Landscape and sustainable development: challenges of the European Landscape Convention

Council of Europe Publishing
Editions du Conseil de l'Europe

Landscape and sustainable development

Challenges of the European Landscape Convention

Council of Europe Publishing

French edition:
Paysage et développement durable – Les enjeux de La Convention européenne du paysage
ISBN-10: 92-871-5988-2
ISBN-13: 978-92-871-5988-5

Photo: Jean-François Seguin
"On the Long Strand, an Irish beach, pebbles unite in their diversity as if in homage to the European Landscape Convention"
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Cover design: Graphic Design Unit, Council of Europe
Text proofreading and layout by the Documents and Publications Production Department (SPDP), Council of Europe

Council of Europe Publishing
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
http:/book.coe.int

ISBN-10: 92-871-5989-0
ISBN-13: 978-92-871-5989-2

Printed at the Council of Europe

Preface

The European Landscape Convention was adopted in Florence (Italy) on 20 October 2000 under the auspices of the Council of Europe, with the aim of promoting European landscape protection, management and planning, and organising European co-operation in this area. It represents the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with all aspects of European landscape. It applies to the entire territory of the parties and covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes.

The convention represents an important contribution to the implementation of the Council of Europe's objectives, namely to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law and to seek common solutions to the main problems facing European society today. By taking into account landscape, cultural and natural values, the Council of Europe seeks to protect Europeans' quality of life and well-being in a sustainable development perspective.

The Council of Europe has undertaken a work aiming at examining and illustrating certain fundamental aspects of the convention: Landscape and

– social, economic, cultural and ecological approaches;

– individual and social well-being;

– spatial planning;

– innovative tools;

– identification, assessment and quality objectives;

– awareness-raising, training and education;

– international policies and programmes; transfrontier landscapes;

– public participation.

This book has been produced thanks to the Council of Europe experts' reports and to the results of the workshops which have taken place on the implementation of the European Landscape Convention and have enabled specific examples and cases to be used to illustrate the same themes.[1] The various resulting publications may thus be examined together.

Our thanks go to Messrs Michel Prieur, Yves Luginbühl, Bas Pedroli, Jan Diek Van Mansvelt, Bertrand de Montmollin and Florencio Zoido for the excellent quality of their contributions to the debate.

1. Documents T-FLOR 2 (2002) 18 and 18 addendum and T-FLOR (3 (2002) 12. Also see Council of Europe Publishing, European spatial planning and landscape series, 2005, No. 72 and 2006, No. 74.

The reports were presented to two Conferences of the Contracting and Signatory States to the European Landscape Convention, held before the convention even came into force, the first on 22 and 23 November 2001, the second on 28 and 29 November 2002 and to the conference held when the convention came into force, on 17 June 2004.[2] The representatives of governments and of international governmental and non-governmental organisations who attended these conferences thus had the opportunity to discuss the relevant issues and to take the first steps towards optimum implementation of the convention.

The main feature of the European Landscape Convention, which is wholly dedicated to landscape, meaning landscape as a whole, is the way it in which it calls for the landscape to be valued as a product of history, the fount of cultural identity, a heritage to be shared, and a reflection of a Europe of multiplicity.

The task ahead, an ambitious one, is hugely important to the future of our land and our surroundings. We wish every success to those who are committed to it.

Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons
Head of Spatial Planning
and Landscape Division
Council of Europe

Enrico Buergi
Chair of the European Landscape
Convention Conferences,
2001-2004

2. Documents T-FLOR 1 (2001) 19, T-FLOR 2 (2002) 27 and T-FLOR (2004) 15.

Table of contents

2. Landscape and individual and social well-being

Yves Luginbühl, expert to the Council of Europe

> *"The member States of the Council of Europe signatory hereto […]*
>
> *Aware that the landscape […] contribut[es] to human well-being […];*
>
> *Believing that the landscape is a key element of individual and social well-being […]"*
>
> Preamble to the European Landscape Convention

"If I were to inquire what passion is most natural to men who are stimulated and circumscribed by the obscurity of their birth or the mediocrity of their fortune, I could discover none more peculiarly appropriate to their condition than this love of physical prosperity. The passion for physical comforts is essentially a passion of the middle classes; with those classes it grows and spreads, with them it is preponderant. From them it mounts into the higher orders of society and descends into the mass of the people."

Alexis de Tocqueville, De la démocratie en Amérique, *Paris, Pagnerre, 1850.*

Introduction

If we refer to the definition of landscape given in the European Landscape Convention,[55] the relationship that it is possible to establish between individual and social well-being and landscape is self-evident, since this definition associates the landscape with the quality of people's lives, which this text aims to improve. In fact, this relationship raises complex problems, which are more or less interconnected. It is not possible simply to state that all "high-quality" landscapes correspond to the (individual and social) well-being of the people who live in the territory of which it is the visible expression. This relationship between the landscape, individual well-being and social well-being is much more complex. This report, commissioned in the context of implementation of the European Landscape Convention, proposes to approach the issue from a number of different angles:

– first, it is proposed to consider the meaning of the terms individual well-being and social well-being;

– a second part is devoted to the links it is possible to establish between these concepts and the landscape;

– in the third part, an attempt will be made to show the current situation, to make it possible to identify the context in which this relationship can be reflected; these

55. "Landscape" means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

are the questions that will, therefore, have to be asked: by referring to previous definitions, does the contemporary landscape produce well-being for individuals and for societies? Do current trends in landscape transformation produce well-being or, conversely, a lack of well-being? And under what conditions is it possible to state that demanding high-quality contemporary landscapes produces well-being for individuals and for societies?

– the fourth part will focus more closely on the contributions of the European Landscape Convention and ways and means of implementing it that might favour individual and social well-being.

This issue has not, on the whole, received much attention from either science and political institutions, or government technical bodies. It has received more attention from medicine, which views well-being from a physiological and psychological perspective and sets the problem of well-being in the context of health, but it has very rarely dealt with the relationship between well-being and the landscape or, at the very least, open spaces. It has been dealt with from the perspective of social well-being, but seen in terms of its economic significance in relation to social inequalities and society's access to consumer goods and services.

