Values of rural landscapes in Europe: inspiration or by-product?

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Abstract

European landscapes are facing a deep crisis. As a consequence of globalization and the economical change associated with it, traditional functions like production agriculture are becoming less important. After the self-evident but inspired landscapes of numerous generations of peasants, monks and landlords, landscape has now largely become a nameless by-product of the global economy. This paper shows that the key to developing new living landscapes lies in a participatory process of landscape development with respect for their inherent values. Today, even in traditionally small-scale farming systems like organic farming, diverse and sustainable landscapes only develop if they are consciously wanted and when landscape development is integrated into the objectives of farming. The work that is needed to achieve such landscapes we call 'landscape work'. This paper describes a phenomenological approach to identifying landscape values and finding new inspiration for landscape management. It gives examples of the application of this approach in organic farming in Germany. It is concluded that a living, sustainable landscape combines the functional effects of producing economic and social benefits with the intertwined effects of providing identity and inspiration for getting actively involved in it, in accordance with its dynamic character. Living landscapes will enhance the well being, also of the predominantly urban European population. In other words: landscape works.

Additional keywords: landscape identity, landscape work, organic farming, participation, phenomenology, social farming, sustainable landscape

Introduction

Developments in European rural landscapes

Today's landscapes in Europe are cultural landscapes (Pedroli, 2000). Natural landscapes,

which were dominated by forests as the final stage of natural succession, were certainly not uniform, as they were structured by dynamic rivers and also influenced by large grazing animals. But human intervention in the landscape made the climax stages vanish virtually everywhere in favour of earlier stages of succession (Van Elsen, 1996). In contrast to the natural landscape this cultural landscape is not stable, but depends on human intervention (Hutter *et al.*, 1999). The diversity of use led to an increase in diversity of biotopes and species (Van Elsen, 2000; Moser *et al.*, 2002) and to a differentiation of the landscape. Depending on different intensities of use and different site factors specific plant communities developed (Van Elsen, 2004). Weeds from the Near East and the Mediterranean region found a habitat on the regularly tilled arable fields. Cultural modification of the landscape remained compatible with the natural environment and enhanced qualities of nature rather than making them disappear, although historical agriculture in many cases had not been sustainable at all. Examples for this are the history of heath land (Gimingham *et al.*, 1979; Manning *et al.*, 2004), or large wind erosion problems in areas with sandy soils.

But despite these environmental problems the diversity of species and biotopes in Central Europe increased compared with the natural situation. Biologists assume that the diversity of species was maximum about 150 years ago (Frankel *et al.*, 1995). With the decrease in labour intensity in agriculture, the need to standardize product quality and the economic measures that demanded mechanization, specialization and increasing parcel size, the development of diverse landscapes gradually but steadily came to a turning point in the 1950s and 1960s. Nonetheless, the relationship between farm size and intensity of agricultural management appears not to be straightforward (Herzog *et al.*, 2006). In favourable (high-yielding) areas agriculture becomes intensive, in marginal regions agriculture is abandoned (Van Elsen & Godt, 2000). The rapid change in intensity and use, eutrophication, increasing environmental pollution, fragmentation, and isolation of habitats had a major impact on the diversity of species (Ssymank, 1997). Today many species are threatened and often wildlife cannot find the conditions to survive (Van Elsen, 1996).

Working on the landscape

With this in mind we want to understand 'landscape work' as measures that arrest or redress the tendencies described in order to bring back or maintain features and habitats for wildlife and landscape. Landscape work includes the integration of nature conservation measures into sustainable land use systems (Van Elsen & Godt, 2000). Such measures include the creation or conservation of biotopes (e.g. copses, hedges, solitary trees, wetlands), the harvesting of orchards, mowing of meadows, special grazing management with the aim of keeping the landscape open and supporting rare species, and the promotion of beneficial birds and insects, for example by installing nest boxes for birds, creating hiding places for insects or planting strips of flowering plants. But landscape work is more than just ecological restoration of the landscape. It includes the aim to build a landscape with new qualities that have not even been part of the historical situation, and with people that become aware of the values and potentials of the landscape. To design adequate measures, a participatory process of landscape

development is needed. Farmers, experts and other stakeholders should be involved in the 'landscape work' so that it can lead towards sustainable landscape development in rural areas (Röhrig *et al.*, 2003).

