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Is there a future for cultural landscapes?

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Abstract

Cultural landscapes, in a nomenclatural sense, are an IUCN Protected Area category, a special sub-set of sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, and a concept in landscape ecology. Various authors have recently indicated the essentially cultural nature of all landscapes, even using the term biocultural landscape. It is perhaps a truism that all landscapes are cultural, it just being a matter of degree. We argue that cultural landscapes are in fact special and recognizable, that they do exist, and that they have a clear future as part of the multifunctional tapestry of European landscapes. The major factor in the identification and maintenance of cultural landscapes is the understanding of the world views that have shaped them. The key issue for the future is what policy settings are needed to ensure their survival in the face of environmental homogenization, as part of the general process of globalization.
Keywords: cultural landscape; IUCN Protected Area categories; landscape management

What kind of cultural landscapes do exist?

Pérez de Cuéllar (1995) refers specifically to cultural landscapes in the following words: *"Humanity's relation to the natural environment has so far been seen predominantly in biophysical terms; but there is now a growing recognition that societies themselves have created elaborate procedures to protect and manage their resources. These procedures are rooted in cultural values that have to be taken into account if sustainable and equitable human development is to become a reality"*.
Elsewhere he also refers to cultural landscapes as: "*non-physical remains such as place names or local traditions are also part of the cultural heritage. Particularly significant are the interactions between these and nature: the collective* **cultural landscape**. *Only the preservation of these enables us to see indigenous cultures in a historical perspective. The* **cultural landscape** *forms a historical and cultural frame for many indigenous peoples"*.

Tress et al. (2001) note *"all landscapes consist of both a natural and a cultural dimension. The perceived division between nature and culture has dominated the academic world. In the case of landscapes, this divide is counter-productive and must be overcome since all landscapes are multidimensional and multifunctional"*. So, the common message is that essentially all landscapes are cultural, subject to cultural

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influences, and a source of cultural knowledge. And as such, sustainability of ecological systems is achievable only within the context of cultural landscapes.

In the past decade cultural landscapes have come to be recognized in a number of key areas. For example, we cannot understand and manage the 'natural' environment unless we understand the human culture that shaped it. Our management itself becomes thus an expression of that culture. We must, of course, understand also the environment to comprehend how it, in turn, reshapes that culture through feedback processes. Equal emphasis should, therefore, be given to the cultural aspects of ecosystems in their management – the concept of *biocultural* landscapes (Bridgewater and Arico 2002).

Operationally, the Convention on the Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage (popularly known as the World Heritage Convention) has included cultural landscapes as sites that represent the works of man and nature in a special way (see Von Droste, Plachter and Rössler 1995). Similarly, Europarc (Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe) has recognized cultural landscapes as follows (http://www.europarc.org/international/europarc.html):

"Europe's natural heritage is unique. In global terms, this comparatively small continent has the most complex system of landscapes, reflecting the scale and intensity of development of its natural resources over the centuries. The remnants of Europe's original natural landscapes and its varied cultural landscapes hold an essential part of the continent's abundance of wildlife. It is for this reason that a system of protected areas has been established over recent decades. In Europe's national parks and large nature reserves, nature is left to develop freely, and natural evolution can continue unhindered. The natural beauty of these areas is also preserved to enrich our lives.

Regional and nature parks as well as biosphere reserves are cultural landscapes which have been shaped over hundreds of years, during times when people lived in greater harmony with nature and their environment. Areas such as these could be seen as models for the way in which Europe's rural areas should be dealt with in future."

The National Parks to which these cultural landscapes belong are also an IUCN Protected Area category. IUCN's Protected Area categories deal with cultural landscapes in several different ways.

Protected areas – IUCN management guidelines

IUCN categorizes protected areas by management objective (CNPPA/WCMC 1994) and has identified six distinct categories of protected areas as presented in Box 1.

