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AZ EURÓPAI TÁJ EGYEZMÉNY FILOZÓFIÁJA ÉS ÜZENETE

PHILOSOPHY AND MESSAGE OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

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ABSZTRAKT

Az Európa Tanács Táj Egyezménye a jelen értékeinek megőrzését és a jövő formálását is a demokrácia tág keretébe helyezi. A tájpercepció és a tájkarakter, valamint a minőségi célok hangsúlyozásával az emberi aspektusokat és a térségek egyedi mintázatát helyezi előtérbe. Látásmódja dinamikus, mivel a természeti és kultúrális elemek kölcsönhatását emeli ki. Az Egyezmény a polgárok és a döntéshozók jogait és kötelezettségeit helyezi a középpontba a táj védelmében, kezelésében és tervezésében, miáltal a tájat a demokrácia arénájának tekinti.

A cikk koncepcionális elemzés révén világítja meg a Tájegyezmény elméleti alapjait és azok megvalósulását az Intézkedésekben.

Kulcsszavak: táj és demokrácia, polgárok joga és felelőssége, tájészlelés, tájkarakter, környezeti kontextus ⦿

ABSTRACT

The Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe introduces a broad view of democracy concerning the preservation of values and the shaping of the future. By highlighting the perception and character of the landscape and seeking qualitative measures, it brings to fore the human aspects and the unique pattern of the areas in question. It takes dynamic view by emphasising the interactions of natural and cultural elements. The Convention focuses on the rights and responsibilities of citizens and stakeholders concerning landscape protection, management and planning, thus situating landscape as the arena of sustainability.

Through conceptual analysis, this paper aims to highlight the theoretical basis of the Landscape Convention and its implementation.

Keywords: landscape and democracy, citizens' rights and responsibilities, landscape perception, landscape character, environmental contexts

INTRODUCTION

The Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe, opened for signature in the year 2000, brought a new way of thinking at the turn of the millennium. Among the antecedents of the Convention, the campaign "Europe Our Common Heritage" should be highlighted. This campaign initiated the promotion of shared historical values, as well as the interconnected cultural and natural heritage of the continent across borders and historical eras. More than 1,100 projects have been launched, many of them as thematic cultural routes.

These routes are both factual and symbolic, reflecting the spatio-temporal dimension of our European patrimony, express the manifold relationship of the unique places and artefacts. This campaign foreshadows the holistic and integrative philosophy of the Landscape Convention that takes into account the historic, present and future significance of heritage instead of concentrating on partial or static issues.

The place chosen for the signature of the Landscape Convention was the Renaissance city of Florence. The Renaissance as an era of humanity is a model of completeness, where we can discover the ancient, platonic oneness of the good, the beautiful and the true. In thinking of landscape, we have to transcend the mere naturalistic, scientific view and encompass the humanities.

This choice of place was certainly purposeful, as was the venue for the opening ceremony in the city hall of neighbouring Sienna, where an exemplary series of paintings from the 1330s by Ambroggio Lorenzetti decorates the walls. The paintings, collectively called "The Allegory of Good and Bad Government", allegorically depict the biblical virtues of righteousness and moderation, and illustrate the consequences of wise and utilitarian human decisions. The tableaus provide a perfect visual presentation of life flourishing thanks to the wise use of landscape, and suffering harm as a result of an exploitative attitude. It draws attention to the role of human responsibility, which is a core issue of the Convention.

The objective of this paper is to highlight the theoretical basis of the European Landscape Convention and its implementation through the 'Measures' the Parties have to undertake. The paper also presents the significance of landscape perception as a framework for holistic thinking. The method used is conceptual analysis, allowing the philosophical basis of the Landscape Convention to be brought to the fore.

THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION IN THE PREAMBLE AND ITS RELATION TO THE GENERAL AND SPECIFIC MEASURES OF THE CONVENTION

The Preamble serves as conceptual, philosophical foundation for the Convention, and the National Measures provide the tools for its implementation through the various activities envisaged. The eight Measures are divided into two groups: General Measures (GM) and Specific Measures (SM). The conceptual statements of the Preamble and their realisation, as formulated in the Measures, are intrinsically interrelated. The connections will be presented in this chapter. The linkages are manifold, but we highlight here the most relevant ones, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The opening paragraph of the Preamble declares the underlying concept of the Council of Europe: *"to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage"*. Amongst these ideals and principles, the focus is on the democratic decision-making process through participation and subsidiarity. In order to achieve this, the document emphasises the importance of *"agreements in the economic and social fields"*. This