Today sustainable and dynamic landscapes only develop if they are consciously wanted, and when landscape work is integrated into the objectives of farming. This applies even to traditional small-scale farming systems and organic farming approaches (Van Elsen, 2001). The development of cultural landscapes can be understood and realized as a process where involved individuals participate in a bottom-up approach in order to collect and share perceptions and thus reach a common conclusion as to what the landscape consists of and what its special character is (Buijs *et al.*, 2006). By integrating different perceptions and viewpoints a solid basis for landscape work can grow (Baumgart & Van Elsen, 2007). There is no doubt about the importance of the natural environment for the mental and physical health of people (Groenewegen *et al.*, 2006), and the widespread *biophilia* (Van Den Born *et al.*, 2001) can well be used to broaden public support for the subject. In other words, landscape management measures should be defined that on the one hand meet the interests of the people who live in the landscape, and on the other hand enhance the character of the landscape and strengthen its identity.

This paper's objectives

This paper is meant as a contribution to the debate on the changing values in rural development, focusing on the European cultural landscape. The first part of the paper is based on a book chapter co-authored by the first (BP) and third (JDVM) authors (Van Mansvelt & Pedroli, 2003). The second part of this paper is based on research carried out in Germany by the second author (TVE) (Van Elsen *et al.*, 2003a, b). Combining and integrating these two elements provides new insight into how a certain methodology of describing the values of landscapes can be of inspiration for making landscape work.

Against the background of the degrading landscape values that are currently observed in Europe, this paper aims to answer the questions as to how the value of landscape and its identity can be studied and how a phenomenological approach can be used to enhance a balanced use of the landscape. Before embarking on these questions we shall first address in more detail the importance of landscape values for human well being. Then the question will be answered what landscape is and how the identity of landscape can be approached. This approach is exemplified and structured with the help of the Portofino landscape in Italy. Organic farming is explored as an example of how this approach can be implemented in practical landscape work. The question what contribution organic farming can really make to landscape values is subsequently addressed, for which examples of landscape work on organic farms in Germany are used as case studies.

Organic farming was chosen for this reconnaissance study because it is a farming system focusing on locally or farm-derived renewable resources and the management of self-regulating ecological and biological processes and interactions. External inputs, whether conventional or organic, are reduced as far as possible. This should allow for

acceptable levels of crop yields, livestock and human nutrition, protection from pests and diseases, and an appropriate benefit in return to the human and other resources employed. Organic farming in this sense is not only aiming to be a sustainable way of agriculture but also to explicitly contribute to landscape development and diversity (Verhoog *et al.*, 2003). This is currently being practised more and more in other farming systems as well (e.g. Buizer *et al.*, 2005).

Healthy landscape for healthy people

Since long, the value of landscape for people has attracted researchers. Already as early as the 19th century, Alexander Von Humboldt stressed the closest reciprocal relationship between the earth and its inhabitants: "Land affects the inhabitants and the inhabitants affect the land". Already at that same time, working the land(scape) and experiencing it were recognized and applied in their therapeutic dimensions, for example in the Canada Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital's garden (Paine, 1997), but also in various places in Europe. Interestingly, not only creating and elaborating the landscape but also experiencing / enjoying it were considered therapeutic. Eating from that same landscape, as yet another way of healing interaction, was so self-evident that it was hardly ever mentioned.

As insanity was seen as a brain disease largely brought about by psychological stress, the 'healthy' design of the architectural and landscape-environment of therapeutic centres was regarded as a crucial tool for the patients' recovery. Recent studies have shown that a view on the park significantly contributes to the recovery of hospitalized patients and that patients viewing the wall of an industrial building recovered more slowly (Larsen, 1991; Mooney & Hoover, 1996; Anon., 2004).