In Table 1 the matrix shows the six categories according to a range of management objectives. Category I is subdivided into two separate sub-categories. Category V is protected or cultural landscape. Figure 1 shows the ranking of the categories against presumed human intervention in the landscape – Category V is shown to have the most degree of human intervention, and Category II is a typical National Park in the North-American sense. However, these 'labels' are less effective than categorization by management objective. For instance the Uluṟu-Kata Tjuṯa National Park in Australia is regarded as Category II, yet it is inscribed on the World Heritage List as a cultural landscape! The reason is the presence of cultural influences, particularly those of the original Aboriginal inhabitants, which have helped shape the landscape of the Uluṟu- Kata Tjuṯa region as we find it today.

I. Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area: protected area managed mainly for science or wilderness protection
II National Park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation
III. Natural Monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features
IV. Habitat/Species Management Area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention
V. Protected Landscape/Seascape (National Parks in Europe): protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape protection and recreation.
VI. Managed Resource Protected Area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems.

Box 1. IUCN categories of protected areas (CNPPA/WCMC 1994)

Table 1. IUCN Protected Area categories by management objective (after CNPPA/WCMC 1994)

Management Objective	*Ia*	*Ib*	*II*	*III*	*IV*	*V*	*VI*
Scientific research	1	3	2	2	2	2	3
Wilderness protection	2	1	2	3	3	-	2
Species/genetic diversity preservation	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
Maintenance of environmental services	2	1	1	-	1	2	1
Protection of natural/cultural features	-	-	2	1	3	1	3
Tourism & recreation	-	2	1	1	3	1	3
Education	-	-	2	2	2	2	3
Ecologically sustainable use	-	3	3	-	2	2	1
Maintenance of cultural attributes	-	-	-	-	-	1	2

Key : 1 Primary objective
2 Secondary objective
3 Potentially applicable objective
- not applicable

Another example is from the Category II National Park – Kakadu – in Australia. Here, as described in detail by Russell-Smith et al. (1997), both riverine floodplain and lowland rainforest habitats were habitats critical to the traditional economy by providing food resources at certain times through the seasonal cycle. The influence of people in shaping, or at least modifying, these habitats are critical thus to the current conservation value of the site. More detail can be found in Bridgewater, Russell-Smith and Cresswell (1998).

