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8th COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONFERENCE ON THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

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the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe*

PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT

Landscape Lexicon: richness and diversity of words, texts and approaches to landscape in Europe

Council of Europe
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Summary

The European Landscape Convention and the Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the guidelines for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention state:

European Landscape Convention

“Each Party undertakes: a. to recognise landscapes in law as an essential component of people’s surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity;” (Article 5, a. – General Measures)

Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the guidelines for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention

“... ”

1.3. Legal recognition of landscape

The legal recognition of landscape implies rights and responsibilities on the part of all institutions and citizens of Europe towards their physical surroundings.

The landscape in which they live is the result of many change-producing actions resulting from the activity of various stakeholders in territorial processes in highly varied ways and on differing scales of time and space. Such activities may be the outcome of action by public authorities in establishing a large-scale infrastructure or of individual action in a restricted space.

... ”

The Conference is invited to:

- examine the report prepared in the framework of the Council of Europe Work Programme of the European Landscape Convention and in particular its conclusions, and to decide on possible follow-up to be given.

Wealth and variety of terms, instruments and approaches to landscape in Europe

Mr Jean-François SEGUIN

Expert of the Council of Europe, Former Chair of the Council of Europe Conference on the European Landscape Convention

Introduction

As we all know, the term “landscape” has multiple connotations: it is not uncommon for the word to have several meanings in the same country, and sometimes even in the same language. A hundred languages are officially spoken across the 47 states which make up the Council of Europe. Within these 100 languages, 120 words are used to denote landscape in all its various meanings.

The Council of Europe, however, is no tower of Babel and its members have managed to agree on a single, common definition as a basis for the European Landscape Convention.

This definition – an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors – is the fruit of an intelligent compromise that has enabled it to find its way into a growing number of domestic laws.

The wealth and variety of underlying meanings attached to landscape have not been erased by the European Landscape Convention, however, and when discussing landscape, it is always worth remembering that the people we are speaking to may not have the same understanding of landscape as we have.

I recall the meetings of the group of experts tasked with drafting the Florence Convention. The group was chaired by a representative from the United Kingdom, the head of the Countryside Agency. It was only after several meetings that this gentleman realised that, for the French, “landscape” encompassed towns as well as countryside whereas for him, it referred solely to the countryside. “Countryside”, indeed, would seem to be a more accurate translation of the German “*landschaft*” and the French “*paysage*” than “landscape”.

Since then, I have taken a close interest in the terms and meanings of landscape, as used by the many people encountered at meetings held in connection with the European Landscape Convention. Through these interpersonal contacts, I have managed to put together a collection of definitions and comments that reflect a personal, rather than an expert, perspective.

In the light of all these discussions, it is clear that this linguistic and semantic diversity has not been, and is still not, a barrier to implementing the European Landscape Convention. Far from it.

In order to better understand this seemingly paradoxical situation, I propose to begin by looking at the words used to denote landscape, and the meanings assigned to them, across the vast Pan-European area. Just as language is a reflection of how populations think, so the law is a reflection of how societies think. The second part of this document deals with the various accepted meanings of “landscape” in the international instruments that apply in Europe. The third and final part provides a brief description of how words and their meanings have inspired methods of identifying, assessing and describing landscapes under Article 6C of the European Landscape Convention.

Part 1. Landscape in the languages of Europe

The word “landscape” is relatively recent. Experts have found references to “*landschap*” in the Netherlands in 1462 and to “*paysage*” in France, “*paesaggio*” in Italy and “*paisagem*” in Portugal around 1550. In the Netherlands, *landschap* refers to the abundance that was expected to flow from the cultivation of land reclaimed from the sea. Flemish paintings are a wonderful testimony to this very close link between *landschap* and a social utopia characterised by abundance born of intelligent spatial planning. Evidence of this kind of thinking can be found in the famous frescoes “The Allegory of Good and Bad Government” which since 1339 have adorned the walls of Siena town hall in Italy. The French term “*paysage*” differs from “*landschap*” as the oldest known definition in French is “a painting depicting a rural scene or a garden”. In this instance, therefore, landscape thinking is, above all, the expression of satisfaction in the aesthetic relationship with the land.

A third important word that one comes across in Europe is “*krajina*”, derived from the Slav languages. This refers first and foremost to an area or province, clearly delineated by a well-guarded border.