Active encounters with a landscape in various ways, ranging from survival trips to farming-practice weeks, forestry week-ends and many days walking-trips, are more and more seen as an important tool to help people re-connect to the real-world qualities and thus to their own humane essence. This holds especially for urban people who become increasingly disconnected from nature by the large range of 'virtualities' that characterize today's life in a city (asphalt, concrete, neon-lights, traffic, huge buildings obstructing the view of the sky, a high level of mechanical and electronic noise). Countryside weekends and holidays 'in the green' are widely appreciated by urban people as relaxing and recovering from the inevitable urban stress (Groenewegen *et al.*, 2006). Also the increasing appreciation of work-on-the-land as therapy for psychologically affected people and its social appreciation by mentally handicapped people point toward the importance of actual 'grounding' in the 'here and now of the place where you are' (Van Elsen *et al.*, 2006).

As for this effect of grounding, it makes a considerable difference whether or not the farmers consciously include the production of a varied, locally specific and characteristic ('fitting') landscape as an issue in their style of farming (Bohnet, 2002; Hendriks & Stobbelaar, 2003). Such local specifics of landscape often can much easier be accommodated by small-scale types of farming like organic farming than by large-scale industrial farming (Tress, 2000). Diverse and locally fitting agro-ecosystems are

generally much more stress-resistant than the highly specialized agro-chemical monocultures (Zechmeister & Moser, 2001; Reidsma *et al.*, 2006). There is an interesting parallel with human health. Recent studies on human health indicate that health may be much less a fixed state (absence of disease-generating compounds or organisms) and much more a fluent state: a basic capacity to overcome disturbing influences of any kind (the so-called salutogenesis effect; Lindström & Eriksson, 2006). In people as well as landscape, the whole as such – though dependent on its parts – is more than the sum of those parts. This whole in the landscape is represented by its identity. To be able to work on landscapes that – besides producing economical benefit – enhance the basic capacity in people to overcome disturbing effects of modern life, we need to address this identity.

How to approach identity in landscape?

Landscape scientists and landscape managers increasingly acknowledge that all the facts and figures of a landscape do not make the landscape that people actually perceive and experience. The landscape in which people live, work, move and spend their leisure time is an integral experience. It is a landscape with its range of forms and colours, structures and smells, its dynamics over time and its links to the observer's reminiscences and spiritual meanings (Abrahamsson, 1999; Buijs *et al.*, 2006).

The development of the concept of landscape in history starts with a relatively unconscious but fully involved awareness of the landscape as a whole, e.g. in the old times when estates were common. Since the Renaissance, a detailed analysis of a wider range of disciplines based on an outsider / onlooker position led to a renewed involvement in landscapes as a whole, now perceived as a complex system consisting of interacting subsystems. A specific single issue arising from that approach was the economical production per unit area. However, a wide range of other functions, such as tourism, nature conservation, cultural heritage, traffic, watershed management, came to compete in the landscape as an arena without a value of its own. In this context, Jones (1993, cited by Abrahamsson, 1999) argues that a landscape can have several values simultaneously, and that they need not be mutually exclusive. He differentiates between four types of amenity value: (1) intrinsic ecological value, (2) scientific and educational value, (3) aesthetic and recreational value, and (4) identity value. An example of the intrinsic ecological value is the maintenance of biodiversity. People enjoy wildlife for its own sake. Protected landscapes (scientific value) can preserve traditional forms of land use. Landscape beauty and local history, embodied in the features of a farming landscape, add aesthetic and recreational values, while the historically developed landscapes with a specific inherent character are part of our heritage and thus add identity value (Jones 1993). In fact, in many cases the identity of landscape at the general level is 'fading out' (Arnesen, 1998) in generalizing and globalizing trends, and functional history is no longer being added to the landscape.

So the landscape as such has become an issue of conscious awareness. This means that a wide range of disciplines is challenged to contribute to the landscape at a higher, more general level than the object of their particular discipline and its

sub-disciplines. Here, environmental soundness, diversity of species and ecosystems, sustainability of the management, aesthetics of the landscape are at stake as aspects of the landscape's value in its historical development (Van Mansvelt & Van Der Lubbe, 1999). This requires an explicit move from expert's analysis to transdisciplinary synthesis, as well as a change from a scientist's or engineer's objective outsider position to that of the involved participants (Tress *et al.*, 2005).

