

WORKSHOP I: Wednesday 2 October – Thursday 3 October 2013
**IDENTIFY, ANALYSE, CHARACTERISE THE LANDSCAPE
TO ACT, IMPROVE THE KNOWLEDGE**

Introductory interventions for presentations on ‘Experiences of landscape identification and assessment: national, regional and local levels’

Methods: Scales and levels

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1. Introduction

When member states of the Council of Europe contract to the European Landscape Convention one of the things they undertake to do is to “**identify** their own landscapes throughout its territory; to **analyse** their **characteristics** and the forces and pressures transforming them; and to take note of changes”. They also undertake to “assess the landscapes thus identified, taking into account the particular values assigned to them by the interested parties and the population concerned” (COE 2000, ELC, Article 6C.) How to achieve these tasks? In the second part of the 13th ELC workshop in Cetinje, we will hear ways that member states are finding to bring citizens and the public into the discussion; in the first part, we will hear about more expert ways to provide initial identifications and characterisations of landscape.

In the early 1990s, appropriate methods for characterising landscape began to be developed in the United Kingdom and many other countries have looked to these methods for inspiration. We must remember however that there are many other approaches in use across Europe, as we shall see today, and this methodological diversity (not least because it matches landscape and cultural diversity) is as important a part of European diversity as any other aspect. Even when the ‘British’ approach is used in other countries, it normally requires adaptations to different circumstances, different types of landscape, different needs and historically different cultural approaches to the idea of ‘landscape’.

2. UK examples - characterisation

In England, two main methods of identification and characterisation of landscape have been developed, both based on the idea of the ‘character’ – or personality – of landscape; both therefore humanistic rather than scientific or environmental approaches. These are Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC; in Scotland it is called Historic Landuse Assessment). Both were invented for use as a basis for landscape planning and management, but also for all aspects of spatial planning and other policy, in line with the ELC which emerged a few years later. The existence of separate methods for the historical dimension and the present day dimensions of landscapes is today – or ought to be - an anachronism, but it resulted from historical circumstances and the very real disciplinary and cultural differences that divide the landscape field. LCA was carried out mainly by landscape architects or planners, HLC by archaeologists and historians. In Wales, a different method called LANDMAP, made of a comprehensive database for integrated landscape analysis, is used. This covers five aspects of the landscape: geology, habitats for species, visual and sensory characters, the historical landscape and cultural aspects.

‘Landscape character’ is the distinct and recognisable combination of elements that occurs consistently in a particular area of land, and how these are perceived by humans Swanwick et al. 2002 In the late

1980s and early 1990s, the former agency Countryside Commission in England developed guidelines for Landscape Assessment, were intended for planners and policy makers. Since being first codified in 1993, LCA has become an increasingly important method for identifying and understanding landscape. In the early 1990s new thoughts for planning and management was raised about regarding the landscape as “a whole” in instead of looking to small isolated components. Descriptions of landscape character reflect certain combinations of geology, land formation, soil, vegetation, land use and settlements, and the idea of landscape as human perception, thus fundamentally incorporated in the definition: ‘landscape character’ depends on human choices in defining and selecting, prioritising and combing the various elements. Although theoretically repeatable by other practitioners, there is an inherent subjectivity at the heart of the methods; this subjectivity is however moderated, framed and contained by transparency of decision-making and consistency of method (Martin, 2004) .

In the UK, LCA has had two main types of application, one at a national (England) scale, one at county or, smaller, district or municipal level.

At the national level, a comprehensive program was initiated it the mid 1990s to identify, describe and analyse the character of the entire English landscape, thereby to take account of landscape character when planning and managing for change. A method for large-scale character assessment was developed, which combined map analysis of landscape character with data management in geographical information systems (GIS). This method was used together with more traditional methods to describe the landscape: expert assessments, literature reviews, field work and studies of different maps. The work eventually created a map of 159 ‘National Character Areas’, a method that is now familiar in several countries, each with its accompanying description of the regional landscape types and character areas. (They are also called ‘Joint Character Areas’ because they reflected the interests of all there English government agencies - the Countryside Commission, English Nature and English Heritage). The project also examined which factors affected the landscape character, and the driving forces that altered the landscape (Sarlöv Herlin 2012).

At the county or district level, more detailed LCA has been carried out for most of England, usually by the local authority involved. Descriptions of the landscape character of LCA method have a standardized format in the UK. They describe areas' characteristics, and the overall character. They also take up the way in which natural conditions, history and culture, settlement, land use and vegetation are shaping the landscape character. The method is based on a structured description which first shows the individual elements shaping the landscape, and how they then form distinctive patterns. These more local LCAs, because of their finer scale, have proved effective for helping to make planning decisions on, for example, new buildings, wind farms, forestry plantations or other new elements that should be fitted into the landscape; they have also guided the use of resources of landscape and agri-environmental management. The method can also involve a systematic approach to assessing the sensitivity of different landscape areas to different types of change and new additions.