One feature common to all of these words is the fact that their root (land, *pays*, *Kraj*) signifies country, land, place... Such roots are to be found in most languages. The Finnish “*Maisema*” and the Estonian “*Maastik*”, for example, have a common root, *Maa*, which means country, land, province. From the very beginning, therefore, landscape has been tied, in one way or another, to the territory where people live.

The first factor in the wide variety of meanings assigned to landscape is the way in which words have migrated within Europe.

As we know, Europe is a tremendous hub for interchange and cross-pollination. Since they first emerged, the terms “*landschap*”, “*paysage*” and “*Krajina*” have spread far and wide. While, in many cases, the terms themselves still sound familiar, their meaning will sometimes have changed considerably, depending on the country.

The German word “*Landschaft*”, for example, made its way to Russia where “*ландшафт*” (*landshaft*) denotes the vast expanses of nature that are so much a feature of that vast country. The French “*paysage*” likewise travelled to Russia and “*пейзаж*” (*peyzazh*) means tracts of land that have benefited from the attention of a landscape architect. The word was most likely imported in the 18th century by Catherine II who brought in French landscape gardeners to work on numerous extensive projects to beautify her native land.

Elsewhere, words were imported in response to changing concepts or policies.

A second factor in the diversity of meanings assigned to landscape is the variety of languages spoken in a given country.

In Finland, three official languages are spoken: Swedish (“*landskap*”), Finnish (“*Maisema*”) and the Sami language (“*Eanadat*”). In Belgium, there are three official languages: French (“*paysage*”), Flemish (“*landschap*”) and German (“*landschaft*”).

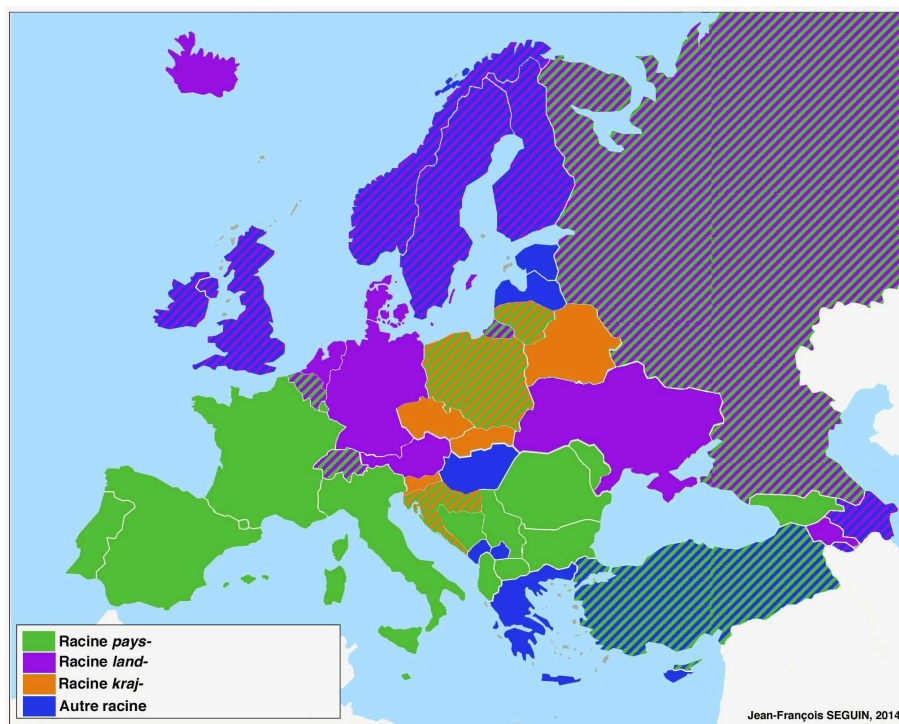
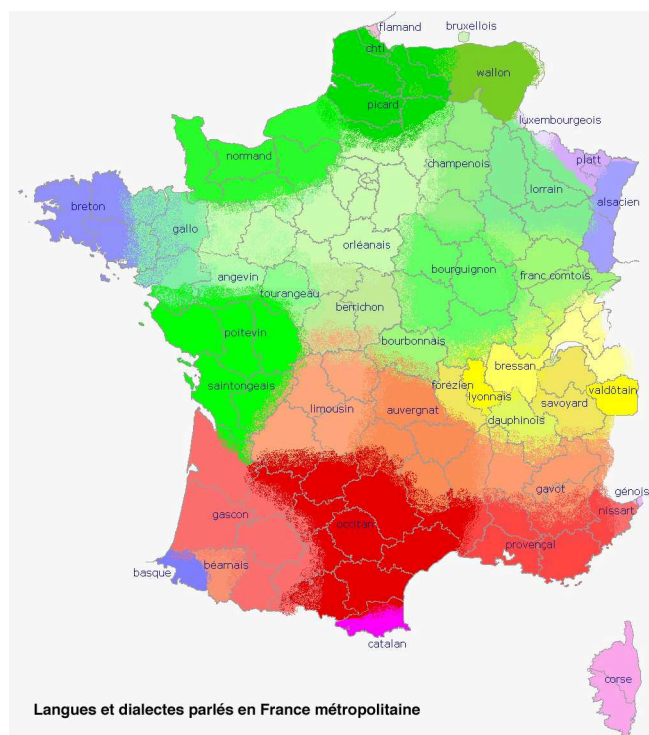
In some countries the picture is more complex because, even though there is only one official language, several languages and dialects are spoken, each conveying a different understanding of the word “landscape”.