In this paper such methods of synthesis are used in the integrated study of the rural landscape. As a result, a wide series of aspects come together, ranging from those covered by the natural sciences to those covered by the social sciences and the human sciences, or, in other words, covered by the geo-bio-sphere as well as by the noosphere, i.e., the sphere of the human thought (Tress, 2000). Early in the 20th century Carl O. Sauer formulated it as follows: "The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium and the cultural landscape is the result" (Sauer, 1925). People thus produce landscape, including its identity value. Since spatial and temporal coherence contribute to landscape character, in the next paragraph a stepwise approach is introduced to identify these aspects of landscape, illustrated with a Ligurian coastal landscape.

Steps in observing a Ligurian coastal landscape

Although it may seem trivial that careful direct observation of the landscape itself is a prerequisite for identifying its value, too often this holistic first impression is left in favour of mainly analytical reductionism (Zonneveld, 2005). For the analysis of the coherence in and the character and identity of a Ligurian coastal landscape, the description of such a holistic first impression is given in Box 1. It represents the appearance of the landscape for the attentive onlooker.

Spatial coherence

Interestingly, a landscape cannot be described from a single point of view only. It becomes an image as soon as the observer has combined in his mind the impressions of many sites belonging together. The old chestnut trees are inseparable from the eroded terracettes discernible around, and from the village back in the valley. The pines in the maquis belong to the same system as the lizards on the bare rocks. These are the phenomena as they appear physically, and we have to accomplish the spatial coherence ourselves. The spatial coherence also tells us about the indicator value of plant or animal species for specific soil or habitat conditions.

Temporal coherence

Another dimension is the coherence in time. The flowers in the olive trees promise fruits next winter. From the branching of the old chestnut trees it can be deduced that they have been taken care of for hundreds of years until a few decades ago. Following the landscape during the seasons, or even during one day, enriches strongly the expe-

Box 1. Appearance of a Ligurian coastal landscape (from Van Mansvelt & Pedroli, 2003)

When you get off the train at the small station of S^{ta} Margherita Ligure on the Italian Riviera, and descend the steep stairs between the houses, you suddenly find yourself on a pebble beach along a boulevard on the Mediterranean Sea. Between the palms you notice green forested hillsides above ochre, yellow, pale orange and sienna house fronts. The Monte di Portofino is a steep outlier of the Apennines in the Ligurian Sea. Away from the sailing boats, motorinos, ice cream booths and gesticulating tourists with their cell phones, already at few minutes from the promenade you can find the quietness of walled gardens. Narrow streets lead further up. The villas with a view on the distant sea over neatly shaven lawns under manicured olive and apricot trees gradually make way for terraced olive groves. Only small tractors can alleviate the hard work of old farmers on these steep slopes. Many terracettes on these slopes have been abandoned. The path crosses the road that leads to the splendidly located restaurant further uphill, and arrives at the church of a small village built against the slope. Steeply uphill behind the church, some vegetable gardens have remained between the encroaching forest, and soon you walk between stems of old sweet chestnut trees. Even here the slope has been terraced, and you notice that wild boars have laid out their tracks across them. Further uphill the forest is less well maintained, large chestnut trees lay scattered through the hornbeam forest and everywhere are the wild boar tracks.

Resting at the crest you stand between tall trees, tree-heather and pistachio shrubs on rock soil. An age-old paved eight cobbles wide road runs along the crest. At the other side of the road, the shadow of the forest gives way to the warmth of the Mediterranean sun. Looking behind, you can still see the town down below on the wide bay beneath the faint blue-green Apennines. Towards the sun, the difference between sky, horizon and sea at the other side of the peninsula can hardly be distinguished through the dense maquis. A few minutes later along a winding path downhill you suddenly discover the breathtaking view between light Acacia woods on the shore of an azure blue sea deeply beneath. The nearly bare rocks dive straight down into the sea, with a rim of bright white foam. In a small bay there are an old building and a solid tower, closely together between holm oaks and olive groves. Descending, you pass a spring level. The olive yards on these slopes have been completely neglected, and are largely overgrown with bramble and bushes. Only close to the former monastery, some olive groves are still in production. Down there, a surprise is waiting: instead of serenity, around the age-old cloister of San Fruttuoso you only find bars and souvenir shops. The small beach is full with noisy children. Several small ferryboats bring the tourists here from Portofino and other small harbours; there is no need to make the effort of the 1.5-hour hike.

rience of the landscape. At this stage, the question arises whether the current landscape is a result of the past or whether it just presents the potential for the future. The observed phenomena are continually in transition. It requires an active thinking effort to build up a conscious image of this unsteady but nonetheless characteristic picture.

