

VITAL LANDSCAPES

Landscape quality guidance

How to generate landscape quality objectives
in participatory planning processes



EUROPEAN UNION
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DEVELOPMENT FUND



**VITAL
LANDSCAPES**
CENTRAL EUROPE Project

This Project is implemented through the Central Europe Programme co-financed by the ERDF.

VITAL LANDSCAPES

Valorisation and Sustainable Development of Cultural Landscapes
using innovative Participation and Visualisation Techniques

Work package 3

3.1.5: Joint definition of CE landscape quality objectives

Project partners:

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March 2013

Further information on the project is available on www.vital-landscapes.eu.



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1 Introduction

Landscape can be seen as a “key factor in the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of individuals and societies” (Déjeant-Pons 2006) and, therefore, constitutes an important part of quality of life (European Landscape Convention (ELC) preamble). However, Central European cultural landscapes face unprecedented challenges that endanger their quality and variety. For instance, uncontrolled and inadequately planned settlement developments are responsible for increasing land consumption and the fragmentation of natural and cultivated landscapes (Antrop 2000, EEA 2011). Intensification processes in the context of structural changes in agriculture and forestry (IAASTD 2009, EC 2011) have led to a degradation of landscapes and a loss of biodiversity (Krengel 2005). Furthermore, the renewable energy sector becomes a new driving force of landscape development (Nadai and van der Horst 2010) and causes a rise in land-use conflicts in rural areas (Bosch and Peyke 2011).

Against this background, the Vital Landscapes project¹ as a joint initiative by eight project partners from seven countries, aimed at promoting and supporting the sustainable development of cultural landscapes in Central Europe. In the sense of the European Landscape Convention, the project focused on participatory approaches to discuss landscape issues with local people. Therefore, the project developed and respectively adapted innovative tools and methods for the visualisation and moderation of landscape development scenarios that were applied in pilot processes in all participating countries. In this way, the project transferred knowledge and motivation to local stakeholders to get involved with landscape development since everyday action influences and determines the quality of landscapes.

The European Landscape Convention (ELC) treats “landscape quality objectives” as one core issue of landscape policy implementation (Neugebauer and Stoeglehner 2012). Formulating a guidance on how to derive landscape quality objectives has to start with the identification and assessment of landscapes, and goes on with the analysis of the changes and challenges of landscape development including the driving forces, and, finally, comes to determining the desired future state. The characteristics of the identified landscapes, their alterations including the reasons of these changes, and the values assigned to the landscapes “by the interested parties and the population concerned” (Art. 6 ELC) form the base for the formulation of landscape quality objectives. As the landscape quality objectives shall be determined for each landscape identified and assessed, they have to be region-specific. Therefore, landscape quality objectives cannot be published as a terminal, generic list of objectives for all landscapes, but have to be determined for each landscape in participatory planning and assessment processes, respectively.

According to the ELC these planning and assessment processes shall comprise intensive public participation in dealing with landscape quality:

- according to Art. 6A ELC awareness within the civil society, private organizations and authorities shall be raised “in order to recognise the value of landscapes and their own roles concerning the designing of and interventions in landscapes” (Stoeglehner 2006);
- in landscape identification and assessment active participation of the interested public and groups shall be carried out in order to include the values attributed to the landscapes by the interested and concerned public (Art. 6C ELC);
- finally, when adopting landscape quality objectives the ELC calls for a mechanism that the

¹ Further details are available on the project website www.vital-landscapes.eu.

general public, the local and regional authorities and interested groups shall be consulted (Art 6D ELC).

Giving special attention to landscape quality objectives is a vital part for integrating “landscape into [...] regional and town planning policies and in [...] cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as in any other policies with possible direct or indirect impact on landscape” (Art. 5D ELC). The landscape quality objectives actually empower the respective authorities to implement landscape issues in strategies and plans on the local and regional level as they provide the value base from a “landscape perspective”.

In which planning context the landscape quality objectives, and the measures to implement them in practice, should be generated can be left open². At least two implementation scenarios are possible: (1) a landscape planning regime that deals with the three pillars of the landscape policy – landscape protection, management and planning – on the local and regional level; (2) if a landscape planning regime is not available or cannot be set up for whatever reason, a mixture of spatial planning (regional and town planning) as well as community and regional development processes like Local/Regional Agenda 21 can be utilized to implement the pillars of the landscape policy (Stoeglehner 2007).