However, analyses of the problems encountered by contemporary society in managing the human environment change the different ways of approaching this issue of individual and social well-being, although they have never dealt with it in relation to the issue of landscape.[56] It appeared, therefore, to be both essential and innovative in the context of implementation of the European Landscape Convention, to put forward a series of observations and proposals likely to foster public and private action leading to an improvement in the living conditions of the people of Europe and, consequently, to their well-being through the objectives of landscape management, protection and planning which the convention has, in particular, set itself.

2.1. Individual well-being, social well-being

The concept of well-being involves several aspects of man's relationship with the outside world and with himself, which are not easy to separate: a material dimension, associated with the satisfaction of physical and biological needs, and a spiritual dimension, associated with the satisfaction of psychological and emotional aspirations: well-being is "being well disposed in mind and body" or the "pleasant sensation produced by the satisfaction of physical needs and the absence of psychological tension", or even "the material situation which makes it possible to satisfy the needs of existence", according to the usual dictionaries.

Well-being therefore concerns the individual considered in his physical being as a biological entity on the one hand and in his spiritual being as a thinking entity on the other hand and also considered, in his material situation, as a social

56. An Internet search via several search engines associating well-being with landscape produced no results.

being dependent on what society is likely to provide to meet his basic needs. This concept of well-being also calls to mind the concept of health (physical[57] and mental), which the World Health Organization (WHO) defines as follows: "Health is a dynamic state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."[58]

It is therefore fundamentally difficult to separate the physical element of an individual's well-being from the spiritual element and, moreover, it seems that social well-being also has a reciprocal association with this state of health. However, for the purposes of this study, it will be necessary to take account of the different dimensions separately in order to associate them with the concept of landscape, while bearing in mind the strong links that bind them.

Although the concept of both individual and social well-being is, in addition, often dealt with in its relationship with environmental issues, it is still more often than not associated, on the one hand, with the satisfaction of the biophysical needs of the body or with the corresponding satisfaction of the fundamental needs of human existence: equal access to resources, to work, respect for human dignity and human rights, gender equality and child protection being the most frequently cited objectives on the whole, but increasingly issues linked to the physical or spiritual environment are also cited. It is the maintenance of biological health through access to food resources which are uncontaminated by toxic substances, in particular water, for example, but also the maintenance of spiritual health through access to knowledge and culture. The socio-economic meaning has been the subject of numerous studies in North America, notably by economists, who have tried to measure social well-being in relation to the gross domestic product (GDP) of a country and in relation to the conditions on which people have access to wealth. It is, in particular, the concept of welfare that has been analysed in such cases. One country stands out in this preoccupation: Canada, which has founded a council of social welfare with responsibility for assessing the well-being of the Canadian population and proposing measures to offset the harm to the population caused by social and economic change, or giving consideration to new dimensions and factors of the well-being of society in Canada. This national council of welfare has recently proposed methods of measuring well-being and has highlighted the strong link between the well-being of future generations and sustainable development.[59]

57. See, in this connection, Georges Vigarello, 1993, *Le sain et le malsain, Santé et mieux-être depuis le Moyen-Âge*, Seuil, Paris. This work is devoted to the history of human beings' relationship with illness and shows the changes that have taken place in the way they regard what is healthy and what is unhealthy. One of the conclusions is that there has been a shift in the boundaries between the two as knowledge has increased: extension of the scope of risk, as is clearly illustrated by the example of AIDS.

58. Report of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization, 1998. See Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons and Marc Pallemaerts, *Human rights and the environment*, Council of Europe Publishing, 2002, p. 271.

59. See the site of Canada's National Council of Welfare: http://www.cyberus.ca.

Generally speaking, the issue of well-being is also close to the concept of comfort, which is the term often used by politicians or the technical planning departments when formulating action designed to improve quality of life. At least it is from this perspective that the Interdisciplinary Research Programme on Cities conducted in France until 1996 envisaged what was termed "urban well-being": "In France, considerable efforts are made to improve the well-being of city dwellers. And yet knowledge of the conditions for improving urban well-being is often still no more than rudimentary. What constitutes 'urban comfort'; how does it manifest itself in terms of the social environment and how is it linked to urban practices?"[60]

Although a similar question could be posed in relation to rural areas and now, in particular, in relation to peri-urban areas, where the majority of people in Europe live, the link between well-being and landscape has never been studied. At the very most, recent work by landscape designers, especially in urban areas, to improve living conditions, or travelling and leisure conditions in urban public spaces, is identified as action intended to recreate loose social links across cities or neighbourhoods and improve travelling or leisure conditions. However, it is rare that such "landscape" activity is specifically designed to create well-being.

This kind of activity also reveals the new preoccupation of politicians, who seek solutions to the problems of urban sprawl and the economic crisis which is felt more sharply on the periphery of cities as a result of a shrinking labour market. The rise of insecurity in cities, frequently identified in planning policies in most European countries, and juvenile delinquency, in particular, figure as the principal factors of an absence of social well-being. Although an absence of individual well-being is not unconnected with an absence of social well-being, it does not necessarily involve the same factors. There are clearly links between individual well-being and social well-being, but whatever links it may be possible to establish with the landscape must first be considered separately, and then be brought together.

For the purposes of our study, we will therefore separate the first two dimensions of well-being into that which is associated with the human body and consequently with the environmental conditions necessary for good physical health, which can be reflected in the landscape, on the one hand, and the spiritual dimension and all that contributes to creating the landscape and the manner in which it affects human thought and fulfilment, on the other hand.

2.1.1. Individual well-being

Individual well-being consists, therefore, of:

– physical well-being, which the landscape as defined above is capable of bringing about;

– mental well-being, to which the landscape, or landscape configurations and ways of appreciating them, can contribute.

60. Gabriel Dupuy, Director of PIR Villes, in *Villes, Cités, Ciudades*, Cities Summit, Istanbul, June 1996, *Le courrier du CNRS*, pp. 85 and 86.

The third dimension, which relates to the individual's material situation, can be analysed differently, more in relation to the social situation and to the political and socio-economic situation in which an individual finds himself. It is associated partly with social well-being (but only partly, because social well-being also has to do with social relationships).