Character of a place: the message from appearance and succession

The character of a landscape can be seen as the combination of appearance aspects and features of succession, brought together in one's mind. For every landscape component this character is different, resulting in different processes, plants and animals present. An upper slope, middle slope and lower slope can be distinguished. This is reflected in plants and animals, in the presence and absence of water and in the soils. At the same time, together they are 'the slope' as a whole, which can be characterized as such. Altogether, the slopes of a mountain ridge can be characterized as a whole at a still higher level, with the slopes and slope-parts as subsystems (organs or organelles). The character is what everyone knows about a landscape, when knowing it well. The inhabitants of the region know what the difference is between the northern slopes of the Monte di Portofino and the southern ones. It can even be communicated between them, without being required to sum up its quantitative characteristics like solar radiation and plant species occurrence.

Identity of a place: *genius loci*

Why is the Portofino landscape different from the Cinque Terre landscape, a comparable landscape some 40 km further down the Riviera? In both landscapes very comparable physical phenomena can be observed, comparable processes play a role, and a comparable – though not identical – character may be attributed to the identified landscape. But still these landscapes differ completely from each other. The Monte di Portofino biography is characterized by the presence of the small harbour and the monastery, both inaccessible to road transport. However, they allowed for connections over sea, contributing strongly to their unique *genius loci* (Antrop, 2000). The Cinque Terre landscape is characterized by active agricultural villages leaning against the hill slopes that are just as inaccessible as those of Portofino.

Moreover, it is also the cultural appreciation of the landscape that determines to a large extent its identity. Whether the landscape has this influence on society, or society on the landscape, is an unsolved question (cf. Schama, 1995). At any rate, landscape identity is the combined result from both the physical appearance and the human perception. Man is associated inseparably with landscape. So to find target images for landscape rehabilitation we should look for images that are realistic and complete. With this we refer to natural physical processes as well as to the variation in these processes in time, but also explicitly to the changes society has brought about, and which in most instances are irreversible. But even if restored to the former 'ideal' situations, completely different situations would result, because of the changed boundary conditions. Landscape identity is a dynamic concept, with remnants from the past interacting with future images (Van Mansvelt & Pedroli, 2003).

Using notions

At this stage of approaching the landscape's identity, it can help to mark the character of landscape components using summarizing notions (Bockemühl, 1997). In general, for the northern slopes we would speak of an *earthy blanket of trees*, whereas for the southern slopes a *sunny and fruity openness* is at stake. The character of the side slopes, where water-rich valleys invited people to build water mills can be generalized as *flowing meeting places*. Of course, these notions are not exclusive and they are – depending on time of the day, of the year, and on scale of detail – relevant in all landscape components, but they may inspire the composition of a target image for the management of specific landscape *components* as a whole.

A gradual approach to landscape

In summary, to put the observations that are necessary for proper landscape understanding into order, we have proposed to exercise a gradual approach to the landscape's identity for target setting in landscape development (Pedroli *et al.*, 2002). Together, the described observations give a firm, yet imprecise, personal impression of the landscape, which can be ordered by a systematic approach to landscape identity, starting with appearance, moving into succession and the character as shown in Figure 1.

Landscape development by farming: a challenge for the future?

