Richard Stiles

A LOCAL LANDSCAPE PLANNING NETWORK FOR AUSTRIA

The European Landscape Convention calls for the grass roots involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in the process of landscape planning and management, but what if the politicians cannot even be persuaded to sign up to it? Although Austria lives from its landscape more than any other comparable European country, landscape planning appears not to be a political issue and Austria belongs to the non-signatory states of the Convention. Some ten years ago an attempt was made to argue the case for introducing landscape planning in Austria without success, although then the political climate could be said to have been generally more favourable then than now.

Given this situation there is possible an argument to be made for looking at other ways to introduce landscape planning ideas without the need for specific legislation. The Landscape Convention provides an opportunity for this, in particular because of its stress on the role of stakeholder participation. This corresponds to the fact that in Austria landscape planning decisions are taken at the district level by the 2350 mayors on the basis of a total of 9 separate provincial spatial planning acts and the same number of nature conservation acts. This article sets out the framework for a new project which is setting up a network of typical rural Austrian districts in order to investigate the local implications of global climatic, economic and European policy factors on landscape change at the local level across the different legislative environments and natural landscape regions of the country, which stretches from the flat plains on Hungarian border in the east to the high Alps on the Swiss border in the west.

The basis for selecting sample of districts is described, before a pilot project to investigate the issues of landscape change at the district level and their relation to the local population, which was run as a student project is reported on. Finally the plans to develop this research programme and its potential for becoming an international comparative programme are explained.

The European Landscape Convention

The European Landscape Convention was opened for signature in Florence in October 2000 and received the minimum necessary number of signatures and ratifications to enable it to come into force for those states in March 2004. By the time of writing 18 of the 46 member states of the Council of Europe has ratified the Convention and a further 13 states have signed but not yet ratified it. This begs the question as to what influence the provisions of the Convention and its coming into force in 18 countries should have on those remaining countries which have so far not yet got around to signing it.

As far as landscape planning is concerned, the Convention establishes three important facts. Firstly it stresses the fact that landscape is ubiquitous and covers the whole of a territory, including urban as well as rural areas and degraded as well as intact landscapes. Secondly, the Convention calls for landscape planning to be introduced into national planning legislation, while thirdly the Convention stresses the importance of public participation and the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of landscape conservation, planning and management.

Landscape planning and the situation in Austria

This paper reflects on the situation in Austria, one of the 'not yet signatory states' of the European Landscape Convention, and outlines a project which attempts to respond both to the demands of the Convention as well as to the fact that Austria has so far not made up its mind to sign. Whereas signature of an international treaty such as the European Landscape Convention is something which is undertaken at the national level, the material with which it deals - landscape planning, management and conservation are defined as matters of provincial responsibility by the Austrian Constitution, and hence the agreement of the nine provinces, as the competent authorities, is necessary before signature is possible.

Although Austria is one of the European countries which is more economically dependant on its landscape than most, and one which has a reasonable well developed planning system, which takes at least some notice of the importance of the landscape, indeed it recently funded a national research programme on the cultural landscape, there is nevertheless a reluctance on the part of the provincial authorities to agree to sign the Convention, which they fear might lead to additional costs and legal responsibilities.

In fact, there is no shortage of legislation relating to planning and the landscape in Austria. On the contrary, because of the fact that both land use planning and nature conservation are defined in the Austrian constitution as being within the responsibility of the provinces, there are nine separate planning acts as well as nine pieces of legislation dealing with nature conservation, which also have some bearing on the landscape. In the field of landscape planning there are considerable differences from province to province in the degree to which the landscape is treated within the planning legislation. Of the nine provinces, the most explicit references to landscape and

the need to afford it special treatment are made in the planning acts of Salzburg and Lower Austria. Even here though there are fundamental differences of both terminology and approach. Salzburg requires the preparation of a so-called 'Freiraumkonzept' (literally open space concept) as a part of the local development concept, on which land use plans have to be based. While is Lower Austria a 'Landschaftskonzept' (landscape concept) is a part of the statutory requirements of every land use plan, although this is seen as part of the survey stage and not as a planning proposal.