In both scenarios the landscape identification and assessment, the drafting of landscape quality objectives as well as the action plans to implement them (consisting of planning, management and protection measures) can be generated in participatory planning approaches oriented on Local/Regional Agenda 21 processes as can be clearly seen in several Vital Landscapes pilot actions, e.g. in Austria (Löschner et al. 2013c), Germany (Freyer and Pozimski 2013, Hass et al. 2013) or Hungary (Jombach et al. 2013). In such processes, which include intensive participation of the interested public in workshops and other interactive methods, normally a (limited) share of the population can be reached. In order to give the public not yet involved in the process the chance to give statements to the proposed landscape quality objectives, a formal consultation process is required. Such processes are normally part of formal planning procedures. Therefore, a combination of both approaches is promising in fulfilling the requirements of the ELC and designing implementation processes that allow for a broad public participation and awareness for landscape issues.

Therefore, we propose that a formal planning process alone based on information and consultation is not enough to reach the ambitious goals of the ELC, and that – no matter which legal regime is chosen for the ELC implementation – a combination of bottom-up “Agenda-21-like” processes and formal planning regimes is required. The following guidance, how to generate landscape quality objectives, is founded on this approach. This guidance, which is based on planning processes that took place in several pilot areas of the Vital Landscapes partner countries, summarizes and interprets these experiences.

² For further information on the planning systems in the project partner countries please refer to the Vital Landscapes output 3.1.3 (Simoneti and Kranjc 2012).

2 Contents of Landscape quality formation

Landscape quality objectives shall answer questions like (Neugebauer and Stoeglehner 2011): “Which landscape do we want to have in the future? What are the core elements of our future natural, cultural and social environment? What are indicators of sustainable development?”

Processes that lead to “vital” landscapes as defined by this project, are participatory in nature and close the cycle from landscape identification and assessment to landscape quality objectives and action plans (including landscape planning, management and protection), which may influence the landscapes in a way that landscape characteristics change and the process starting from landscape identification has to be undergone again. For the Vital Landscapes project the following vision, which was jointly developed in a workshop of the international Vital Landscapes project team (Vital Landscapes WP3 work group 2010), is important to reach in each process dealing with landscape quality:

- high quality of life for satisfied people living in the landscape
- high diversity of nature, landscape, culture, tradition, economic approaches, living conditions, development scenarios, different societies living there...
- functioning technical, social, cultural infrastructure
- strong regional economies including e.g. in energy and food supply, regional economic cycles, social networks
- environmental sustainability (responsible use of the environment, low CO₂ emissions, low pollution of soil, water and air...)
- preserved historic cultural landscapes and landscape elements by use and modest adaptation to 21st century living conditions (as part of our common memory and identity), nature/landscape/heritage protection
- balanced development (of urban, sub-urban and rural regions), link between the protection and development
- high, regionally diversified landscape quality
- low levels of risks and damage because of fragmentation of landscape
- capitalised regional resources, e.g. regional products/branding, cultural tourism, regional knowledge management
- bottom-up and long-term approaches.

In this project the partnership set up a set of criteria to identify a “vital” landscape. These criteria comprise environmental, social and cultural, economic, participation, implementation and spatial criteria (Neugebauer et al. 2011). In order to deal with the range of content landscape quality objectives should cover, we transfer environmental, social (including cultural) and economic criteria in questions that should be answered in each local or regional planning process (see Annex).

The spatial criteria are related to the spatial archetypes urban, suburban, rural areas as well as rural small towns. As they are cross-cutting through all other criteria, they are not included in the set of questions for the generation of landscape quality objectives in the Annex as a separate set of criteria. Landscape characteristics, pressures on landscapes and their driving factors will be different in each spatial archetype, so the spatial criteria are already addressed by dealing with the environmental, social and economic criteria in a respective region.