2.1.2. Social well-being

This is a concept which has already been defined as the improvement of the material situation of society, but further consideration needs to be given to the concept. We could visualise it, on the one hand, in the sense of that definition and, on the other hand, as a situation where social relationships (on different scales) contribute to the well-being of each individual; this would lead us back to the previous problem, while specifying these social relationship situations.

Having established these initial approaches to the study, it is necessary to specify in what context and subject to what precautions the relationship is considered.

– We must be realistic here and refrain from thinking that any high-quality landscape will produce the ideal conditions for individual and social well-being. First, because of the difficulty of defining a high-quality landscape and, second, because of the different ways in which society perceives quality of life, or a landscape visited temporarily: some people may "feel good" looking at a particular landscape, while others will feel the opposite in the same situation (for example, this observation has been made during surveys: for some people, a mountain landscape is overpowering and oppressive, yet such places are often very popular tourist destinations).

– It is also essential not to see the issue from a determinist perspective by thinking that it is the formal framework around us which produces the basic essentials of (individual or social) well-being. Research carried out on the urban environment, in particular, contradicts the idea that, by attempting to act on urban forms, it is possible to resolve some social and "well-being" problems that occur in urban environments. It is not only form, or forms as a whole, that are capable of having an effect, but a series of factors which belong to several registers of meaning and process (economic, social, environmental, spatial).

– Continuing with this second precaution, we will resist the temptation of thinking of the landscape only as a visual concept; the landscape conceals factors and processes or elements which have an effect on man and society which are not necessarily visible, and it is well known that the manner in which landscape is perceived mobilises all human senses. So we will be referring not only to a visible landscape, but also to one which can be appreciated by touch, taste and smell. Clearly, in the physical and physiological (bodily) dimension of well-being, the human senses play a vital role.

Having established these conditions and precautions, we can now consider ways of approaching the issue of landscape taken in conjunction with well-being.

2.2. Landscape and well-being

2.2.1. Landscape and individual physical well-being

The factors inherent in the configuration of landscapes which affect physical well-being and, in particular, those which can be influenced by political action, whether it is the physical or biological nature of the environment which can be reflected in the landscape by certain forms, are very diverse: they may consist of landscape planning, which facilitates movement from one place to another, such as pedestrianised areas in cities, urban parks which contribute to a sense of healthy living, or types of dwelling that avoid violent or excessive exertion, notably to take account of a person's age or physical condition.

To begin with, these factors can be ranked according to importance, the various factors involved in physical well-being or organised into groups in relation to the human senses; the link between the different senses and the landscape is not universally accepted; however aesthetics, an indisputable dimension of the quality of landscapes, cannot under any circumstances be reduced to the aesthetic values of form and the visual. In fact Hegel, in his first-rate treatise on aesthetics,[61] extends the concept of aesthetics to include all sensations of which man is capable: music and sound are particularly included.

a. Hearing and sound

Physical well-being is dependent on the noise produced by society or nature: hearing and sound are involved in producing physical satisfaction. The noise of urban traffic and the sounds that can be heard in the countryside are factors in the production of well-being or an absence of well-being: both from a qualitative point of view (that is to say, the type of sound) and from a quantitative point of view (that is to say, the level of sound). These sounds may have a positive effect on a person's impression or, conversely, a negative effect: the excessive noise produced by traffic obviously has a negative effect on people, especially in cities, and in most countries. The authorities have taken steps to reduce this noise: notably, noise barriers along motorways and urban or metropolitan highways, or along railways, which are a visual presence in the landscape and sometimes block the view from apartment blocks.[62] The noise of a thunderstorm can also contribute to a feeling of unease for some people, whereas the sound of wind rustling through leaves or the sound of waves breaking on a shore may produce a pleasant sensation.[63]

61. Georg Wilhem Friedrich Hegel, trans. Knox, TM, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
62. It is a well-known fact that residents of buildings located alongside motorways often dislike these noise barriers, complaining that they block the view of the traffic on the road.
63. Studies of large-scale agricultural landscapes reveal the strong influence of sounds produced by the wind, which lead people to liken such landscapes to seascapes. See, also, comparisons of this type of landscape made by Emile Zola in his novel *La Terre*.

Although the question of noise is not immediately related to the landscape (which is too often reduced to the concept of form), it is clear that it influences the way in which a person appreciates the spectacle before him: a mountain landscape is often associated with the sound of rushing streams or waterfalls, for example, or with the sound of cow bells in alpine pastures. These sounds contribute to the creation of the representations a person constructs of the landscape before him. Scientific research carried out into the "soundscape" reveals that sound contributes greatly to a person's appreciation or dislike of a landscape which is also "visible".

b. Sense of touch

The sense of touch is also involved in the relationship between physical well-being and the landscape. It is above all what a person experiences in his confrontation with what surrounds him, whether that be inert matter or living matter: notably, road surfaces, the material nature of the ground, the type of housing materials. These different materials relate back directly to the landscape aspect and to the comfort or discomfort these elements of quality of life provide.

The sense of touch is also involved in the sensations experienced by differences in temperature (heat, cold) and by currents of air; this brings to mind, in particular, configurations of the urban landscape which afford protection from heat or cold (for example, arcades, insulation systems in homes) or, conversely, the layout of buildings in cities, which make crossroads or squares windy places, and can give rise to unpleasant sensations which devalue urban landscapes.

c. Sense of taste

The sense of taste is indirectly involved in how a landscape is perceived or represented. It is, moreover, the sense which plays the most oblique role in physical well-being. However, we know that a qualitative knowledge of the culinary characteristics of an area is also related to a knowledge of the landscape, which is the visible expression of the system of food production. The most striking example is the landscape of vineyards and the sensation this produces of the taste of wine; this is also true of olive groves and certain pastures[64] which can, indirectly, evoke the pleasure of the food they produce (olive oil, cheese, certain types of meat).

