

VITAL LANDSCAPES

2CE164P3

Evaluation report of existing practice

Workpackage 3, Action 3.1.2

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1. Introduction

1.1. Evaluation background

The Project Vital Landscapes

Theoretical and practical approaches of sustainable regional and landscape development get more attention since the 1980s, especially in Germany and Austria. Since the formulation of the European Landscape Convention in 2000, landscape became an important topic in all CE countries. The adoption of the Territorial Agenda of the EU in 2007 finally underlined the urgent need to link landscape and nature protection with sustainable socio-economic development.

International contacts between the partner structure of Vital Landscapes raised the awareness of common CE landscape values and the ongoing damages by insensitive development. Furthermore, the partners realized that all countries are faced with similar problems in this field (e.g. the gap between nature protection and economic development) and thus decided to extend the mutual co-operation towards a common EU project, the project VITAL LANDSCAPES.

VITAL LANDSCAPES contributes to the goal of strengthening territorial cohesion in Central Europe (CE) in several ways:

- First of all, the project is linking key actors in the field of regional development and landscape protection by the joint development and implementation of innovative methods of integrative landscape management.
- The three years of close co-operation are accompanied by different activities of exchanging experience and know-how. This exchange as well as the joint development of tools will contribute to close the gap in regional development and landscape protection in the old and new member states.
- The project enables the perception of CE cultural landscapes as a common value, common heritage, and part of our common history. This trans-national dimension on the other hand will facilitate the development of respective measures and tools on national and regional level in the partner regions.

The project will promote the cohesion and integration of CE mainly by promoting cultural landscapes as a common CE heritage and a common value and as an important factor for the future development of the CE regions. Furthermore, the collaboration within the project and the exchange of knowledge will help to maintain and develop typical landscapes in CE. In this regard, the joint development of methods of sustainable regional development (including innovative tools to visualize landscape development scenarios), linking nature preservation and economic development, will help to achieve common CE standards in integrative and participative regional und landscape management in a mid-term perspective.

Furthermore, the maintaining and valorization of cultural landscapes will contribute to enhance the competitiveness of Central Europe. The richness and extension of cultural landscapes belong to the most significant characteristics of the CE regions (e.g. compared to densely populated urban areas in Western Europe). Thus, landscapes of high quality will support the competitiveness e.g. by

- strengthening the regional economy: The linkage of nature protection, landscape valorization and regional development will support social welfare and economic prosperity.
- promoting tourism: Original landscapes of high quality and regional characteristic will become more and more attractive as recreation area of the inhabitants of urban regions.
- creating regional products: Since most goods are available globally, a new demand of regional products arises. As many regions in Western Europe show an intelligent regional branding and marketing may safeguard jobs and support sustainable growth on the regional level.

Finally, the project also contributes to a balanced development of urban, sub-urban and rural regions by the concept of sustainable development. This will help to avoid migration, to meet negative impacts of demographic change and to avoid additional costs to support deprived areas.

Workpackage 3 - Innovative Participation and Visualization Techniques

The aim of Workpackage 3 (WP3) within the project VITAL LANDSCAPES is to develop tools and procedures to visualize and moderate the creation of landscape development scenarios and to negotiate landscape development objectives in local and regional communities.

During the parent project CULTURAL LANDSCAPES (INTERREG IIIB) as well as other projects and experiences of the PPs, three closely connected main problems of sustainable landscape development had been identified:

- Regional stakeholders, decision makers, politicians and inhabitants do not realize, sometimes even do not know the values of 'their' cultural landscapes.
- Landscapes change fast and often without reflection about alternative solutions. The actors involved mostly are not willing or able to imagine the impact of interventions (e.g. new constructions) on landscape.
- There is a lack of mutual communication and understanding amongst different landscape relevant actors on all levels, e.g. between nature protection and regional (economic) development.

Against this background, WP3 focuses on the development/adaptation of innovative tools/procedures of visualization and participatory moderation of landscape development scenarios. VITAL LANDSCAPES will develop different tools to visualize landscape changes. Based on a given situation in concrete regions (actual and historical landscape images) they will demonstrate different development scenarios. The tools will be tested in pilot regions and used as a base for participatory discussion processes of regional stakeholders. In addition, the Project will use participatory procedures to discuss and agree regional development scenarios, using modern moderation techniques and involving different regional stakeholders. In this regard, the Project will use experiences from regional development processes (Agenda 21 approach) in Austria and Germany.