But the level of diversity and devolution of responsibility for planning and the landscape does not end here. While the constitution defines these matters as being the responsibility of the provinces as far as the framing of legislation is concerned, it is up to the individual districts to prepare the actual plans and thus to put this legislation into practice. In Austria there are some 2,350 separate districts and each of them has the tendency to interpret the legislation in a different manner. While this high level of devolution of responsibility for planning can be interpreted as being very much in line with the intentions of the European Landscape Convention, it leads on the other hand to a high level of inconsistency in the way in which planning matters are handled, and there is no area in which this is more true than in the treatment of the issue of the landscape. As far as the Lower Austrian 'Landschafts-konzept' is concerned, there is no real definition of what form it should take, which issues it should address, at what level of detail these should be treated or indeed who should be regarded as competent to prepare it. Hence the legal requirements for preparing this document can equally be satisfied by a five page document written in an afternoon or a 100 page study which is prepared over a six month period. The level of detail in which the Landschaftskonzept is prepared is a matter of agreement between the local mayor of each district and the free-lance planner who has been commissioned to prepare the local development plan. Thus, while the planning authorities of the province administration have the official responsibility for quality control as far as the land use plan and its landscape planning components are concerned, in practice there is no legally binding definition of quality which they can use to ensure a certain minimum standard is obtained.

'Der Landschaftsplan'

Some ten years ago an attempt was made to prepare the way for the introduction of a German-style model of landscape planning into Austria. A study was commissioned by the Federal Environment Office, the 'Umweltbundesamt' which was eventually published in 1995 under the title of 'Der Landschaftsplan' (Brandenburg et al, 1995). This endeavoured to both set out the objectives and benefits of a landscape plan for the level of the individual districts and described the hierarchical landscape planning system as it has been legally implemented in Germany.

While being well received in professional circles, this study and the ensuing publication failed to have any political impact.

It can be argued that ten years ago the political climate and general public receptiveness with regard to environmental questions was considerably more favourable than it is today. Furthermore the reputation of 'planning' in general has received a considerable blow as the social emphasis has shifted from environmental to economic concerns. While the recent advent of the European Convention is to be seen as an important recognition of the wider importance of the phenomenon of 'landscape' as well as of a new understanding of its spread across the whole of a national territory, the reluctance to sign the Convention can be seen as part of a wider complacency regarding environmental issues which is also reflected in the former attitude to the introduction of landscape planning. Given this political reality, the question is how to react?

In practice the existing legislation, while far from ideal, already allows for the development of landscape concepts or plans on a voluntary basis, with the agreement of the local mayor. Furthermore the local knowledge of and interest in the landscape is something which provides a solid foundation on which to develop the future initiatives.....

Planning for the landscape without 'Landscape Planning'

Whereas the study referred to above contained one particular view of the landscape plan and of landscape planning, other models exist, both in practice and in theory. One question which might help to clarify matters is that of how landscape planning is defined in the first place, and one pragmatic answer to such a question might be to say that landscape planning is simply 'planning as if the landscape was important'. This surely is the fundamental attitude behind the European Landscape Convention, which also does not go further in defining landscape planning as "strong forward looking action to ....." It neither defines scales or levels in the planning hierarchy at which this ought to take place, nor does it set out which cultural and natural landscape resources should be subject to this "strong forward looking action".

Thus while the situation in Austria would initially seem to be very difficult as far as the landscape is concerned, both due to the fact that the European Landscape Convention has been neither signed nor ratified, as well as the absence of special landscape planning legislation in Austria, there is also no formal hindrance to the adoption of approaches which indeed allow planning to take place as if the landscape mattered. Indeed it could be argued that the

landscape 'matters' in Austria almost more than in any other country in Europe, as it provides an important basis for the country's economic prosperity, in particular with regard to tourism, which contributes a higher proportion to the gross domestic product than in any comparable European country, largely because of the dual roles of both summer and winter tourism, both of which could be said to be 'landscape-based'. Given this fact, the landscape planning challenge should be seen as finding a way to implement some form of landscape planning despite the absence of specific legislation or the ratification of the European Landscape Convention. If this is to be attempted, it would also be ideal if the new landscape planning approach also reflected as closely as possible the concerns and provisions of the Convention.

