

PREFACE

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The COST Action A27 program *LANDMARKS. Understanding pre-industrial structures in rural and mining landscapes* presents a very informative sample of the various aspects and ongoing activities related to the archaeological-historical landscapes of Europe during the past decade. The program has focused on "new ways of valorisation, promotion and management of cultural heritage in the more general framework of territorial planning". As a sample of current research endeavour, it shows what the potential of this field is and in which direction research and management of the cultural landscape in Europe can develop.

First of all landscape is a platform where not only research and management, but also society can meet each other for different purposes: For some, it is sheer interest in or love for the landscapes they live in, visit or pass through, but others it is also about creating a living for people and a future for their children, or tackling problems about conflicting views on use, ownership and identity. European landscapes display an immense and often confusing variety in form, in history, in present occupation and in future development. This diversity is a cultural resource that can be exploited, but should also be maintained in a sensible and responsible manner. But how to do this?

COST A27 comprised a group of researchers and managers from 21 European countries, sharing common interests in cultural landscapes and displaying the diverse "states of the art" as regards current knowledge, policy and practice in this field. Not "everything" has been covered by this group, but, for example, the programme has confronted us with a representative selection of the differences and similarities between countries, disciplines and groups. Respecting the differences as part of traditions and identities and recognising their value for finding new pathways towards understanding the transformation and management of past and present landscapes two major trends unite the differences: the region is highlighted as the basic unit on which to practice research and management, and inter- and transdisciplinarity represent a logical, but unconventional answer to the problems and challenges communities face. To exploit these two trends fully will certainly

take the next decade and probably even longer. But this should not prevent us from reflecting about their wider context: the European level.

Having established these two trends it raises the problem of dealing with them on the level and scale of Europe as a continent of regional landscapes and as a landscape of actors divided over disciplines, sectors and communities. Is the European level only the sum of regions and actors or is there an added value to be explored? My hypothesis is that Europe seen as a mosaic of landscapes, regions and actors must have a considerable added value. I will explain this further.

In my opinion one important criterion to define a landscape is its "meaningfulness" as socio-cultural framework to understand and assess past and present histories and actions reflected or materialised in the landscape. The time depth of the European archaeological-historical landscape covers the long evolutionary span from hunter-gatherers to industrial societies with their very different environments and forms of land use. Depending on the particular problem of heritage research and management at stake, the size of the meaningful landscape or region may vary and inevitably the supra-regional scale will play a more or less prominent role. For example, during their winter-summer cycle, Upper Pleistocene hunter-gatherers exploited landscapes ranging from the central European mountain zones into the Northern European plain. To assess for research and heritage management their sites and the various landscapes they exploited theoretically one has to cross the borders of many historical regions and even modern nations. To take another example, those of us who are engaged in the "Frontiers of the Roman Empire", and who promote their status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site are also working at a trans-national scale. Although the Roman frontiers cross modern borders, they have to be conceptualised as a single "military" landscape. And there are of course many other examples to frame meaningful supra-regional landscapes (or seascapes, as in the Mediterranean world).

Another form of supra-regional framing uses actual environmental or economic themes. Water management of river systems crossing modern boundaries is one of the strongest examples, since river systems represent in themselves traditionally meaningful entities. Modern infrastructures like high-speed railways or tourism also facilitate or require the linking of regions on a European level. European sponsored INTERREG programmes illustrate this.

The other major trend is to cross the traditional borders of disciplines, sectors and institutions. This is more than cooperation by putting disciplines together, it means sidestepping the boundary by adopting and adapting the paradigms of both disciplines. It means also to establish a fruitful interaction between research and policy on the basis of mutual respect and meaningful interaction. And, finally, it entails the cooperation between expert/professional knowledge and local or lay knowledge. To arrive at inter- and transdisciplinarity as this is defined, not only on a national, but also on an European level, networks crossing the borders of regions and nations are needed.¹ It will be evident that this is a very ambitious perspective, but it is the only sensible way forward.

Landscape and its problems are too complex to be solved from one specialist view, landscape is too relevant for modern society as a whole to be the sole responsibility of experts, and the value of regional and national landscapes are the constituents of the rich European landscape. The COST Action A27 is a major step towards the implementation of this perspective!

This final volume of the impressive series of publications produced by the COST Action A27 group during the past years is the materialisation of what has been said before. Past landscapes and actual aspects of perceiving, characterising and presenting them to support their sustainable management are described. Theory, methodology and practice are discussed. Regional in-depth research using e.g. GIS of one particular region and the comparative approach combining different regions and a particular theme like medieval mining or Roman imperial landscapes illustrate the importance of the region. The concluding remarks show the progress made since the start of the program and the new perspectives for the future. We are grateful for the contribution to this progress by the various participants in this COST Action A27. But above all we have to thank Almudena Orejas and her colleagues from the Spanish Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) for managing this ambitious activity resulting in marvellous books and a European network of research and friendship.

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NOTES

¹ Multidisciplinary research is characterised by parallel tracks, each situated within a particular academic field, between which there is only limited interaction; while knowledge is exchanged, it is not integrated. Instead, each field works within its own conceptual framework and according to its own methods. Interdisciplinary research involves collaboration between various unrelated academic fields for the express purpose of crossing boundaries, such that researchers can create new knowledge (so-called unifying concepts) and achieve a common research goal. Here the adjective "unrelated" indicates that the disciplines in question differ with regard to their research paradigms, for example differences regarding quantitative, qualitative, analytical or interpretative approaches. In trans-disciplinary research, academics from different unrelated disciplines collaborate closely with non-academics in order to achieve certain research objectives and to develop new knowledge. This approach is participative and leads usually to negotiated knowledge such as common definition of problems, the identification of facts and the development of strategies (Tress, B.G., Tress, G and Fry, G. 2006: "Defining concepts and the process of knowledge production in integrative research". In: B.G. Tress, G. Tress, G. Fry and P. Opdam (eds.): *From Landscape Research to landscape Planning. Aspects of Integration, Education and Application*, Dordrecht (Springer): 13-26, especially 15-17). Inter- and transdisciplinarity are labelled as integrative research approaches.