After having shown a systematic approach to the coherence in and character and identity of landscape, the next question is how the approach of farmers trying to improve their landscape can be viewed against this background. In countries where multifunctional land use is practised more widely, this can be found in several branches of farming. In the Netherlands for instance, this concept is known as 'farming for nature' (Buizer *et al.*, 2005). In this paper, however, we shall focus on examples of organic farming in

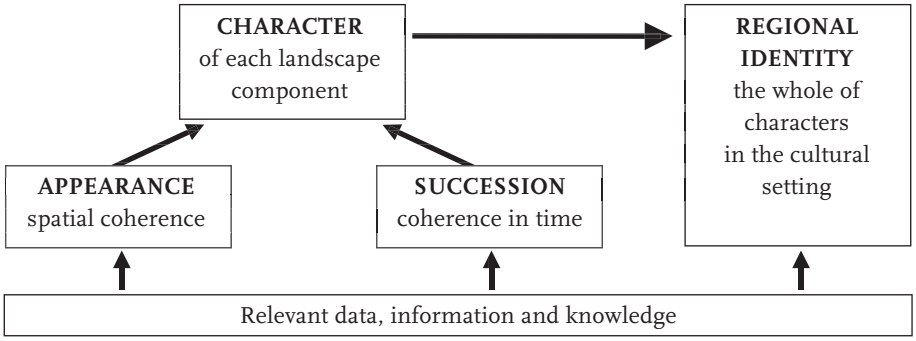

Figure 1. Appearance, succession and character as stages in assessing landscape identity. After Pedroli (2005).

Germany and on a study in which the diversity of 16 selected cases were compared (Van Elsen *et al.*, 2003b). These cases were also exceptional among organic farms in their commitment to landscape work. There are many examples of farmers contributing to landscape and nature conservation after having converted from conventional to environmentally friendly farming. The study tried to select examples of good practice in landscape work, to show what can be done for landscape development at farm level.

The following question was used as a starting point: Will it be possible for organic farming to combine its quantitative growth with the aim to preserve and even enhance landscape quality and biodiversity? Especially amongst organic farmers, approaches can often be found in developing the own land in a way beyond a mere intensification of crop production and cattle raising. What approaches can be found here? Will their ways of developing the landscape also lead towards coherence, character and identity of rural landscapes?

The results of our study and other investigations show (Tress, 2000; Van Elsen, 2000; Baumgart & Van Elsen, 2007) that several conditions should be fulfilled for modern landscape work on organic farms that not only aims to restore landscape elements but also tries to develop landscape as an integrated process involving experts, practitioners and other stakeholders. These conditions are:

- A participatory approach (bottom-up instead of top-down planning);
- A qualified advisory service for farmers who are willing to improve their impact on biodiversity;
- Support for farmers by better agri-environmental schemes, which help farmers to realize locally adapted concepts;
- Better education at agricultural schools and universities.

In this way, the landscape becomes an individual *task*, a developmental task in nature (Van Elsen & Zehnter, 2002). In such a process of landscape work, nature conservation or nature development becomes a *result* of a conscious process, with different people involved, taking the landscape character as a basis for the potential development of habitats.

There is a growing demand for improving the regulations for certified environmentally friendly farming and to integrate the task of nature and landscape management and the 'production of biodiversity' into the regulations. However, a better landscape is not produced by better regulations but by farmers willing to improve their land, who are convinced of the rightness of this task and who are ready to invest in their attitude towards nature, including their awareness of the landscape's identity (Van Elsen *et al.*, 2006). This asks for advice and education. It asks for a participatory approach and co-operation between landscape planners, farmers and environmentalists. The integration of nature preservation is not only a question of natural or environmental sciences but also a social question of how people with different professions and backgrounds can work together (Luginbühl, 2001). These include the farmers with their unique experience in managing the land, the environmentalists and biologists who know the plant and animal species, and the customers and friends of the farm who practically give hands to support the farmer in improving the landscape and who care for biotopes. Landscape development can become an added value of multifunctional farming, being the starting point of a revitalized culture of the European landscape. The mentioned case studies

of 16 organic farms that try to improve their landscape show the potentials of such bottom-up approaches (Van Elsen *et al.*, 2003b).

What motivates the farmer to integrate aims and objectives related to landscape identity?