Advertisements for certain culinary products have not been slow to take advantage of this, since they frequently associate certain landscapes with a particular local product of the soil, so forming a link between the pleasure of the taste of the food and the visual pleasure of looking at the landscape which produced it. Similarly, registered designations of origin are directly associated with the characteristics of

64. One might think, for example, of the Spanish *dehesa*, woodland consisting of holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) or cork oak (*Quercus suber*), which is used to produce ham from breeds of pig specific to the Mediterranean area (Iberian black pigs, whose fat is claimed to be free from cholesterol-producing fatty acids).

a particular region of cultivation and, consequently, with the sights and flavours its landscape has to offer.

d. Sense of smell

The sense of smell is more directly linked to landscape. Odours experienced in a landscape are associated with the pleasure of the view before one and somehow confirm the pleasure of looking at the landscape, and vice versa. A landscape which is pleasant to look at can be spoiled by unpleasant smells, whereas pleasant odours can reinforce the sensation of well-being the visual landscape produces. Some typical landscapes of Europe closely link visual comfort and olfactory comfort: the Mediterranean landscape is indissociable from a series of shapes, colours and fragrances produced by the vegetation (the smell of Mediterranean plants which, because of the climate, have special cells which contain olfactory essences; this is true of most evergreen plants which give off intoxicating fragrances). Seashore landscapes, and in particular the Atlantic landscape, also associate their particular form of rocks and sandy beaches, which are pounded by crashing waves, with the smell of the foreshore (where decomposing seaweed produces a strong odour of iodised substances).

Odours produced by human activity are also often associated with the sight of a particular landscape. They might be the smells emitted by an industrial chemical plant or produced by agricultural techniques, such as spreading animal waste (for example, in Holland or Brittany, where the structural surpluses resulting from rearing animals indoors pose serious problems by filling not only the air with the smell of methane but also the groundwater with nitrated compounds and rendering the water unfit for human consumption). The wooded landscape of western France, which is of great symbolic and aesthetic value, has been spoiled not only by the odours caused by spreading liquid pig and chicken manure, but also by nitrates which, in the absence of groundwater on granitic land, run on the surface of agricultural plots and accumulate in great quantities in surface water.[65] Urban landscapes are also closely associated these days with atmospheric pollution from traffic or emissions from industrial plant on the periphery of large towns.

The link between physical well-being, landscape and odour is, therefore, two-fold: on the one hand, odours play a role in our perception of the landscape, but on the other hand they can be associated with environmental problems, which can adversely affect human health (as in the case of urban pollution or agricultural pollution, in particular).

65. Surveys carried out in the bay of Mont Saint-Michel in France reveal the deleterious effect on people's quality of life of odours coming not only from manure spread by pig breeders, or the surpluses of vegetable production decomposing on the market garden polders; but at the same time the landscape of the bay which, because of its reputation and unique character, has been classified as a UNESCO World Heritage site, is closely and positively associated by users with marine odours coming from the coast (the bay of Mont Saint-Michel is one of the coasts which experiences the highest tides in the world – 15 metres – which could explain the potency of these marine odours).

e. Eyesight

Lastly, sight has a role to play in creating well-being, but the association between this human sense and the landscape is not so easy to establish. It is more through the meaning of shapes which can act on the individual sensations they cause (the sensation of serenity or oppression that certain landscapes can create, according to individual cultures) that this link can be seen. But it is difficult to assert that the shape of the landscape has a direct effect on physical well-being. It is rather on spiritual well-being that the shape of a landscape acts, because it has a significance for the individual which produces an emotional reaction in him – of joy, pleasure, stress or anxiety.

Physical well-being is also affected by climate in general (exposure to the sun, to wind, rain, drought, heat or cold …), but this link is associated with the human senses through which these are felt: cold, heat, rain or drought are assessed by the sense of touch, in particular.

Landscaping is designed to act on these links between the senses and shapes: the shape of urban landscaping is capable of offsetting the disagreeable sensations produced by configurations of urban or other planning. But such "landscape" action is often difficult to imagine and devise, because it calls for complex approaches about which little information is available, and also has to bring together a multiplicity of dimensions of an individual's experience, involving both physical well-being, which can be compared to comfort, and spiritual well-being, which is even more difficult to grasp, and which cannot be extended completely to everyone or to all social groups: there will always be an individual element which remains.

2.2.2. Landscape and individual spiritual well-being

This second dimension of individual well-being is more difficult to deal with, because it brings into play factors which make public intervention problematic, but several approaches can be suggested:

– Taking account of links between landscape and a person's attachment to the place where he lives, to local culture and the freedom to express it (at the risk, however, of veering towards "communautairisme"). Individuals seek their reflection in the landscape of the place where they live, as the geographer Elisée Reclus[66] commented in the 19th century. The landscape thus constitutes a collective creation, fashioned by social practices where the individual finds his own personal action, or the action of the group to which he belongs, on nature. This recognition is part of the indissoluble link that unites an individual with the place where he lives, or was born. According to some scientists, Plato called this link "chôra", which means that a human being cannot exist without a place that is consubstantial with his existence.

66. Elisée Reclus, "Du sentiment de la nature dans les sociétés modernes", in *Revue des deux Mondes*, Paris, 1866.

– Taking account of links between landscape and recognition of the individual's place in land-use planning decisions. This is clearly closely associated with the previous approach, in that the individual who can have a say in land-use planning decisions feels that he has been acknowledged as a player capable of considering planning and forming part of the society that manages the land.

– Taking account of links between the diversity and quality of landscapes as a reflection of the cultures of nature and individual fulfilment. Modern theories on the evolution of societies have set culture and nature against one another, presuming that developed societies are characterised by how far they are able to distance themselves from nature and its exploitation, to assure immediate survival; this is also why some people say that the idea of landscape is born at precisely the moment when that distance is established, showing a desire to set up the spectacle of nature as a subject for contemplation. In fact, such theories conceal the culture of nature which societies have constructed for themselves by observation and empirical experimentation. It cannot be denied that these cultures manifest themselves by a knowledge of the natural environment, which has often enabled societies to withstand natural processes and exploit them with a view to their own survival.[67] It might be considered that a recognition of these cultures plays a part in the spiritual well-being of the individual members of society, inasmuch as it finds a place for popular knowledge. However, it goes without saying that this layperson's knowledge, which is distinct from scholarly knowledge, must be validated in order to be taken into consideration these days in land-use planning decisions or in environment policy. Indeed, science is often wary of this type of knowledge, because it is tied up with beliefs or myths which could lead to dubious decisions.