3 Participatory process of landscape quality formation

The process of landscape quality formation has, as already explained, bottom-up components for active participation and involvement of the interested public that is willing to spend voluntary work on landscape identification and assessment, the formulation of landscape quality objectives and the action plans for their implementation, as well as information and consultation elements for the general public. As already stated in Stoeglehner (2007), Stoeglehner and Schmid (2007), and Neugebauer and Stoeglehner (2011), planning process designs following the principles of Local and Regional Agenda 21 are suitable to accommodate the bottom-up elements.

From the frameworks for Local/Regional Agenda 21 (Humer and Sieghartsleitner 2002, BMLFUW 2010, OöAUN 2010) and our experiences in the Vital Landscapes pilot areas, the local or regional process to discuss landscape quality and determine landscape quality objectives including action plans can be organized as follows:

- 1) *Start-up phase*: In the start-up phase the local/regional decision making body adopts the formal decision to start a process dealing with landscape quality according to the ELC. An external process attendant and expert, normally a landscape planner, is nominated to guide the process, and a core team consisting of decision makers and members of the interested public is formed.
- 2) *Sensitising*: The process attendant and the core team start awareness raising activities for landscape quality involving the local and regional politics, the administrations and the citizens in order to enhance public interest and motivate active process participants to join the process.
- 3) *Developing landscape quality objectives*: Based on the identification of local/regional landscape characteristics, the experienced changes, the problems, threats, opportunities and development perspectives related to the landscape characteristics are assessed and landscape quality objectives defined that express the future, desired state of the landscapes. Besides written objectives, plans can also be drafted showing the landscape characteristics that shall be protected and managed as well as areas where new landscape characteristics shall be developed or the existing changed. Action plans for the implementation of the landscape quality objectives shall be drafted. In this phase workshops are held with interested citizens. The results are summed up in a landscape quality vision statement and action plan.
- 4) *Information, consultation and decision*: The results of the development phase are presented to the public. Everybody is entitled to give written statements that have to be considered by the landscape planner, core team and the decision making body. Finally, the landscape quality vision statement and action plan have to be adopted by the respective local/regional decision making body.
- 5) *Implementing projects and achieving continuity*: As in Local/Regional Agenda 21, a steering structure has to be created that guarantees a continuous implementation of projects, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process as well as of the landscape quality objectives, the vision statement and the planned actions. In case the process is not successful, or frameworks (outside and inside the local/regional area) change, the landscape quality vision statement and/or action plan has to be adapted. For achieving this task, a monitoring, evaluation and steering structure has to be created. Contrarily to Agenda 21, where these tasks have to be carried out on voluntary work, such tasks can be accommodated within the local/regional administration.

Landscape quality influences quality of life and the regional and local identity of the people, therefore, public participation is an issue of great significance when dealing with landscape quality (Jones 2007,

Sevenant and Antrop 2010). Sustainable development processes such as Local Agenda 21 (LA21) during which visions, strategies and measures for sustainable development on local level are elaborated require active community contribution that can be realised on different levels. For instance, the Austrian expert group “Decentralised Sustainability Strategies – Local Agenda 21” differentiates five quality levels of participation, whereof the minimum requirements for LA21 processes comprise the first three levels (see figure 1).