Landscape, a challenge for the farmer

The conversion from conventional farming to organic farming often already means a contribution to nature and landscape conservation (Tress, 2000; Van Elsen, 2000). For example, the diversity of associated plants on arable fields is two to three times higher on organic fields than on conventional fields. Many studies show similar results for soil arthropods and wildlife (Anon., 2000; Mäder *et al.*, 2002). However, like everywhere in agriculture, organic farming also shows a tendency towards intensification and specialization (De Wit & Verhoog, 2007), which reduces these positive effects (Van Elsen, 2001). Do organic farmers show the interest and the will to integrate certain measures of nature conservation (such as planting of structural elements) into their farm? By acting in this way they could push forward the role of organic farming towards a multifunctional and environmentally friendly type of agriculture (Van Elsen & Daniel, 2000). In the following section we report some results of an investigation involving 16 case studies of organic farms (Van Elsen *et al.*, 2003b). An example of developing landscape through agriculture on one of these farms is provided in Box 2.

Optimizing nature conservation and landscape development on organic farms in Germany

The investigation focused on farmers who integrated approaches of nature conservation into their farming practices (Van Elsen *et al.*, 2003b; 2004). What motivated these farmers to deal with questions of nature conservation and landscape development, and actively created and developed their landscape? Which circumstances allowed such initiatives? The following hypotheses were the starting point of the investigation:

- There are organic farmers that are exceptional amongst organic farmers concerning their engagement in nature conservation and landscape development.
- There are different motives that lead to actions.
- There are different ways of acting and different systems of knowledge applied in order to find ideas and realize means of landscape development.

Because no previous reference investigations were available, we chose an explorative approach. In various regions of Germany, 13 interviews were carried out on organic farms. A wide spectrum of farms with respect to size, geographical location, parcel structure, social structure and farming style was chosen. The interviews were carried out using methods of qualitative social analysis (Mayring, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1996).

The answers of the farmers show that their motives were exceptionally intrinsic in nature. Individual experiences in their biography built the background of their ambitions

Box 2. An example of application: developing landscape through agriculture

An example of developing landscape through (in this case organic) agriculture is Medewege Farm, a biodynamic farm of 80 hectares outside the gates of Schwerin in eastern Germany. Recently, 150 additional hectares were leased, 120 of which are adjacent to the existing property. It is a huge grain farm on undulating glacial deposits, lacking all structure except for a few dried-up small lakes (glacial kettles). It would have been easy to plan the crop rotation and subdivisions of the area from behind a desk. However, one of the responsible farmers decided he wanted to really acquaint himself with the new land, and organized a seminar for this purpose. The seminar was to start with basic exercises in order to become aware of the process of perception and the role of different backgrounds, professions and world views before deciding what measures should be taken.

As a first exercise (the level of the appearance, see Figure 1) we observed the landscape in relation to its mineral, its plant, animal and human aspects. It appeared that much insight could be gained from observing the landscape in a consciously chosen one-sided way, unprejudiced by one's usual functional viewpoint. Exchanging experiences after having observed the landscape in such a one-sided way, the strongly differing reports from the different groups contributed much to the overall view of the landscape.

A second step involved sketching the shape of the terrain (the level of coherence). After initial perplexity when faced with such an apparently unstructured area, suddenly some discoveries were made. These included: "It is not one uniform area at all"; it is "amazingly diverse"; "we walked through different landscapes". Later we occupied ourselves with one of the glacial kettles, which each of us drew using three 'false colours': blue for whatever seemed to be cool/moist, red for warm/dry, and yellow for qualities of light. How surprising to find that nearly everyone experienced the kettle in the same way, drawing it with a 'light' (yellow) centre and usually 'cold/moist' edges. A kettle in the field – is it a "place offering relief to drive around when ploughing" only?

Many questions and new perspectives emerged from our short but intensive romping with the kettle (the level of character, approaching landscape identity). We "learned to value the place a little"; "before I thought there is no starting point here, it is dried up anyway and no longer intact, one might worry about it later"; "How can the special qualities that I value in it be encouraged so that it develops, so that more plants and wildlife can find a place to live here?"; "How can designing the new lands become a *shared aim* of the farm community?"