– Individual spiritual well-being is also associated with numerous links between the individual and landscape, taken to mean every aspect of the way in which nature is organised by societies: it can be the pleasure of enjoying the charms of nature, of directing it to satisfy one's aesthetic or symbolic aspirations (designing and creating a garden, for example) or more simply the pleasure of observing natural processes: living creatures growing, the ecological processes that can be observed in the landscape, or even tectonic phenomena – all spectacles that provoke emotions, sentiments or sensations capable of contributing to spiritual well-being. This is the field explored by phenomenology, which has often been used as a means of understanding the links of individuals with the world of objects around them; this world of objects, for the most part elements of the daily landscape, powers the individual's imaginary world and is of particular significance for each person, linking him to the natural and social world in general. The significance of objects contributes to a person's spiritual well-being, because it enables him to create (material or symbolic) reference points in relation to society and to find his place in it.

67. There are countless examples of this, recently brought to light by studies in social anthropology, on several continents.

2.2.3. Landscape and material well-being

This relationship forms part of a conception of landscape as something that society has constructed, reflecting both the ability of a society lastingly to produce a range of goods for the public and equality of access to such goods for the public.

First and foremost, these are food and clothing, the importance of which cannot be underestimated from either a quantitative or qualitative perspective. Their role is fundamental, inasmuch as it would be dangerous if the landscape became totally separated from agricultural production: this issue is vital, because it would be difficult to accept that, in a political context, landscape was a dimension divorced from human productive activity (which would leave the way open to the vagaries of economic activity). The link between landscape and material well-being is apparent here because agriculture is the main activity which fashions the rural landscapes of Europe: these therefore play a role in material well-being as the visible reflection of food-producing agriculture, but also in spiritual well-being because they constitute a series of the best-known landscape models of European culture, which have most often been represented by artists and writers (bucolic and pastoral models).

The exploitation of mineral resources also contributes to the construction of landscapes: the production of materials for building homes and roads is one of the basic components of the inhabited landscape and contributes to material well-being because it forms the basis of constructions housing the population and their creative, commercial and industrial activities. However, exploitation poses problems of sustainability. Alluvial valleys have been heavily worked at points close to built-up areas to extract sand and gravel for concrete production, just as other limestone regions have seen entire hillsides worked for the production of cement. The creation of material well-being therefore calls for a global approach to the quality of architecture and building materials of the future, so as not to exhaust the earth's resources.

Lastly, the material well-being of individuals is highly dependent on their ability to have fair access to these different consumer goods. On a more general level, it is the issue of society's access to natural or artificial resources. We know that water, in particular, is vital and its link with the landscape is direct (public or private watercourses, expanses of water and springs) or indirect, through the competition of the different sectors of activity in the exploitation of water. The implications of such access to water are obviously very directly linked with living conditions, that is to say the wealth or poverty of populations.

2.2.4. Landscape and social well-being

Social well-being is related to the satisfaction of needs and aspirations that collective living – life as part of a society – is able to provide. This is the sense in which this report considers it, although it is distinct from the usual definitions of social well-being, which see it more as the satisfaction of people's basic needs.

The link between social well-being and the landscape can, therefore, be seen from several angles:

– taking account of the material conditions according to which people's living environment is organised – that is to say people's everyday landscape – which make it possible for members of society to live together in harmony with their neighbours;

– taking account of the landscape as evidence of the interest the authorities take in society, its quality of life and the well-being of everyone;

– taking account of the landscape as a creation of the human community, that is to say the landscape in which the social groups which make up society recognise their aspirations to live together and their actions.

A landscape which reflects the ability of a society to create a quality of life which permits collective living is, first and foremost, a landscape where the social conflicts that can arise around access to resources and services are reduced by the visibility of the efforts made by the authorities to remedy them. These efforts are, indeed, visible to a greater or lesser extent and people are acutely aware of the importance of public investment in the landscape. The landscape of an urban district can reflect the care of the public authorities through the quality of its open spaces and the presence of services, or employment. Once the inhabitants of that district fail to be aware of such an effort on the part of the authorities, a lack of well-being takes over, often manifesting itself in social conflict, because the inhabitants feel that they have been abandoned by the politicians they have often had a part in electing and complaints are frequently directed against "others", who do not belong to the district in question, but are from another geographical area, or who appear to have greater access to consumer goods; this is true of numerous disadvantaged estates or housing developments.[68] It is also true of people who live in rural areas undergoing social or agricultural depression who, when confronted by visible signs of the abandonment of social activities in the landscape (tumbledown houses, land lying fallow or undergrowth springing up, etc.), accuse the authorities of having abandoned them.

A landscape is therefore capable of providing social well-being if, on the one hand, it is the visible expression of the efforts of the authorities to ensure all inhabitants have access to goods and services and if, on the other hand, it shows clear evidence of an attempt to make such access equal.

Social well-being is also considered to be what inhabitants feel when, in the landscapes that constitute their living environment, they see that their aspirations, or their contribution to political decisions, are taken into consideration. This link between landscape and social well-being is related to the previous links in so far as the visible signs of the interest shown by political bodies in land-use planning

68. Surveys carried out in urban areas in low-cost housing estates on the outskirts of a big city reveal this feeling on the part of residents of having been abandoned by politicians, which is summed up in phrases such as: "What do *we* matter? For them [the politicians], we're nothing, we don't exist."

to satisfy people's needs and aspirations reflect the interest they themselves have in the role of such populations in the decisions they take.

One of the first conclusions that can be drawn from this rapid analysis is how difficult it is to strictly separate individual well-being and social well-being, on the one hand, and physical well-being, material well-being and spiritual well-being, on the other. If there is a link between landscape and well-being, it may be one which intimates that only physical well-being, only material well-being, only spiritual well-being, only individual well-being or even only social well-being is not enough and that well-being is in all probability all of them at once: physical, material, spiritual, individual and social. Thus the landscape constitutes a path to be explored, in that it has a material dimension which links it to material and physical well-being, a non-material dimension which relates it to spiritual well-being and, moreover, the landscape is perceived individually, but is at the same time the perceptible reflection of social practices, that is to say all of a community's activities.

2.3. Do contemporary landscapes produce individual and social well-being?

Although it cannot be denied that, in the last century, European society has experienced an improvement in standard of living and considerable progress both in the production of consumer goods and access to comfort, it is also true that these advances are very poorly distributed and that the disadvantages of these advances, notably in the technological and environmental field, have given rise to a number of social protests and complaints.