'ALPEN' - A programme to study the role of landscape planning in 'typical' rural Austrian districts

Landscape planning is seen, amongst other things as a means to direct landscape change. The European Landscape Convention defines it as "Strong forward looking-action to enhance, restore or create landscapes" (Chapter 1 Article 1). Landscape change, however, takes place independently of whether there is any formal system of landscape planning or not, and the absence of landscape planning does not mean that landscape change has to be without conscious direction. In order to respond to the stress on the importance of both landscape planning as a mechanism and on the need for a bottom-up approach to this in which all stakeholders are involved as closely as possible, a programme has been devised which aims to look at the actual role of landscape planning in Austria and its contribution to landscape change in combination with other factors.

One of these other factors is of course the fact that there are different legislative backgrounds to spatial planning and nature conservation in each Austrian province. To what extent can these be shown to affect landscape change differently throughout the country? In order to be able to look at this objectively it would of course be necessary to compare the effects of the different legal provisions on their impacts on similar landscapes. This raises the question of landscape types and the extent to which they are differentially subject to different pressures for change across the country. The flat landscapes of Burgenland in the east of Austria adjoining the Hungarian border are clearly not only the product of very different land uses to those in the high Alps of Vorarlberg next to Switzerland, but they are also subject to very different pressures for change.

In order to be able to understand and investigate how the different planning situations interact with the contrasting landscape situations across Austria, a programme has been devised which will focus on looking at landscape planning and landscape change at the local level in a range of 'typical' rural districts across Austria. The ALPEN Programme - short for Austrian Landscape Planning Education Network - is also focussed on education at a number of levels. Based in a university department it aims to develop a resource for teaching and research in the field of local landscape planning, by highlighting the different factors which influence landscape change, including amongst other things the provincial planning and conservation legislation. However the programme will not only be directed at students and researchers, but also at the local politicians and the residents of the districts themselves. This is very much in line with the overall 'bottom-up' philosophy of the European Landscape Convention, but it is also the result of a conviction that local knowledge and understanding of the landscape is at least as essential as 'expert' knowledge for ensuring sensitive landscape change. Participation by local residents in making decisions about their landscape is also an explicit goal of the Convention and while this is to be warmly welcomed, experience with public participation over recent decades indicates that it is far easier to write the need to consult with local people into legislation than it is to actually interest people in actually taking part in the planning process. Even if they can be motivated to participate, the quality of their contribution, and therefore their interest to make a contribution on a continuing basis is to a high degree dependant on their understanding of and insight into the issues concerned. For this reason the ALPEN Programme also aims to try and inform local people and their elected representatives about the special character of their own landscapes in order that they come to recognise them as something unique and valuable for which it is worth making an effort to contribute to their future conservation.

One of the possible reasons for the low level of participation in the land use planning process is the feeling that planning is an arcane matter which does not affect most people directly and is anyway uninteresting, inaccessible to the person in the street and furthermore is shrouded in specialist jargon. While this may indeed have more than a grain of truth in it as far as approaches to spatial planning are concerned, it is contended that the landscape provides a way into planning which is more readily understood and accessible to the public generally. The ALPEN Programme aims to develop this idea as a means to increase both the level and the quality of public participation.

Planning is usually seen as starting with a survey of the current situation before moving on to make proposals for future change and development. Looked at from the perspective of the landscape, however, it takes on a different character. Landscape change and development is a process which has been taking place as a result of the actions of mankind ever since the start of the Neolithic period, when human beings began to adopt a settled lifestyle and to initiate farming. For the vast majority of this time this change has not been subject to any formal type planning system but has taken place in response to

economic and social needs and in tune with the prevailing environmental conditions. The ALPEN Programme aims to place the planning process into this wider context and to see landscape planning as merely being about shaping the next steps in this centuries-old process of landscape change and evolution.

Landscape change may be initiated by national, European and even global changes, but it takes place as a result of decisions and actions taken at the local level, and on a land parcel by land parcel basis. This gives a special role to the land owners and land managers as key stakeholders in the landscape planning process. They are the people who ultimately shape the landscape. For this reason their understanding of the landscapes which they are responsible for managing and the way in which they value them can be a key factor in influencing landscape change. The ALPEN Programme will therefore focus in particular on those people directly engaged in shaping the landscape today, in order to help discover and influence their intentions with regard to the way in which they plan to manage it tomorrow.