Aim of the evaluation

To include existing approaches and advanced knowledge, WP3 starts with an analysis of existing experiences in Action 3.1.2, of which this report is the key outcome. Action 3.1.2 contains an evaluation of 15 previous projects in landscape and regional development in the partner regions to identify factors of success and failure, to compare successful approaches and to collect good practice.

1.2. Evaluation method

The evaluation method for the case studies was developed during an expert workshop of all project partners in Vienna in July 2010 applying the Group Invention Method (GIVE) introduced by SPES. The method is documented e.g. in Stöglehner, Mitter & Jungmeier (2006, see Fig. 1)¹. As the project partners are all experts in their respective fields and represent different scientific disciplines (among others landscape planning, environmental engineering, environmental planning, spatial planning, urban planning, economics, geography, nature conservation, landscape ecology), a broad knowledge base could be used to develop evaluation criteria. The criteria developed in the expert workshop are grounded on the basic terms and concepts of the project (see chapter 1.3.) and reflect a holistic view on sustainable landscape development. Therefore, the criteria include the following thematic areas of landscape development addressing contents and procedures of the case studies under survey:

- environment and nature (7 criteria);
- social issues and culture (6 criteria);
- economic issues (5 criteria);
- participation (5 criteria);
- implementation methods (6 criteria);
- spatial criteria (4 criteria).

The criteria were transformed into an evaluation questionnaire which was filled in by the project partners for each case study and is documented in the VITAL LANDSCAPES report “Collection of Good Practice”². The case studies selected had to develop goals and measures for at least one thematic area of landscape development, had to represent different levels of decision making and strategy building from the transnational to the regional and local level and had to be implemented in different funding schemes in the respective countries. From the case study questionnaires the evaluation questions can be seen which can be answered with yes/no. Furthermore, a description of the reasons for the yes/no classification has to be provided which allows for deeper insights how the criteria were implemented in the respective case studies. It is important to note that the filling in of the questionnaires including the yes/no classifications was the sole responsibility of the national partners (see “Collection of Good Practice”²). The authors of this report did not overrule judgments made by the partners. In this way contextual understanding of the criteria used in the partner countries is preserved Central European variety of planning cultures illustrated.

The conclusions from this survey are derived in two steps that are reflected in the structure of the report: First, in the case study analysis (chapter 2) the case studies are compared in a matrix making the quantitative consideration of the criteria in the case studies visible. The presence or absence of criteria can be interpreted as factors for success or failure to reach holistic sustainable landscape development according to the definition of a “vital landscape” within this project. From this analysis it can be derived for which criteria an application is state of the art practice in landscape related development projects/processes in Central Europe and to which topics further awareness has to be directed in order to reach holistic sustainable landscape development.

¹ Stöglehner G., Mitter H., Jungmeier P. (2006): Adult Education as a Key Factor of Sustainable Rural Development. In: Subai C., Ferrer-Balas D., Mulder K.F., Moszkowicz P. (Eds.), Engineering Education in Sustainable Development, 4.-6.10.2006, Lyon; ISBN: 978-2-905015-63-1

² Vital Landscapes (2011): Collection of good practice. Magdeburg, Weimar.

The second step of the evaluation (chapter 3) goes deeper and looks into the reasons why certain criteria are applied or what is needed to bring them into the projects/processes. Again, this evaluation step is carried out in the interdisciplinary and transnational VITAL LANDSCAPES expert group using another GIVE method. From this evaluation step arise agreed and prioritized factors of success and failure for the implementation of holistic projects/processes aiming for “vital landscapes” in the thematic areas listed above.