In France, the official language is French. Depending on the region, however, the Alsatians will talk about “*Ländschàft*”, the Bretons “*maezad*”, the Basques “*paisaia*”, the Catalans “*paisatge*”, the people of Provence “*pàisage*” and the Corsicans “*paisagiu*”.

A third factor in the wide variety of meanings is the existence of several words, or several meanings of the same word, within the same language.

In some countries, two distinct words, reflecting two different approaches to landscape, have emerged from the same linguistic root. In Croatia, for example, two terms are employed: “*krajolik*” and “*Krajobraz*”. “*Krajolik*” is used mainly in human and social sciences while “*Krajobraz*” tends to be employed more in the field of life and earth sciences.

Conversely, within one and the same country, the same word may have two meanings. In Sweden, for instance, “*landskap*” refers to landscape as “an historical, political territorial unit founded on cultural and geographical features which many people identify with”, “*Landskap*” being equivalent here to “province”. “*Landskap*” is also, however, “the physical setting or environment in general terms, including a scenic dimension”.



Map of the main roots of the words used to denote “landscape”

Some initial conclusions from this brief survey

Throughout Europe, landscape is the reflection of a very powerful bond between individuals and communities and where they live. This bond takes many shapes and forms but it is fair to say there are three main types of relations:

1. Through landscape, individuals and communities express satisfaction with the harmonious nature of the area where they live and which they have transformed in order to make it habitable. This harmony is reflected in the patterns observed, which are in keeping with aesthetic values. Landscape is in this sense about both the land and how it is portrayed in art and literature. This visual connection with the land is expressed through the notion of expanse, which explains, for example, Europeans' attachment to what are referred to as "open" landscapes.

2. Through landscape, individuals and communities express satisfaction with the natural resources which the land places at their disposal, as it were. The French geographer Vidal de Lablache, indeed, defined the French term "*contrée*" as follows: "*a contrée*" is a reservoir where energies lie dormant. These energies, of which nature planted the seed, depend for their use on Man." "*Contrée*" is the origin of the English word "country" which most definitely implies places where humankind has succeeded in harnessing the forces of nature. Landscape is, in this sense, more "rural" or even "natural" in character.

3; Through landscape, individuals and communities express satisfaction with the quality of their surroundings. Landscape here means our everyday surroundings, as shaped by social and economic relations, and cannot be reduced to nature or culture alone. The Norwegian representative in the group of experts responsible for drafting the European Landscape Convention said that, in her view, "nature is our culture". Landscape is both a window and a mirror of these surroundings, and of individual and collective well-being. Our relationship with this landscape is the ambivalent one of the spectator-cum-actor. The European Landscape Convention acknowledges this fact in its preamble: "Wishing to respond to the public's wish to enjoy high quality landscapes and to play an active part in the development of landscapes".

"Landscape", in all its linguistic diversity, is understood by Europeans as meaning a visual and aesthetic relationship with the land, as a natural territorial resource and as the territorial setting which "contributes to human fulfilment". These three aspects of the concept of landscape are not disjointed, however. Each individual, and each community, makes use of these three approaches to landscape depending on the time, place and circumstances.

