



Sustainable Futures for Europe's Heritage in Cultural Landscapes:

Tools for understanding, managing, and protecting landscape functions and values

Report

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

First EU level Workshop in the frame of WP9

Friday, 23rd of May 2014
10:30-14:00

European Landowners' Organization
Rue de Trèves 67, Brussels, Belgium



The first HERCULES' EU Level Stakeholder Workshop took place on the 23rd May, entitled 'European Cultural Landscapes at a Crossroads'. The Workshop, which was organized by the European Landowners' Organization (ELO), gathered **41 representatives** from the European Commission, practitioners, NGOs, SMEs and the scientific community to discuss cultural landscapes.

Following an **introduction to HERCULES by the project coordinator, Tobias Plieninger**, the workshop offered various perspectives on the current condition of cultural landscapes, through presentations by Professor Peter Howard, a visiting professor from Bournemouth University; Tom Jones, Member of the Bureau of the Specialized Section NAT (Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment), at the European Economic and Social Committee; Christos Fragakis, Deputy Head of Unity of the Unit on Management of Natural Resources at DG Research and Innovation, European Commission; Rodolphe de Looz-Corswarem, President of the European Historic Houses Association; and Matej Batič, a senior programme from Sinergise.

In his presentation, **Professor Peter Howard** highlighted the significant, and – according to him – largely at odds definitions of “landscape” according to UNESCO’s World Heritage program on the one hand, and the European Landscape Convention on the other. While the first takes a top-down, prescriptive approach of only considering so-called “designated” landscapes of exceptional character, the ELC – according to Peter Howard – allows for ordinary, everyday landscapes to be considered. Professor Howard argued for a holistic conception of cultural landscapes, warning the audience of the dangers of reducing everything to picture-postcard visual elements or to ecological characteristics – indeed, landscapes are multi-sensory: church bells and barnyard smells are just as important as haystacks and hedgerows.

By stressing the two-way link between people and landscapes, **Tom Jones** reminded the audience that while we may shape landscapes in our everyday activities – by farming them, roping them off or building over them – they have shaped us and continue to do so as well. Yet Mr. Jones reminded the audience that in order for farmers and other rural stakeholders to shape the landscape in an optimal way, so to speak, society must reward them for providing these extra services they perform. Policy initiatives at EU level, such as agri-environmental measures within the Common Agricultural Policy, are a firm step forward and have in the past proven helpful, but Tom Jones argued that over the past 10 years, landscapes have slowly fallen off the political agenda. He concluded that it is now time that we put them back and make them an integral part of discussions.

Christos Fragakis, the EC Project Officer for HERCULES, welcomed the HERCULES initiative and expressed his pleasure that the project is attempting to be as practice and policy relevant as possible. He assured that both the European Commission and the Council are putting cultural heritage back on the political agenda. Mr. Fragakis further welcomed HERCULES' efforts to be as relevant for EU policy as possible and expressed the hope that its members would continue to engage policy makers and other stakeholders in their research. He expressed a strong faith in the power of nature-based solutions to enable cities and rural areas to improve their resource efficiency, and in doing so to help manage our cultural landscapes sustainably.

Members in the audience were keen to react to the three talks by Prof. Howard, Mr. Jones and Mr. Fragakis. David King, from Société des Agriculteurs de France, brought up the topic of farmers and the ecosystem services they provide – would the Commission consider working towards a framework for farmers to be compensated through contracts for e.g. carbon sequestration? Mr. Fragakis agreed that this was an interesting topic for discussion, though perhaps more adequate for DG Agri.

Rodolphe de Looz-Corswarem emphasised the health benefits of the countryside, citing the large number of city dwellers who flock to rural areas every weekend as proof that their significant contribution to the overall well-being of citizens was worth protecting. The controversial issue of windmills was raised as well, and a lively discussion ensued, leading to the conclusion that windmills are only the tip of a much larger iceberg that HERCULES must address as a whole.

Toby Aykroyd from Wild Europe asked how the concept of landscape might be rendered operational, recalling the discussion about the definition of landscape in the speeches that had preceded. Tom Jones admitted that clear definitions and frameworks would be necessary, though they are necessarily self-bounded.