International pressures for change with local impacts

Pressures for landscape change exist both at national, European and international levels but in all cases their impact will be local, and this impact will vary according to local conditions. At least some of the pressures for change are well-known. These range from the effects of global warming to the impacts of the World Trade Agreement and the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy. While the general directions of the changes they are likely to bring about and their possible effects on the landscape can be discussed, it is generally recognised that their actual local impacts are likely to vary considerably.

In the Austrian context these factors will interact locally within the various natural landscape regions and be affected to a greater or lesser extent by the different planning and nature conservation acts of the provinces. The planning instances are, however not the provinces, but the some 2350 local districts, with their mayors as the final arbiters of land use in their home districts. For this reason, in order to understand the processes of change, and above all to be able to have some impact on issues of public participation within the context of influencing landscape change, it is necessary for the ALPEN Programme to focus on the level of the districts.

Clearly limited resources will not allow all districts to be considered, and this raises the question of which districts should be considered and how to select them. It has been decided to select a representative sample of some five percent of the total number of districts and within this to try and represent as closely as possible the natural and administrative variation within the population as a whole. The selection of districts has been designed to sample both the range of natural landscape variation as well as to cover the differences in planning and conservation legislation as defined in the different provincial acts.

Given that Austria is largely a rural country composed of small districts, most of which have a population of under 2,500, the aim of the Programme is also to look at landscape planning and landscape change in what might be regarded as 'typical' rural districts. Another reason for this focus is the fact that there has already been considerable focus on what might be termed the 'special cases'. These include districts on the borders to the former Eastern Block, districts in the close vicinity of urban areas, and districts which are affected by specific infrastructure projects or other special developments.

Selecting case study districts

A sample of some 7% of the total districts has been selected which aims to proportionately reflect the distribution of districts between both the provinces and the natural landscape regions of the country. The total number of districts to take part in the project will be some 165 out of the approximately 2350 which go to make up the whole country.

However, the first problem to be overcome was the fact that there is no unified and consistent natural landscape classification of the whole of Austria. This is in itself a reflection of the fact that matters of landscape and nature conservation are also issues dealt with at a provincial level and thus there are only a number of incompatible landscape typologies for some of the provinces. In order to get around this problem it was decided to use a national classification of forestry yield areas (reference) which breaks the country down into nine major and 22 minor zones, which can effectively be seen as being equivalent to natural landscape regions and which can be used as a proxy for such a classification.

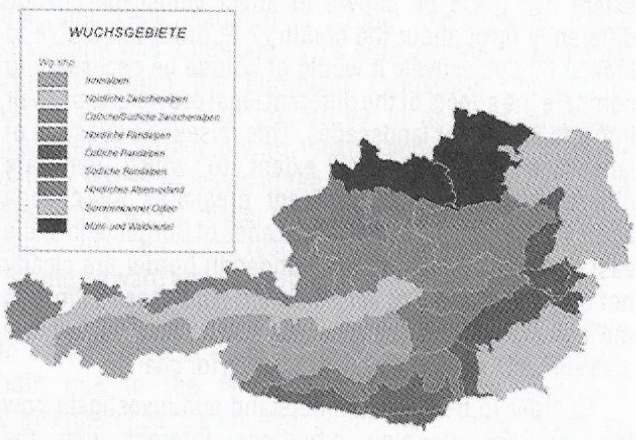

Figure 1:
Forest Yield Map of Austria as a proxy for a national natural region classification

Because the focus of the study was to be on typical rural districts, only eight of the nine provinces were included. Vienna, which is not just the only large metropolis in the country, but also a province in its own right, also with its own legislation, was excluded from consideration. This however only effectively removed one district and one province from the overall total and had little effect on distorting the overall picture in terms of the number of districts to be considered.

