

**16TH COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEETING OF THE WORKSHOPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE
EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION**

Workshop 5: Transfrontier landscapes to be revealed

Report

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The 5 presentations of this workshop demonstrated that, as mentioned by one of the co-chairs, Mr. Jean-François Séguin, at the beginning of the session, "there is a need to analyse what separates in order to reveal what is common".

In the MEDSCAPES Initiative, Mr Phaedon Enotiades presented a project involving Cyprus, Greece, Jordan and Lebanon, that considered the landscape character assessment as a tool for the conservation of natural values in the Eastern Mediterranean and had as one of its goals the development of a landscape methodology as a source of inspiration for sustainable decision-making in the participating countries.

The presentation revealed some important issues that were dealt with in the project, such as using a methodology developed in the West (landscape character assessment) but adjusted and applied in the East, that needed training to develop a common understanding of the methodology and process, recognizing that the definition of landscapes integrates the relationship between the population and its territory implying the special importance of taking into account the cultural, historic and symbolic diversity of the Eastern Mediterranean and that that every single landscape is different from the rest (but not better or worse). The community participative process (based on the tradition of the Arab "Hima" concept) to build on the results of the landscape character assessment was an important feature of the project.

"A Landscape Observatory of the Tagus River", a common project between Portugal and Spain, presented by Mrs Maria do Rosário Oliveira, showed the relevance of the transfrontier cooperation, raising the issue of the meaning of the "border" for the protection and management of the landscape of this shared river: between two countries with different public policies, administrative organization, normative and regulations along the common border, can transfrontier cooperation overcome the concept of the border as a barrier and allow "continuity" (in terms of common goals, for example)?

The presentation briefly described the process of setting-up the Landscape Observatory as an essential framework for partnerships between public institutions and local communities, a tool for information, participation, education and training. A proposal for the definition of a "Tagus green infrastructure", considering the river as a structural and cohesion element between the north and south, the urban and the rural areas, the coast and the hinterland, is being prepared. This project, while enhancing cross-border cooperation between Portugal and Spain, may be also a step forward for the ELC implementation in both countries in a transfrontier perspective by connecting the Tagus landscape through fundamental resources such as water, land, people and biodiversity, overcoming the border challenges already mentioned.

"Small historic towns and their landscapes along the European Green Belt, following the former Iron Curtain", presented by Mrs Brigitte Macaria, dealt with the Austrian section of the Green Belt, a green ribbon along the former "Iron Curtain" that crosses 24 countries and connects a great variety of landscapes, showing that landscape border lines usually are not the administrative

border lines, as landscapes are composed of natural and human factors and influenced by the way the people perceive them.

Based on the 6 pilot regions of border situations between Austria and its neighbours, having common landscapes but different languages, common problems and challenges, many of them deriving from the peripheral situation of the Green Belt in most countries, but where small towns and villages are a cultural mark in a real mosaic of landscapes, the project defined, based on a set of historic and functional criteria, the concept of "historic small towns" as a cultural variety in these regions and proposed several paths for sustainable regional development, namely the need for "dynamic preservation" of these landscapes, good governance and transborder cooperation at the local and regional level. The last part of the presentation dealt with the future and the role of the Green Belt, considering that its rich variety of landscapes, small historic towns and human factors justifies its recognition and need for management in the sense of the ELC and as a contribution for sustainable rural development.

Mr Tapio Heikillä, one of the co-chairs, concluded at the end of the presentation that it is important to keep in our minds very important and difficult memories and that the Green Belt could do this but change the type of memories.

The ECSLAND Project, presented by Mrs Gloria Pungetti, dealt with the European culture expressed in sacred landscapes, being part of the EUCEL Initiative (European Culture Expressed in Landscapes), developed between 2007-2015.

The ECSLAND was based on the idea that the transfrontier concept is not just about the "physical" but it also has a "spiritual" dimension and that sacred landscapes are a fundamental part of our cultural heritage and unique identity. Different groups organized within the project network dealt different topics (history, character, identity, archeology and architecture) and going from the spiritual to governance (supporting and promoting inter-religious, intercultural and intergenerational dialogue), each group having their own goals and functioning process. Improved cooperation between the participants was one important outcome of the project. Mrs Pungetti finished the presentation mentioning the idea of going from sacred landscapes to biocultural diversity, considering that the cultural and sacred landscapes carry a cultural and spiritual relation to nature, supporting a bionatural diversity that defines "biocultural landscapes".

"The touristic values of the landscape of the transfrontier Parc "PRESPA", presented by Mr. Laci Sabri, focused on the importance and diversity of the landscape of this area (two lakes, mountains, historic monuments, agricultural land, biodiversity) and on the impacts of human activities on the landscape. Focusing mostly on the albanian area of the Parc (created in 2000 between Albania, Greece and the Former Republic of Macedonia), Mr Sabri briefly described the actions developed to analyse existing factors and potentials for socio-economic development of the area (namely, the opinion of the population) in order to base a possible political priority given to tourism, while keeping its important values. Mr Sabri enhanced the need to diversify the relationships and cooperation with the neighbouring countries in order to guarantee a correct development and protection of existing values.

As important conclusions of this workshop, we could point that:

- landscape borders don't always fit administrative borders, resulting from natural, man-made, cultural factors and even political priorities, as well as from the perception of the populations with different cultural and social backgrounds and identity;
- there is a need for common language, concepts and even methodologies, although adapted to local culture and tradition;
- as mentioned by Mr Phaedon Enotiades in its presentation, transfrontier cooperation doesn't have to mean that it should be applicable only to "contiguous" frontiers;

- transfrontier cooperation, at all levels and between the populations is an important tool for the protection, management and enhancement of border landscapes;
- landscape is an important potential and contribution to sustainable development but it has to take into account the wishes of the population;
- a common analysis, not only of what exists but also of challenges and solutions, allows a coherent decision-making (Mr Jean-François Séguin);
- Europe is full of borderlands implying the need for transfrontier cooperation, border cooperation being an important contribution to democracy (Mr. Tappio Heikkilä).