It was no doubt thanks to this that the Council of Europe, drawing on the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, was able to come up with a single definition of landscape, one that owes its success partly to the fact that the definition is "open-ended" and respects the wide range of linguistic features. At the same time, this definition provides an aid to communication and discussion, which all Europeans can adopt and use.

Part 2. Landscape in legal instruments and international treaties

If language is a reflection of a population's culture, then the law is a reflection of society's culture. It is interesting therefore to examine the different meanings of landscape that have informed law-making.

It was neither feasible nor, indeed, desirable to examine all the domestic laws within the compass of this brief report. Attention has therefore been focused solely on international instruments: European Union directives and conventions at various levels.

The Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states concerning the identification and evaluation card for the protection of natural landscapes (1979) reads: "natural and semi-natural landscapes: the natural environment including the physical environment as a whole (climate, soil, water), the biocenoses (flora, vegetation, fauna), the whole more or less formed by man and by past and present social and economic factors". Although, strictly speaking, this text has no legal force, it is interesting because it provides a definition of "natural and semi-natural landscape". This natural landscape is understood on its own terms, as meaning the physical environment and biocenoses, more or less formed by man. Landscape here is not a place for people to live in, but first and foremost a habitat for wild flora and fauna.

Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (Article 3) states that: "The environmental impact assessment will identify, describe and assess in an appropriate manner [...] the direct and indirect effects of a project on the following factors:

- human beings, fauna and flora,
- soil, water, air, climate and the landscape,
- the inter-action between the factors mentioned in the first and second indents,
- material assets and the cultural heritage.

In this directive, landscape is understood as one of the component elements of the environment in the widest sense since it also includes cultural heritage. These components are divided into 4 categories, as it were, with landscape being classed among the abiotic elements (soil, water, air, climate).

The 1992 Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora calls upon Member States of the European Union to encourage, through land-use planning and development policies, "the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora". This binding legal instrument sees in landscape, or at any rate landscape features, an environment conducive to wild flora and fauna, rather than to the growth of human settlements.

The UNESCO Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage (1972) does not deal with landscape. It was not until 1994 that the "Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention" introduced, within cultural heritage, the concept of "cultural landscapes" meaning landscapes which "represent the 'combined works of nature and of man' designated in Article 1 of the Convention" ("cultural heritage" includes sites which are "works of man or the combined works of nature and of man").

In the interests of efficiency, the Guidelines explain that "Cultural landscapes fall into three main categories, namely:

- (i) [...] the clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man. This embraces garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles.
- (ii) [...] the organically evolved landscape. This results from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. [...]
- (iii) [...] the associative cultural landscape. The inclusion of such landscapes on the World Heritage List is justifiable by virtue of the powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent".

Landscape is regarded here as a product of culture, that is to say, as a work “constructed for aesthetic reasons”, in “response to its natural environment” or as a projection of “religious, artistic or cultural” phenomena on the natural element.

Interestingly, the convention makes no mention of landscape in the context of natural heritage even though this natural heritage can also have a powerful aesthetic dimension. The Guidelines, indeed, state that among the criteria used to determine outstanding universal value, sites must “contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance”.

The objective of the Protocol on the Implementation of the Alpine Convention of 1991 relating to the conservation of nature and the countryside (1994) is to “protect, care for and, to the extent necessary, restore nature and the countryside in such a way as to ensure [...] the diversity, specificity and beauty of the natural and rural landscape”. Landscape here is viewed primarily in terms of an aesthetic relationship with natural and rural areas. The aesthetic qualities of Alpine landscapes are based on three “values”: “diversity, specificity and beauty”.

The Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (Aarhus, 1998) recognises landscape as being one of the environmental elements, namely “air and atmosphere, water, soil, land, landscape and natural sites, biological diversity and its components, including genetically modified organisms, and the interaction among these elements”.

Although it is a United Nations document, this convention takes up the idea contained in the European Union directive of 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. Landscape is an element of the environment but, this time, it is not confined to abiotic features. What is interesting about the concept of landscape that seems to have inspired the Aarhus Convention is that some languages, such as Creole and at least one of the Sami languages, do not, strictly speaking, have a term for landscape. Instead, another word is used, such as “*alentou*” in Caribbean Creole or “*Eanadat*” in the Inari region of Finland, which means that which is “around” a person or community, i.e. surroundings. Because of the lifestyle of these population groups, landscape is conceived in terms of a place in which to live.

