whom the projects, the events would not happen. All those people who take responsibility without ever asking for a thank you. So, I have a deep respect for you, for all that has been done for a long time for this studio to exist, without you having any particular recognition because nobody realises it (Alexia, Fall Studio 2016).

3.4. Assessments and Management of Difficulties

The studios are evaluated at different moments and using different methods: at the end of the Sfax fieldwork, during a meeting with the decentralised cooperation service of Grenoble, the twinning steering committee, and the French Consulate; during a debriefing with the students immediately upon returning to Grenoble and at the end of the term; and, by an annual mission report addressed to all partners and supporting organizations.

Feedback from experience with students and our partners led the studio to be developed over eight years, incrementally, by setting up the studio over the two years of the master's programme; dealing with different themes over several years (1 - exploration, 2 - problematising, 3 - networking of actors, 4 - project implementation and handover to Tunisian society); mobilising students in the project process, and involving Tunisian colleagues and students.

Table 2: Annual studios' activities

Period	Activities
February - May	Spring Studio: reading previous reports, acculturation to international cooperation, Tunisia and Sfax. Hosting in Grenoble an event with Tunisian students.
June - July	Co-elaboration of the new commissions for Fall Studio
September - November	Fall Studio: team building, drafting of a technical note (reformulation of planning problems, methodological positioning, logical frameworks), preparing fieldwork, provisional budgets and trip logistics
November	Fall Studio: ten days of survey and fieldwork in Sfax
December	Fall Studio: data analysis, final report writing, preparation of the public exhibition.
January	Fall Studio: public exhibition and final presentation in Grenoble in the presence of Spring Studio's students
February	Assessment of the studio by teachers and the various sponsors and partners who decide on how the work is to be extended

The studios are now planned one year in advance through a permanent co-construction process that involves all stakeholders. Table 2 shows the way in which both studios are planned by professors while the 'goose chase' (Figure 2) describes, through the students' lenses, the Fall studio. The studio starts with preparation from Grenoble. It continues with the fieldwork and its phases of transcription, astonishment, luck, and changeover from diagnosis to project. The game insists on the many moments of doubt and panic, the delays, and the share of luck and misfortune that are both inherent in the realisation of a studio. It concludes with a report and exhibition.

