

Events

VL 2026 International Conference on Visualizing Landscape

Maurizio Perticarini

On May 7 and 8, 2026, the second edition of the international conference *Visualizing Landscape*, titled *Beyond the Dominant Aesthetic: Landscapes, Perceptions, and Transformations* (fig. 1), was held at the Rectorate of the University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli. The event began by challenging the traditional image of the landscape as a harmonious, balanced place, traceable to the long lineage of the *locus amoenus*, deeply rooted in Western figurative culture. Against this, VL 2026 contrasted the need to explore its counterpoint: marginal, degraded, unsettling, contaminated, industrial, abandoned, or simply ordinary landscapes, often excluded from the dominant imagination. Within this framework, the reference to the *locus horribilis* is adopted as a critical tool for recognizing those territories which, though marked by conflict, fracture, or loss, constitute a decisive part of the contemporary experience of space. The biennial conference was organized by Vincenzo Cirillo, associate professor of Drawing at the University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, PhD Margherita Cicala, and PhD Riccardo Miele, and featured the participation of 96 authors from Italy, Albania, Lebanon, Germany, Brazil, Argentina, Spain, and Portugal, for a total of 53 contributions presented out of the 56 selected. During

the opening ceremony, the event was introduced with institutional remarks by Prof. Ornella Zerlenga, Director of the Department of Architecture and Industrial Design at UniCampania and President of the Italian Design Union; Prof. Vincenzo Cirillo; and PhD Margherita Cicala. The keynote speaker was the prominent artist and photographer Mario Amura, who, through his visual art project *Napoli Explosion*, captured the complex and layered relationship that Naples maintains with Vesuvius: a living presence in the landscape, at once physical, symbolic, and deeply rooted in the city's collective consciousness. His photographic research, based on long exposure times, low ISO sensitivity, and careful direction of light, transforms New Year's Eve into a ritual scene in which Naples, understood as a single great collective soul, seems to issue its own challenge to the volcano every year. Fireworks, explosions, and trails of light thus produce abstract compositions, cosmic landscapes that stand out against the dark, motionless backdrop of Vesuvius. The volcano, once a dominant natural element, becomes a silent spectator to a collective exorcism, in which the Neapolitan people symbolically renew their relationship with the place's memory and identity. The conference, organized into four sections



Fig. 1. Event poster.

held consecutively in a single plenary session, featured alternating thematic sessions with introductions by moderators Margherita Cicala, Michele Valentino (University of Sassari), Flavia Camagni (Università Telematica San Raffaele Roma), Rosina Iaderosa (UniCampania), PhD Riccardo Miele, PhD candidate Gianluca Gioioso, Luigi Corniello

(UniCampania), and Alessandro Scandiffo (Politecnico di Milano), as well as presentations by Domenico Iovane and Alice Palmieri (UniCampania) and by Veronica Tronconi and Francesco Stilo, both PhD. In particular, with regard to the thematic sections addressed, Section A, *Cultural Landscapes, Infrastructure, and Territorial Planning*, brought together six contributions that addressed the landscape as a tool for interpretation and transformation, where historical memory, settlement patterns, infrastructure networks, and social practices converge to define the forms, values, and identities of places. Maps, atlases, surveys, and digital visualizations are understood as interpretive tools capable of revealing latent relationships and guiding design hypotheses. The contributions explored the theme through archaeology, historical archives, photogrammetry, and georeferenced data organization, demonstrating how heritage can be documented, narrated, and revitalized, thereby creating a framework in which knowledge, participation, and design support new forms of enhancing contemporary and collective cultural landscapes. Section B, *Sensory and Artistic Digital Visualization*, brought together twelve contributions, further expanding the scope of inquiry. It highlighted how the landscape can be represented and interpreted through images, data, and digital tools. The research demonstrated how maps, surveys, 3D BIM models, audiovisual archives, photomontages, sound data, and AI can make memories, boundaries, and social relationships visible. Case studies such as Positano, Naples, Venice, L'Aquila, and Milan revealed a conception of landscape as a

living, complex system to be explored through scientific methods and artistic sensory experiences to enhance its content and guide a design hypothesis. Section C, *Marginal, Industrial, and Wounded Landscapes*, comprising twenty-four contributions, formed the core most directly connected to the theme of the invisible: viewing marginal, industrial, and wounded landscapes as places full of memory, traces, and possibilities. Brownfield sites and abandoned areas, military zones, industrial archaeology, and flawed settlement models present opportunities for rethinking urban regeneration. The contributions demonstrated that these territories can regain value through interdisciplinary integration. Among these, representation serves as a conduit for a better understanding of transformations, thereby rediscovering the dignity of both natural and built spaces and directing collective sensibility toward new avenues of enhancement. Section D, *Historical and Rural Landscapes: Memory, Identity, and Production*, featured eleven contributions and gathered content in which the territory is interpreted as a living organism: historical and rural landscapes constitute animated palimpsests of collective memory and cultural identity. Through integrated methodologies of surveying, three-dimensional modeling, GIS systems, and iconographic analysis (pictorial, archival, and cartographic sources), scientific representation conveys the geometric-perceptual complexity and profound symbolic values of the territory. The conference thus falls within a research field that is central today: the description of landscape as a cognitive, critical, and design tool that invites us to

go beyond the dominant aesthetic by representing the invisible as well. From this approach stems one of the initiative's main merits: having placed at the center not only new objects of study but also new ways of looking at them. In conclusion, *Visualizing Landscape 2026* outlines a move beyond the traditional idea of landscape as a purely harmonious place, allowing us to embrace the complexity of the contemporary territory in all its facets. Shifting attention toward marginal, industrial, or scarred areas means giving scientific value to spaces often neglected by classical visual culture. In this context, the combination of geometric surveying, advanced digital technologies, and sensory analysis creates an innovative approach to work. Technology and art do not merely record reality but reveal the collective memory and the stories hidden within places. The strong international participation demonstrated that understanding the territory requires a continuous dialogue between the rigor of spatial data and the sensitivity of human experience. Drawing thus emerges as a profound interpretive activity, capable of transforming the complexity of historical layers into tools for active knowledge. The act of representation becomes a dynamic interface that unites past memory with choices for the future, offering essential insights to guide urban regeneration projects. The true value of the event lies in its ability to legitimize the graphic perspective as a driver of cultural, social, and territorial regeneration. The proceedings of this collaborative event are available on the Publica Press website and can be downloaded via open access.

Author

Maurizio Perticarini, Civil Environmental and Architectural Engineering Department, University of Padova, maurizio.perticarini@unipd.it