

VITAL LANDSCAPES

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Central European landscape quality objectives

Workpackage 3, Action 3.1.5

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**VITAL
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1. Introduction

The term “Landscape quality objective” is a central element of the European Landscape Convention. It expresses the idea that for specific landscapes the competent public authorities shall formulate “the aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings”. (Art. 1 ELC). Furthermore, landscape quality objectives shall be defined “for the landscapes identified and assessed, after public consultation” (Art. 6 ELC). Therefore, landscape quality objectives have to be related to the contents of the landscape identification and assessment, which means that for the whole territory of States the landscape characteristics shall be analyzed including the forces and pressures leading to landscape change, recognize changes and assess landscapes according to the “particular values assigned to them by the interested parties and the population concerned” (Art. 6 ELC).

According to the literature environmental quality objectives – and landscape is normally included in recognized lists of environmental goods, e.g. in the environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment Directives of the European Union – should operationalize visions, go one step further than abstract aims, should be concrete, checkable, and, therefore, claimable, and should fulfill the following features (see e.g. Fürst and Scholles 2008¹):

- be oriented on environmental goods, not on causes of environmental impacts;
- name the environmental good;
- make propositions on concrete situations and may not be directly transferrable to other situations;
- define contents, spatial and temporal contexts.

Therefore, landscape quality objectives could be defined as objectives related to landscape development that define the future state within certain areas, and the timeframes within these states should be reached. Which, again, brings us to the question, what is a landscape? The ELC defines landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. It is interesting that the ELC relates the landscape definition to the perceiving human being and the interaction of natural factors as well as human factors. This definition draws a very complex picture of landscapes:

- perception is part of the definition, which is something individual, and related to different senses (looking, smelling, hearing, tasting, feeling, ...)
- natural factors and their interaction address all environmental goods (water, soil, air, climate, fauna, flora);
- human factors include settlement and infrastructure development and all socio-economic activities;
- the interaction of natural and human factors describes the resource provision of the environment to humans on the one hand and the environmental impacts of socio-economic activities on the other hand.

¹ Fürst, D. and Scholles, F. (2001): Handbuch Theorien und Methoden der Raum- und Umweltplanung. Dortmund. Dortmunder Vertrieb für Bau- und Planungsliteratur.

This very complex of the interrelation of natural and human factors make suggest to think about another dimension of environmental (and landscape) related protection objectives that deal with the producers and causers of environmental impacts and have another direction: the mitigation of negative impacts by human activities, or more precisely, the definition of an accepted level of negative impacts. Therefore, the subject of the objective is not the environmental good, e.g. the landscape and the concrete state it should get in a certain period of time, but the human action that causes negative impacts on the environmental good(s).

Summing up, landscape quality objectives comprise a multitude of aspects including:

- the physical dimension of landscapes, e.g. nature based and human made landscape elements;
- the different dimensions of the future state of landscapes including the functional relations between environmental goods and human factors;
- the future state and/or intensity of human interventions into landscape.

When we take the different spatial dimensions from the local and regional level to the national and Central European level into account it becomes evident that not all aspects of landscape quality objectives can be covered on the spatial levels in the same way. It seems that landscape quality objectives are easier to determine on the local and regional levels, as they are connected to certain, specific landscape elements and their values to the local/regional population, or depending on and addressing (region-specific) human activities. Yet, there may be some landscape quality objectives that are applicable on the whole Central European level.

This report of action 3.1.5 covers activities within the “Vital Landscapes” project that establish a common understanding of “landscape quality objectives” and the directions landscape development should move forward. The next sections cover the method of the survey, the results and brief conclusions.

2. Method

The task of this core-output of the “Vital Landscapes” project, the definition of landscape quality objectives for Central Europe, is based on a bottom-up approach. All partners agreed to use the “criteria for a vital landscape” (Neugebauer et al. 2011²) to guide the development of the set of Central European landscape quality objectives. Furthermore, all partners agreed that the set of criteria should comprise landscape quality objectives that are applicable in different regional contexts. In order to structure the objectives the Austrian partner suggested distinguishing objectives between urban areas, suburban areas, rural small towns and rural areas, where applicable. These spatial archetypes can be found throughout Europe.

