

Horn, Sweden, Tuesday, 30 October 2007

”QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY” by the Landscape Observatory of the Emilia-Romagna Region – Italy

Questions/Answers:

Introductory remarks by the Observatory:

According to your knowledge and skill, please answer the following questions. If you want you could answer also partially, in any case your contribution will be helpful and valuable.

1) In your opinion, which could be the role and aim of a regional landscape observatory?

Landscape quality objectives as discussed in the European Landscape Convention, art 6 d and art 5 c, certainly depend heavily on regional and national cultures of old date in different parts of Europe. Thus, in the Nordic countries “nature” tends to dominate much more in the national and sometimes international debate than in Southern Europe, where themes like “landscape perspective” may be rather more predominant for classic climatic or historical reasons, just as the “citizenship” theme may be more central in politically sensitive nations like France or Turkey.

When answering to your questions, that were sent to me by Mr Leif Gren of the Swedish Heritage Board, invited like myself as expert at the newly finished Workshop on “Landscape and rural heritage” in Sibiu, Romania, from that scientific point of view that happens to be mine - language and civilisation – I would like to stress “the territorial dimension of human rights” that so often appears in many reports concerning the Convention. Shouldn’t more attention be paid to these historical and humanistic aspects – included language uses in Europe – when discussing the development of regional landscape observatories?

I believe so. The Swedish situation concerning landscape and spatial planning is characterized by the facts that the country has signed and started an implementation, but so far not yet ratified the Landscape Convention. Simultaneously, the national Heritage Board has variously underlined that “history and humanism” should be more focused. Since the regional situation also could change, due to a proposal in February of 6-8 new regions to be developed in Sweden, by the Parliamentary Committee for Public Responsibilities, it is pretty clear that public participation in landscape matters is a topic of very high public interest - that is not necessarily publicly discussed in public.

For all these reasons a regional landscape observatory at a European scale would be most interesting role, from a Swedish citizen’s perspective. Such an observatory would, seen in the Swedish context, be able to favour that more research efforts be made on different aspects of the transparency of definition procedures, etc, in order to, as stated in ELC, 6 d: *“define landscape quality objectives for the landscapes identified and assessed, after public consultation in accordance with Article 5.c.”*

2) Which experiences of territorial evaluation and monitoring you may indicate as significant and exemplary?

The admirable work carried out by the Council of Europe, as seen for instance in its last report on the "The European Landscape Convention", T-FLOR (2007) 14, should be underlined (see for instance a reply of the Committee of Ministers, app 7 of the above Report, 11.2 – 11.6.3). It is probably only at this scale, and awaiting more concrete steps regarding landscape matters from the EU, that all the European states, and their citizens, will be able to follow the different experiences of territorial evaluation and monitoring in all of the of the states. As was pointed out at the 6th Workshop in Sibiu, recently, by the representative of Landscape Alliance Ireland, the Council of Europe could perhaps also take on an even bigger role by also presenting various "tool boxes", to be used by interested states and parties (including NGO's), according to the Convention.

3-4) Which instruments/methods/criteria could be adopted in order to evaluate the effects of regulations, plan provisions, programs and projects on landscape? According to your opinion or experience, how the concerned authorities (that are the Regions in the Italian case) could actively verify and constantly supervise the effectiveness of provisions and protection actions, valorisation and management of landscape?

I would like to point out the instruments/methods/criteria that seem to be in use by the Walloon Region according to the CPDT Plaquette no 4, by its Ministry (Conférence Permanente du Développement Territorial): *Pour une meilleure prise en compte des paysages*. One reason for this choice is of course its obvious integration of the "landscape quality reflex" where the local and regional mandatory but also every interested citizen are addressed. This strengthens the political responsibility and rights' awareness on a concrete territory, the administrative Region. On the other hand, while using the example of a small, northern region, as we know in struggle with certain linguistic problems, the book also gives good advice of how to (ideally) take a more active role in landscape matters in Europe, at base levels. The Walloon example seems to be both significant and exemplary for the situation in many regions of interest to the Swedish emerging regions, and probably around the Baltic Sea.

5) Which are your remarks/observations about the theme of the quality and quantity indicators of landscape, their definition, employment and utility?

In the light of the ongoing Swedish implementation process without, as yet, ratification, and principally from a participatory and research point of view, there seems to be need for more attention as to the various segments of society implied in the quality and quantity indicating processes, and at what precise moments. Because of the fact that Sweden to a very large extent is particularly occupied with the natural and ecological landscape aspects, and predominantly by and through its experts in these fields, more place should be given to those indicators, that concretely allow for a broader part of the Swedish society, with an interest and/or knowledge specifically in "historic and humanist" aspects of landscape, to be consulted in reality.

6) Which significant and exemplary experiences you recommend for determining and employing the landscape indicators?

In my experience, most important here, is, of course, the Rural Heritage Observation Guide by CEMAT, that was also being admirably focused on the 6th Workshop of the ELC in Sibiu this year. Here landscape quality objectives, spatial planning and public participation genuinely coincide. If coming projects on landscape, can present this Guide in various language editions, and if responsible publishers, concerned Authorities and/or regional

universities decide to use this Guide as a concrete tool for landscape identification, assessment and public participation in all or in some of the national territory – then a very important step would indeed have been taken in direction of an implementation of the Landscape Convention.

7) Which actions/procedures/instruments you suggest as useful and efficacious to find out meaningful local experiences and the social awareness of landscape?

I suggest: more actions/procedures/instruments in the lines of the Austrian LANDSCAPE REGISTER example (by ECOVAST- Austria). This very simple 10 points Check list of landscape identification has the huge advantage of engaging local citizens in concrete evaluating work, (preferably to a large extent based on groups and associations, but also allowing for individuals) for “their” landscape – without stealing responsibility neither from the responsible authorities, nor from the scientific community and experts.

Most importantly, though, especially from a Swedish, rural point of view (which should dominate in the sense that the country is, in fact, widely rural!): much, much more research on the social factors and benefits of the “landscape perspective” (for instance concerning rural-urban cooperation and development).

All of this, of course, in Sweden, in parallel with other, often already on-going research projects, most often stressing an ecological agenda. Of course.

With best regards

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Landscape & Citizens

Networks of Partners of the European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe

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