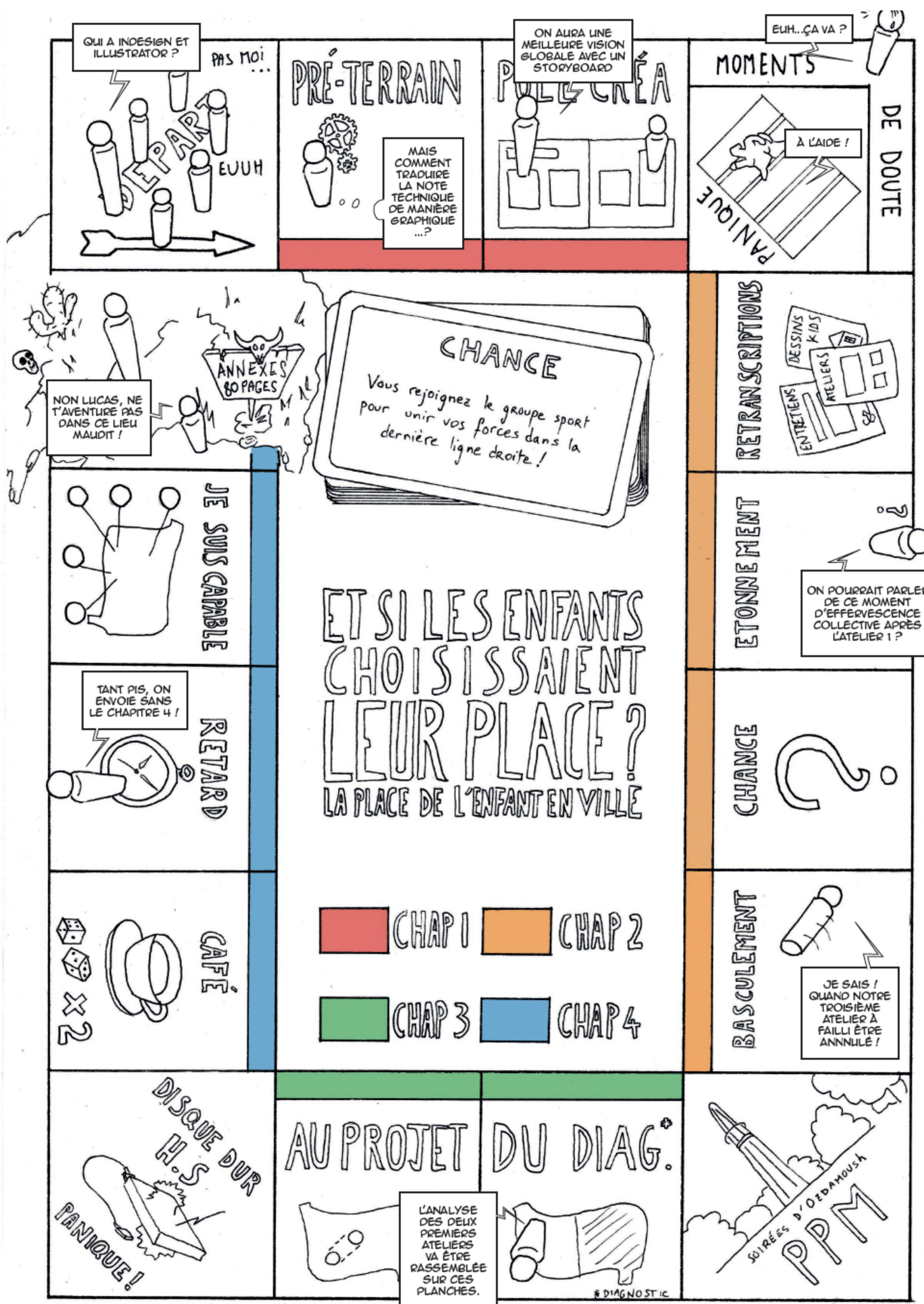

Figure 2: The goose chase. Lucas Rajic, *Dernière année*, master thesis, 2020

3.5. Managing Difficulties

A teaching approach of this kind is subject to numerous types of difficulties: financial, logistical, linguistic, and security-related.

The system of education in France is almost entirely free (fees of €243 per year at masters level, with a total fee waiver for students on an apprenticeship). Travel, visas, accommodation, and breakfast are entirely paid for all students engaged in the Spring and Fall studios. The total costs of the two studios is about €18 000 for approximately 40 students and 2 + 1 professors travelling for 10 days, both ways. The funds are provided by the City of Grenoble (€8 000 per year), and a para-public organization sponsoring apprenticeships (€3 000 per year). These financial contributions are renegotiated every year. The remaining budget is provided by the French student association and the Institute itself.

The students must participate actively in the organization of the studio work they are to engage in. This participation is organised through the involvement of a student association dedicated to the studio abroad: City Trotters. The association takes on travel and housing related logistics, as well as management issues. It is able to take on the organisation of the journey in a much more proactive way than a university administration. This experience is generally valued by those involved, though it can be a heavy burden on board members:

> I appreciated the self-managed logistical organisation including the collection of funds to pay for the trip. In addition to fostering the sociability needed to work in the field, this City Trotter tool empowers students and teaches them how to find funding (Eleonora, Fall Studio 2015-16).
>
> I must admit that the preparation beforehand was long and tedious. There were times when I felt like crying, I probably even did but I thank my brain's selective memory for forgetting those moments. I told myself many times "when we get there, we won't think about it" and this is exactly what happened. What trouble? What problem? I do not know any more. Sfax taught me skills, or perhaps I can even say new qualities, which are the ability to put things into perspective and self-control. I do not know if other students have mentioned this, but personally, it is thanks to them that I have been able to develop this (Alexia, Fall Studio 2015-16).