In order to support the partners in identifying landscape quality objectives the Austrian partner provided a table that links the “Vital landscapes criteria” to the spatial archetypes, and to driving factors for landscape development throughout Central Europe. The driving factors were identified in a workshop in Vienna on December 15th-16th, 2011, and comprise frameworks/chances/problems of landscape development as follows:

² Neugebauer, G., Stöglehner, G., Freyer, J., Kolbmüller, B. (2011): Vital Landscapes – Evaluation report of existing practice. European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), Europäische Union.

Environment and Nature:

- A1: natural capital/heritage
 - threat of pollution from abandoned industrial estates
 - loss of biodiversity
 - loss of traditional cultural landscape elements
- A2: ecological carrying capacity
 - overuse of natural resources (water, space, wood)
- A3: landscape preservation
 - programmes often too conservation-oriented
 - loss of traditional cultural landscape elements
 - conflicts of nature protections and agricultural development
- A4: landscape development
 - lack of monetization of nature resources
 - urbanization instead of rural development
 - sprawl
 - suburbanization
- A6: renewable energy sources
 - new land-use demands of energy production
 - innovative energy “forms” transfer the landscape (e.g. windmills; monoculture fields)
- A7: climate change adaptation and/or mitigation
 - sectorised administrative / government structures cannot solve holistic problems
 - collision with agricultural politics
 - externalization of sources
 - too much energy introduced (fuels, fertilisers etc.)
 - lack of locally/regionally differentiated programmes

Social and cultural issues:

- B1: quality of life
 - level of public (social) services are partly insufficient
 - health care, elderly care, child care underdeveloped or endangered, especially in shrinking areas
 - lack of public transport in rural areas
- B2: social capital
 - social segregation between rich and poor
 - loss of local social cohesion
 - missing motivation / self-consciousness to create own business
- B3: cultural capital/heritage
 - loosing traditional skills and crafts
- B4: demographic change
 - changes in types of households/families
 - low population densities
 - just a few opportunities for old people to spend their free time usefully
 - migration of young people
 - demographic change

- gentrification of population
 - intolerance to immigration/newcomers/integration of newcomers
- B5: consciousness / awareness of landscape
 - lack of awareness
 - too poor/too rich - don't care a lot for the environment
- B6: local / regional identity
 - lack of identity / identification with environment & landscape
 - loss of local/regional identity
 - lack of connection of people to their places
 - emotional (de)attachment to landscapes and property
 - globalisation of local cultures

Economic Issues

- C1: economic capital
 - perceiving sustainable use as non-economic
 - lack of business ambition
- C2: multifunctional agriculture
 - declining agricultural use leads to forestation
 - nature protections block agricultural development
 - low profitability of certain agricultural production / products
 - overgrowing of pastures by not using the landscape
- C3: regional resources
 - missing local markets and distribution
 - economy based on local resources
- C4: regional labour market
 - missing working places
- C5: regional economic cycles / regional income generation
 - lack of marketing of local economy
 - missing local markets and distribution
 - local partnerships are missing
 - lack of customers who would pay for added value
 - globalised food chain
 - products without added value
 - (un)joint production
- general
 - understanding, getting over regulations and bureaucracy

The partners were asked to fill in the table for each country using the results from action 3.1.2 (evaluation of previous projects and activities), action 3.1.3 (screening of national/regional politics and development plans), as well as results from the state of the regional pilot studies, where applicable. Additional screening of country-specific plans and programmes related to landscape development was carried out if the partners decided that this was necessary to fill in the tables. Objectives that are addressed to development as well as protection of landscapes are included in the survey. The correctness and quality of the country-specific tables is in the sole responsibility of the respective partners.

Finally, the Austrian partner compiled the results to one set of Central European landscape quality objectives. For detailed information which country provided which objectives please refer to the tables of objectives in the Annex to this report.

3. Results

According to the set of “Vital Landscape criteria” (Neugebauer et al. 2011³) the section is structured in environmental, social and cultural as well as economic Central European landscape quality objectives and principles for their implementation. The objectives and principles are not prioritized but show a non-conclusive list of aims that should be strived for in urban, suburban and rural areas as well as small towns. These objectives can serve as a starting point for the definition of landscape quality objectives in (participatory) local and regional planning processes.