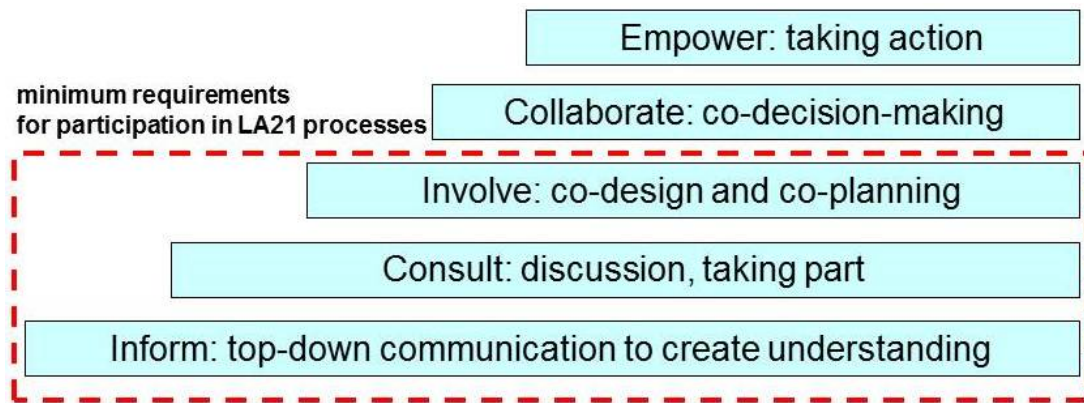


Figure 1: Five levels of participation within the Austrian LA21 process. Sources: ExpertInnengruppe LA21 (2010) and International Association for Public Participation (2007)

With the process design suggested here the three minimum requirements for active participation can be fulfilled. The visioning and action planning takes place in a participatory process while the legally binding aspects serve as framework for the implementation and secure the results. It is also likely that the continuous implementation of projects can be reached as the relevant stakeholders and actors have the chance to propose action and to influence the results of the planning process.

4 Innovative methods and tools supporting the landscape quality formation

The process of landscape quality formation described above can be supported in the respective phases by innovative methods and tools whereof a selection developed and implemented in the framework of the Vital Landscapes project is presented below:

4.1 Photo competitions as awareness raising and sensitizing tool

In the framework of the Vital Landscapes project several regional photo competitions / exhibitions were implemented that aimed at awareness raising for values and challenges of cultural landscapes. For instance, the Hungarian, the Austrian and the Slovakian project partner organized a web-based photo competition in the respective pilot areas (for further details, also on other partners' photo competition / exhibitions see Těšitel et al. 2013).

In Hungary, the **photo competition “My Nagyberek”**³ was implemented as a special module on the Vital Berek website, called “Photo Berek” (<http://www.e-berek.hu/fotok>). Registered users could upload photos to this platform, visitors of the website could vote on the uploaded photos in a five star system. The results were determined by summarizing the visitor's and the professional jury's votes. During the

³ Nagyberek is the name of the Hungarian pilot area

competition three different categories of photos were collected:

- Nature Berek (photos of nature, flora and fauna of the pilot area);
- Most beautiful Berek (photos of beautiful landscapes of the pilot area);
- People Berek (photos of people, culture, costumes of the pilot area).



Figure 2 Award-winning photos of the Hungarian photo competition “My Nagyberek” (Jombach et al. 2013): from left to right: Aigrette (Márta Újváryné Szabó), Boróca (János Marosi), Cut the reed (Csaba Tóth)

In the framework of the Austrian regional pilot process in the LEADER-region “Mühlviertler Kernland” a **photo competition “Sichtweisen auf das Kernland”** (“Perspectives on the Kernland”) was carried out. The broad public was invited to capture personal landscape impressions. Altogether 180 photos were submitted by a total of ninety participants in the course of the photo competition that was realised in cooperation with the regional newspaper Bezirksrundschau Freistadt and the LEADER region Mühlviertler Kernland. Photos were collected in the following categories:

- “The most beautiful landscape in the Mühlviertler Kernland”
- “To me, an intact landscape looks like...”
- “The landscapes of the Mühlviertler Kernland are under distress because of...”
- “Landscape is subject to change”
- “My favourite spot – this is where I like to be”

The photos uploaded on the website www.bezirksrundschau.com/sichtweisen were analysed in order to draw conclusions from the motives shown. Aim of the action was to find out which landscape aspects can influence personal and regional identities. Primarily, different types of landscapes, the highly structured nature of the landscape with transitions between forest, agricultural areas and small-scaled structures as well as historical buildings and farmhouses were portrayed.