French is partially a common tongue, native, or second language in Tunisia, yet there is a considerable part of the population which is only Arabic-speaking. As English is not a *lingua franca* yet, professors in France tend to include some Arab speakers in the programme each year, and Tunisian professors select French-Speaking students:

> The few Sfax students involved in the project also helped us a lot in making appointments. In addition, having Arabic speakers on the team often saved us a lot of time and allowed us to hold meetings that would have been impossible to do in French (Cécile, Fall Studio 2015-16).

For the French government, Sfax has the status of a "zone of reinforced vigilance". The studio must, therefore, pay particular attention to the security of the students. They are informed about potential dangers linked to behaviour in the country. Professors also remain in daily contact with the French Consulate and the Police force of the Sfax governorate:

There was one thing I didn't like: the omnipresence of the Police. We didn't really have the impression of being protected, but rather followed all the time, which was actually quite unpleasant... as we couldn't escape it, I ended up getting used to it (Cloé, Fall Studio 2015-16).

4. Effects of the Studio on Students

The international cooperation studios seem to be effective in preparing students for the labour market and reportedly have impacts upon them long after they leave the university.

4.1. Students' Preparation for Practice

The students make little mention of the links between theory and practice in the studio. Instead, they focus on the acquisition of communication skills, techniques for working in a group, with a client or the public, and learning how to manage a project. These skills are more related to communicational than rational urbanism. This could be referred to as a postmodern education for spatial planning, "including social and cultural awareness, adaptability, creativity, collaborative ways of working and becoming global citizens with a shift to learner choice and autonomy" (da Rosa Pires and Frank, 2021).

During the 2018 Fall Studio in Sfax, the students met with more than 400 inhabitants of the city within a ten day period including: elected officials, municipal technicians, civil society leaders and activists, children, teachers in primary and secondary schools, hospitals and clinics' staff and users, craftsmen, hotel owners, real estate agents, and so on.

The students developed a variety of tools: meeting with the elected representatives, site visits with technicians, exchanges of know-how with planners, commented walks and semi-directive or wide-open interviews with civil society, mental maps, questionnaires and 'serious' games with children in schools, field observations, short informal interviews with hospital patients and clients of clinics, etc. One group, working with architecture and design students on the *medina*, even implemented its own workshop.

In each year of the programme the students have needed to communicate their ideas and propositions to different people and, through different mediums: public presentations of field observations carried out in Sfax before approximately 100 people, and final project presentations in Grenoble before approximately 150 people; an exhibition at the *Plateforme*, an information centre on the urban projects of City of Grenoble (attracting 9,255 visitors over six years); and, a final written report.

4.2. Long Term Effects on Students

The students are unanimous in affirming that their view of planning is changed as a result of the experience of alterity that the studio offers them. They are affected by the encounters with the people and places they come into contact with through the work. At the same time, they gain confidence in their own abilities thanks to the experience of working through the complexities inherent in these projects. As a result, the prospect of entering the profession seems less formidable to them and their ideas become clearer with respect to what they want – or do not want – to do in the future. In the years following their involvement in the programme, certain alumni speak of the effects that the Sfax experience has had on them with regard to it making them - whether working in France or elsewhere - more open, more serene, and more combative as planners:

> In short, this studio reinforced my desire to learn from the Other. The Other is Culture and an enriching difference that allows us to think in new ways. We have seen that reality, that culture, that territory - through the lens of our sensibility, our analyses and our capabilities. I became aware of the value of what we, urbanists and alumni, possess, thanks to our acquired criticality and capacity for analysis. Our capacity to adapt to different contexts and situations, identifying stakeholder dynamics and taking care to situate them within the physical context and culture of their country. (…) With the distance that has come from several years of working professionally, I am aware that the studio changed my way of envisaging public place and of apprehending a city. My capacity for project management and the coordination of a pluridisciplinary team grew as I learned to define shareable vocabularies (Laetitia, Fall Studio 2015-16).