These were signs indicating that the identity of the landscape had to be taken seriously, no matter how depleted it was, taking as a starting point the observations through the own senses. After the seminar the process continued as a planning process among the farmers, the local authorities and two students who wrote their diploma thesis about the topic. From the experience of the identity of the landscape, perspectives emerged for concrete measures that might meaningfully be considered: where to plant a hedgerow, where to develop new grassland, etc. This was experienced as a 'dialogue' between the people responsible, the landscape and its development potential.

to care for the wildlife and nature on their farmed land. Especially their relationship to nature is very important. Two types could be distinguished, one was an 'intimate' relation to nature, characterized by a close connection to nature and landscape including feelings and the ability of 'living within'. The other type was characterized by a 'more distant' relationship to nature.

With respect to the reasons for acting, again two types were found. On the one hand there was the inclination to first and foremost protect endangered plant and animal species and biotopes, and on the other hand a phenomenological approach with a strong connection with and reflection on personal experiences. Farmers of the second type rather had the whole farm in their mind, but additional to this holistic vision, for them aesthetic criteria and the process of perceiving and taking decisions were at least as important as the measures themselves (Bockemühl, 1997). However, the differences between the measures that the farmers implemented were smaller than the differences between their approaches. So although the intrinsic motives to work on the landscape can be very different, the fact that there is a motivation is crucial. With this our question whether (organic) farming could contribute to landscape values was not directly answered. It would need more research on the concrete landscape effects. However, it was confirmed that a prerequisite for sound landscape development seems to be 'landscape work', involving at least the farmers but including other people committed to enhance the landscape identity as well.

Discussion and conclusions

There is a vast amount of literature on the values of landscape, on the ways landscape is perceived by people, and on the threats to landscape quality. Although most authors writing about landscape management argue that landscape should be approached in a comprehensive (or holistic) way, the various approaches to implement this in practice remain scarce, and often do not attain scientific reproducibility. This may be due to the fact that in solving complex problems – and landscape is obviously a complex notion – the direct and conscious observation of both the object of study and the own relationship to it are essential. In management theory this is recently called the principle of 'presence' (Senge *et al.*, 2005).

In this paper we have presented an approach for a comprehensive study of landscape, which – exercised in a comparable bottom-up approach by farmers – appeared to be effective in landscape work on selected organic farms. We expect these examples also to function as a stimulus for other farming systems and for groups of people connected with specific landscapes, provided they want to invest their personal efforts in landscape quality.

As a matter of fact, the farmer who depends on the landscape production capacity views the landscape differently from the conservationist who is active as a volunteer in landscape management. Anyway, involvement – be it directly and actively, or indirectly – seems to be one of the basic conditions for the acknowledgement of landscape identity as a notion to be taken care of.

Landscapes play an important role in everyday life of ordinary people, whereas

naturalness and biodiversity are rather normative concepts, without a clear and direct relationship with the quality of life. In this sense there is an interesting parallel with the recent debate on participatory approaches in ecological restoration (Higgs, 2003, 2006; Throop & Purdom, 2006). In nature restoration – Higgs claims – it is still possible to responsibly design and implement specific nature restoration projects without public participation, whereas Throop & Purdom (2006) have their serious doubts about this statement. In landscape management this is simply impossible, since landscape (in this case defined as the cultural landscape) cannot sustainably persist without the intervention of people (Schama, 1995). At the same time, in the difference between nearby everyday landscape and the tourist consumption landscapes, there surely is a challenge in involving also non-residents in landscape planning. This is comparable to the difference between farmers 'living within' and farmers with a 'more distant' relationship to their environment, as we found in our case study. Both experience inspiration from the landscape. But these differences present a substantial task for national and international landscape policies and for local landscape management initiatives to be developed, taking into consideration both the material and immaterial nature of landscape.

Only if landscape is considered an inspiration for people active in the landscape, rather than a by-product of globalized economy, living landscapes can survive in Europe. In this way a living sustainable landscape combines the functional effects of producing economic and social benefits with the intangible effects of providing identity and inspiration for getting actively involved in it, in accordance with its dynamic character. Living landscapes will also enhance the well being of the predominantly urban European population. In other words: landscape works.

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