Fig. 2: Group InVENTion Method (GIVE®) by SPES (source: Stoeglehner, Mitter & Jungmeier 2006)

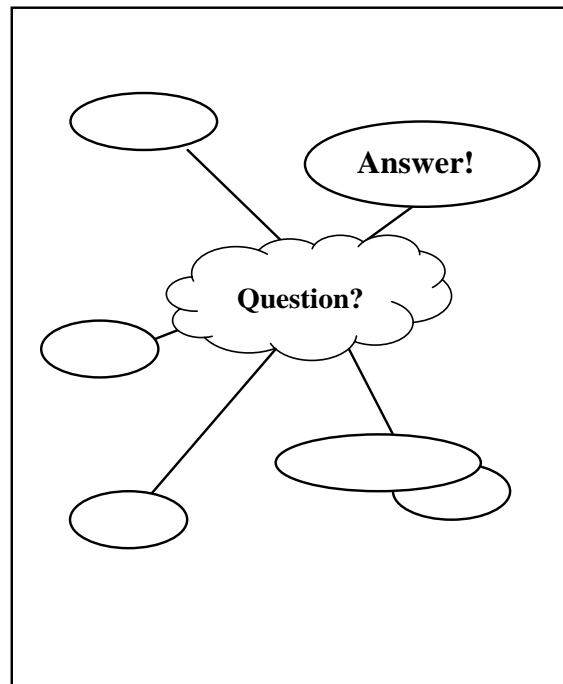
“The GIVE method is a tool to collect ideas also in big groups in a very efficient way. The method can be applied in groups of few people up to more than 100 persons. Furthermore, the method is democratic as many people are not willing to speak in big groups, but give written contributions. For the preparation you need a certain amount of questions depending on the size of the group. A simple rule is to divide the number of persons by 5 and have at least 5 to 7 questions. Each question is put on a flip chart sheet, the sheets have to be attached to the walls and need to be freely accessible. Every participant shall get a pencil to write down his or her ideas. After these preparations the work can be done in four steps:

First step – GIVE personal answers:

- Everybody gives his/her personal answers to different questions, written on a flip-chart.
- Make a circle around your answer and connect the circle with a line to the question.
- Everybody goes around the room to the different flip-charts and gives as many answers he wants.
- The result should look like a “mind-map”.

Second step – GIVE your personal priorities:

Everybody has the possibility to give three points for every flip-chart (question) to show his own priorities. He/She can give three points for one answer, because this was the most important answer for him/her. Or he/she can give one point to three different answers on the flip-chart. The maximum is three points per person and per flip-chart. The sum of the points from each answer gives you a good priority list.



Third step – Discuss the three most important answers/points:

- This can be done in group work, this time we made a panel discussion because of the small group.

Fourth step – Presentation of the group-work”

1.3. Basic terms and concepts

Vital landscape

Vital landscapes as topic of the project comprise a holistic view according to the definition of the ELC: “Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.” Therefore, the following issues are addressed in VITAL LANDSCAPES:

- rural landscapes, urban landscapes, nature reserves, human abandoned land
- cultural landscapes, cultivated and transformed over centuries
- society / societies living in and shaping the landscapes
- networks of actors / actor groups who influence landscapes
- different perceptions and values e.g. by different stakeholder groups, scientists etc.
- sustainable regional development

Landscape development scenarios

Landscape (like nature in general) is no static subject. Moreover, nearly all landscapes in Central Europe are the result of human activities (cultural landscapes). Thus, development/change has always been (and will be in future) an essential characteristic of landscapes. However, the actual losses and damages of CE cultural landscapes by insensitive, fast and irreversible developments have raised the question, which landscapes do we want, and who decides about preservation, change and development of landscapes?

Although being meanwhile a serious European topic (amongst others covered by the European Landscape Convention), there are no general answers - these questions have to be discussed and agreed locally. Therefore, designing landscape development scenarios on local and regional level is an essential precondition. Suitable/innovative visualization and moderation techniques are important tools to support processes to achieve these landscape development scenarios.

VITAL LANDSCAPES intends to contribute to the sensitive and sustainable development of CE landscapes by designing and implementing suitable landscape development scenarios, based on / supported by professional regional management. In addition and different to existing practices, these scenarios mainly focus on **integrative** and **participatory** approaches.

a) **integrative:**

- integration of economic, ecological, social, environmental, cultural factors/aspects;
- involvement of actors and decision makers from different political sectors (nature and heritage protection, economy, agriculture, ...)
- cross-sectoral communication (horizontal and vertical) of problems, activities, aims...
- visualization and communication of landscape values (and damages)

b) **participatory:**

- active involvement of different stakeholders, equal involvement of the local population („local experts“, “action research”);