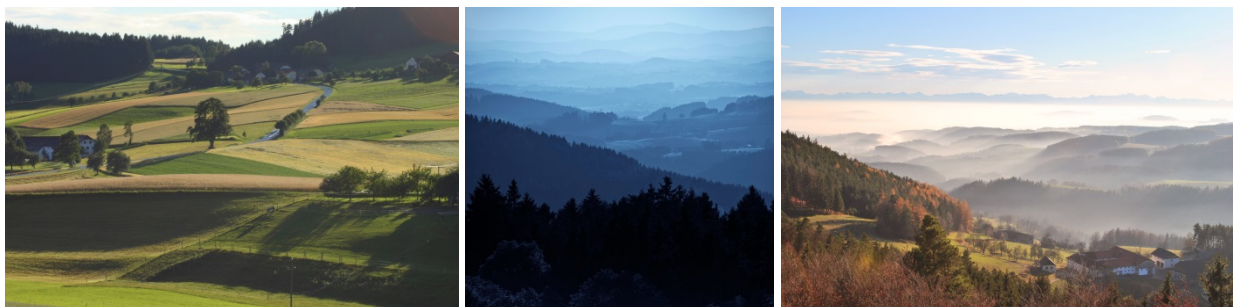


Figure 3: Award-winning photos of the Austrian photo competition “Sichtweisen” (Stöglehner et al. 2013): from left to right: Oberhirschgraben/Tischberg (Barbara Schauer), View into the Kernland (Richard Schramm), A photo (Irene Höller)

The Slovakian photo competition “**My landscape in Time**” was aimed at raising the awareness of the residents in the Sub-Little Carpathian region for the historical context of their region. For this purpose, twins of historical and recent photos were collected. During the contest 58 twins of photos were delivered to the organisers and presented in the web-gallery www.mojakrajinavcase.sk as well as in an exhibition in the town of Modra in September 2012.



Figure 4: Twin of photos showing the street Holubyho ulica in the municipality of Pezinok (1940 and 2012) (Hanušin et al. 2013)

In all three cases described, the photo competition successfully contributed to promote the Vital Landscapes project and drew attention on the respective activities in the pilot regions. Furthermore, the project team and the organisers were able to collect a set of photos suitable for publication about the pilot area and the project activities. A selection of photos from all participating countries was made for the publication of a common project calendar.

4.2 Landscape dialogues – discussing landscape issues with local people

In order to involve the public in the elaboration of visions and goals for sustainable landscape development, the Austrian Vital landscapes project team conceptualised “**landscape dialogues**” (Stoeglehner et al 2013, Löschner et al. 2013c) as a short and efficient process based on the Local Agenda 21 approach. The process comprised several steps (see figure 5) of community action (in violet) and desktop work of the process attendants (in red). Based on a preparatory meeting with local and regional stakeholders and a short visit of the respective municipality, two workshop evenings were implemented. The first workshop was focused on landscape identification, problem description and goal definition, the second was targeted on the elaboration of concrete implementation measures. The participatory method is more thoroughly documented in Löschner et al. (2013a).

