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Dynamism and Change of Cultural Landscapes

What can biosphere reserves accomplish?

When developing perspectives for cultural landscapes/cultural spaces a general framework of values is needed. In that context, the question of which visionary model of the landscape is appropriate, comes up. Such a framework of values and such a vision can relate directly to the Seville Strategy of the MAB programme. Biosphere reserves are ideally suited for combining types of traditional and modern cultural landscapes as well as for further developing them in a modern approach.



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Cultural landscapes: The essence

Cultural landscapes are human-modified environments; human modification or use transforms the natural landscape into a cultural landscape. Man formed nature according to his needs, what his livelihood depended on and what his creativity and technical means made possible at any one time. He had to adapt or even bow to the natural scheme of things: to the rocks, the ground, availability of water and natural nutrients, flow of waters and the altitude. Cultural landscapes have or had – apart from the specific use of the area – a specific cultural geomorphology. These are for example, walls, tree rows, waling, scarps, fences, tree-lined roads, individual trees, pits and marshes. At the same time they possess many non-functional or useless coincidences, by-products or refuse-products resulting from human economic activity, like shrubberies, small fallows, gorges and much more. The remains of 'natural' nature can be found at best where cultivation was not worthwhile, where it is too wet, too steep, too dry or too stony. This assessment was, of course, always relative. The general economic conditions for establishing many elements of the cultural geomorphology, for example boulder walls, today are no longer given. These forms are, as such, relics of economic history; nevertheless they can shape the face of a landscape, even today.

The traditional cultural landscape was mostly used polyculturally, i.e. there were numerous ways of use in one area. Fur-

thermore there were clear use-gradients involved from the settlement down to the district boundary. There was no conservation, only movement, dynamics, progressive and regressive succession (i.e. sequences of plants and animal societies at one location), a pulsation between forest and non-forest. This dynamism had, as a whole, the effect of preserving habitats.

All cultural landscapes, also those, which to us appear to be old-fashioned, were and still are subjected to dynamism, they demonstrate movement on a time axis. There were and are delayed and almost stagnating, as well as accelerated phases. These processes run differentially, in a special sense: here – batches of change, there – stagnation, perhaps under the pressure of economic distress and migration. The relationships and dependencies between the political and socio-economical framework conditions and the picture and state of the landscape have not really changed over the years. The dynamism, which is inherent to these relations, is something we have to face up to and also shape.

Change in the cultural landscapes has speeded up considerably in the last decades, accompanied by a dramatic increase in developed and especially covered areas and the well-known negative effects on habitats, flora and fauna and on the geomorphology. Individual facial features of the cultural landscapes, their value and character were often obliterated or removed. Landscapes have been designed in many so-called 'favoured areas' in such a similar way that they ap-

pear exchangeable to a large extent. Trans-regionally there is a remarkable levelling of standards in the areas of building construction, landscape gardening, types of settlements, route planning and the arrangement of roads and paths, equipping the landscape with noise-insulation measures, dumpsites or leafy slopes along motorways. Energy landlines are ever-present, the landscape is being torn up to a frightening extent, forestation engulfs hillsides and valleys, use-gradients only exist locally. We are in a dilemma: on the one side, such change is a characteristic of the cultural landscape; on the other hand we do not know how all-encompassing change can be so that people can cope with it mentally or at least accept it and so that a sustainable landscape development is not prevented.

A complimentary aspect: The preservation of ecological, aesthetic and social qualities of our cultural landscapes cannot mean that landscape is 'frozen' and that landscapes turn into museums. Landscape must definitely be able to develop further. On the one hand, typical attributes and identification marks have to be preserved, and on the other hand new ones should be defined and consciously created. Also the process element of landscape and the characteristics and ageing of landscape elements must be considered in the way we act nowadays.

The resulting fundamental question is as to what a modern cultural landscape should look like, a landscape with its own profile, which shows continuity, whose parts are also established in functioning relationships. What is, in the broadest sense, a functioning modern cultural landscape, which is, at the same time, home?