- enable and motivate local people to organize their own regional development (self-organization principle)
- support regional networks of stakeholders and local people, linking of key actors (e.g. by professional regional management)
- sharing of landscape perception, knowledge and special approaches/backgrounds of scientists, politicians and local people

Landscape quality objectives

Landscape development scenarios show potential paths of landscape change and are an important precondition on the way to (jointly) define landscape quality objectives that answer the following questions: Which landscape do we want to have in future? What are the core elements of our future natural, cultural and social environment? What are indicators of sustainability/sustainable development? Landscape quality objectives have to be defined in a cross-sectoral and participatory process. Insofar, quality objectives may/will differ from region to region. However, VITAL LANDSCAPES mainly stresses and supports the following aspects in order to achieve “vital landscapes”:

- satisfied people (living in the landscape)
- high diversity (of nature, landscape, culture, tradition, economic approaches, living conditions, development scenarios, different societies living there...)
- functioning infrastructure (technical, social, cultural...), above all in regions concerned by the demographic change
- regional economy (e.g. in energy and food supply, regional economic cycles, social networks...)
- support of sustainability (responsible use of the environment, small CO₂ emissions, low pollution of soil, water and air...)
- preservation of historic cultural landscapes and landscape elements (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
- improvement of landscape quality, reduction of risks and damage (avoiding fragmentation/disappearance of landscape)
- capitalising of regional resources (creating of regional products/branding, cultural tourism, regional knowledge)
- bottom-up and long-term approaches.

Local / regional knowledge management and communication

The knowledge (academic, legends, emotions, etc.) about landscapes determines people’s awareness to preserve, manage and develop “their” landscapes. Passing knowledge between different stakeholder groups and generations is an important feature for a long-term sustainable development of natural, aesthetic, economic, social and cultural dimensions of landscapes. VITAL LANDSCAPES addresses the following aspects:

- cross-sectoral communication, equal involvement of local people/stakeholders
- identity as aim of knowledge management
- identity, image and PR of regions (internal – external)

- horizontal and vertical communication
- professional regional management
- formal and informal structures
- sharing knowledge and information within social structures and regions

2. Case study analysis

Tab. 1 reveals the results of the questionnaires filled in for each case study. For the detailed answers concerning the evaluation criteria please refer to the case study collection report.

Tab. 1: Case study comparison. Source: own processing.³

The overall picture of the case study comparison reveals interesting results in the thematic areas, as will be explained in the next subsections.

³ Explanations: PPx refers to the partner who selected and analysed the case study. References for the case studies under survey are included in the report: Vital Landscapes (2011): Collection of good practice. Magdeburg, Weimar.

Evaluation results: Y...yes; N...no.

2.1. Environment and nature

From the seven criteria attached to the thematic area environment and nature a few case studies addressed all aspects. It is interesting to see that only a few case studies deal with renewable energies and climate change adaptation and/or mitigation, whereas natural capital/heritage, landscape preservation and landscape development as well as regional resource cycles are subject to considerations in most of the case studies.

A1) Natural capital/heritage

Natural capital/heritage is a key factor of regional identity, affected indirectly, for instance through awareness raising or the identification of landscape features valued by the local population and/or scientific analysis. As direct effects, projects elaborate on the preservation and management of landscape territories and/or landscape elements. The issue of natural capital/heritage is addressed by almost all projects be it in “cultural landscapes”, built environments and areas protected under nature protection legislation. Issues of a narrow definition of “landscape planning” are mainly focused on landscape plans for protected areas.

A2) Ecological carrying capacity

Ecological carrying capacity is not an issue for all processes/projects. Some projects try to improve the ecological carrying capacity by enhancing the resilience of habitats. In the Austrian example ecological carrying capacity is addressed by reducing environmental pressures through reduction of material and energy flows, e.g. by energy saving, closure of regional material and economic cycles, avoidance of transport necessities.

A3) Landscape preservation

On the one hand, landscape preservation takes place by zoning protected areas. On the other hand, this issue is covered by designing economic activities and consumer products that allow for the maintenance of landscape elements like fruit trees, herbal meadows, pastures etc. by specialized agricultural and forest production, organic farming etc.

