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Workshop 4: Landscapes, spaces of cooperation

Rapport

Margarita Ortega

Architect, Honorary Member of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning (CEMAT), and of the implementation of the European Landscapes Convention

In border areas, landscapes are especially cultural facts. Cultural means territory, people and their transformations along the time -past, present, but future as well. However, as indicated by the title of the workshop 4, border landscapes are mostly places where cooperation is essential.

The experiences presented in this workshop¹ confirm this proposal. The speakers have provided us a very interesting set of suggestions. This paper tries to summarise its main ideas for contributing to the conclusions. Obviously many of them have also been expressing in the presentations of the previous sessions as well.

All of them concerning to the main topics mentioned in the title of the workshop -landscape, space of cooperation- emphasizing its mutual relationships; with special attention to the specific role of cooperation in border landscapes; or, what is the same, the important role of the landscape as space for cooperation in these areas.

The suggestions are organised on these tree main aspects:

1. Singularity of border landscapes

Border conditions are key elements for identification of landscapes. However, at the same time, these previous conditions could become opportunities in future. It is possible to identify some principal factors:

¹ The Swiss-Italian joint Project of shared landscapes. The Gate of Gornje Podunavlje (Serbia). Transfrontier cooperation in the North Calotte Area Landscapes. Lapland (Finland, Sweden and Norway). Landscape of the Douro, at the border: the isolation of identities and the challenges of economic cooperation (Spain). The Green Belt of Fennoscandia: prospective project of international cross-border cooperation in joint research and use of natural and cultural landscapes (Russian Federation).

Periphery: In general, border regions are peripheral (in both sense, physical and economic) in relation to central ones. In the past, most of them have suffered from common administrative controls or restrictions with economic consequences as well. Therefore, they have had common challenges to cope with them (rural abandon, marginalization, lack of activities by different market or administrative regulations...) (Cases of Serbia, Douro-Douro or Lapland).

Nevertheless, this means the preservation of vernacular or traditional features (uses and management of the territory; agricultural, urban and architectural patterns; cultural traditions...) that become important assets at present.

Significance or values of the lines: Borderlines are not random. In general, are situated or use relevant geographic elements (mountains, rivers, bays, capes...) normally less transformed than others did and, for that reason, more and better preserved. Therefore, these areas nowadays are more authentic and richer (Lapland, Serbia, Douro).

Nevertheless, these spaces were established by political decisions as strategic areas (defence or dominance) that left traces, footprints with associated cultural values that need to be discovered and identified today.

Rural dominance: some areas appear even more vulnerable than others do, especially the remote rural areas ones. In the case of Douro, we could see a vision made from of point of view of their inhabitants.

Symbolic and identity features: Most of border areas have been witnesses of historical facts; sites where have occurred events that provide them footprints. They could be consider as “event places” or “narrative spaces” with capacity to communicate, to keep a scenery or to transmit information.

In synthesis, as the Russian comparative study stated, because of the effect of the border, appear different patterns in both sides of each country according to the different administrative or cultural rules.

Landscapes patterns are witnesses of a good management of natural resources, in many cases even self-sufficient. Today these patterns could be

the real safeguard –even the only- if its relationships are respected (Douro) and used as patterns of the functional relationship of the man with its environment. In this sense, it could be a real alternative for a new model of ecological and sustainable development.

2. The additional values of the border landscapes

Because of these factors, in general, in border landscapes cultural and symbolic values may be more important than other natural values already recognized. It is crucial to identify the additional value that incorporate the cultural and historical aspects to the natural dominance in order to reveal the different character of these “new” landscapes.

Natural and environmental values: Border areas generally have higher natural or environmental values due to have suffered less or minor changes over time. It supposes weak transformations (Serbia, Lapland and Douro).

Cultural and historical values: As noted, the cultural aspects serve as descriptors of lifestyles, customs and traditions in the use and management of the territory, completed with the footprints due to historical reasons. Therefore, most of border landscapes are really “cultural landscapes”².

As “cultural landscapes”, symbolic and historical dimensions of the landscapes require an innovative language as expression not only physical of the territory. An image of its complex structure. In addition, must be an answer, culturally created, transmits and expressed by a concrete social group sum of two communities that have been historically separate by political reasons. In fact, they could be consider as a “heritage” landscape. This would involve transforming a territory landscape, to create a new scene –a new narrative- integrating by all the elements incorporating the memory and its events as well. The representation of a reality result of a process.

Practically all the cases have noted that landscapes are a resource and a factor for local but also regional development. The cultural and symbolic

² According to the Spanish National Plan for Cultural Landscape (2012), “Cultural landscape” is the result of people interacting over time with the natural medium, whose expression is a territory perceived and valued for its cultural qualities, the result of a process and the bedrock of a community’s identity. “Border landscapes” are obviously between the different categories of cultural landscapes.

values, as identity but also the desires of citizens, implies incorporate the needs and contributions of the current society and considering their possibilities in the regeneration or creation of these new landscapes: “from landscape received to landscape desired”, as Italian-Swiss project has expressed.

3. What consequences and requirements for cooperation?

According to the examples presented, it is possible summarized some key common aspects in relation to the role of the cooperation.

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) and its Guidelines, as key reference. It provides legal bases for its implementation in both sides of the frontier (Serbia and Douro); it offers an operative interpretation of cultural dimension of the landscapes as basic component of the European identity – the “European construction”- (Russian Federation study); or also the add value of an award from the Council of Europe as the Serbia project.

Discover and identify common values and challenges, appreciate diversity and perceive threats. Landscape emerges clearly as an important local resource and as a tool to discover and to reinforce the identity factors and the necessary sense of ownership (Italian-Swiss project). Especially in order to create new conditions and opportunities for a more attractive environment for the quality of life. It is the case of increasing tourism and jobs in the Serbia experience; historical and positive resilience keeping the relationship people-territory and claim for the very rich resources not profit by the area, in the Douro case; or discover and improve a new transversal and trans-European “region” at the Lapland project.

Set common goals for a “new” shared landscape. It requires common but differentiated and adapted responses according to the different administrative rules in each side. Agreeing on common management model, while maintaining the cooperation commitments. It is also important respect the management models. Especially to be able to manage the complementarities between all the diverse dimensions of the landscape. It is

necessary to avoid the temptation of the simplification and the isolated answers.

Creative and active approach and methods. To achieve a new landscape “desired” is important using innovative tools for appreciation, public participation or required measures of restoration, remedy, and for to look for new patterns for the current activities and uses. Maps made by children to provide bases for future in the Italian-Swiss project, or discover a landscape strongly connected to individual mind and emotion at the Lapland case are good examples.

Seek appropriate support tools or instruments: Observatories; new interpretation Maps; itineraries, green corridors or historical networks to refer the “new” border landscapes. Some projects mentioned the possibilities and opportunities of the European Union instruments.