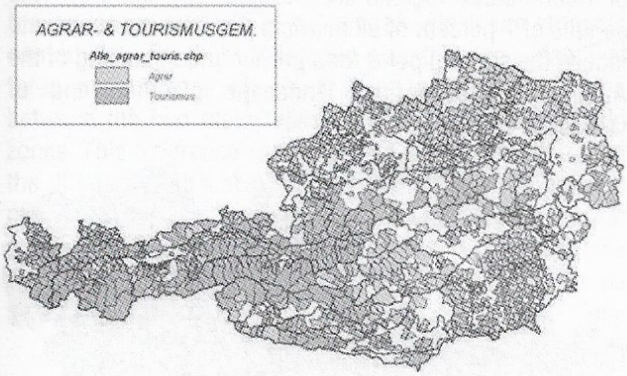

Figure 2:
The 2356 local districts classified according to their primary economic basis

By overlaying the boundaries of the remaining eight provinces with those of the nine main landscape regions in the country using GIS, it was possible to identify a series of different sized polygons each of which was homogenous to the extent that it represented an area having both the same natural landscape type and the same provincial legislation relating to landscape planning issues. Within these polygons it was now possible to decide on the number of districts which were needed for the study, in proportion to the relative area of the provinces and of the natural landscape regions.

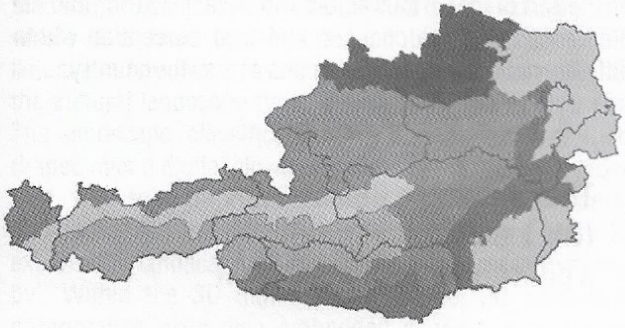

Figure 3:
Overlaying the provincial boundaries with the natural landscape regions results in the definition of 54 separate polygons

A further filter was added in order to ensure the homogeneity of the districts chosen with regard to their natural landscape conditions: districts which straddled the border of two natural landscape regions were not considered. In order to focus on the typical rural districts, it was also decided that those which were unusually large or small in terms of area or population should also be eliminated from the sample. Therefore only the median 75% of districts from each province were selected.

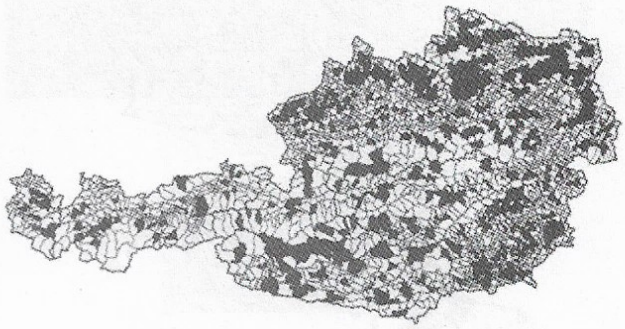

Figure 4:
Filtering out districts on national boundaries and removing the 25% smallest and largest ones

It was then possible to look in more detail at the remaining 'candidate' districts for each of the provinces separately. The maps produced for Carinthia, Lower Austria and Burgenland are shown in figures 5, 6 and 7. In these examples the different economic bases of the districts are indicated (see below).