For certain students, the studio has defined professional orientations or personal life choices. They have created their own businesses to work on social aspects of planning such as participation, or urban agriculture.

Le Master Urbanisme & Coopération Internationale présente

FAITES PLACE ! SFAX AU QUOTIDIEN

8E ÉDITION

EXPOSITION

DU 15 JANVIER
AU 15 FÉVRIER
LA PLATEFORME

VERNISSAGE
LE 15 JANVIER 2020 À18H

PLUS D'INFOS | www.facebook.com/citytrottersIUGA
iug.uci.master@gmail.com

La Plateforme
9 Place Verdun
38000 Grenoble

Tramway A : Verdun - Préfecture
du mercredi au samedi
de 13h à 19h

Figure 3: Public Exhibition poster created by the students

> My working group studied the place of urban agriculture in Sfax. Following the studio, the City of Grenoble offered me a six-month civic service appointment there. I met numerous stakeholders, organised meetings, recycling workshops, a network of small-scale farming stakeholders and, above all, came to know the city and its inhabitants. Upon returning to France I presented my final paper and began looking for work. After five months of searches and indecision, I took on the position I now occupy as Project Coordinator for the association Graine d'Espoir, in Sfax, of which I am a co-founder (Agnès, Fall Studio 2017).

Though the programme is clearly practice-oriented, several students have noted that studio experiences raised questions which led them to the idea of undertaking doctoral studies:

> At the time, I thought the Sfax studio was to be my final experience at the Grenoble Planning Institute. I hadn't yet understood that it was in fact the starting point for doctoral studies. The studio was one of the main experiences through which I developed an interest in research and a desire to reflect upon certain broad questions about cities. The Sfax studio invited us to reflect upon the intrinsic nature of our knowledge of cities. In my case, it created the desire to go further, to observe, to reflect, to analyse planning practices and, more generally, to apprehend how cities are creating themselves before our eyes (Alexia, Fall Studio 2016).
>
> The intense discussions, and the incredible productive capacity we discovered ourselves, gave us a new confidence. (…), I chose to return to Tunisia for a research-oriented internship, and to extend the work that I had previously done there. In turn, this experience led me to the idea of pursuing doctoral studies (Théo, Spring and Fall Studios 2018-19).

5. Conclusion

This paper suggests that there are some key features of this very specific kind of 'studio abroad'. The relevance of the studio can be explained by the choice to work hand in hand with the decentralised cooperation of a city from one's home country; the long-lasting partnership with a foreign twinned city in order to assess the local territories and to win the trust of local actors; the passing on from year to year of knowledge and findings; the involvement of students in their own training with a peer-to-peer learning environment; and knowledge transfers to and from the foreign partners. This goes far beyond the limits of a mere studio abroad. Maybe we should speak about this kind of experience as a global project of *education abroad* to more accurately reflect the range of types of outbound educational opportunities which include not only study abroad but also research abroad, intern abroad, teach abroad, and service-learning abroad (Ogden, 2015).

This paper also confirms that this kind of studio is resource intensive. Intercultural learning requires an adaptation of pedagogical postures and materials with adequate institutional support (Jones and Brown, 2007), and risks creating additional workloads for teachers; these can become a burden (Peel and Frank, 2008; Sykes et al, 2015). It can also very easily be stressful for those students who adapt poorly to logistical, linguistic, security, and intercultural issues. Is it only at this cost that the studio abroad can become a real transformative experience for the student? Perhaps we should leave the final word to one of the students who participated:

> Sfax could have had more or less the same conclusion as my years at the institute. Sometimes you feel like crying, you wonder why you are here, what you are doing, the meaning of your life and your future, then you pull yourself together and look at it with a smile. You realise how much you have learned. You realise the professional distortions you already have when you go on holiday and comment on the urban qualities and faults of the city where you are. You smile and say to yourself, "holy shit, I'm really a planner, it's official". (Alexia, Fall Studio 2015-16)

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