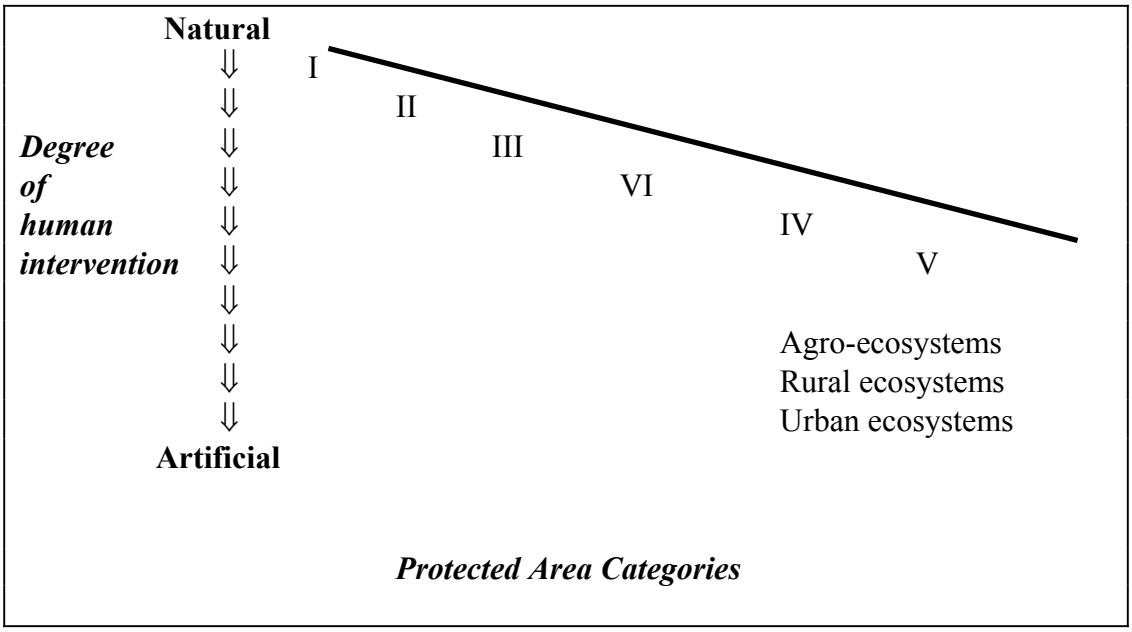

Figure 1. IUCN Protected Area categories and human-dominated ecosystems ranked against human intervention

Cultural landscapes as 'active landscape'

Tongariro National Park in New Zealand and sacred groves in Ghana, Zimbabwe (Dorm-Adzobu, Ampadu-Agyei and Veit 1991) and Mexico (Gómez-Pompa and Kaus 1990), protected by religious taboos, are areas that have been preserved thanks to cultural practices. These areas, which are genetic reservoirs, help us to understand the role biodiversity has in framing cultural landscapes. Gadgil, Hemam and Reddy (1997) note that sacred groves played a major role in the landscapes of the Greek and Roman Empires, and that they still play a role in the Indian landscape. They note that these groves are especially important in the more remote regions. They draw conclusions about the strong sustainability of such regions, compared with a large-scale stratified society. It is hardly farming in the European Community style, but over 50,000 years such impacts produce distinct and permanent change to the vegetation patterns in the landscape.

The German school of landscape ecologists (Langer 1973; Smithüsen 1963) explained the differences between *Naturlandschaften* (natural landscapes) and *Kulturlandschaften* (cultural landscapes). In particular Langer emphasized the view that cultural landscapes need to be explained not only by the natural sciences but also by the socio-cultural sciences. This is precisely because cultural landscapes are intersections of people and nature. In effect, they are also the finest distillation of what Naveh and Lieberman (1994) (following Egler 1954), call the Total Human Ecosystem. Tress et al. (2001) also note that the Total Human Ecosystem was suggested as a guiding conceptual principle for the holistic meaning of landscape, in a series of recommendations from a conference on multifunctional landscapes held in Roskilde, Denmark in 2000.

In the words of Tress and Tress (2001): *"Landscape research is a future-oriented, pro-active science, and therefore, it is necessary to take on the challenge of looking beyond the boundaries of our own disciplines, our own familiar ways of thinking, and*

discover common ground with other disciplines. It is necessary to bridge the gap between human and natural sciences in landscape research. Then we may acknowledge that we are not only part of the landscape, but that the landscape is also part of us."

In light of this we attempt to draw together the seemingly unrelated disciplines of ecology, linguistics, landscape management and knowledge management to see how, together, they can illuminate our current understanding of cultural landscapes and their management.

We have seen above some examples of how culture and landscape are inextricably entwined. We have touched on the mutual dependency between landscape and culture; landscapes must be sustained in order for culture to survive, and cultures must be maintained to assist in the management of these landscapes. But what exactly is it that culture gives to the landscape? What makes it so important for particular cultures and landscapes to be sustained together? The answer is knowledge. Culture holds knowledge about the landscape from which it is born and nourished. Every human being holds knowledge about their habitat, but the collective knowledge held by a cultural group is far greater and far deeper than that of any individual. To reiterate the words of Pérez de Cuéllar (1995): *"...societies themselves have created elaborate procedures to protect and manage their resources. These procedures are rooted in cultural values…".*

In essence then, we need to understand the role of knowledge in landscape structure and function, and thus its management. Due to its abstract nature, the concept of *knowledge* is somewhat difficult to define. Horibe (1999) refers to knowledge as a "body of information, technique and experience that coalesces around a particular subject". Wiig (1996) writes that knowledge is "the insights, understandings and practical know-how that we all possess – is the fundamental resource that allows us to function intelligently".