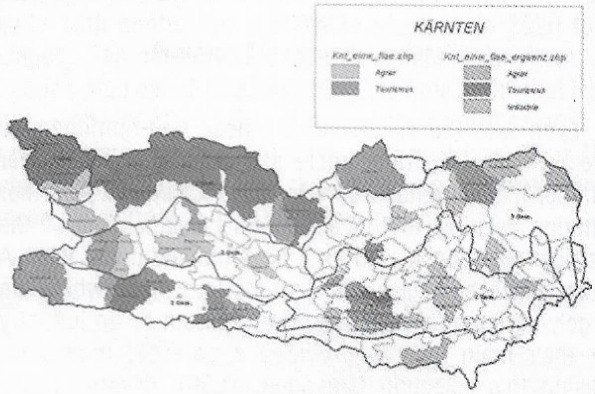

Figure 5:
'Candidate' districts in Carinthia

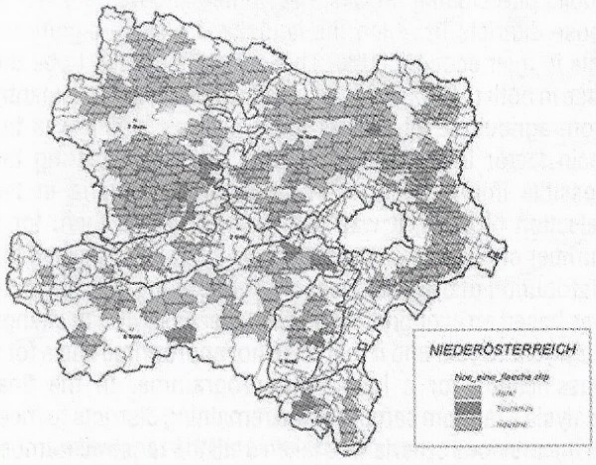

Figure 6:
'Candidate' districts in Lower Austria

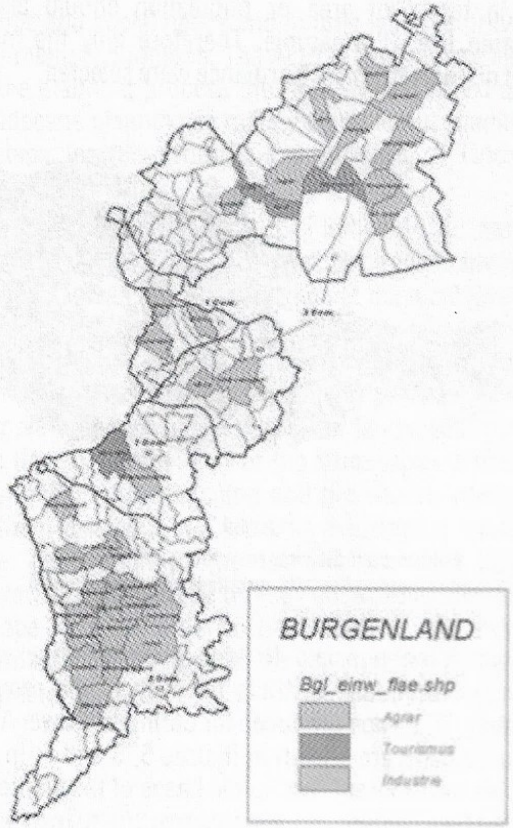

Figure 7:
'Candidate' districts in Burgenland

Even with the elimination of these non-homogenous and un-typical districts, there still remained a far larger number that were necessary for the 7% sample. A further criterion relating to the economic classification of the districts was considered as a possible additional filter. A study which has classified districts into those which are largely agricultural, dependant on tourism or on industry for their main income provided a potential means for making this selection (Quendler, 1999). It was initially argued that in s programme aimed to study landscape planning and in particular to focus on the potential role of public participation.in this, preference should be given to those districts in which the landscape plays a significant role in their economic life. This could be argued to be the case in both districts which make their living predominantly from agriculture as well as those where tourism was the main factor in the local economy. After considering the possible implications of including these criteria in the selection process, it was decided not to use them for a number of reasons, amongst others because it skewed the distribution of districts, but also because the classification was based on economic data which necessarily can change from year to year and it therefore not appropriate basis for a classification for a long term programme. In the final analysis a random sample of the remaining districts to meet all the previous criteria was taken until the required number of each polygon had been reached. Districts adjoining national borders, conurbations or which crossed two or more natural regions were discarded.

In this way a stratified random sample of rural Austrian districts has been selected which represents the general distribution of districts both between the provinces (from 4% in Vorarlberg to 24% in Lower Austria) as well as between the nine main forest yield regions (e.g. Central Alps 15.9% or Eastern Warm Summers Zone to 16.69%). The sample of Austrian districts can be said to be both typical in that extremely large or unusually small districts are nor included as well as homogenous, as no boundaries between natural regions are bisected (see figure 8). This sample of 7 percent of all districts provides the basis, and indeed the starting point for a proper understanding of the Austrian landscape, of landscape planning and of landscape change.

