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LANDSCAPE PLANNING ACROSS BORDERS IN EUROPE

Introduction

In Europe structured development of urban and rural areas, landscape management, water management, road planning, agricultural development and conservation of natural areas have taken place for several hundred years. The main objective was to organise an efficient land use, which could fulfil all required functions in the most efficient way within a country. What happened across the border was of less interest. Nowadays there is a stimulus for border crossing cooperation. However, our experiences show that this kind of projects is not very easily developed and that maintaining mutual interest across borders is still a difficult issue.

Environmental and landscape planning for safeguarding and development of natural resources are priority issues for national and regional authorities. The notion of "Environment" comprises in its broadest sense the totality of all factors that are of importance for living species and living communities. It also refers to the social and psychical environment of man. Environmental conservation and environmental management reach far beyond the technical environmental protection such as air and water purification. It also includes functional ecological systems and their variety in spatial forms in their totality. It is necessary to take natural resources and their mutual relations in consideration in landscape planning. This implicates also a close relationship between the use of natural resources, environmental management and spatial and landscape planning. The objective of spatial planning is to organise functions and space in such a way that it shows the best mutual relationship or, to develop human and natural potentials in a spatial framework in such a way, that all can develop as well as possible (Buchwald and Engelhardt, 1980).

What has characterised the concept of planning in Europe has been the institutionalisation of planning ideals like segregation and functionalism. Its implementation in planning is rooted in changes in social life: growing urbanisation and territorial demands for an increasing population. In planning the ideas of segregation have been pushed towards the extreme edge in the human exploitation of nature. Man's ability to change the forms and functions of the land and its impacts has developed a need for new values in planning decisions and in our concept of nature. Now another aspect is being introduced: disappearing borders between countries. At least in economic and environmental respect the non-existence of borders is now recognised. However, that is not yet the case in planning and legislative respect. This causes problems and conflicts.

Landscape planning and landscape linkages

The present processes in European landscapes are homogenisation and fragmentation of traditional landscapes (Jongman 2002). New international landscape types develop such as motorway landscapes, recreation landscapes, suburban landscapes, industry landscapes and excavation landscapes (Ministry of ANF 1995).

The European landscape is fragmenting and many species in the small-scale cultural landscapes of Europe are especially sensitive to land use change and changes in landscape structure. In all Europe arguments have been given for development of ecological networks. Fluxes of matter and minerals, compensation of land use and population dynamics are the main considerations. Especially sensitive are water courses that cross national and regional borders. Ecological networks however require landscape planning and cross borders. If decisions are not coordinated across borders then misunderstanding ineffective planning and waste of government budget is the risk.

The responsibility for landscape and spatial planning is organised rather differently over Europe. In many cases functions and tasks are divided over several ministries and many other agencies depending on the state organisation. Different views are being developed depending on institutionalisation, scientific tradition and history. In Germany and Austria landscape planning plays a decisive role as a tool for structuring and maintaining the diversity of the rural areas: its multifunctionality. In other countries especially in urban areas landscape planning has always been more a tool to give new functions an acceptable outlook. In other countries nature conservation and landscape planning are strongly integrated (Czech Republic, Slovak Republic) because of the recognition that it is a related problem in their cultural landscapes. In countries in southern Europe the need for planning was felt less strongly or at least the execution of planning ideas was less strict. Partly this was, as in Italy is the case, to lack of vertical co-ordination between municipalities, provinces, regions and the national level. In large parts of countries such as Italy discussion is ongoing how culture, nature and other rural functions can be brought together in the same landscape.

In general there is an institutionalisation within borders, functions within landscapes are segregating, urbanisation and suburbanisation takes place and there is a territorial demand for new functions. We also see opposing trends in Europe; on the one hand the national borders are disappearing and there are more common, international issues; on the other hand there is increasing attention for regional and cultural identity and there is a decentralisation of land use, nature and landscape planning.

Experiences from Dutch cooperation in Europe

The Netherlands is situated in the delta of Rhine Meuse and Scheldt. That means that nearly all Dutch rivers enter the country from east or south (Figure 1). This also means that there is a strong impact of Belgian and German land use and river management on water availability and water problems in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands and Germany should develop border crossing cooperation and in fact they do organise regional dialogues across borders. In German-Dutch border there is a tradition of border crossing cooperation, there are touristic cycle routes, there are joint landscape and nature parks and local initiatives have been taken to stimulate cooperation in economic and ecological planning.

In one of these border-crossing projects different regions discussed their ideas, came with new concepts and ideas and started cooperation projects. (<http://www.aktion-gruenes-band.de/>). The results were promising. Documents are produced, in one of the regions 10 project proposals and two active project groups established, and political recognition of the region was gained (Jongman 2003).

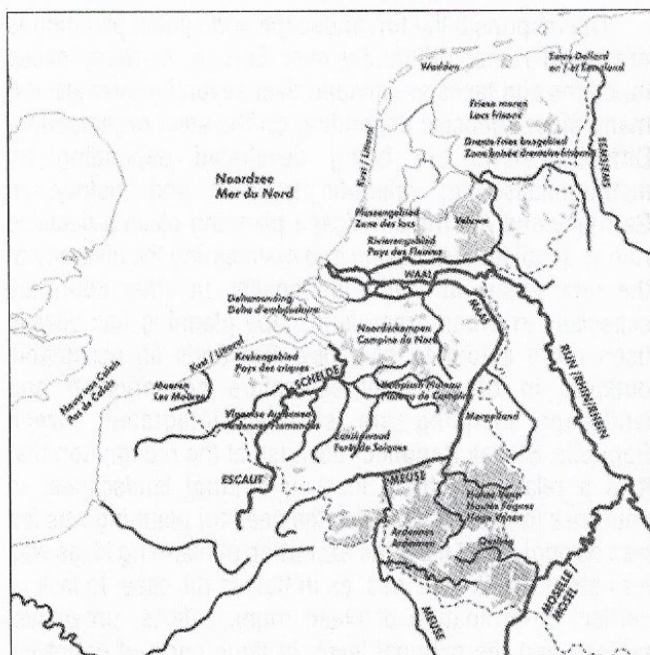


Figure 1.