A key aspect of LCA – and of HC – is the deliberate separation of the characterisation stage, as a value-neutral (although subjective) stage, from value-judgements inherent in the evaluation or assessment stage. HLC goes further indeed, in postponing any evaluation stage to the point of need, on the basis of specific proposals for change, or as part of an integrative strategy with LCA and other environmental data. Professor Carys Swanwick at the University of Sheffield, who has been leading the development of LCA methodology, since the early 1990s, describes how to distinguish between determining landscape character and to evaluate it (2002). The initial characterization - that is, the process of identifying areas with a single character, classifying, mapping, and describe them - means no evaluation. First, in the next stage one has to consider how a new landscape feature, such as a wind turbine, a road or afforestation, may affect the landscape character, and if the change will be undesirable or desirable for the landscape.

Landscape characterisation uses two units of analysis, *Types* and *Areas*.

Landscape Character Types are distinct types of landscape that are relatively uniform in character and which can be found repeated across a region. These can occur

everywhere, in different parts of the country, and with respect to such as geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historic land use and settlement patterns. In LCA, they are often defined topographically (eg valley side, upland), and tend to take second place to Areas. In HLC they are defined by the through-time combinations of cultural land use (and other factors) and are both primary and central to the method.

Landscape Character Areas, are discrete, separately-bounded and unique specific geographical areas containing a combination of Landscape Character Types which is unique in itself. Each landscape character area has an entirely individual character and local identity, although it will probably share some landscape character types with other Areas. In HLC, Areas are usually drawn out of the Types for specific purposes; alternatively HLC types can be used to better describe the character of LCA Areas (Swanwick et al. 2002).

Analyses of LCA at different scales can be linked with each other so that a study can range from national to local scale - or vice versa. The method has been used in many different situations in England during the last ten years. It has for example been used to develop strategies for the landscape at different scale levels, to predict how wind power will affect an area, as a basis for various large-scale landscape changes, and as part of an EIA in recent years. LCA has also been used in landscapes with special designations, such as National Parks and AONB areas, as well as the landscape outside the protected areas. The method is not intended to be used to freeze landscape development, but will serve as a basis for harmonize the fitting of new elements in the best possible way. Landscape Character Assessment and similar methods include also the preparation of forest management strategies (Forestry Commission), landscape assessment of river corridors (Environment Agency) and landscape analyses of the areas of England that goes under term Environmentally Sensitive Areas, (ESA). Although LCA mainly used in rural landscape, it has now also been used for urban landscapes and peri-urban landscapes.

A further development of the method has resulted in an Integrated Characterisation that places equal emphasis on several environmental factors: the character of the landscape, biodiversity, historic character, air and water, recreation and access. Agriculture as an economic asset is also an important factor that shapes the character of the landscape. The integrated characterization is hence adding several factors, and do not regard only to the character of the landscape.

Landscape Character Assessment was initially used as support for experts so that they could better understand and evaluate landscape, but the method can also function as a tool to engage the public and stakeholders in the management and development of an area. By describing the characteristics of a local area, it may be easier for the public to participate in decision-making on the landscape. Local participants can also contribute to implementing LCA when testing already implemented descriptions of landscape character, as they can convey valuable information that otherwise might not have come up, such as where different species are found, local history or anything else that is unique to one area and is considered locally important. Users can either be interested in a particular issue, such as bird conservation or archaeology, or be especially interested in a specific site or area. Typically, the people with access to a place where they live, maybe since several generations, also have special interests in the place. Those who are focused on certain issues may include landowners in the area, state and local governments, or interest groups in nature conservation, local history or recreational activities. There is no strict division between categories, but those affected, such as farmers and foresters often belong to both groups. Today there is work in progress within different countries to develop better methods for Landscape Character Assessment as a tool for stakeholder participation, assuming many different forms of engagement (Butler and Berglund, 2012).