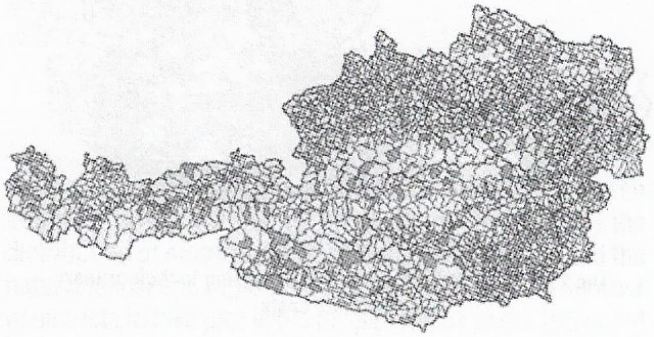

Figure 8:
Stratified random sample of 7% of districts in proportion to the 54 homogenous polygons

The range of comparative and investigative projects which can be undertaken with this relatively large range of different and yet largely comparable districts is almost limitless and is bounded only by the scope of the investigators imagination. Some of the main questions to be addressed relate to the actual aspects of landscape change, the effectiveness of previous planning documents in directing change, the perceptions of landscape change on the part of the various actors within each district, and the differences in these changes and their perception within different natural landscape regions across the country.

The Landscape Glass' (Die Landschaftsbrille) - a pilot project at district level

In order to investigate the potential for presenting the landscape issues to a wider public at district level in order to use them as the sort of tool to increase both the amount and the quality of public participation, a pilot project was carried out in the context of a student project a couple of years ago. This project took one Lower Austrian district, St. Peter in der Au, which borders on Upper Austria (see figure 9), as an example and aimed to look at the historic development of the landscape over time, as well as to present possible options for future change based on scenarios which were

developed on the basis of talking to typical actors within the various different landscape regions of the district. This is in fact not one of the sample districts selected by means of the process described above, but the choice of this district and its subsequent analysis of its landscape did coincidentally serve to confirm the basic validity of the forest yield map as a useful proxy for a landscape classification, because the boundary between two forest yield zones, which split the district of St. Peter in the Au into two (and was one of the reasons for its rejection) was picked up very accurately in the landscape analysis of the district which the students carried out. The only difference was that they identified three regions, one of which being a transition region between the two main types defined as the forest yield zones. This difference can simply be explained in terms of the different scales at which the district and the national map were considering: the size of the intermediate zone at the large scale could be said roughly to correspond with the thickness of the line drawn between the two zones on the small scale national map.

Figure 9:
Location of the district of St. Peter in der Au in Lower Austria

The first stage of the project involved characterising the landscape of the district in the form of a detailed survey. This helped to identify more closely the nature of the natural landscape regions which were defined for the country as a whole at a much larger scale and to identify the main landscape features and elements which went to make up the cultural landscape types which had evolved on them. The landscape classification for the district was then draped over a digital elevation model of the region in order that the topographical context could be properly understood. In the internet is was possible for users to explore the landscape of the district in an interactive 'fly-by'. Within the 3D digital terrain model 2D panorama photographs were also embedded at various points, in order to be able to visualise important parts of the landscape from the users' perspective.

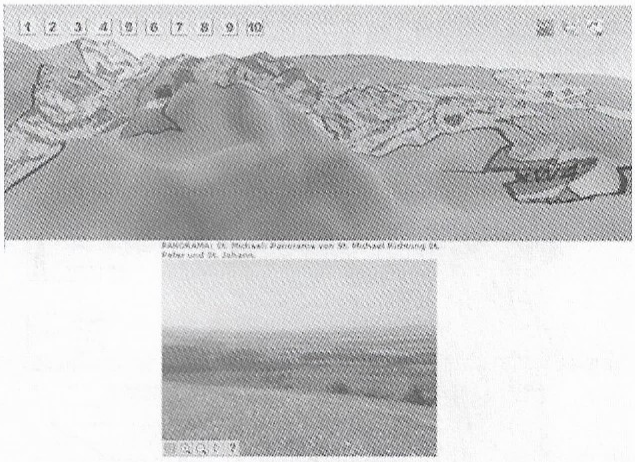

Figure 10:
Presentation of the landscape classification of St Peter in der Au

When the nature of the current structure and features of the cultural landscape had been established and presented in map form, the next stage was to address the question of how this situation was itself the product of past landscape change. The comparative analysis and interpretation of a series of historical maps made it possible to reconstruct the development of the landscape within the district over a time period from the time of the Franzsisäische Kataster in the early 19th century to a possible scenario in 2020 four stages. The intermediate stages being taken from an historic map dated 1920 and from the time of the first land use plan in 1978. By using a consistent means of representing the different land uses on these plans the changes in land use over this period could be rendered clearly and understandable to a lay audience.