As far as the European Landscape Convention is concerned (Florence, 2000), landscape is “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. This definition deliberately invites us to view landscape from the perspective of well-being and quality of life. The preamble to the convention is quite clear in this respect: “the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere”, “the landscape is a key element of individual and social well-being”. “Landscape” here is considered with reference not to nature or culture, but rather to close interaction of “natural and/or human factors”.

The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (2003) takes into account “the high ecological importance of Carpathian mountain ecosystems, such as natural and semi-natural grasslands, as part of the ecological networks, landscapes and traditional land-use”. This convention proceeds from the position that ecosystems, which may be anthropised, are part of the landscape. Landscape is thus understood here as the “traditional”, highly environmentally responsible relationship between communities and nature.

What broad conclusions may be drawn from this quick glance at the international instruments on landscape?

The first is that since 1979, the concept of landscape has not evolved in a linear fashion over time. The variations in the meaning of landscape show that instead, the concept has acquired various additional meanings depending on the focus of the different instruments developed.

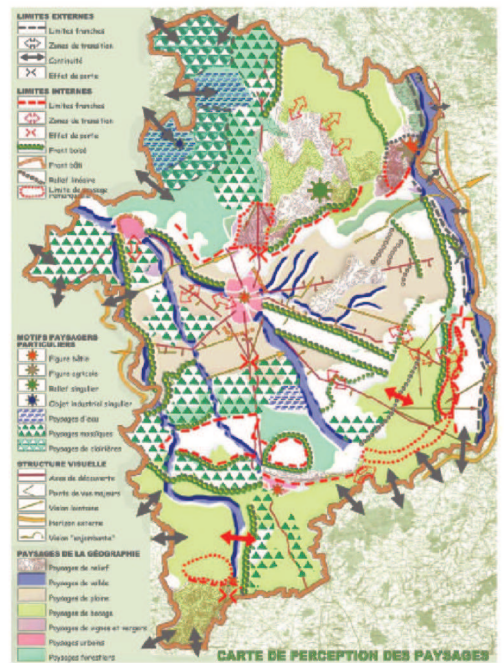
These various meanings can be roughly divided into three broad categories:

Landscape is the aesthetic face of territory. The UNESCO convention on world heritage and the Alpine Convention are both examples of this approach.

Landscape is the natural face of territory. More accurately, landscape is first and foremost a concept that relates to pieces of land where human action is not the dominant feature. In this view, landscape is synonymous with the natural environment and ecosystems, as well as rural areas, usually ones that have been developed by farmers. The directive on natural habitats, the Convention on the Carpathians and the Sixth Environment Action Programme¹ are all typical of this approach.

Landscape is a place where populations live. Legal instruments assign it the task of humanising the notion of environment so as to turn it into a political issue, i.e. a question of democracy rather than a subject for experts alone. The Aarhus Convention and the European Landscape Convention best exemplify this approach.

¹ The Sixth Environment Action Programme (2003) takes the view that “Preservation and improvement of landscapes are important to quality of life and rural tourism as well as to the functioning of natural systems”. This action programme differs from the other texts in that it assigns an economic value to landscape through “rural tourism”. Yet although the programme refers to quality of life, and 80% of Europeans live in towns or cities, it very clearly associates landscapes solely with rural and natural areas.