The landscape changes that the countries of Europe have experienced may have been beneficial for the well-being of their populations; this is true of all changes which have contributed to material comfort, such as improvements to housing, means of transport or access to leisure facilities or energy. These changes have, in effect, been reflected in the landscape by an increase in both group and individual housing, by the creation of road or rail networks, by the creation of seaside resorts or winter sports resorts and, more generally, by sports facilities and by the construction of hydroelectric dams. In rural areas, too, comfortable housing has become more widespread and has made a major contribution to improving living conditions; this can also be said of agricultural production which, since the Second World War, has become largely self-sufficient and even produces a surplus, benefiting mainly countries with an expanding export trade. There is also a wider variety of products.

However, one observation needs to be made: these trends benefiting the development of individual and social material well-being, which has also permitted the development of physical well-being by improving access to food products and sports facilities, are not evenly distributed throughout Europe. Many regions and countries have not experienced these changes. Disparities even increased, in

particular between the countries of western Europe and the countries of central and eastern Europe, during the Communist period, when the collectivist economy based its objectives on agricultural and industrial mass production, neglecting the production of consumer goods and food diversity. It was this economy, in particular, that contributed to the creation of the multitude of small plots of land or family allotments in eastern Europe devoted to food production for the population. It is also possible to see these creations as a symbolic reaction to a political regime which sought to eliminate any hint of individual ownership which, according to Communist ideology, was a middle-class principle. These tiny parcels of land which surround most towns and even villages of central and eastern Europe have contributed greatly to offsetting the material, physical and spiritual absence of well-being of the people.

Disparities are also created inside a country between developing regions and disadvantaged regions as a result of demographic movement, which has led to a process of social or agricultural decline (in the case of mountainous or isolated regions) or, conversely, a process of excessive population densification in areas surrounding big towns and cities.

Among the factors which have made the biggest contribution to landscape changes, it is possible to identify those which have contributed most to a reduction of well-being.

2.3.1. Rationalisation of activities for greater productivity

Such rationalisation is reflected in landscapes, first, by a rationalisation of agricultural activity: the disappearance of most of the minor elements of vegetation that punctuated the landscape, or gave it structure, such as hedges and embankments; the increase in parcel size, as a consequence of the reduction in the number of farms, has thus radically changed the rural landscapes of Europe; this change has had an effect not only on most people's concept of the countryside, giving it an image of a landscape damaged by excessive attempts to raise productivity, but also on renewable resources, such as water, the quality of which has deteriorated seriously as a result of the run-off of pesticide- and nitrate-laden water into watercourses or their leaching into groundwater.[69] Even if the visible changes merely contradict essentially symbolic models of the landscape (the myth of bucolic or pastoral life), they play a role in the creation of well-being because they contribute to the undervaluing of rural landscapes and their association with the deterioration of living conditions.

Besides, these changes pose a threat to biodiversity: the disappearance of numerous forms of animal or plant habitat has reduced the numbers of many species belonging to ecological cycles and constituting the richness of flora and fauna, a vital resource for the future of human populations in particular.

69. Regular increase in the quantities of nitrate and atrazine, in particular, in drinking water in most regions of Europe where intensive farming is practised.

Changes in urban landscapes have not escaped this quest for rationalisation. This is often reflected by the prioritisation of economic efficiency and the fastest possible profit, at the expense of urban planning designed to reduce stress for individuals or the community. Despite one or two improvements associated with the creation of pedestrian zones in towns, the urban landscape is organised around the car. One need only observe the time it takes a car to cross a junction which is organised to facilitate the flow of traffic and compare it with the time it takes a pedestrian, attempting to cross the same junction and finding himself obliged to take a path which is constantly interrupted by traffic lights, in order to appreciate the priority given, in the majority of cases, to traffic.

This rationalisation is also the reason for buildings which are designed and erected in open spaces to house large numbers of people and which reach such dimensions that those public spaces that remain accessible to pedestrians are fewer, or are crossed either by roads or by wind turbulence, which individuals find unpleasant. Big estates designed to house disadvantaged people often become social ghettos, with a concentrated population of unemployed or socially excluded immigrants; these are the urban landscapes which those people interviewed most often associate with social exclusion, juvenile delinquency, violence or unemployment.[70]

It is clearly at the root of air pollution in cities, this now having been firmly acknowledged in epidemiological research as the source of serious illnesses such as lung complaints in young children or lung cancer in adults.[71]

2.3.2. The quest for immediate profit and/or the logic of speed

The desire for greater efficiency in working practices – which does not necessarily mean greater efficiency in social terms – has led to a compression of social time and natural time and is highly prejudicial to individual and social well-being. This process, which is closely related to a logic of speed, has led to organisation and production practices which give preference to road transport, which is more flexible in adapting to the market and to the just-in-time rule. It is nothing new to recall here the predominance of goods transport by road over rail,

70. Results of surveys conducted in several major French cities in 1997 and 1998.

71. According to the latest estimates provided by the Regional Office of the World Health Organization (WHO) for Europe, about 80 000 deaths a year in Europe can be attributed to long-term exposure to road traffic air pollution. Research suggests that, apart from professional drivers and road workers, the elderly and the very young are most at risk of adverse health impacts. The research on day-to-day variations in urban pollution and respiratory diseases and related hospital admissions shows the most significant findings in relation to young and old people (2003 report, WHO Regional Office for Europe). Scientific experts attending the European Forum on Transport, Environment and Health organised jointly in Vienna by the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Austrian Ministry for the Environment agreed that diesel exhaust contains a number of potential and proven carcinogens and contributes to human lung cancer. A recently highlighted new class of potent mutagenic compounds found in diesel exhaust and airborne particles (nitrobenzanthrones) is likely to be among key factors here. Evidence is also increasing for a link between childhood cancer and motor vehicle exhaust, possibly due to benzene exposure.

which results in more congestion year by year on roads and motorways and in a number of road accidents whose long-term social cost is out of all proportion to the immediate economic advantages. We all know that car production is one of the essential motors keeping Europe's economy turning, but does it really have to be accompanied by this logic of speed which kills an astounding number of Europeans every year and represents an undeniable social cost and absence of both physical and spiritual well-being (physical injuries, family misfortune, etc.)?[72]

Furthermore, giving priority to individual road transport accentuates the problems of noise in and around cities, in residential areas across which motorways or trunk roads run.