Framework of values

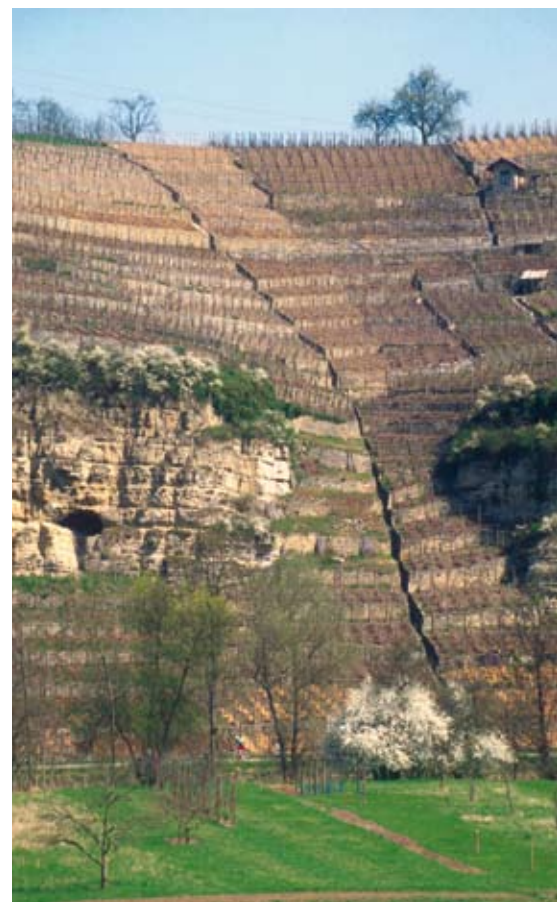
When it comes to developing perspectives for cultural landscapes/cultural spaces, we must focus on a general framework of values. Connected to that is the question, which visionary model of a landscape, in which we plan, decide and shape, is fitting? A framework of values and a vision could almost seamlessly latch onto the Seville Strategy of the MAB programme and also to the conventions of the World Summit of Rio:

- The development of landscape is to follow the concept of sustainability in a consistent manner.
- The respective identity of the landscape must remain intact or be replaced by another unmistakeable identity.
- Diversity, typical for a specific natural and cultural space should be aimed for in space and time, which includes an optimal, regional biodiversity.
- Cultural landscapes should not be dependent on maintenance measures and landcare.
- Important landscape functions should be re-established, for example flood and mass containment in floodplains.
- Burdening mass transfer is to be kept to a minimum.
- The 'use' of areas and the dissection of the landscape are to be minimised.
- Allowing natural processes to unfold without interference should be encouraged on limited areas, without setting targets of trajectories.
- Acutely endangered, recently overhauled cultural landscape should be protected and maintained. Thus they can be secured for some time, until they become useful again.
- All goals should be realised with as little interference as possible and also with a minimum of energy expenditure.

If we compare these goals with the state of our landscapes today then it is obvious that stronger efforts are required; new proportions of use and protection are needed. A more specific version of these goals can only be agreed upon on the basis of actually existing landscapes, at the regional or communal level. To work out such more specific goals publicly conducted discussions on landscape planning and regional development have to take place.

Instruments and ways

Considering the above mentioned principles, biosphere reserves are absolutely ideal for combining traditional and modern cultural forms of landscapes and for developing these appropriately, in other words, controlling the inherent dynamism of the cultural landscape. The concept of zoning of biosphere reserves could lead to the interpretation that trusted, traditional cultural landscapes be placed primarily in the buffer zone and newer, modern cultural landscapes in the transition area. One



Traditional vineyards are the most impressive cultural landscapes in Central Europe. They often stem from the middle ages and were formed by significant interference with the landscape. They were mostly re-allocated or completely closed down. The remaining vineyards must be preserved and maintained in the long-term, for example in buffer zones of biosphere reserves.

