

Title of the symposium:

The European Landscape Convention 20 years after: Achievements, Progresses, and Opportunities

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Symposium abstract

Over the last decades, the protection and sustainable use of landscapes have become a prominent and widely practiced policy objective in Europe. One of the main issues in this regard has been the need to assess landscapes to implement suitable national legislative safeguards and to identify adequate interventions for landscape management and rehabilitation. Safeguards have been intertwined with more robust practices to protect isolated cultural heritage items, including archaeological sites or historical buildings and monuments. The study of landscapes has thereby experienced a paradigm shift, evolving from conventional reductionistic and mechanistic approaches to more integrated approaches based on wholeness, connectedness and ordered complexity. These new visions have been proposed by landscape ecology, but they are now shared by other researchers and have recently permeated landscape protection legislation.

The European Landscape Convention (ELC), signed in Florence in 2000 and since then ratified by 39 Council of Europe member states, provided a major milestone in this evolution of landscape protection, study and policy. The ELC innovated not only the shared definition of the landscape but also the approach to landscape preservation, protection, and management.

The ELC applies to all types of landscape and represents a holistic view of the sites and their surroundings. It emphasizes how people experience the landscape and highlights its social significance. It underlines the democratic aspect, i.e. the importance of giving people the opportunity to participate actively in the evaluation and management of the landscape. The ELC is designed to be applied at two levels: adhesion of the states and the construction of common regional policies, strategies, and practices that share the values of local societies. A variety of national policies and planning processes are used to implement the ELC due to the

different types of European landscapes, which cannot be planned in the same way at the various administrative levels.

In some European countries, ELC has pushed legislation toward the promulgation of new measures for landscape protection. This represents the latest relevant evolution of the national normative for the landscape. From a planning perspective, the introduction of the new legislation for cultural heritage and landscape protection has produced a new generation of landscape plans with an increased attention to environmental issues of landscape conservation and integrated safeguard rather than conservation of individual historical sites or monuments.

However, in the last years claims have been raised on moving beyond the rhetoric of the ELC and to bring landscape more firmly and coherently into the spatial planning discourse. This requires more research to promote and champion landscape governance in order to overcome its inherent 'fuzziness' and elitism which still pervades many practices of landscape planning.

Against this background, the proposed symposium intends to bring together European experiences of implementation of ELC at different levels and including different cross-cutting fields and disciplines. Contributors are requested to provide reflections on one or more of the following topics/aspects related to the implementation and impacts of the ELC:

- How does the practical implementation of the ELC differ across European countries?
- Has the ELC been effective in improving the protection and sustainable use of European landscapes?
- Which indicators and methods can be used to measure this effectiveness?
- Which have been the main impacts of the ELC on the coupled socio-ecological landscape systems?
- Which have been constraints, possibilities and positive outcomes of implementation of the ELC in the different European planning systems?
- Is a revision of the ELC needed after 20 years, and which reform opportunities exist?

How your symposia will improve landscape ecology science?

By proposing a concept of landscape as an interaction of different socio-ecological systems, the ELC has "naturally" embraced landscape ecology theories and its manifold approach to landscape assessment.

A review of experiences of the practical implantation of the ELC in different European planning systems will provide new evidence on the concept of landscape ecology theories in the planning and management of European landscapes and, at the same time, suggest room for possible improvements in the landscape legislation and regulation at European level.

Broad thematic areas

Broad thematic areas 1st choice: Landscape planning

Broad thematic areas 2st choice: Landscape governance

Free Keywords

Landscape Planning, Europe, European Landscape Convention, Landscape protection, Planning, Socio-ecological systems

Outcomes of symposium

Special issue in a scientific journal (already negotiated)

Notes

Articles from Selected contributes of the sessions will be published in a special Issue of the journal Socio-Ecological Practice Research (Springer) on the same topic