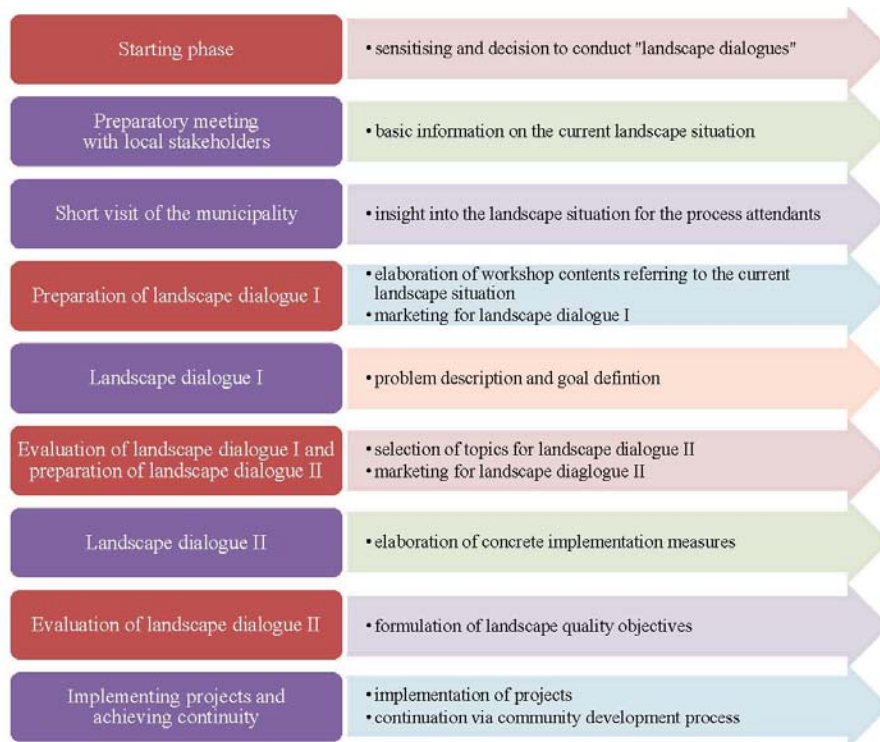


Figure 5: "Landscape dialogues" process scheme (Löschner et al. 2013a)

In the framework of the landscape dialogues in four locations, about 80 persons were involved in landscape identification, a SWOT analysis of the landscape and the subsequent elaboration of goals. The landscape dialogues provided insights regarding the public perception of landscape and constituted the basis for the formulation of landscape quality objectives (see figure 6). The further activities contributed to awareness raising about landscape development and completed the insights gained during the landscape dialogues. Figure 6 shows the summarized landscape quality objectives for the Austrian pilot case "Mühlviertler Kernland".

The landscape quality objectives are a result of the general perception of the local people that they are satisfied with their landscape which largely contributes to the regional identity (P&P Sozialforschung 2010). Yet, the local people see this state endangered and acknowledge that engagement of the civil society as well as action by local and regional authorities is needed to preserve the current state. Several cornerstones for this engagement are defined that are represented by the landscape quality objectives (figure 6). For more information, please refer to the "Mühlviertler Kernland" case study report (Löschner et al. 2013c) and the Vital Landscapes final report (Stöglehner et al. 2013).