A4) Landscape development

Within the implementation of several projects the development of regional resource, production and consumption cycles or landscape bound touristic offers are promoted. This serves on the one hand to keep and preserve landscapes (see A3), on the other hand it is intended to influence demographic change, fight outmigration and rural brain drain by creating regional jobs and revenue.

A5) Regional resource cycles

Regional resource cycles are identified to be subject to many projects that are promoting not only regional agricultural production, but also the processing to more complex consumer products, be it wine production and marketing, using wood as regional construction material, demonstration of the connection between economic and natural commodities, as well as awareness raising by a certification system of local products and services.

A6) Renewable energy

Renewable energy sources are direct subject of few of the evaluated projects through application within the implemented measures, otherwise addressed through awareness raising and education activities. For instance, within projects biomass district heating systems are constructed, or otherwise people are educated to use renewable energies in their own houses.

A7) Climate change adaptation / mitigation

The use of renewable energy as well as climate change mitigation cannot be separated. Additionally, initiatives, that include renewable energies are also directed towards energy saving, a further important aspect of climate change mitigation. Climate change adaptation is identified with a project dealing with habitat reconstruction to achieve a better ecological stability.

2.2. Social Issues and culture

Most projects assessed touch upon issues of local and regional identity, consciousness and awareness rising, quality of life, social capital and cultural capital/heritage whereas demographic change is no subject of consideration in quite a few projects.

B1) Quality of life

Quality of life seems to be a major issue in many processes/projects. Activities like the vitalization of villages and small towns, maintaining of landscape elements for recreational use, availability of open spaces and landscape, gender issues, generation of social infrastructure, awareness rising for the role of agriculture in landscape management, addressing physical and psychological health, environmental quality, risk limitation, are identified with quality of life.

B2) Social capital

The issue of social capital seems be addressed normally in network formation which is often project-based and theme-based and brings together representatives and stakeholders of different groups of society. Some activities are also related to certain target groups like for instance the youth, handicapped people, family oriented activities or overarching societal topics like gender mainstreaming. One initiative was focused on landscape management like the training of local people to cultivate fruit trees.

B3) Cultural capital / heritage

Landscape is often seen as an important cultural capital or heritage that can be kept by societal and economic activities related to local recreation, rural tourism and is also seen as an important factor of regional identity. Activities are also including the revitalization of castles, old farm houses, mills etc. and use for cultural activities like concerts, exhibitions, meeting places for the local society etc. Also traditional agricultural products are seen as cultural heritage.

B4) Demographic change

Demographic change is normally perceived as a problem connected to the outmigration and loss of young people in rural areas on the one hand which calls for childcare, job offers for men and women in rural areas or in acceptable commuter distance as well as teleworking possibilities. On the other

hand the aging society is addressed with initiatives to create opportunities of independent life for aged people so that they can stay in their homes and get food supply and daily care if needed. Furthermore, pressures induced on landscape development from population growth and/or shrinkage is considered.

B5) Consciousness / awareness of landscapes

The marketing of agricultural products and rural tourism offers, rediscovery of regional cuisine, making landscape diversity visible is identified with raising awareness for issues of landscape development and management. Also mapping of landscape elements is used as a tool to strengthen consciousness/awareness of landscapes. This issue is often mentioned together with local/regional identity as described below.

B6) Local / regional identity

Creating local and regional identity is often defined as a central aim of the projects surveyed. For instance, local products, regional brands and typical landscape elements were identified, rediscovered or developed to build upon visible features or products that help to strengthen identity. Also cultural activities are promoted to strengthen identity, social capital and awareness of landscape, for instance the collection of local stories and legends. Furthermore, creating local/regional identity is seen as a strategy to influence demographic change, namely the outmigration of young people from rural areas.

2.3. Economic issues

Only dedicated landscape protection projects do not necessarily bear economic issues in mind, all other projects try to cover at least several aspects of economic capital, multifunctional agriculture, regional resources, regional labour markets and regional economic cycles/regional income generation.

C1) Economic capital

Most projects have the aim of increasing the economic capital but not all projects have a clear strategy how to do that. It seems that certain strategies are normally used to reach this aim which is mainly rural tourism based on the one hand like the creation of new tourism destinations. On the other hand it comprises better networking of existing economic activities, and is connected to regional resource use like renewable energy supply or other regional production, e.g. furniture from regional wood.

