

Title of the symposium:

The landscape approach - key to enhance sustainable land use in Europe and North-America as well?

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Symposium abstract

According to the Global Landscapes Forum “the landscape represents an ideal scale at which to implement strategies and evaluate progress of initiatives designed towards more sustainable outcomes for both people and nature. As such, landscape approaches are increasingly acknowledged within global environmental policy discourse and have generated discussion and debate within the scientific and practitioner communities” (GLF 2017). This is followed up by Reed and Sunderland (2018), who describe the background for the wide appeal of the concept being based on a recognition of a need to overcome sectorial silos if we are to find sustainable development pathways. Also Freeman et al. (2015) emphasise that the concept is increasingly applied within the international environmental community, in general for addressing multiple objectives, usually related to both environmental and social goals, especially social equity. However, in Europe and Northern America landscape is not often considered as an integrating concept in cross-sectoral strategies and policies for the mentioned purposes.

A landscape approach is “a framework to integrate policy and practice for multiple land uses, within a given area, to ensure equitable and sustainable use of land while strengthening measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change” (Reed et al. 2015). FAO (2012) defines a landscape approach as “...dealing with large-scale processes in an integrated and multidisciplinary manner, combining natural resource management with environmental and livelihood considerations.” FAO further underlines that the landscape approach also factors in human activities and their institutions, viewing them as an integral part of the system rather than as external agents.” According to Sunderland (2014), the landscape approach “...as it relates to conservation, agriculture and other land uses seeks to address the increasingly complex and widespread environmental, social and political challenges that transcend traditional management boundaries.”

“The landscape approach” is currently being propagated as useful in a wide range of contexts, including rural land use (FAO 2017), forest land use (Reed & Sunderland 2018) and urban heritage landscapes (Bandarin & Van Oers 2012). The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and partner institutions describe ten principles they consider characterise such an approach (Sunderland, 2014). These 10 principles emphasise adaptive management, stakeholder engagement and dialogue, and multiple objectives (Sayer et al., 2013). FAO (2017, p.6) forward the usefulness of a landscape approach and state; “Landscape approaches are essential to support sustainable food and agriculture and build resilient and productive social-ecological systems. These approaches protect vital ecosystem services and sustain livelihoods, tackling food security challenges while adapting to the likely future impacts of climate change.”

While being propagated by FAO, UNESCO and The Global Landscapes Forum, interestingly the landscape approach at present appears to be mainly seen as relevant to development

cooperation, e.g. REDD and other land use projects, required by the donors to be sustainable and equitable. The landscape approach is much less well recognised in e.g. European and North-American policies. Landscape ecology has a considerable potential to play a crucial role in this “landscape approach”, although it is rarely mentioned explicitly as being relevant in this context. In this symposium we will explore why this is the case, and how this could change.

How your symposia will improve landscape ecology science?

In many occasions it has been claimed that scientific findings, including those of landscape ecology, rarely find their way into policy and practice (McNie 2007). In this symposium we will explore whether the “landscape approach” could benefit landscape ecology through a) providing a closer link between scientific evidence and policy and b) providing feedback from policy to research needs.

Both the aim of using a landscape approach, the content and composition of this approach appears well in line with the thinking in landscape ecology. We believe thus, that a landscape approach as it is currently described e.g. by FAO, CIFOR and UNESCO is well suited to also integrate landscape ecology. We further suggest that this could be mutually beneficial, especially also within the context of land use futures in Europe and North-America. It is this thinking we will debate in this symposium.

Our aim is for this to contribute to placing landscape ecology higher on the science-policy agenda, and contribute to fulfilling the aims of landscape ecology of underpinning the inherently interdisciplinary aspects of the science.

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Environmental Evidence 4:2

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Forest News, Wednesday, 27 Aug 2014.

Broad thematic areas

Broad thematic areas 1st choice: Socio-economic-ecological systems

Broad thematic areas 2st choice: Future: scenarios and new landscapes

Free Keywords

landscape approach

land system

land use strategy

social justice

equity

Outcomes of symposium

Special issue in a scientific journal (to be negotiated)