For the second part of the workshop, **Rodolphe de Looz-Corswarem** spoke on behalf of Europa Nostra and as the President of the European Historic Houses Association. He underlined the fact that while nature can be re-created or re-introduced, cultural landscapes – and particularly their built components, such as historic houses – are essentially non-renewable. Once the historic elements within them have been degraded or lost, they are gone forever. This led Count de Looz-Corswarem to argue that landowners and rural stakeholders in general were most apt to make the right decisions when it comes to responsible and sustainable land stewardship, as their time horizon is not measured in 4 or 5 year electoral mandates but in lifetimes and generations. So long as their choices can be properly supported by policies when and where necessary, we can thus count on private landowners and rural entrepreneurs to manage our cultural landscapes in a sustainable manner.

Following this impassioned defence of European cultural heritage, **Matej Batič**, a senior programmer from Sinergise – one of the project partners in HERCULES – presented his vision for a solution, the Knowledge Hub, a tool for collecting, analysing and visualising data, with the help of crowdsourcing for participative data contributions and the centralization of pre-existing open resources, managed within a user-friendly Geographical Information System (GIS) application for both desktop and mobile phones. Based on their extensive experience in participative projects where citizens, policymakers and others contribute data to an online spatial database for use within GIS applications, Mr. Batič predicted that the tool could be essential in the long run for making well informed decisions in rural planning, on top of providing landscape practitioners a means to share examples of best practices.

The 3 hour workshop finished with a constructive debate, with among others Marie-Alice Budniok from ELO warning about the importance of maintaining and protecting property rights in the context of an open, online tool such as the Knowledge Hub and the concluding remarks of **Laurence Le Du-Blayo** from the University of Rennes2, who stressed again the importance of considering ordinary, everyday landscapes that provide a sense of place.

ANNEX

List of participants

first name	last name	position	organisation
Toby	Aykroyd		WILD EUROPE INITIATIVE
Emma	Bailey		
Matej	Batič		SINERGISE
Claudia	Bieling	Chair for Landscape Management Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg	University of Freiburg
Marie-Alice	Budniok	Director of Legal and Administrative Affairs	ELO
Rodolphe	de Looz-Corswarem	President	European Historic Houses Association
Sarah	De Meyer	Policy officer	Flanders Heritage Agency
Nicolas	de Villenfagne	Landscape and Urban design	le Vostre sprl
Hadewijch	Degryse	provinciaal archeoloog	provincie Vlaams-Brabant
Jacques	Delsalle		DG Environment, Unit B1 – Agriculture, Forests & Soil
Delphine	Dupeux	Policy Officer	EHHA/ELO
Anna	Eguiara		Delegation of the Basque Country to the European Union
Edward	Eyre	Assistant European Policy Officer	East of England European Partnership
Guy	F. Fievez	Value Engineer	FERDESI
Hans	Farjon	Senior Policy Researcher for Landscape & Spatial Planning	Department Nature and Rural Areas, PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency
Laura	Fernández Agustín	EU Policy Officer	Bayer SA-NV, EU Liaison Office
Bruno	Foletto	Agronomist Phytopathologist	
Christos	Fragakis	Deputy Head of Unit	DG Research & Innovation, Management of natural resources
Geneviève	Girod		CIME
Nicolas	Goulet	representative	ec(h)o-citizen collectif
Ekaterini	Hambouri	Research Programme Officer	DG Research & Innovation, I3 - Sustainable Management of Natural Resources
Peter	Howard		LRG



Josef	Jary		Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation
Tom	Jones	member of the Bureau of the Specialised Section NAT (Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment)	European Economic and Social Committee
David	King		SAF
Helen	Klimmek	EU Liaison and Funding Support Intern	IUCN
Laurence	Le Du-Blayo	HERCULES Coordinator	LRG
Patrick	Lefebvre		
Damiana	Maiz	Junior Policy Officer	Euromontana
Stephen	Meredith	Policy Coordinator	IFOAM EU
Nicholas	Merriman	Assistant	ELO
Matthieu	Moulonguet		Délégation de la Région Rhône-Alpes à Bruxelles
Julianna	Nagy	Project Coordinator	ELO
Selina	Nußbaumer		European Office of Local Authorities of Baden-Württemberg
Federico	Nogara	Life Unit	European Commission
Tobias	Plieninger	Associate Professor	University of Copenhagen
Robby	Schreiber	Head of EISA Brussels	EISA
Leena	Seim	Executive Officer	Future for Religious Heritage
Robert	Slater	Assistant European Policy Officer	East of England European Partnership
Paul	Tabbush	Chair	LRG
Fanny	Van den Haute	PhD-researcher	Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research, Social Sciences Unit