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) was first developed as a research project of archaeologists at English Heritage between 1992 and in 1994 as a process to identify, describe and analyse the different patterns in the historical landscape (Aldred and Fairclough, 2002; Fairclough and Macinnes, 2003; Macinnes 2004) The method is used today alongside Landscape Character Assessment. A criticism made by archaeologists is that the Landscape Character Assessment is largely based on the

region's visual properties and does not take sufficient account of the historical processes that have shaped landscape. Therefore, critics believe that the relationships between vegetation, land use and human history will not always be expressed in the Landscape Character Assessment. During the 1990s, archaeologists and cultural heritage managers also were increasingly critical to how the management of the historic environment was usually focused on the protection of individual objects as archaeological remains, listed buildings or renowned parks and gardens. They argued that the history is present throughout the landscape and the historic environment also consists of fields, woods, roads and everyday buildings. If we can better understand how the landscape has changed throughout history we would have a better basis for the new changes in the landscape, say those who developed the HLC method. By examining the differences between early and modern maps it was possible to map and assess changes that had taken place in the landscape. HLC method primarily describes the historical patterns that have been mapped in the landscape, whether they are more or less visible in reality. In England and Scotland there are almost full descriptions of the character of the historic landscape, descriptions showing how both change and continuity has led to the landscape we can see today. In England, HLC projects were conducted for English Heritage by local authorities at county level and in national parks; national coverage (and in Scotland) is now almost complete (Clark et al. 2004; Turner, 2006; Turner and Fairclough 2007)

Both LCA and HLC methods are based on a clear structure for collecting data, analysing and characterising, and they can provide a basis for planning and management of landscape. Both methods are based on spatial and map-based approaches and are using geographic information systems (GIS). HLC method can either be used independently or as part of the LCA method to deliver information about the history of the landscape and to describe changes. One difference between the methods is that the Historic Landscape Characterisation mainly is based on different "types" of landscape, rather than the 'areas' that are prominent in a Landscape Character Assessment.

3. Scales and levels of LCA and HLC

These methods of landscape characterisation take particular scales at which to work, but these are usually determined pragmatically, for example by type of data or expertise that is available, by the particular practice- or policy- led requirement of a project, by the disciplinary standpoint taken. One of the characteristics of landscape within the ELC framework – and one its great advantages in terms of being a way of seeing, thinking and acting rather than as a subject of study - is that landscape does not operate at a single scale. There is no such thing as 'the' 'landscape scale' - scale is a major issue for landscape research, but landscape itself is not a scale. Instead, landscape characterisation at a variety of scales helps to unlock scale, to link different scales of data, to study activities that have taken place at a variety of scales; it can also, perhaps most important, encompass all the different scales that individual, communities, practitioners, policy makers, developers and animals operate at, from local to European, from habitat to pan-European distributions, from anyone's backyard to the ambitions of a multi-national corporation, from an architect's design project to a regional spatial plan. It is why landscape simultaneously affords the basis of national (and European) identities but also at the same time is intimately linked to local identities and sense of place (Fairclough 2006; 2013).

Time-scales are as important as spatial scale - the cross-temporal scales which help to link multiple pasts to the present, and to facilitate visualisation of the some possible futures, the pragmatic timescales of deadlines of completing a characterisation, or updating it when the passage of time has wrought changes, and the timescales, both short and very long, of landscape, societal and environmental change itself. This sense of temporal scale in landscape character does not only reveal the temporal depth of landscape today – its time depth – but also helps us to understand questions of survival, aftermath and the complexities of reuse. The past, and every layer in the sequence of landscapes perceived by the many generations of predecessors, also had their own pasts, which still weigh on our own landscape perceptions. So, if we think that issues of spatial scale are complex matters of landscape characterisation, we should think of the even greater complexity of time scale,

especially viewed against the short span of a single human life and the even shorter span of a politician's electoral timescale (Fairclough 2006; 2013)..

A further issue of scale in landscape characterisation is that of the detail of our understanding. Landscape calls on us to generalise, to combine data, interpretations and perceptions, to step back to a wider view. The different scales unlocked by the idea of landscape as defined by the ELC, allied to its openness to subjectivity, representation and imagination, allow a level of generalisation and abstraction above and beyond the detail of the material landscape itself, which offers a broader bridge towards real-world issues of policy, resilience, sustainability and social wellbeing (Fairclough 2006; 2013)

Studies using the HLC method cover often relatively large areas, which can extend over large administrative areas such as county or national parks where the overall pattern is determined. The method is based on desktop studies and implemented through the analysis of historical maps, various types of contemporary maps (usually known as the Ordnance Survey maps, scale 1:10 000 or 1:25 000 showing field boundaries, parcels and buildings), aerial photos and data on such habitats or forest land. Data are compiled and processed using GIS. The historical land use is interpreted with the help of these resources, and then historical character types are determined. This material is interpreted from an archaeological perspective that is focussed on the historical depth of landscape, taking a vertical approach both in terms of its focus on time and change, and of largely map-based viewpoint; originally conceived for pragmatic reasons as a parallel but complementary approach to LCA, it raises many issues concerning disciplinary standpoints, the use of characterisation as a research tool, the methodology (and timeliness) of integration, the relationship of heritage to landscape, and attitudes to landscape change in the context of a *longue durée* itself characterised by almost continual change.