2.1. Environmental landscape quality objectives and principles

- A1: natural capital/heritage
 - protect the environment, ecologically valuable landscapes and open spaces from negative impacts
 - conserve or regenerate a balanced natural environment (sustainable conservation and regeneration of nature, sound management of nature and landscape, protection of nature and landscape, soil, water balance, climate; protection against noise, odour, radiation and vibrations; protection against nature hazards)
 - protect, manage and/or develop diverse and resilient healthy ecosystems in natural and cultural landscapes with self-repairing capacity for human impact and disasters
 - protect and cross-link valuable open space elements and biotopes and consider Natura-2000-areas in spatial development strategies
 - keep and support varied landscape pattern and heterogeneous land mosaics
 - promote sustainable and ecological land use (protect the basis for all ecosystems (soil, air, water, fauna and flora), conserve their functionality, protect and manage natural resources, protect the character and diversity of nature and landscape, preserve the diversity of species)
 - provide for 5% nature protected areas and 15-20% extensively used areas in each region
 - provide sufficient open space and cityscape/townscape/landscape elements as habitats for a diverse fauna and flora
 - embed urban green elements in regional open space systems
 - guarantee green zones and protected areas within the city borders (city)
 - develop regional open space networks for ecological balance (incl. urban areas) and recreation (interlinkages between spatial archetypes)
 - guarantee free accessibility to forests, mountains, water bodies and other landscape amenities and provide development with low impacts (hiking trails, promenades, bathing places etc.)
 - direct spatial planning measures with respect to natural resources

³ Neugebauer, G., Stöglehner, G., Freyer, J., Kolbmüller, B. (2011): Vital Landscapes – Evaluation report of existing practice. European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), Europäische Union.

- A2: ecological carrying capacity
 - adapt human activities (e.g. settlement and infrastructure development, agriculture, forestry) to ecological carrying capacity limits
 - promote natural resource saving human systems (e.g. water supply, energy supply, raw material supply etc.)
 - conserve or improve settlement structures in accordance with population density and ecological and economical carrying capacity
 - reduce the ecological footprint to fit into regional ecological hinterlands (city, suburban, small town)
 - reduce the ecological footprint to accommodate environmental pressures from cities, suburban areas and small towns (rural)
- A3: landscape preservation
 - protect landscape characteristics (landscape elements, species, habitats/biotopes contributing to landscape characteristics)
 - preserve networks of areas with high protection requirements
 - define minimum requirements for extent, configuration and cross-linking of biotops, biodiversity and consider the needs of endangered species / biotopes
 - preserve the historic core of cities, major monuments, churches, buildings, historical technical facilities, (historic) parks, outstanding landscape elements and scenery
 - define green zones separating settlements and settlement boundaries to protect regional settlement structures and typical landscape elements
 - manage changing landscape characters and landscape dynamics
 - allow for traditional agricultural use of nature protected areas (restricted and controlled)
 - revitalise old devastated cityscapes/landscapes and reintegrate them into the recent functional structure of the area
 - control the expansion of towns and cities (city)
 - maintain ensembles of cultural-historical value and allow certain adaptations to accommodate 21st century life styles (city, suburban, small town, rural villages)
 - avoid negative impacts on landscape, in particular the development or enlargement of building land splitters (sprawl)
- A4: landscape development
 - develop landscape characteristics
 - create networks of areas with high protection requirements, define minimum requirements for extent, configuration and cross-linking of biotops, biodiversity
 - arrange functional interlinkages of open spaces (avoid open space dissections)
 - elaborate local products made from nature sources
 - restrict land use
 - diversified development of urban fabric and green urban areas with respect of important characters and scenery
 - regulate urban sprawl (city, suburban, small town)
 - support biofarming which is more sustainable and supports original landscape structure (small town)
 - enhance characteristic landscape elements (suburban)
 - create attractive settlement image (suburban)