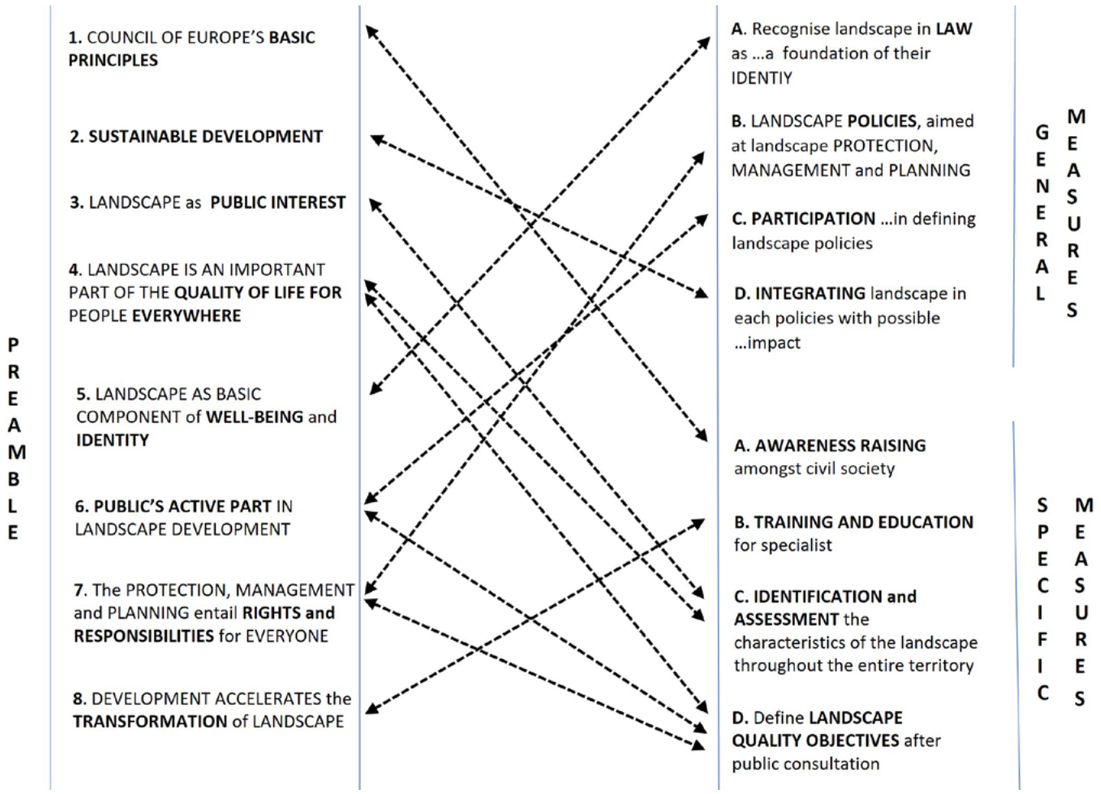


Figure 1: Linkages amongst the philosophical foundations and the Measures of the Landscape Convention

introductory statement conveys the message that the aim of the Convention is broader than simply the conservation of the European heritage, it seeks to strengthen democracy, and the separation of power. In this respect, Specific Measure A, '*Awareness Raising'* is the most relevant. Initiatives have to be undertaken to raise awareness of the landscape, and to foster changes *"amongst the civil society, private organisation, and public authorities"*.

The second statement of the Preamble highlights *"sustainable development (SD), based on balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment"*. Landscape is the adequate territorial unit in which sustainable development can be realised. Neither administrative and political units, nor the pure physical geographical landscapes, are suitable for SD. The firsts lack natural area-units, the latter ignores the results of human-induced transformation. Landscape as conceived in the Convention is an area-unit, encompassing man-nature interactions. This organic and dynamic view is reflected in several measures, but especially in General Measure D, about the *"integration of the of landscape into each policy with possible direct or indirect impact on it."* This initiative establishes a connection between the individual strategies of the economic sectors in order to achieve balanced development.

The Preamble further acknowledges landscape's *"important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, economic and social fields and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity."* In strong relation with sustainable development, this paragraph refers to the manifold functions of landscape, which have to be analysed and valued through identification and assessment, as formulated in the Specific Measure C. The landscape character assessment relates to the involvement of both citizens and stakeholders. Thus, it is a suitable discussion platform between different interest groups and provides an opportunity for an agreement to be reached regarding the goals of preservation and development.

