

“LANDSCAPE INVENTORIES AS MEANS TO UNDERSTAND LANDSCAPE CHANGE” – A SUMMARY OF THE SPECIAL EUCALAND SESSION AT THE 25th PECSRL CONFERENCE

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In August 2012, within the framework of the 25th session of PECSRL (Permanent European Conference for the Study of the Rural Landscape) “Reflection on landscape change: the European perspective” in Utrecht¹, EUCALAND organised its third special session, after Obidos and Riga. The aim of the special session, entitled “Landscape Inventories as Means to Understand Landscape Change” was to show the variety of European landscape inventories, including different approaches and products used in the respective countries. The overall aim was to analyse parallels and to learn from each other in the European context. All the presentations were supposed to illustrate the theoretical approach with a number of case studies and/or examples for cultural landscape inventories. The contributions should also link to the debate on a European classification and database of European agricultural landscapes from a cultural heritage perspective. The topic was chosen as a first follow-up of the EUCALAND workshop held in 2007 in Cambridge, where participants from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Switzerland had presented their national landscape descriptions, material, inventories etc.

The topics relevant for this special session included the perception of agricultural landscapes and their heritage using different methodologies and experiences; what people do to create, maintain and/or destroy heritage in agricultural landscapes, how approaches towards heritage in agricultural landscapes have changed over the past decades; interactions between local stakeholders and local/global policies; investigating whether different support mechanism create new heritage; heritage in agricultural landscapes and nature conservation; what happens to agricultural heritage in urban sprawl settings etc. Thus theoretically informed papers based on empirical research, preferably on comparative or European-wide context were welcome.

Organisers of the this special session:

Dr Alexandra Kruse, secretary general of the Eucaland-Network DE/FR

Dr Michael Roth, Dortmund University of Technology, DE

Anu Printsman, Tallinn University, EE

Graham Fairclough, Newcastle, UK

From the submitted abstracts, the organisation board had chosen the following presentations:

¹ See also the article by Stefunkova et al. in this volume.

1. “Downscaling the EU landscape social perception indicator” by Dirk Wascher (contact: dirk.wascher@wur.nl, Alterra – Landscape Centre, The Netherlands), Erling Andersen, Philip Jones, Riccardo Simoncini, Sonia Carvalho Ribeiro, Anne Schmidt, Maria Luisa Paracchini & Claudia Capitani.

The contribution dealt with a response to EU policies and EEA reporting mechanisms addressing the need for agri-environmental indicators. The Joint Research Centre (JRC)

has been developing landscape indicators for “Landscape state and diversity” at the EU scale. In order to validate these indicators at the regional scale, JRC had launched a study to critically review the indicators on the social appreciation of the landscape by (1) exploring the availability and implementation of additional datasets at the European level, and (2) to identify complementary landscape indicators which are considered to be of higher relevance at the regional level. First results of this work have been presented.

2. “Alpine grasslands identified in Landscape Inventories - An example from the Austrian Alps” by Peter Strasser, Consultant (contact: peterstrasserfr@yahoo.co.uk, Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, Vienna)

Within the alpine cattle breeding system, food – hay – has to be provided for the period of the year, when snow covers the meadows and the cattle are not able to find the food on their own. “Winter hay” found on high altitude of strong flavour and containing a high amount of herbs was harvested in summer and served as additional food (like a kind of “vitamin pill”). Winter hay was produced in the most remote and steepest slopes in the Alps, which proved to be too steep for grazing the cattle. However, due to drastic changes within the alpine cattle breeding system in the twentieth century, practically all alpine grassland areas were abandoned shortly after World War II and this traditional winter hay making system came definitely to an end some 50–60 years ago. In the Montafon-valley the author of this presentation documented this systematically within the EU-funded research project “Cultural Landscape Inventory Montafon” (Kulturlandschaftsinventar Montafon – KLIM, 2008-10).

3. “Reconnecting Landscape change in the facts with landscape change in the mind for a more sustainable landscape planning: methodological teaching from the “French Chaîne des Puys” landscape history.” by Yves Michelin (contact: yves.michelin@vetagro-sup.fr, Clermont Universités & UMR Metafort, Campus agronomique de Clermont, VetAgro Sup, France)

Visitors and inhabitants often ask for a strict protection that forbids any change in the landscape while they accept serious damages like urbanisation spread or reforestation that modifies the landscape deeply. This situation drives local authorities to apply policies that are not necessarily adapted to the local situation even if asked by locals, or that enter in rough conflicts with locals who don’t understand their aims, even if they could drive the landscape toward the aspect they are asking for.

The French Chaîne des Puys represents a good example of this type of situation. These volcanic landscapes, original in their landforms and easy to perceive due to the agrarian history (common flocks grazing the volcanoes from the Middle Age up to present), are at the origin of the creation of a regional park in 1977 and of a protected area in 2000. However for at least 25 years, it has been very difficult to mobilize inhabitants and stakeholders to participate in the conservation and management of these landscapes.

In the investigations, different disciplines and methods (archaeology, geomorphology, analysis of various historical documents, historical agronomy...) were applied and produced various representations of the landscapes and their evolution (maps, sketches, 3D diagrams, ...), followed by discussions with locals about the future of their landscapes during participatory meetings. Today, a demand for a UNESCO World heritage registration, using all this material and knowledge, is in progress with a large support of the population; a demonstration that the initial hypothesis held proof.

4. "Description of EUROPEAN agricultural landscapes (EAL) and landscape elements – the EUCALAND Network manual" by Alexandra KRUSE & Michael ROTH (contacts: see above)

There are many different cultural landscapes in Europe and there are also many different landscape types and different landscape elements. Some of them have already been described. Others are not well known. Some are restricted to only one region or one country, others are quite "European", some occur world-wide, or are even ubiquitous landscapes.

One of the tasks of the EUCALAND Network is to collect information and to describe agricultural landscapes in Europe, thus contribution to an inventory of European agricultural landscapes and their valuation as cultural heritage. A first step was made by conducting the Eucaland Project from 2007-2009, within the EC program "Culture 2007-2013". First results are a list of agricultural landscape types which will serve as a basis for our future research, furthermore a glossary on more than 40 agricultural landscapes, with translations into 6 languages.

The following tasks and aims have been defined for the future work of the EUCALAND Network in 2011: (1) To provide material, case studies, empirical studies and a methodology to map and describe agricultural landscape types and landscape elements in order to start an inventory of European agricultural landscapes. (2) To deal with experts' as well as with the lay peoples' valuation and assessment of these landscapes/landscape elements.

In order to fulfil these tasks and to meet the goal of collecting and providing data on EAL, the description of EAL (types and elements) has been started in 2011. To keep this process feasible within the given frame, it was decided to describe ONE landscape type and ONE landscape element per year. Therefore a manual has been produced in order to insure, that the descriptions will be made along one common methodology and following one standardized scheme, collecting and transmitting similar information for all countries involved.

The presentation showed the results of the first year's work and discussed the special challenges resulting from the method chosen: Cooperating all over Europe (15 countries are envisaged for the moment) on a volunteer basis (with focus on receiving funds), along a scientific but practicable method.

Further information: EUCALAND (European Culture Expressed in Agricultural Landscapes, <http://www.eucalandnetwork.eu>)

The next special session will be at the 26th PECSRL conference in 2014 in Sweden. If you are interested in receiving the call for abstracts, please contact the EUCALAND at secretariat@eucalandnetwork.eu