

**13th COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEETING OF THE WORKSHOPS
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION**

*“Territories of the future,
landscape identification and assessment:
an exercise in democracy”*

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Closing Speech

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As this meeting is coming to an end, I would like to once again extend my warmest gratitude to the authorities of Montenegro for their hospitality and in particular to Mrs Sanja Ljeskovic Mitrovic, General Director for Spatial Planning at the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro, and to Mr Vuk Markovic, to Mr Nikola Jovovic and to their collaborator in the Directorate of Spatial Planning for their collaboration which is greatly appreciated in the organisation of this event.

Due to ‘travelling’ carried out in our workshops, we were able to move the camera by flying over the vast European territory and zoom in on spaces, territories at different geographical scales and at different administrative levels

The meeting enabled us to evaluate the implementation of 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 in matters of identification and qualification of landscape in member States of the Council of Europe.

This Recommendation states: “The various texts relating to the Convention and the various experimental practices already being developed or operational in different European states show a diversity of approach to knowledge production that also reflects the diversity of cultural concepts. However, there is an acute awareness of the inadequacies of the most frequently used theoretical and methodological instruments for operational needs. Too often, they belong to compartmentalised disciplinary universes, while the landscape demands adequate responses within cross-disciplinary time and space constraints which can meet the need for a knowledge of the permanent changes at local level. Approaches include: one that may be described as ‘description-interpretation’; this attempts to meet the requirement for knowledge imposed by instruments and measures for managing territorial changes (general plan, sector plan, landscape projects, etc.); approaches that are more analytical and descriptive, relatively independent and having operational purposes”¹.

The Recommendation considers that the term ‘identification’ should therefore be understood in its broad sense as the expression of this preliminary requirement; it is composed of a phase of comprehension and analysis of specific characteristics – description – and a phase of quality problem identification – assessment, which may vary according to the complexity of situations and objectives.

It provides that landscape knowledge should be developed according to an identification, description and assessment process, which includes:

¹ ‘Knowledge of the landscapes: identification, analysis, assessment’, Section II.2.1.

- an understanding and description of the specific physical characteristics of the sites in their current conditions, revealing the traces left by natural and human processes and recognising that landscape characteristics result from the action of natural and/or human factors and their interrelations;
- examination of their developmental processes and highlighting the past, present and foreseeable time-related forces due to either human or natural factors and the possible pressures and risks facing landscapes;
- recognition of characteristics and value systems based on analysis by experts or knowledge of the social perceptions of landscape. This knowledge can be gained through various forms of public involvement in the process of landscape policy definition and through analysis of the geographical distribution of the population.

Action should be taken to:

- promote integration of the different knowledge-production approaches to observation of the territory – economic, social, environmental, historic/cultural, perceptive/visual...;
- check that analyses concern the entire territory – which take account of outstanding, everyday and degraded parts – and not only parts or features regarded as significant or exceptional;
- ensure ease of access, clarity and transparency in the organisation and presentation of knowledge, with the particular aim of securing public involvement in landscape policy choices;
- encourage the establishment and availability of landscape databases; these should concern the condition of places, their past and present dynamics, pressures and risks, and both natural and human aspects of them. Information should be updated periodically, more frequently when changes are rapid.

They should comply with nationally, and where possible internationally, recognised criteria so as to encourage exchanges of experience between states, regions and territorial communities at other levels.

The Guidelines for measures should not be too interventionist as regards the methods, stages and stakeholders involved in the process of knowledge production: certain public authorities may provide landscape catalogues or atlases for use as a stand-alone instrument, with bodies having the specific responsibility for producing them. Depending on the state, such documents have various titles: landscape atlas, landscape catalogue, landscape map, landscape character assessment map, and so on. These supply a common reference framework and constitute a common language which makes communication easier between stakeholders. Other documents may leave it to the experts to choose whether to use descriptive analysis or interpretative description as the first stage in obtaining the knowledge required by the instruments of landscape policy definition and implementation, depending on the administrative level, scale, objectives and tools (programmes, plans, charters, etc.).

Why engage in this type of exercise? It is often stated in which concerns nature that one does not protect what one is not familiar with. It would be possible to say, referring to landscape that one protects, manages and develops well what one knows well. Therefore, the term identification should not be interpreted simplistically nor be limited to an inventory of landscapes but to lead us to examine the underlining of decoration, to know the riches which surround us and should be linked to the establishment of landscape quality objectives.

Landscape knowledge constitutes thus the first fundamental stage in a process either of formulation of choices or of the involvement of the stakeholders whose activities influence the landscape; it leads to the establishment of landscape quality objectives and to landscape action. The methods and

experiences presented during this meeting are often quite diverse but have for a common denominator to better know the territories of life.

For who was this exercise carried out? For the inhabitants of the territories. As mentioned in the European Landscape Convention, landscape must be recognised 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.

To make the process successful, it is necessary to consult the public and all other relevant stakeholders from the outset and secure their approval and involvement.

I hope that the result of our work allows us to move towards a wise management of our living space, for the benefit of present and future generations.

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