In the 1970s Karl Popper similarly espoused the view that knowledge is what allows humans to function intelligently and described knowledge as the fundamental difference between humans and animals (Popper 1972). Popper (1972) also proposed the three-worlds theory that divides the human existence into three parts:

- World 1 – the physical world of objects and events;
- World 2 – the cognitive world of conscious experiences; and
- World 3 – the information world of representations of Worlds 1 & 2.

Knowledge is created in World 2 through a combination of perception of World 1 and conception of World 3. The above three definitions give us a perspective of knowledge as a combination of information and personal experience in relation to a specific topic. Popper's three-worlds theory can be mapped directly onto the real world of cultural-landscape management. World 1 is the landscape or ecosystem, World 2 is the culture that shapes and is shaped by World 1, and World 3 is what? What is it that encapsulates knowledge, defines it, transfers it and communicates it? The answer is simple: language. Every language is a *knowledge repository* for the culture that uses it.

It is our view that language has a dual role to play in the management of cultural landscapes. It is both a repository for traditional (or indigenous) knowledge of the landscape and a tool for the communication of that knowledge. As such, we believe it is especially important to identify language, just one of the components of human activity, as a key indicator of the health of a cultural landscape. We suggested the term 'linguasphere' (Bridgewater and Bridgewater 1999) to define the envelope of human communications through language – that most living of human cultural

attributes. Such linkages between culture, language and land management strategies are to be found on all continents.

The linguasphere is thus a part of every cultural landscape and, as such, is an important resonant with the environment and human management of the environment. Indeed, postulated extinction rates for languages parallel those for species over the next century – and the forces for extinction are essentially the same: the processes of biotic and cultural homogenization of landscapes (Bridgewater and Arico 2002).

Integration of cultural knowledge into landscape management

Management covers everything from recovery programs for endangered species to the management of protected areas. These, and other management challenges, offer opportunity for involvement of local communities such as that suggested in the action plan for UNESCO-MAB Biosphere Reserves (Bridgewater and Cresswell 1998). Opportunities to integrate protected-area conservation programmes with those operating in the wider landscape should be sought and developed. Where neighbours have similar, joint or mutual interests in resources, opportunities should be taken to implement not only agreed management plans, but to establish assessment protocols for evaluating management effectiveness. The view of the biosphere as the 'global garden' (Bridgewater 1993) underlines this approach.

Drawing these themes into cultural landscapes, there are few, if any, parts of the biosphere that have not experienced the impact of human activity (Gómez-Pompa and Kaus 1992). Policies that effectively capture the conservation of biological diversity also capture cultural diversity (which is an important and clearly recognized component of biological diversity). So, people have helped shape the existing biodiversity, and biodiversity plays a major role in shaping cultural 'memory' – especially through the medium of the linguasphere.

Bridgewater and Arico (2002) note: *"Beside better knowledge of biodiversity, it is critical that people are empowered to act as ecological stewards for the sustainable use of natural resources. While a legal framework for conservation and use of biodiversity is needed, participation of local communities in ensuring good ecological stewardship remains a central tenet of sustainable development. Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems are pivotal to reinforcing stewardship, and guaranteeing biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. For a future with sustainable biocultural landscapes, suitable strategies based on better scientific research, management and monitoring must be clearly identified to ensure continued ecosystem – and human – health on this planet."*

So, there is a future for cultural landscapes, but only if cultural-diversity components, exemplified and codified by language, are given the same conservation emphasis as biological-diversity components. In Europe we need to understand more about the boundaries between language and culture, and how language and culture can inform the development of multifunctional and sustainable landscapes into the future. In terms of a research agenda for cultural landscapes it is thus essential to include a linguistic component – and linkages between linguistic studies and landscape management need much more emphasis.

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