C2) Multifunctional agriculture

Agriculture is often seen as an important source of landscape degradation. Intensification processes take away landscape elements and biodiversity. Multifunctional agriculture as a concept is seen as a possibility to combine agricultural production with other outputs like landscape preservation or creating identity, promotion of regional traditions and other related benefits.

C3) Regional resources

The use of regional resources is a main factor of economic development following ideas of endogenous regional development. Resources to be used are normally related to activities concerning agriculture, forestry, renewable energy supply and tourism. One important feature is the creation of regional brands like wine labels, direct marketing labels of farmers' products, theme trails and many other related activities. In some cases also regional knowledge is seen as an important resource for economic activities, e.g. historical knowledge, adaptive use of resources, regional cultivation and processing techniques, e.g. for fruits.

C4) Regional labour markets

Strengthening regional labour markets by keeping existing jobs and creating new additional job opportunities is a main aim of the activities under survey. The results are not always measurable because on the one hand secondary effects are hard to identify and calculate, on the other hand because effects are sometimes low. E.g. in one example, a LEADER-strategy tried to create 10 jobs per year in the region but failed to do so. Labour market effects are often not reached in the production sectors but mainly in the enhancement of social services like childcare, care for the elderly, education and training or tourism services like landscape guides.

C5) Regional economic cycles and regional income generation

An aim of regional projects in order to enhance economic capacity and the regional labour markets is to (re-)direct the spending power of the regional population into the region. This means the closure of regional economic cycles between production and consumption in order to strengthen regional income generation.

2.4. Participation

Most projects have a strong focus on participation and fulfill most of the criteria related to this thematic area. Nature and landscape protection projects are often based on top-down decision making and strong (supranational) regulations. Even in such projects the implementation was accompanied at least by the aspect of network creation and support, all other aspects of participation were neglected in such top-down projects/processes.

D1) Creation and supporting of networks

Network creation is an important feature of almost all projects. The networks are linked to different thematic issues and normally comprise relevant target groups of stakeholders to implement certain sectoral activities. Only few processes build a regional umbrella for different sectoral networking activities so that different target groups within a region can participate in a regional network of interest.

D2) Bottom-up oriented participation methods/approaches

To elaborate a strategy with participatory approaches is quite common although the level of participation is diverse. The least intense way of participation is the distribution of questionnaires or the collection of interviews. The most intense participatory approaches involve local people in the visioning process and the drafting of the strategy and catalogue of measures. Sometimes also

educational activities are identified as a precondition of participation in landscape development activities.

D3) Bottom-up decision making

Bottom-up decision making is rare. Only few examples suggest a grass-root level decision that was confirmed by the local authority. Most approaches are participatory concerning the collection of ideas but leave the decision in the hands of local/regional authorities.

D4) Bottom-up implementation

Many projects are implemented by professional institutions and associations like nature park administrations or tourism marketing initiatives. Some projects are dependent on the implementation of the strategy by the local and regional population like in the Austrian Agenda 21 approach where farmers or other stakeholder groups are implementing measures or in the Hungarian case where local people are creating a landscape feature database.

D5) Bottom-up monitoring, evaluation and adaptation strategies

The Austrian Agenda 21 approach calls for a local/regional bottom-up management structure that monitors and evaluates the process implementation. The monitoring and evaluation can lead to the adaptation of the implementation strategies or the revision of the vision statement if necessary. In most other described projects/processes monitoring, evaluation and adaptation of strategies did not happen or was top-down organized e.g. by mayors and/or research institutions.

2.5. Implementation methods

Most projects/processes follow an integrated approach, are concerned with the sustainability of the project/process achievements, try to increase the regional/local knowledge base, but only a few conduct any impact appraisals or introduce monitoring mechanisms. Interestingly enough, not all projects are said to have concrete implementation measures.

E.1) Concrete measures

Concrete measures are not derived from all projects/processes. It seems that some projects/processes lose esteem after the visioning is completed. Some processes lead to a wide variety of concrete measures that can be linked to the definition of a “vital landscape” like the marketing and branding of local products, educational activities, preserving certain agricultural practices, building infrastructure like biomass district heating systems, social infrastructure like childcare, habitat reconstruction in nature parks, creating new tourism destinations like theme trails, a regional database of characteristic landscape elements.