Scale is a complex issue in HLC. HLC normally needs to be undertaken at a much more detailed scale than 'visual' LCA. Its types need to be defined at a high level of resolution if they are to be able to capture the diversity of several centuries of landscape creation, which necessarily makes the work detailed. Without working at detailed level, it is difficult to escape from more or less simple topographic mapping which portrays the landscape's natural 'elements' and influences well but which over-simplifies or misses out its human, cultural aspects, such as the all-important human response to the land, and how it changes through time, continually. Historic character also operates in most cases at very local level, that of the territories of individual farmsteads, hamlet, villages – household and community level, in other words - which often creates patterns of landscape character which repeat over and over again within – and often across - LCA character areas.

HLC therefore shows the historical footprint in today's landscape. It may for example be field size and shape, or different types of boundaries in the landscape. The method can also interpret the landscape characteristics that may have existed in the past and identify how landscape may have changed over time. The method does not aim to restore the landscape of the past or preserve the landscape in an unchanged condition. By specifically highlighting the different layers that can be interpreted in the landscape and the local character, people can more easily understand the surrounding landscape. The information about the landscape qualities and historical patterns that are developed using HLC is useful as a basis for planning decisions, for example, when deciding where new housing can be placed. HLC method is also used to provide data to regional and local planning, in planning for mineral extraction, waste management and agricultural support. Other uses are to find out more about the historic landscape and to identify questions for future research. In this way, the method also encourages research into the local history and a growing involvement by the public (Dobson and Selman 2012).

The ELC of course is clear that landscape occurs everywhere, in urban and marine contexts as well as rural. In recent years, therefore, greater attention in the field of characterisation has turned to these types of landscape. In the UK, HLC has been extended to urban and metropolitan landscape in England, and an even more detailed sub-method has been developed for such areas. This incorporates ideas from HLC, from LCA and – importantly – from older (1960s) methods of townscape analysis.

Also recently, both HLC and LCA have developed 'seascape' methodologies. The LCA version focuses particular on land/sea interfaces and the view from the land; HSC (Historic Seascape Characterisation) seeks to define the historic character of the sea as well as its relationship to the land. Both have been developed in response to the ever-growing need for information to guide marine spatial planning, as development proposals affecting the seabed, from wind turbines to marine aggregate extraction to gas extraction, become more common.

4. The diversity of landscape understanding and assessment

The British LCA/HLC approach has been adopted in several other countries, often as a result of the ELC and its workshops which have encouraged significant knowledge exchange. Sometimes the approach has been adapted - because different situations require different detailed methods; sometimes the principles alone are transferable to another country but the methods do not all fit. But they are now quite old methods, and new ideas supplant them; it is also clear that there are many quite different but firmly-rooted and well-established methods of landscape understanding elsewhere. The reasons why such differences exist are interesting in themselves, for example stemming from different disciplinary, cultural and political circumstances, or the extent to which they reflect disciplinary or cultural differences in different parts of the world and how this results from different approaches to land management and landscape planning. In this, however, as in so much else, in Europe, strength can be seen to lie in this diversity. Thus, whilst our starting point has been the two British methods, Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), it is also very necessary to look at the full range of methods of landscape assessment and characterisation in their local practical and policy contexts. There have been few attempts to do this.

Throughout Europe during the past three decades, again partly as a result of the ELC, the idea of landscape has changed, in scientific, practitioner and public appreciation, from a relatively straightforward on natural beauty or scenery (reflecting earlier art historical definitions of landscape) to a much broader concept of landscape's character as the sum of all its parts, as a complex whole that through human perception transcends its individual elements. Underlying this is the idea of landscape as a 'way of seeing' - a matter of how people perceive the world about them - and as a 'way of acting', in which landscape thinking is used as a tool for achieving broader policy, planning and management objectives rather than only being seen as a place or a set of objects deserving of study and protection. This newer perspective on landscape recognises and capitalises on its wide-ranging social relevance and reflects inter-disciplinary study, people-based and community-focussed definitions, and a fundamental acceptance of plural values and multiple voices.

These ideas are now also firmly embedded in the Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage to Society), which brings in useful ideas about the mutual interaction between landscape and heritage, taking forward debate and action on the ways in which the social relevance of the landscape idea offers a way of framing socio-economic issues and challenges, from identity and community issues to human rights and sustainability. The ideas also accord well with the ESF/COST Science Policy Briefing 'Landscape in a Changing World' on how the idea of 'landscape' can be an integrating concept and a disciplinary meeting place that can strengthen the dialogue between research and policy.