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should however, consciously decide against such a straight interpretation of zones. One should get away from formal, established segregation of old/traditional and new/modern and follow integrative concepts, which use the character and distinctiveness of the region.

New landscapes can be for example: extensively used half-open landscapes, which consist of a mosaic of grasslands, shrubberies, pioneer forests and smaller forest resources created by different wild and domestic animals such as sheep, goats, cows, horses, koniks, red deer, elks or bison; agroforensic systems, like trees planted at a distance for wood production and for parallel use of pastures and meadows; forestry for energy production; flood control areas used for the production of biomass as well as others.

In concrete terms, what can be achieved in biosphere reserves?

- What is urgently needed is an open and public discussion on the future of our cultural landscape. All stakeholders, such as communal umbrella organisations and clubs for preserving local traditions should be involved by the biosphere reserve administration. Some important points of discussion are briefly outlined here: Amount of retention and amount of change; shaping change; actors to be involved in change and the speed with which they are realised. How much change can we cope with? What is it that makes a place home? What are regional and local solutions?
- Local clubs and associations are highly important and indispensable players in

the field of maintenance and development of cultural landscapes and home-landscapes. This includes clubs for preserving local traditions, hiking clubs and associations connected with nature conservation and preservation of historic monuments. For their work, which partly covers state obligations, they will need political acknowledgement in future as well as financial support. They are obvious partners of biosphere reserve management.

- In order to bring the meaning of cultural landscape home to people and to organise nature and landscape maintenance in a citizen-oriented and democratic manner, concentrated educational efforts about cultural landscape and home country are of utmost importance. These educational efforts need to be carried out by the communal um-

In the Southern Black Forest we find regular terrace structures interspersed amongst the distended, undivided common acreage. These 'land strips' go back to the 19th century. The landscape is increasingly threatened by the tread of grazing animals.

Photo © Werner Konold



brella organisations, by schools, higher education institutes, adult education institutes, the media as well as interdisciplinary groups – bringing together the fields of agriculture, nature conservation, preservation of historic monuments, water management, forestry and also hiking and tourist associations. The biosphere reserve administrations can be the driving force and the mediator of educational efforts. They can organise cultural landscape schools.

- Knowledge on the genesis of cultural landscapes/home-landscapes enables the local community to become actively involved in planning processes, supplementing civil commitment with sound arguments. The best suited 'peculiar' local solutions can thus be found. Such peculiar, special solutions will in turn contribute to the diversity and beauty of culture landscapes at the large scale.

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UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea and Hallig Islands

Next to the summit areas of the Alps, the Wadden Sea on the North Sea coast is the last large-scale wilderness area in Europe. The biosphere reserve in Schleswig-Holstein spans 4,431 km² and is for the most part a national park – the largest in Europe. The salt marshes along the Wadden Sea coasts represent a special feature of this natural habitat. Resident there are 250 species of animals and there are globally unique ecosystems. The Wadden Sea boasts more birds than any other region in Europe. Just the Schleswig-Holstein part is targeted by more than two million waders and water birds in spring and late summer, who breed on the arctic coasts.

Apart from the birds, humans also like to use the North Sea coast in Schleswig-Holstein. Every year 500,000 holiday-makers take part in mudflat hiking or other nature study activities. Despite the tourism, nature and culture remain unspoiled. The Hallig islands Langeneß, Oland, Gröde, Nordstrandischmoor and Hooe, the home of around 300 people, joined the biosphere reserve, previously designated in 1990, in 2005 at their own request. This area now comprises the transition area. Farming, coast guarding and tourism are their livelihood. Their economies are sustainable and today use a coherent marketing in order to raise the quality of the goods on offer



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and to encourage new guests to visit the Hallig islands and experience life there.

In order to raise acceptance for the nature conservation measures the 'Brent Goose days' are celebrated each year. In 2007 this event took place for the tenth time and as a result of the varied activities on the programme and the excursions not only birders were attracted to the Hallig islands.

Further information:
<http://www.wattenmeer-nationalpark.de> and
<http://www.halligen.de>

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