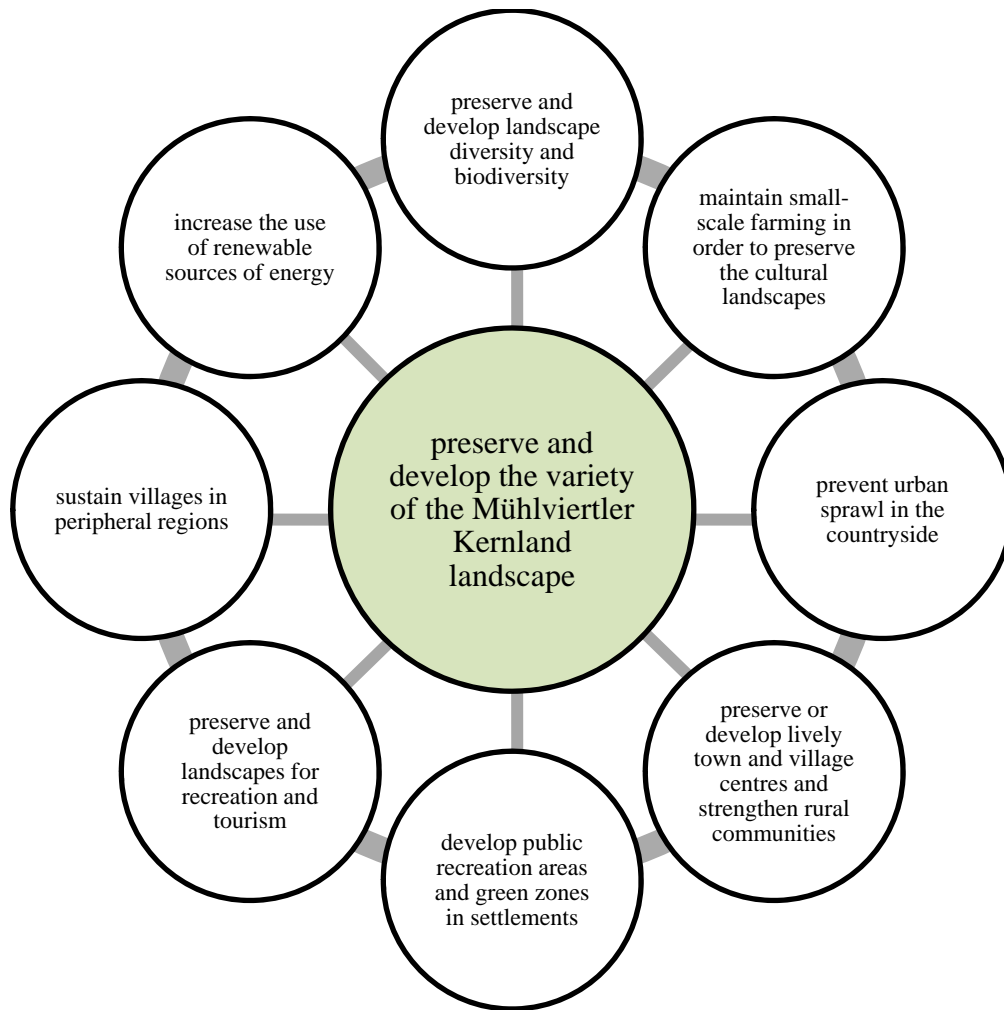


Figure 6: Landscape Quality Objectives in the LEADER region Mühlviertler Kernland (Löschner et al. 2013c)

Comparable experiences with workshops as an essential instrument for public participation were gained by the German project partners. For instance, seven workshops dealing with landscape issues conducted in the pilot region “Unteres Saaletal” contributed to sustainable landscape development by connecting activities and activists. The networks created last beyond the project duration. For instance, the initiative “Cultural Landscape of Nienburg” was introduced as an association network aiming at the co-ordination and structuring of the activities of its members. For further information please refer to Hass et al. 2013.

4.3 School workshops – portraying landscapes in short films

In order to involve young people (aged 16 to 18) in the discussion about landscape issues, the Austrian Vital Landscapes project team organised **school workshops** with students of the Commercial Academy (HAK) and the Agricultural Technical school (LFS) in the Upper Austrian district capital Freistadt during the “Mühlviertler Kernland” pilot activities. The school workshops were aimed at a critical reflection of the current state of local and regional landscapes by implementing the theme of “landscape” in a 1- to 3-minute short film (see figure 7). The method is documented in Neugebauer et al. (2013b).



Figure 7: Procedure of the School Workshops (Löschner et al. 2013b)

The school students addressed various aspects of “landscape” as becomes evident in the film scripts as well as the motives shown in the films. Regional agricultural processing cycles, production of renewable energies, leisure landscapes or local and regional identity represent some of the thematic areas covered in the short films.

4.4 Innovative visualization in landscape quality formation

When dealing with future landscape development in participation processes as described above (e.g. developing landscape quality objectives), visualization techniques and tools can form a very powerful instrument because pictures are generally better understandable for lay people than plans and maps. Therefore, in the course of the Vital Landscapes project several 2D and 3D visualization tools and approaches were developed and implemented.

Simple 2D visualization

The above described “landscape dialogues” held in the Austrian pilot region aimed at discussing landscape issues with local people. In the municipality of Hirschbach im Mühlkreis, one major subject of discussion was the perceived loss of open space due to a rapid increase in forest land. By comparing a historical photo/postcard and an actual picture as well as a simple 2D visualization extrapolating these developments (see figure 8) a critical debate about the underlying causes which are mainly linked to the proceeding structural changes in agriculture and forestry could be initiated.



Figure 8: Visualisation of landscape development in Hirschbach im Mühlkreis (proceeding forestation in four steps)

3D visualization

In the framework of the Vital Landscapes project 3D visualizations were implemented by several project partners to visualize cultural landscape changes. For instance, the Polish project team carried out 3D visualizations for the park and manor complex of the von Nostitz family in the village of Mściwojów and used them for building public participation through active involvement of local

inhabitants and decision makers. In this way, a strong involvement of the local community could be attained that led to the creation of a coherent development strategy based on non-agricultural potentials which could be generated by the revitalized study object. For further details please refer to Litwin et al. 2013.



Figure 9: 3D visualisation of the concept for the von Nostitz family property development in Mściwojów (Brożek, M., Możdżeń, M. and Pijanowski, J.M. 2013)

The Hungarian project team developed a freely available, online visualization channel at the Vital Berek website (<http://www.e-berek.hu/lb3>) – the “visual landscape” – providing a 3D visualization of landscape with help of Google Earth. In the framework of the Vital Landscapes project photorealistic models of buildings in villages of the pilot region were developed and made visible on Google Earth. For further details please refer to Jombach et al. 2013 as well as Szabó et al. 2013.