We have begun to think of the diversity of landscape characterisation methods in terms of broadly-defined families, partly defined geographically but more fundamentally defined by different disciplinary and cultural approaches. The challenge for the next decade of ELC implementation is not to choose the best of these, not even to integrate them, but to examine why they are different, what each offers and to modify one's own methods in the light of the others. We hope that this workshop will be an opportunity to explore these ideas and the legitimate differences between the various approaches.

We have already discussed the British method. It has spread quite widely across Europe, being used for example in Slovenia, Catalonia and Turkey. It also underpins the smaller scale method of Ecovast, widely used in some regions.

There is also however an emerging Nordic family, created seeing LCA type methods through the rather different prism of Nordic concepts of landscape, in which community and custom, people and perceptions occupy a differ, more central position. In Denmark, Iceland, Finland Norway and Sweden, therefore, as part of the ELC implementation process, new methods have emerged, which share a relatively common base regarding the historical development of landscapes, concepts, and well-developed democratic processes, and of people's attitudes to landscape policy. The adoption of the characterisation method here is taking interesting and different pathways.

Just as in England, distinctively archaeological/historical viewpoint took LCA ideas into the field of HLC, so in other countries have different historically-focussed disciplines created specific methods, each of which brings new and valuable ideas to the methodological field.

In Flanders, for example, in response to the needs the spatial planning and landscape protection, and using data-led methods of constructing landscape perceptions from land-use and land-cover data, Marc Antrop and Veerle van Eetvelde brought historical geography and landscape ecology together into the 'Flanders Landscape Atlas', identifying the most intact areas of pre-18th century 'traditional' landscape character, and contextualising the regions historic settlements in a densely inhabited and rapidly urbanised part of Europe,

In the Netherlands, and elsewhere, a markedly different approach (but like HLC archaeologically-inspired) to landscape character is proving effective for participatory planning. Thus takes the human metaphor of the 'landscape biography' as its starting point, and through historical narrative focused on the story behind landscape's present day appearance and upon the memory that resides in it. Landscape biography is, like HLC, focussed principally on the history and evolution of landscape and the ways in which past meets future, taking an almost literally biographical approach to landscape. It is predicated principally on sequence rather than space, and is a multi-layered approach which connects people through the generations as well as people with place; it is particularly well-suited - notably through questions of identity and memory - to incorporating participative approaches to the public appreciation and planning of landscape.

There is what we are currently terming a French School, the *Atlases du Paysage* which have been carried out in France, Wallonia and to a lesser extent Spain, Italy and other countries. This is an approach that is related to the British method but has significant and valuable differences, not least because of the nuanced (more than linguistic) differences between *paysage* and landscape. Strictly within the parameters of the European Landscape Convention, the Atlases grow from a strong conviction that people stand at the centre of landscape, and that because landscape is the concern of everyone, its assessment and characterisation is a democratic task. The Atlases in France are expertly conceived and implemented, but this chapter will show how they foreground public attitudes, and the personal and collective experiential as well as visual aspects of landscape.

Different methods again seem to be used in Germany and Austria (the two largest countries not to have signed the ELC), where there has for well over a century been a strong and distinguished – but markedly different - tradition of landscape thinking. There is no direct equivalent of the LCA approach in German contexts, but instead on the one hand a strong focus on environment and natural diversity and special areas and on the other an approach frequently labelled 'Landschaftsbild' which produces practical landscape assessments that inform and guide planning, design and management.

We should always remember to look beyond Europe, as well. What happens to the 'European' idea of landscape – and of landscape character - when it is transposed to a New World and overlaid on indigenous peoples' radically different relationship to the land? When tangible meets the intangible, and when people not things stand in the foreground. Landscape character retains an important role but in a different context; and lessons from these new fields are being re-exported back to Europe and also finding parallel experience in other continents. Why is LCA not used much beyond Europe? The few examples we have heard of seem to have been exported there by Europeans. Is this because alternative methods exist in other continents? Or are there competing fundamental conceptions of

landscape, alternative paradigms concerning nature, environment or land, or even more deeply engrained cultural differences, which translate very differently into practice. Much Australian and Canadian landscape research for example appears to focus on the intangible landscapes of indigenous native or 'first nation' peoples. This must raise the question of how the precepts of the European Landscape Convention can sensibly be translated into a World Landscape Convention, as has been frequently suggested in recent years.

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