The Netherlands in N-W Europe and its border crossing rivers

Success and failure

However, there is a difference between initiatives organised from bottom up and embedding into the planning frameworks. In the above project in the autumn of 2004 stagnation occurred; as the funding decreased and

other priorities came up environmental NGO's stopped cooperation; the regional representatives were waiting for budget and recognition by their management and finally the political decision has been taken to declare the project not important enough to continue. Everyone went back to business as usual.

But if one analyses how priorities are set, it becomes clear that the balance between needs and possibilities for cooperation across borders is essential. In the region along the Dutch German border there are many small rivers. Water quality and nature conservation issues are key priorities for these landscapes. So, there is a need. However, we can conclude that it is not that easy to establish real cross-border cooperation. What is needed for border crossing projects is not only needs and motivation with the initiators. There are also internal and external push and pull factors such as regional political support and incentives from national governments. Projects also need organisation and supervision. One of the major problems related with border crossing projects is, that the responsibility is not clear. Adjacent regions have responsibilities for their own region and not for cooperation with others; that has always to be arranged case by case. Regional supervision and cooperation must be more than financing local initiatives; they must be creative and have added value for both cooperating regions. Without a stimulus parties easily fall back to business as usual and short term internal projects.

Formally national borders become less important within the EU; pass controls are disappearing between the Schengen countries, export is getting easier, the Euro can be used in most countries and there are common European directives such as the Habitats Directive and the Water Framework Directive. In INTERREG and Life projects the European Union stimulates European cooperation and in the European Research programme proposals have to be developed by consortia from different countries. However, in practice national borders are still very hard; it is not easy to understand the cultural differences with neighbouring countries, especially when they speak a different language and have different traditions. Budget management between countries differ; in one region there is a strict yearly budget planning, the other has yearly available funds for new ideas. Planning an international project together can become frustrating then and often proposals and ideas are not realised. National and regional budget cuts follow national logics and in this respect regional governments often consider international cooperation as luxury.

The preparation of border crossing projects can take a long time because of the procedural differences. Therefore research Institutes can be a valuable partner for governments as these can have long-term experience in international cooperation, they have working contacts, they know how to manage international projects and can give independent feedback to policy makers. Moreover, they know the world outside the region where they are located. For landscape planning and landscape management border crossing projects can be valuable and have added value for



regions, because they embed the region in a new context. Landscape planning also has to go across borders as in many cases landscapes are border crossing.

The future role of the landscape planner

Border crossing landscape planning means that the landscape planner has to grow into a new role. It is not sufficient any more to design or manage landscapes according to local and regional aesthetics, economic, transport and amenity functions, the intensity of the use of these functions and the growing ecological knowledge urge landscape planning towards the role of integrator between policy, economy and ecology.

Cultural landscapes are as much as palaces and estates the expression of the European character. The beehives from the Balkan Peninsula, the bocage landscapes of Normandy, Dutch and primitive landscape painting through the centuries are all part of that cultural heritage. The cultural landscape is an important element of the European identity. The challenge is to preserve it as living landscapes without making it into a museum.

The way national and regional authorities look at landscape planning and its role for society is different. In France landscape planning is mainly focused on the traditional design of aesthetic landscapes, while in Denmark, Austria and Germany development towards a role of integrator of land uses within a landscape setting is more common.

In the USA the role of the landscape planner is more than in Europe the designer of integrated landscape plans, where social partners, economic functions and ecological functions are brought together in holistic landscape plans (Florida Greenway Commission 1994, Adams and Steinitz 2000). The many aspects that mutually influence each other and the ever-growing complexity of social interactions make such an approach needed.

Landscapes are changing everywhere in Europe; they have their own dynamics based on European driving forces. That also means that the scenic beauty and the cultural heritage of the landscape are permanently under threat. Landscape planners should become co-ordinators of complex planning processes and be the designers of such co-ordination processes at the international level. The arguments for a landscape design will come from:

- The socio-economic functions of a landscape within the present and future dynamics of society;
- The politically most desired development;
- The ecological processes for which the cultural landscape is a precondition;
- The long term educational objectives within a region and
- The genius loci and related aesthetics.

This task is not simple and landscape planners cannot cope with all these aspects. Landscape planners should be the co-ordinator of multidisciplinary teams that consists of all kind of disciplines from the regions involved; this also means that they have to cope with cultural differences. It is therefore also a task for teaching landscape planning at universities that planners become aware of the complex process that is behind planning landscapes. The objective is huge: fitting functions for a dynamic society into the traditional European landscapes that must keep their character without harming the future functions. It is like housing a modern software company into a seventeenth century palace. It should be accessible, workable and still maintain the ambiance, the genius loci.

This is, surely the future of landscape planning in Europe. We have to work into that direction, because problem solving approaches in science are in general developing towards multidisciplinary and the market wants us there.

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