Figure 10: Photo-realistic 3D visualisation of the Nagyberek landscape (Jombach et al. 2013)

4.5 Community based knowledge management

In the framework of the Vital Landscapes project several project partners introduced community based knowledge management platforms within their pilot activities. By highlighting, preserving and presenting the knowledge of the community, on the one hand valuable information for sustainable landscape development can be depicted and on the other hand contributions to awareness raising about landscape issues can be reached. The most important feature to achieve these effects is the interactivity of the web tools where the general public can upload, comment and discuss information, pictures etc.

For instance, the exemplary application in the Hungarian pilot region Nagyberek included surveying, mapping, description, evaluation, maintenance, communication and interpretation of community knowledge about landscape values and heritage. Via the two modules “Landscape Values” and “Intangible Values”, the Vital Berek website (<http://e-berek.hu>) offers the possibility for any user to upload landscape relevant information (comments, photos, surveyed landscape elements, intangible heritage elements). For further details please refer to Jombach et al. 2013. A similar approach was chosen by the Slovenian project partner in the pilot region Lubljansko Barje (Simoneti and Kranjc 2013).

5 Conclusions

The experiences of the Vital Landscapes project showed that public participation is a key feature for processes dealing with landscape quality. Without involvement of the civil society and the general public a wide implementation of landscape quality objectives is hardly possible because of lacking legal and financial frameworks. Landscape is very important for the identity of people which is not sufficiently recognised in the current policies and planning schemes. Therefore, an engaged, aware and active public is a key player of landscape protection, management and development. In the pilot regions throughout Central Europe the Vital Landscapes project team was able to show that public participation and the cooperation of the public, decision makers and planners at eye level is not only possible, but leads to widely accepted implementation projects involving a wide range of stakeholders and activists. Without making any claim to be complete, this guidance shows a possible way of achieving such intensive participation. And by giving some examples, we hope to inspire further grass-root level activities to discuss and implement “vital” landscapes development.

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7 Annex

Questions for landscape quality formation

What kind of landscape do we want in ten years? What can we contribute to develop our landscape?

Environment and nature

A1) Which regional / local quality of **natural capital / heritage** shall be achieved? Which landscape elements shall be preserved / developed? How can we achieve that in a sustainable way?

A2) What is our **ecological carrying capacity**? How can we implement this in our development strategies?

A3) Which goals of **landscape preservation** do we want to reach? How can we achieve that in a sustainable way?

A4) Which goals of **landscape development** do we want to reach? How can we achieve that in a sustainable way?

A5) Which **regional resource cycles** do we want to generate? How can we achieve that in a sustainable way?

A6) Which **renewable energy sources** do we want to use? How can we achieve that in a sustainable way?

A7) Which **climate change adaptation and / or mitigation** goals do we want to reach? How can we achieve that in a sustainable way?

Social issues and culture

B1) What are the pillars of our **quality of life** in ten years? How can we implement them in a sustainable way?

B2) What is the level of **social capital** we want to reach? How can we enhance and utilise our social capital?

B3) Which regional/local quality of **cultural capital / heritage** shall be achieved? How can we preserve, utilise and develop it?

B4) What does **demographic change** mean in our region? Which adaptation measures are necessary?

B5) What elements of the **consciousness / awareness of landscape** shall be raised? How can we increase consciousness / awareness of landscape and utilise it for landscape development?

B6) What does **local / regional identity** mean for us? How can we strengthen it?

Economic issues

C1) How does the regional **economic capital** look like in ten years? How can we reach that?

C2) What does **multifunctional agriculture** mean in our region? How can we support farmers to develop all functions in this way?

C3) On which **regional resources** is our economy based in ten years? How can we achieve that in a sustainable way?

C4) How does the **regional labour market** look like in ten years? How can we achieve that in a sustainable way?

C5) Which **regional economic cycles** do we want to generate? Which level of regional income generation shall be reached? How can we achieve that in a sustainable way?



