

A Dialogue for Landscape Action:
European Cultural Landscapes at a Crossroads

23rd of May 2014

Closing statement by

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The previous 3 hours of presentations and debates from HERCULES' first EU level workshop brings us to a few key points that bear repeating and underlining, as they are of central importance to landscape management and the HERCULES project:

- We must first and foremost raise awareness about, and be aware ourselves, of the revolutionary aspect of the European Landscape Convention, which radically changes the approach of pre-existing landscape policies, moving away from a top-down process of designation to a bottom-up process that takes into account all types of landscape, from the spectacular to the ordinary.
- This means we do not have to think about landscape in general terms, according to some universal standards, but rather look at places characterized by a very specific history of interaction between an area and the people living there – a sort of *genius loci*. This sense of belonging to a place is central to the European project, and vital for the individual well-being of citizens. Towards this goal, HERCULES aims to develop tools and methods to engage in participative seminars with local stakeholders and population.
- In a rapidly changing world where people no longer live their whole lives in the same area, it is very important to share knowledge and values about landscape, and therefore to reinforce educational initiatives so that people – especially young people – understand what makes and shapes the landscape. In HERCULES, dissemination is an important task, which leads to searching for new ways to visualize landscapes and stimulate landscape memory, as the Knowledge Hub exemplifies.
- The previously stated objectives cannot be achieved without transdisciplinarity, linking nature and culture in landscape science and integrating hands-on insights from landscape management in order to foster a holistic approach to future discussions of cultural landscapes.
- The aim is indeed to actively engage the very people that tend to our landscape every day – farmers, foresters, landscape architects etc. – and to find, propose and disseminate solutions that, despite coming from local experience, might give way to innovative practices for responsible landscape management in other regions or countries. That why the Study Landscapes are central to HERCULES, where research and practice will converge and focus on local experience.
- To sum up, we must as a society integrate landscape considerations in the economy, in the interest of the community so that local people will support landscape policy. Quality landscapes should not be just an accidental output or a protected bubble, but rather an aim in the agenda of all actors at different levels.