If we consider all the problems created by this quest for a compression of social time, the cost for society as a whole is exorbitant and clearly responsible for an absence of material, physical and spiritual well-being. Mr Robert Coleman, Director General of the Transport Division of the European Commission, has stated: "as regards fatalities only, we still accept about 123 a day, just under 45 000 a year". In the European Union, the total cost of the harmful effects of transport, including congestion, on the environment and on health is estimated at up to €260 billion.

It is not only cities that bear the cost of this logic: rural areas are also subjected to a concomitant compression of social and natural time. "Artificial" or off-ground agriculture is an aspect of this process in that it seeks to reduce production times, whether of animals or plants: some agricultural systems, such as greenhouse cultivation, can produce two harvests of fruit and vegetables a year, by using artificial soil (hydroponic systems) and computer-aided techniques which make it possible to deliver fertiliser and plant protection products to crops; this type of production is carried out in an overheated atmosphere with a high water consumption (the atmospheric condition which accelerates plant growth), the agricultural employees who work in them being increasingly affected by lung, dermatological and eye conditions. The use of antibiotics in off-ground animal-rearing units is commonplace; it is justified on the grounds of a fear of epizoites, but in fact it is well known that they accelerate weight gain in animals, which is a means of increasing productivity.[73]

All these production systems form part of the landscape: glass or plastic greenhouses, off-ground rearing units, together with the panoply of equipment required to deal

72. In 1995, according to WHO statistics, in the European region as a whole, there were 2 million road accidents, killing 120 000 and injuring 2.5 million. One road death in three involves a young person under the age of 25 and pedestrians and cyclists pay a particularly high price; in the United Kingdom, 45% of deaths are pedestrians or cyclists and in Hungary the figure is over 50%, whereas it is appreciably lower in the majority of west European countries (17% in France, 20% in Germany and around 30% in Denmark and the Netherlands). Of all users of motor vehicles, motorcyclists constitute the group at highest risk. In fact, the risk of being killed or injured on a motorbike is 10 and six times respectively higher than in a car. *Ibid*.

73. It is known that these antibiotics are found in meat on butchers' stalls and that people eat them.

with the pollution, such as slurry pits, installations for the destruction of waste plastics, etc.

2.3.3. The disappearance of the culture of nature in favour of technological or virtual culture

A population which is becoming increasingly urban has often severed some of its roots with the countryside and has lost its empirical knowledge of life in a natural environment, which was based on a knowledgeable and strict observation of the material processes of the physical or biological world and on learning from daily experience. Today, this knowledge is replaced by technical and scientific knowledge, or by virtual knowledge, via multimedia sources which disseminate images of nature at work which are often partial or unvalidated.

This development is part of the new political configuration, where experts play an increasingly important role in political decision-making. Some commentators consider that, these days, "technical democracy", where elected representatives take refuge behind the advice of experts to justify their decisions, is gradually taking over from political democracy, where the elected representatives of the people take decisions in consultation with everyone concerned. This trend has the effect of removing the people's power to intervene in political decisions, under the pretext that expert knowledge is superior to popular knowledge. While it is true that popular knowledge was often steeped in beliefs or myths, it is also true that it was based on long-term observation and has been recognised by studies in anthropology, geography and sociology, notably since environmental issues burst onto the social scene.

This process of the disappearing culture of nature, in particular where farmers are concerned, gives rise to conflict due to a lack of mutual understanding of professional activities and practices and is often the cause of disputes and resentment, which are more likely to cause ill-feeling than well-being. It increases the gulf between "those who know" and "those who don't know". It justifies snap decisions, which deny those involved the opportunity of gaining a better understanding of the processes involved in nature at work.

Lastly, the dissemination of the culture of the virtual by the media, including the Internet, provides an opportunity for some image merchants to reinforce certain falsehoods and divert attention along paths which are dangerous for knowledge-sharing in society. There is no denying that these media networks have countless advantages, but they can also constitute highly profitable markets for unscrupulous groups or individuals.

2.3.4. The difficulty of securing public participation

Although public participation is referred to in numerous texts concerning the management of environmental issues or land-use planning – including the European Landscape Convention – it is still a principle which is rarely or not strictly applied, or even merely a pious hope.

The difficulty of implementing this principle is due no doubt to the mistrust of public debate in political circles, for fear that it could raise controversial social issues or challenge planning projects which are profitable for certain groups in society. It is also due to the poor training of elected politicians in holding an open and two-sided debate. Moreover, members of the public are reluctant to enter into a debate and speak; it is often the leaders or certain key individuals in local society who take the floor, while most residents are afraid to speak at public meetings, either for fear of going against the interests of one or other dominant group in local society, or simply because they have difficulty expressing themselves. Local controversies are clearly important matters which inflame old rivalries (whether between families or categories). With landscape, moreover, it is land which is at stake, bringing to the fore the issue of private and public ownership and the interests of different categories. There is also the question of material and spiritual well-being, because ownership involves not only the material comfort that a property can bring, but also spiritual well-being, through the attachment a person may feel for a particular place, which may be the territorial imprint of a family or, more simply, the subject of affectionate or symbolic investment.

This difficulty of achieving public participation may also give rise to an absence of well-being in individuals who can no longer recognise themselves in the landscape which has been transformed by decisions in which they have not been involved.

2.3.5. The trend towards the monetarisation of non-market goods

The mechanisms for evaluating environmental goods have, for several years now, called upon economic methods which tend to assign a market value to amenities, including the landscape. Apart from the fact that these methods, which are based on an agreement to pay, for example, seek to give monetary values which are unrelated to symbolic or aesthetic values, they upset the representations individuals have of the landscape, which could gradually be likened to a marketable good. Admittedly, the tourist trade is based largely on the market values of landscapes which Elisée Reclus denounced back in the 19th century.[74] But the widespread use of these methods is likely to have a perverse effect and, in particular, to encourage people to consider any emotional, symbolic or aesthetic value as a monetary value.