- develop and establish tourist attractions (small town)
 - allow nature to do its job wherever possible (rural)
 - enhance multifunctionality of landscapes (rural)
 - reuse abandoned agricultural buildings (rural)
 - create recreational opportunities in rural areas (rural)
 - establish looking out towers, study trails, exhibitions related to environmental values (rural)
 - establish multifunctional high quality community places fitting everyday life
 - green up buildings, settlement edges and entrances, open spaces to enhance quality of life and adapt to climate change (facades, roofs)
- A5: regional resource cycles
 - protect the environment from disadvantageous impacts
 - conserve or regenerate a balanced natural environment (close cycles in agricultural production)
 - set up functioning recycle circles
 - use natural landscape potential and support natural *self-sufficiency by using local products*
 - introduce/improve recycling system of all kinds of wastes
 - support urban water self sufficiency- rising use of rain water, recycled water, etc. wherever possible (city, suburban, small town)
 - prefer local products (suburban, small town, rural)
 - develop local products of high added value (small town, rural)
- A6: renewable energy sources
 - direct spatial planning measures to economic energy use, in particular of non-renewable energy sources
 - support small / local power producing appliances based on renewable energy resources
 - strengthen natural, historic, aesthetic landscape values during planning processes
 - support landscape compatible power producing appliances (financial)
 - install small solar systems on buildings and operate small solar power plants (use solar potential of site, use non fertile soils and damaged surfaces), support other RES in regions, collection and recycling of materials
 - promote energy saving systems
 - minimise consumption of all kinds of energy and natural sources, unplugging from the idea of permanent growth (city, suburban, small town)
 - manage the urban ecosystem in resource-saving ways (city, suburban, small town)
- A7: climate change adaptation and/or mitigation
 - provide research for climate adapted flora
 - integrate climate adapted flora into landscape planning
 - create superregional cooperation
 - support urban water self sufficiency- rising use of rain water, recycled water, etc. wherever possible (city, suburban, small town)

- support new urban green areas to mitigate the negative impact of the rise of temperature in urban areas (city, suburban, small town)
- rise the NATURAL retention capacity of the landscape wherever possible (rural)
- support all kinds of sustainable and low energy management practises in water and forest management and in agriculture (rural)
- allow nature “do its job” wherever possible (rural)
- preserve compact city structures (city)
- preserve and develop green space system of cities including the dense city neighbourhoods (city)
- hinder the uncontrolled growth of settlement structure (suburban)
- enhance local bicycle traffic (suburban, small town)
- maintain and expend green space systems (small town)
- enhance water retention (rural)
- preserve and restore large wetlands (rural)

2.2. Social and cultural landscape quality objectives and principles

- B1: quality of life
 - recognise non-material values as an important aspect of quality of life
 - enhance cooperation between settlements / urban-rural partnerships in order to share tasks and services (small town, rural)
 - develop and maintain appropriate urban green structures (city, suburban, small town)
 - improve and/or maintain appropriate levels of services in line with population development (e.g. elderly and children care, education, health care, daily supply, etc.)
 - provide better functioning and effective public transportation
 - utilise civil society engagement in social networks for caring about each other (e.g. civil initiatives for taking kids and elderly into town)
 - improve accessibility
- B2: social capital
 - preserve and improve spatial conditions for socially equitable living conditions
 - provide for equal opportunities regardless of gender, ethnic background, religion or conviction, age, disablement or sexual preference
 - foster a social mix of population in city districts (not to be forced in areas where population is not ready => education and advertising advantages) (city, suburban)
 - support different common public activities (feasts, jubilees of famous local people, historical events, sport events, etc.)
 - develop community places
 - harmonizing the needs of newcomers and natives
 - harmonizing the needs of locals and tourists (tourism areas)
 - develop social networks as a incentives for staying in shrinking areas
 - guarantee high-quality assistance and care all over the country
- B3: cultural capital/heritage
 - protect cultural landscape including agriculture and forestry shaping the appearance of the landscape and historical townscapes (changes only in consideration of the original