In connection with the public interest, the Preamble considers landscape as *"an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded area and as well as in areas of high quality..."* Areas of outstanding natural beauty and everyday landscapes are both within the scope of the Convention. This means that all measures—with special emphasis on the landscape identification and assessment as well as the landscape quality objectives (SMC, SMD)—need to encompass the entire territory of countries that are signatories to the Convention.

The uniqueness of *local cultures* is reflected in their landscapes, and this is *"a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity"*. This statement of the Preamble echoes General Measure A, which requires *the recognition of landscapes* in *law.* Similarly to the Preamble, this measure refers to the *"landscape as an essential component of people's surroundings and an expression of the diversity their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity."* We should keep in mind that according to this concept the diversity of landscape heritage is an essential component of identity and wellbeing. The importance of this is the basis for its recognition in law.

The quality of landscapes and public participation in them are highlighted in two paragraphs of the Preamble as follows:

- *"Wishing to respond to the public's wish to enjoy high quality landscapes, and to play an active part in the development of landscapes;*
- *"Believing that that the landscape is a key element of individual and social well-being and the protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone."*

We find here the most important conceptual declarations. First the presumption of a public desire for high landscape quality, which means both the tangible and non-tangible values as well as non-quantitative characteristics. That is in line with the SMD, which concerns the definition *of landscape quality objectives after public consultation.* Second is the requirement to consult regarding decisions that concern development and policy making. General Measure C prescribes the establishment of procedures for the *participation* of the general public, as well as local and regional authorities, in defining landscape policies.

Furthermore, the understanding of *protection, management and planning* as indivisible parts of landscape policies, bridging the past, present and future, is of the utmost importance. General Measure B on establishing and implementing *landscape policies,* aims at landscape protection, management and planning. Last but not least, participation in the formulation of landscape policy is everyone's right and responsibility, reflecting also the basic purpose of the Council of Europe. This emphasis shows clearly the bottom-up approach of the Convention.

Finally, the mention of the development processes *"in different sectors and in the world economy ...accelerating the transformation of landscape"* reflect the dynamic approach taken. Landscape change is a complex issue and the understanding of the cause effect relationships, including the driving forces and their consequences, is the task of professionals. Therefore, in Special Measure B on *training and education,* the multidisciplinary training programmes and university courses are predominantly for specialists, but can be introduced in school programmes as well. Landscape changes have to be taken into account in policy making as well.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MINDSET, AND THE RECENT META-CRISIS OF OUR WORLD, ACCORDING TO IAIN MCGILCHRIST

Iain Mc Gilchrist, a philosopher and neuroscientist, author of two influential books: The Master and his Emissary (2009) and The Matter with Things (2021) developed a theory on the difference between brain hemispheres. Based on his experience in humanities and his long clinical practice in psychiatry, he argues that the cause of the recent meta-crisis of our civilization and environment is strongly related of the dominance of the left hemisphere. In his books he explains the difference between them, and proves how the dominance of the right and the left hemisphere has manifested in different historical eras. This theory shares fundamental aspects of the Convention's landscape concept, as we will see in the next chapter.

According to McGilchrist, both animals and humans had to solve two tasks simultaneously: to eat and not be eaten. This requires two kinds of attention. One, the left hemisphere's attention, is narrow, focusing on individual parts. It is static, and seeks evolutionarily to grab and grasp. The right hemisphere's attention, by contrast, is broad, and sees the whole, including changes and relations. The former allows one to get the food, while the other perceives the environment, the dangers and the entire context of the given situation. It sees the implicit, and understands the non-material, organic functioning of the world. The right hemisphere should be the master and the left its emissary, as the title of the book suggests. Subordinating the right hemisphere means a significant

change in the man-nature relationship, as well as in science and economics.

The *dominance of the left hemisphere thinking has crucial consequences.* Instead of being organic, our worldview became mechanistic. Our way of thinking follows the paradigm of the machine and not the one of the living beings. The difference is that a machine can be set up from its parts, but the entire living entities are always more than their parts. Concentrating solely on parts, especially in science, results in losing the comprehension of the whole. We disregard the fact that the essence of every being (in micro- and macrocosms) lies in the context and in the relationships. We tend to think statically, focusing on particular state or element and often miss the view of the changing reality. It is highly important in case of landscape and every permanently transforming environmental system. It is also typical in the modern era, that we prioritise quantity instead of quality. However, as McGilchrist says, almost everything that matters in life in not measurable, it is qualitative. He also states that the dominance of the left hemisphere contributes significantly to the overexploitation of the nature.