Well-being is, in fact, treated by some institutions whose purpose is to regulate the economy in the same way as a rise in the gross domestic product (GDP); this way of looking at matters reduces well-being to nothing more than material well-being, which is in complete contradiction with the definitions given earlier. It is gradually being challenged by certain bodies such as the World Health Organization. Among the arguments that militate against this narrow interpretation is the case of the State of Alaska which, following the break-up of the Exxon Valdez on its shores and the pollution of its coastline by oil, saw its GDP rise in the following years as

74. Elisée Reclus, *op. cit*.

a result of the depollution activities that were developed there and which made it possible to inject considerable sums of money into the economy. Likening social well-being to an increase in GDP cannot easily take account of the differences in value for a society of the various investments it makes: is the investment a State makes in building a prison as profitable for the well-being of the people as investment in the education structure?[75]

In any event, increasing concern about the landscape has resulted in the establishment of a real market in landscaping, which organises this sector just like any other sector of the economy, but which, quite often, limits itself to formal arrangements, rather like a nature show which takes no account of the different dimensions involved in landscape planning, namely the social, economic or ecological dimensions. There is a lot at stake in this market, both on a regional scale and on a national and international scale, bringing into play the interests of different professions, such as landscape architects and also ecologists and urban planning experts and even the scientific community.

Ultimately, this is a rather mixed appraisal. Recent changes to the landscape have certainly led to an improvement in living conditions but not only have they not been distributed equitably and for the benefit of the greatest number, but also they are closely associated with the emergence of numerous environmental risks and are not always synonymous with economic development. The gulf between rich and poor in the same country, just like the gulf that exists between developed and developing countries, has widened, as we know, and although some processes have benefited individual and social well-being, we can also see a lack of individual and social well-being in the changes taking place in the landscape.

2.4. The European landscape convention's contributions to individual and social well-being

Fundamentally, the objective of the European Landscape Convention is, through landscape protection, management and planning, to contribute to high-quality landscapes to improve the quality of life of the people of Europe. It therefore forms part of a global design to improve individual and social well-being.

First, the European Landscape Convention goes beyond the framework of the concept of landscape that existed before the 1960s, when early studies sought to associate the landscape with quality of life; the scope of the convention is sufficiently clear to suggest that it is the quality of life of the people which is at stake here and not the most spectacular landscapes. Although there is no doubt that protecting certain exceptional landscapes can contribute to spiritual well-being by guaranteeing to safeguard the symbolic values that they represent, the issue of the

75. Example suggested by MK Hubbert, National Council of Welfare, Canada, 2003.

daily landscapes of the great majority of the people of Europe, be they urban or rural, is much more important.

Moreover, the European Landscape Convention, by its principles, responds to the different dimensions of well-being that this report raises.

– By affirming its contribution to the principle of sustainable development, it meets the needs of material and physical well-being: the conservation of natural resources that it implies, both quantitative and qualitative, is one of the essential elements of this well-being for future generations; but at the same time, it must play a role in spiritual well-being, inasmuch as sustainable development implies social equity, that is to say the need to share these resources in such a way that the most privileged social groups do not obtain the greatest benefit, and the concern of the authorities to guarantee the quality of resources necessary for public health.

– By stressing the cultural dimension of the landscape, the European Landscape Convention also meets the needs of spiritual well-being: fair access to high-quality landscapes, to the knowledge of the processes of landscape change and to the information necessary for transparent decision making.

– The European Landscape Convention also stresses the urgent need to develop a concern on the part of the authorities for the spatial organisation, planning, management and protection of high-quality landscapes, these being its main objectives. The focus of this concern must be individual and social well-being and not the interests of the major economic movements which, we know, have their limits, in particular in the equitable distribution of open spaces, resources and consumer goods. It must be of such a nature as to enable people to see tangible signs, in the planning or management of landscapes, of the authorities' desire to concern themselves with individual and social well-being and not solely with the profits of sectors of economic activity and the profitability of speculation on the stock exchange.

– Public participation in decision making is one of the fundamental principles of the European Landscape Convention. For instance, it contributes to spiritual well-being by providing an opportunity for public participation and recognising the public as the principal actors in decision-making processes affecting their living environment and quality of life. It is clearly the area in which most progress must be made, where there is the greatest need for social, political and technical innovation, in order that this participation does not remain merely an illusion, but becomes a reality and people recognise the democratic value it purports to guarantee. The convention also affirms the importance of this participation from the very first stages of landscape planning, management or protection procedures, that is to say the landscape identification and characterisation stages. In this way, it incorporates the aspirations of the people throughout these procedures and should contribute to social well-being.

– The demands for training for those involved (including the public) in landscape planning, management and protection, which are introduced in the European Landscape Convention, also meet the needs of spiritual well-being by providing

knowledge to give a better understanding of the process of landscape change in its social, economic and ecological dimensions.

– The principles of raising awareness are also factors in the improvement of individual and social spiritual well-being, because they provide an opportunity for individuals and human communities to gain a better understanding of decision-making procedures in the area of quality of life and to more easily make a link between their daily lives and such procedures.

Conclusion

The European Landscape Convention thus reinforces the objectives affirmed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. It endorses the action of a number of international bodies, notably the World Health Organization, whose message at the summit was to remind participants that investment in health and the reduction of environmental hazards produces long-term benefits that favour development in social, economic and ecological terms.[76]

However, one of the most important contributions of the European Landscape Convention is, without doubt, that landscape planning, management and protection issues, as part of regional planning, must be seen holistically, without separating the different dimensions of the landscape, be they economic, social or ecological; by affirming the need to include these dimensions at the same level and without separating them, the European Landscape Convention contributes to both individual well-being and social well-being and to material, physical and spiritual well-being. Finally, implementation of the European Landscape Convention must be fundamentally imbued with a spirit of social equity and thus distance itself from the idea, propounded in the 19th century by Alexis de Tocqueville, one of the greatest theorists of the principles and exercise of democracy, that the concept of well-being owes its existence solely to the middle classes; rather, it is a universal concept. Everybody thinks about it and seeks to achieve it, including the most disadvantaged groups of European society, and one of the duties of those who most easily achieve well-being is to ensure that it is accessible to all.

76. Report of the Director-General of the World Health Organization 1998-2003.