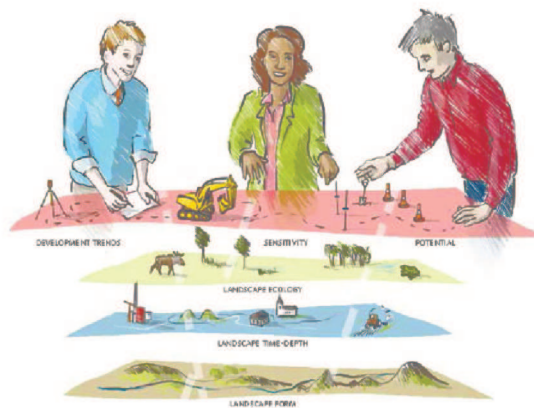


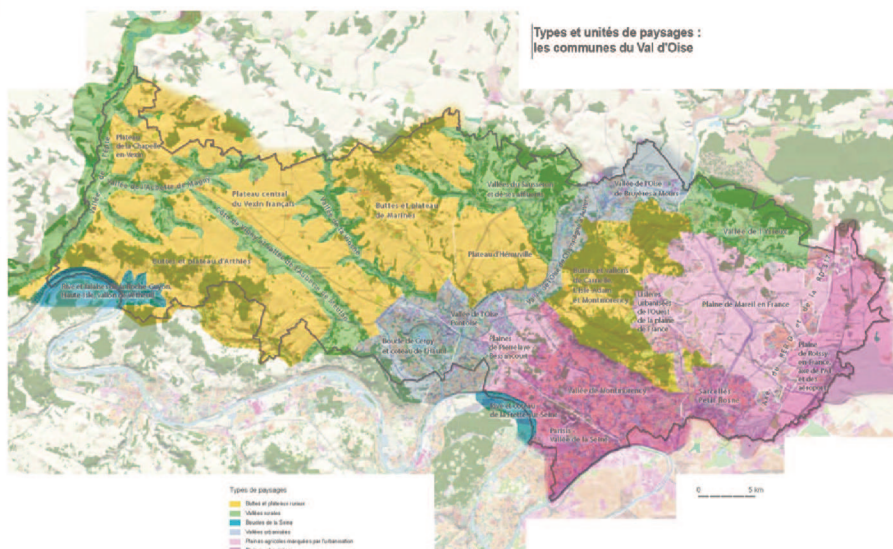
Integrated
Landscape Character
Assessment (ILCA)

ELC in Swedish
regional planning

Including landscape
in long term spatial
planning

Bengt Schibbye
Emily Wade





Atlas des paysages du Val-d'Oise - 2010

definition set out in Article 1 refers to landscape in the sense of people's surroundings.

The convergence of meanings of commonly used words, legal terminology and methods is reassuring, because it means that everywhere in Europe, landscape policies and tools for implementing them can be devised that accord with the “*aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings*”.

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Appendix

Terms gleaned from participants in workshops, conferences and meetings held by the Council of Europe Secretariat of the European Landscape Convention

Albanian	<i>Peizazh</i>
Alsatian	<i>Làndschàft</i>
Andorran	<i>Paisatge</i>
Azeri	<i>mənzərə, landşaft</i>
Basque	<i>Paisaia</i>
Belarusian	<i>peizaj, kraiaivid</i>
Breton	<i>maezad</i>
Catalan	<i>paisatge</i>
Corsican	<i>paisagiu</i>
Creole	<i>alentou</i>
Croatian	<i>krajobraz, krajolik</i>
Czech	<i>Krajina</i>
Dutch	<i>Landschap</i>
English	<i>landscape</i>
Estonian	<i>maastik</i>
Finnish	<i>maisema</i>
French	<i>paysage</i>
Galician	<i>paisaxe</i>
Georgian	<i>peizaji</i>
German	<i>landschaft</i>
Greek	<i>Τοπίο (Topio)</i>
Hungarian	<i>Táj</i>
Icelandic	<i>Landslag</i>
Irish	<i>tírdhreach (tir: land, native soil)</i>
Italian	<i>Paesaggio</i>
Latvian	<i>Ainava</i>
Lithuanian	<i>Kraštovaizdis</i>
Macedonian	<i>PreDEL</i>
Macedonian	<i>Сцена (scéna), пейзаж (peJzaž)</i>

Moldovan	<i>Peisaj</i>
Montenegrin	<i>Predio</i>
Norwegian	<i>Landskap</i>
Polish	<i>Krajobraz</i>
Portuguese	<i>Paisagem</i>
Provençal	<i>Païsage</i>
Romanian	<i>Peisajul</i>
Russian	<i>Ландшафт (landshaft), Пейзаж (peyzazh)</i>
Sami	<i>Eanadat</i>
Serbian	<i>Предео (Predeo), pejзаж (pejzaž)</i>
Slovak	<i>Krajina</i>
Slovenian	<i>Krajina</i>
Spanish	<i>Paisaje</i>
Swedish	<i>Landskap</i>
Turkish	<i>peyzaj (development), manzara (view, vision), yatay (horizon)</i>
Ukrainian	<i>ландшафт (landshaft)</i>
Valencian	<i>Paisatge</i>
Wayana (Amerindian language of Guyana)	<i>ëwutë (village)</i>
Welsh	<i>Tirwedd</i>

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