THE LANDSCAPE CONVENTION AND RIGHT-HEMISPHERE THINKING

The connection to the above theory can be derived from the definition given in the Convention: *"landscape means an area as perceived by people, whose character is the result of interaction of natural and/or human factors"* (CoE, 2000a). Accordingly, landscape, as conceptualised in the Convention, is a perceived, experienced reality. It is an organic whole, a unique microcosmos, where the particular combination of the elements, their presence and coexistence form a unique system, a special character. It is an ever-changing entity and a context continually transforming through the interaction of its constitutive natural and human elements.

In their paper about the role of perception in landscape character assessment, Andrew Butler and Ulla Berglund (2014), based on extensive literature survey, derive the connection between perception and democracy and thus explain the inner coherence of the Convention. This allows us to understand the deeper layers and functions of perception. Its psychical impact to our worldview is presented with reference to Tilley and Ingold. *"In humanities perception is the life-experience, which is interlaced by the landscape we live in."* (Tilley 2004). *"Landscape becomes our world, the space we are engaged for, the space of our involvement, the imprint of those who dwelled in it and left their traces behind."* (Ingold, 2000). Comprehending all these is part of the functioning of the right hemisphere.

Perceiving character as an organic whole is not primarily an individual, subjective act. It *"is filtered by social structures (culture, understanding of meaning). It is a phenomenon of the relations"* (Hague & Jenkins, 2005). Dwelling (according to Heidegger) in a certain place, creates a sort of time-depth that strengthens the relationship with the landscape, the *attachment* to the place. (Ingold (2000). People who live together, who coexist for a long time in a landscape share experiences. Their perception creates a link between them, allowing common understanding, that binds past with future and people with each other, thus forming a *collective identity.* (Oreszczyn – Lane, 2000). This shared identity is the basis of partnership. The Landscape Convention considers landscape as the *arena of democracy,* where it is the participant's right and responsibility to create partnership (CoE, 2000a; Scott, 2011).

In recent scientific and everyday discourse in Hungary, landscape is understood predominantly as a natural, geographical entity. The approach of the Convention, by contrast, conceives of it as both the life-world of humans and the habitat of other living beings. Raising awareness of landscape character has manifold positive consequences in terms of tackling modern cultural and environmental crises.

Perceiving character means understanding the context and *seeing the whole.* The whole is always more than the sum of the parts, as it forms a coherent system, with living interactions that create dynamism, permanently creating special patterns in the landscape. Each *unique element* and particular feature *gains its significance in the given context* – that is the basis of landscape value. Experiencing landscape beyond individual policies and discovering its character makes people aware of the classical unity form of the *good,* the *beautiful* and the *true. Landscape experience relates us to the reality of the world,* which can be a significant *remedy against the distortion of the virtual world* and the dangerous hallucination of AI.

MY SUMMARY OF THE ESSENCE OF LANDSCAPE

Landscape is not merely the aggregate of plant and animal habitats. Humans create landscape through mental and practical activities, in concert with nature. It comes into being through relationships, first by naming and identifying it, then by perceiving and comprehending its characteristics. Man transforms the natural base through construction, cultivation, land-management and a myriad of other activities.

Landscape is the message of our ancestors and our message to the future; it is the dance of the past and future continuously coalescing in genesis and resting in a still picture of the present. It is the setting, the matter and the realisation of our dreams, plans and actions. Landscape lives in us, breathes, evolving through us and shaping us. We are mutually dependent conditions of each other.

Landscape is the truest whirl of our existence. It is a moving, reflecting kaleidoscope. In the individual elements we can discover the myriad wonders of nature, and the legacy of our ancestors—the footprint of their values and the consequences of their actions. And we, living in a given place and time, likewise exist in the present, along with our creations.

Landscape is interconnection, struggle and commitment. All creatures in the time-space continuum merge in it. Landscape connects and organises living and inanimate matter, bringing instinctive beings and thinking man into unity.

Landscape is the cathedral of the being. Upwardly open – an everlasting extension, a horizon, before which things come to light in their uniqueness and in their relationships to others. The named space in which we are participants and co-creators. Landscape is our home, while also being frighteningly alien. The cloud of the unknown and the light shining through it (Konkoly-Gyuró 2025). ⦿

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