E.2) Integrative approach

As integrative approach it is normally perceived to include environmental, social and economic benefit of the respective project/process. Some concepts add participation as a fourth pillar of sustainable development like the Agenda 21 approach in Austria. Integrative is also sometimes perceived as creating benefits for different social groups.

E.3) Sustainability of the project/process achievements

Sustainability of the projects/processes is often identified with long-term visions and with the strengthening of the local/regional self-organization capacity. Furthermore, sustainability of the achievements is connected to monitoring, evaluation and adaptation cycles that allow for a constant reflection and change of the visions and measures.

E.4) Regional/local knowledge base

Some projects try to secure local/regional knowledge by using modern information and communication techniques like a landscape wiki, GIS or web2. Another aspect of these activities is to identify typical landscape features to create local/regional identity. Other projects/processes address qualification needs of the local society to implement the visions and measures derived in the projects.

E.5) Environmental/social/economic/sustainability impact appraisal

An impact appraisal was carried out only in very few examples. For instance, in the Austrian Agenda 21 approach a self-evaluation of the vision and measures concerning sustainability criteria has to be carried out according to the funding rules before the vision is finally adopted.

E.6) Monitoring mechanisms

Monitoring mechanisms are implemented in many examples with different attitudes towards monitoring. Monitoring can take place as an exercise of an expert group, e.g. a research institution, as a task of an authority or as a bottom-up process. In many cases the monitoring contents are not clearly defined, sometimes they are sectoral e.g. only environmental issues in a nature park, sometimes they comprise lists of criteria that offer a holistic picture of environmental, social and economic issues during the project/process implementation.

2.6. Spatial criteria

Most projects/processes surveyed are addressing issues of land use management. All selected projects are dealing with rural areas whereas only a few include issues of urbanization or suburbanization. A bit more than half of the projects do also deal with the built environment and infrastructure.

F.1) Land use management

An intensive form of land use management is applied in the Austrian case study where cooperation between municipalities is applied by coordination of local spatial development strategies as well as the regional distribution of projects and institutions. Some projects support land use management by creating databases, e.g. in Hungary, and some projects try to change land use in order to facilitate environmental objectives. In some projects land use change sets a framework and is mainly perceived as being negative, e.g. infrastructure construction in the Green Belt.

F.2) Built environment and infrastructure

Half of the projects impact the built environment and infrastructure in different ways, on the hand by renovating existing buildings that are identified as cultural heritage sometimes accompanied by the

conversion of the use, on the other hand by adding new buildings and infrastructure for the planned and implemented activities. The projects/processes normally are not directly linked to the housing and infrastructure development of the respective region/municipality.

F.3) Urbanisation - Suburbanisation

Issues of urbanization or suburbanization are only addressed in a few selected projects, for instance as creating limits for urbanization or suburbanization processes by protected areas in the Slovak example. In some projects/processes urbanization or suburbanization are perceived as a threat.

F.4) Rural development

Most projects/processes assessed are identified as addressed to rural development, on the one hand they aim at the creation of databases for rural development processes, on the other hand they are creating visions and measures for rural development.

3. Evaluation results

The evaluation results include factors for success or failure for processes/projects creating “vital landscapes”. The factors identified in the international project partner workshop in Bratislava using the GIVE-method shall be interpreted as follows: the presence of this factor in a process can be linked to a successful project whereas the absence of this factor indicates failure.

Environment and nature

Considering environment and nature starts at the level of values first. (Historic) cultural landscapes shall be valued by local people, stakeholders and decision makers, which can for instance be achieved by identifying characteristic landscape features and their impact on the landscape scenery as well as the identity these landscape features create. Attributing value to landscapes shall create “ownership” of the population in order to achieve understanding landscape protection, management and planning.

The second issue identified as an important factor for success and failure is making environment and nature an issue of development strategies as an opportunity to change the quality of life for local communities and to create economic income from the landscape. Cultural landscapes shall not only be something to be protected, e.g. with the help of certain protection programmes, but also something that offers economic use. Certain techniques shall be promoted and supported that can be coordinated with protection and management of landscape elements and biodiversity.

Third, in order to achieve these success factors awareness is necessary about factors that shape landscapes. This calls for educational programmes as well as the possibility for environmental actors to participate in the implementation of regional projects/processes.