- characteristics, constructional-physical quality of historical cultural landscapes, basis for cultural and regional identity)
 - preserve and design city- and townscapes (including town/village development) and preserve typical overall appearance of the locality (inevitable impacts have to be compensated by landscape management measures)
 - preserve cultural heritage of the region (small town, rural)
 - supporting traditional skills and crafts and transfer old traditions (dialects, music, events etc.), skills and crafts into future
 - promote programmes that can balance (local) tradition with innovation
 - change rural areas into spaces of learning and discovery: thematic routes, study trails, visitor centres (rural)
- B4: demographic change
 - adopt infrastructure supply to population development including special needs of certain population groups
 - formulate local and regional spatial development strategies taking the actual population development (growth, decline, stagnation) into account
 - consider demographic change in landscape management strategies
 - encourage/support young people to stay and live in rural settlements (rural)
 - support housing adaptable to changing needs of the aging population
- B5: consciousness / awareness of landscape
 - raise awareness for day-to-day actions (climate alliance, energy saving, changeover to renewable energy sources, “Natur im Garten” – near to nature shaping of the own living environment)
 - guarantee public participation in landscape issues
 - create a common awareness for regional products
 - make landscapes preservation part of our culture (not occasionally activities)
 - raise awareness of urban inhabitants for landscape (e.g. programmes on patronage of specific part of landscape (or landscape elements) (city, suburban, small town)
 - provide local activities for sustainable environment (suburban, small town, rural)
 - promote perception of landscape as a value per se, not only resource to be utilised
- B6: local / regional identity
 - support different common public activities (feasts, jubilees of famous local people, historical events, sport events, etc.)
 - show how environment and landscapes evolve with inhabitants
 - promote citizenship, e.g. individual responsibility for a place, locality or a region
 - offer activities to support raising of local identity in new suburban residential areas (sport, for families, elderly etc.) (suburban, small town, rural)
 - preserve and promote characteristic landscape and cultural elements as a basis of local identity (suburban)
 - change rural areas into spaces of learning and discovery: establish thematic routes, study trails, visitor centres (small town, rural)

- integrate locals into planning / decision processes, share responsibilities for plan implementation and create transparent structures

2.3. Economic landscape quality objectives and principles

- C1: economic capital
 - preserve or improve spatial conditions for a functioning economy (including the provision of raw materials)
 - establish and preserve open space for recreation and tourism
 - support sustainable land use of economic activities
 - provide good practice for business
 - improve accessibility (small town, rural)
 - encourage people and simplify conditions to create own business
 - support small and social responsible businesses (corporate social responsibility)
 - support networks of business owners and people interested in starting new businesses based on regional landscape resources
- C2: multifunctional agriculture
 - preserve or improve spatial conditions for a functioning agriculture and forestry
 - develop flexible nature preservation schemes to balance nature protection and agricultural development
 - link agriculture (products) with urban consumers - local markets (city, small town)
 - link agriculture (products) with urban consumers – practicing suburban agriculture, including special leisure time activities – e.g. horse riding, etc. (suburban)
 - establish market places for local farmers and entrepreneurs (small town)
 - encourage farmers to start additional activities (rural)
 - support organic farming as well as diverse agricultural production (e.g. orchards, greenhouses etc.)
- C3: regional resources
 - minimize land-use demand of settlement and infrastructure development in order to protect and use regional natural resources
 - show people the value of local products and positive effects of investment in local markets (raising work place and local economy)
 - promote local products and create markets for the selling and exchange of regional products (city, suburban, small towns)
 - improve the economic basis, environment and service infrastructure of small towns
 - maintain a polycentric network of small cities in rural areas as a basis for local economy
- C4: regional labour market
 - provide for the knowledge base to use regional resources
 - support regional firms using regional resources
 - support rural areas in creating jobs in non agricultural sectors

- C5: regional economic cycles / regional income generation
 - create local networks for better use of local resources
 - create rural-urban partnerships
 - promote co-operation between towns and countryside aiming at strengthening functional regions (small town)
 - increase awareness of better quality of products with added value (hand/home made)
 - produce local products of high added value (rural)
 - link agriculture (products) with urban consumers - local markets (city)
 - link agriculture (products) with urban consumers – practicing suburban agriculture, including special leisure time activities – e.g. horse riding, etc. (suburban, small town)
 - establish local/regional processing of agricultural production in order to increase regional income (rural)

4. Conclusions

The set of landscape quality objectives derived from this survey mainly addresses the protection of environmental landscapes and the direction of development of human activities in order to improve quality of life and reduce negative impacts on landscapes. Specific landscape quality objectives, aiming at the future state of certain landscapes or landscape elements according to the definition above can hardly be generated on the larger spatial scales than local or regional.

Therefore, it is important to generate such objectives on the local and regional level with active public involvement, as laid out in the ELC. This involvement, and the generation of landscape quality objectives cannot be separated from the landscape identification and assessment and has to be carried out in participatory and collaborative processes between the public, local and regional authorities and landscape planners. For guidance, how such participatory processes can be organized, please refer to the report “Landscape quality guidance”.

5. Annex

Tables of landscape quality objectives provided by each partner as indicated on the individual pages.

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