Consideration of social issues and culture

The strengthening of local identity is a main feature of successful development projects/processes. One possibility to work on identity is the (re-)discovering of cultural-historical features of the region to support regional identity. Another factor that creates identity and ownership of project/processes is the support of democratic engagement and participation of civil society. In this way civil society

can be motivated to take part in the development of visions and measures and in their implementation. Work on social issues and culture opens new perspectives of development, e.g. in abandoned areas.

Handling economic issues

As already pointed out, landscapes shall be managed by certain uses. This calls for initiating new economic activities based on own regional resources, which can be tourism, agricultural products or processing of primary products, energy production, new (social) services. The use of regional resources shall also strengthen and close regional economic cycles and shall help to keep spending capacity in the region. New economic activities shall also be based on existing skills of local people or skills that can be developed within the local community e.g. by life-long-learning programmes.

Public participation

Success factors in the field of public participation address the level of involvement of the general public including young people, local/regional actors organised in civil society, local/regional stakeholders as well as decision makers in a project/process. All groups mentioned have to take part in the process in order to create ownership of the results so that implementation can be supported. The civil society of the region shall be strengthened by the joint elaboration of future perspectives of regional development between the different groups throughout the process starting with the formulation of the project goals by the local people and stakeholders. This also means that decision makers have to be open for new proposals and may also be prepared to share power with the people in intense bottom-up approaches e.g. by deciding priorities and activities by regional networks. Finally, each successful project/process needs one or a few “Burning soul(s)” – actors who initiate and sustain the process, take responsibility and motivate others to take part.

Implementation methods

Implementation methods of projects/processes as well as their outcomes can have success (or failure) factors on two levels: the frameworks for the process and the process operation. On the level of frameworks guidelines and/or funding schemes are helpful to guarantee a certain quality of the project/process operation by setting standards for participation, process management, thematic areas to be included in the project/process. On the level of the single project/process following criteria for success and failure were identified:

- an integrated approach to fulfil environmental, social and/or economic goals and public participation;
- safeguarding a well organized teamwork;
- building and maintaining a long-term strategic organized network;
- sensitizing local people and regional stakeholders to the values of historic cultural landscapes;
- organizing regional PR;
- reaching local people, regional stakeholders and decision makers.

Spatial criteria

Taking spatial criteria into account, first of all the design and implementation of projects/processes shall not following administrative borders but “human” ones. This can be interpreted in a territorial

as well as a cross-sectoral dimension. Spatial data should be used to identify functional relationships. Furthermore, shrinking processes and demographic change shall be clearly addressed. In case of growing population also the question shall be raised where the people come from and if e.g. immigration in one region causes imbalances in another region. Furthermore, inner revitalisation, e.g. using abandoned houses for touristic use, shall be preferred to the construction of newly built environments and infrastructure. Especially suburbanisation and (urban) sprawl as overall societal trends throughout Central Europe are perceived as framework for development processes of “vital landscapes” threatening natural and cultural landscapes leading to negative effects on environment and nature, but also on social issues and economic development based on primary production.

4. Conclusions

Getting a holistic picture on a “vital landscape” is a complex matter. Summing up the main features of a “vital landscape” following conclusive statement can be derived from this analysis and evaluation: Not only aspects of contents of a vision and development strategy of a vital landscape are relevant, but especially procedural aspects of landscape development make a landscape “vital” and vivid. Social processes related to participation, identity, value of landscape features, ownership of development strategies are as important success factors than the sound science-based elaboration of landscape plans, management plans for (protected) areas, natural and cultural heritage mapping or many other methods and aspects of the knowledge base that may be associated with landscape protection, management and planning.

Even in good practice as selected by the respective national partners and represented in this case study comparison, not all relevant issues are covered in the same depth so that a Central European standard for processes of “vital landscapes” cannot be identified within the selected cases. The variety and state of the projects/processes is high, also concerning the implementation of factors of success/failure. Yet, the survey has shown that the set of criteria developed and applied on the case studies within this action of the VITAL LANDSCAPES project proofed to be useful not only to carry out such evaluation tasks, but also to be applied as a checklist of issues to be elaborated on in any development project/process that shall develop scenarios and visions for a “vital landscape”.