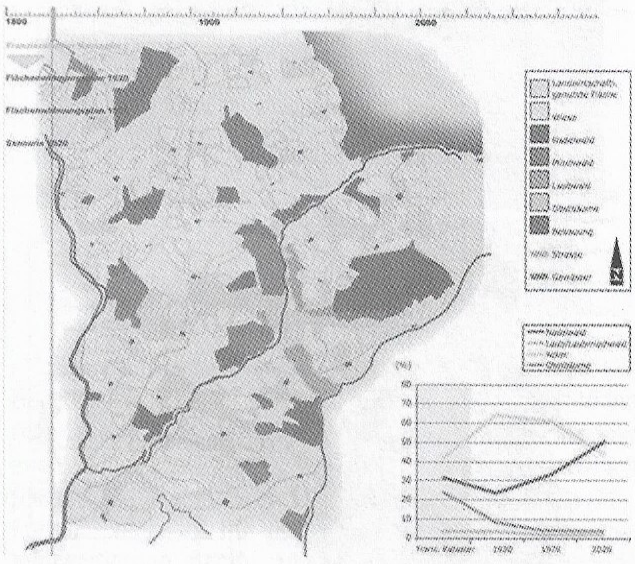

Figure 11:
Landscape of St Peter in der Au in the early 19th century

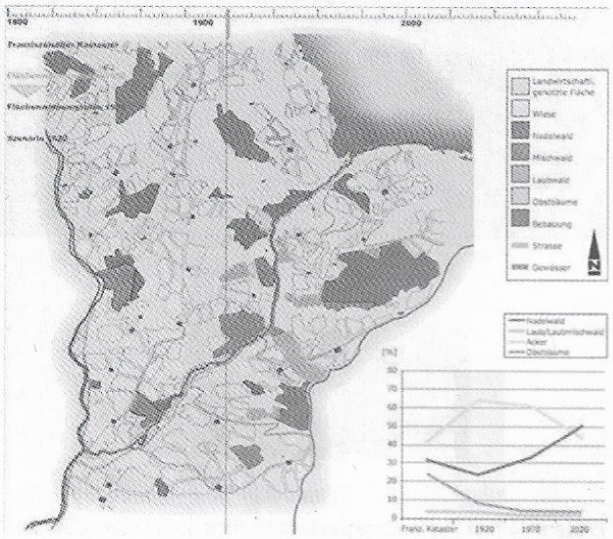

Figure 12:
Landscape of St Peter in der Au in 1920

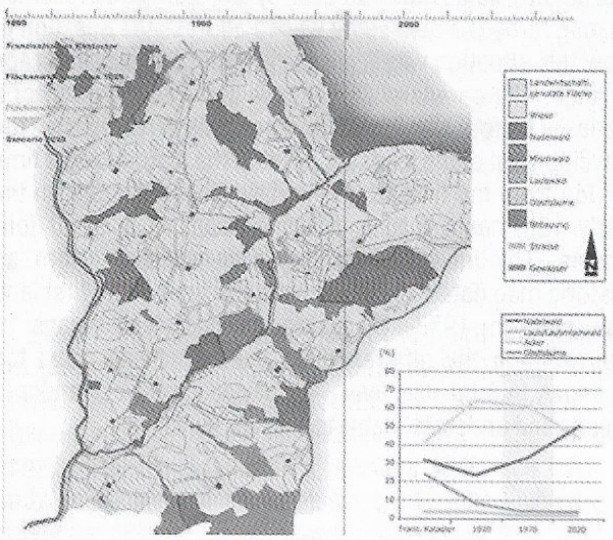

Figure 13:
Landscape of St Peter in der Au in 1978

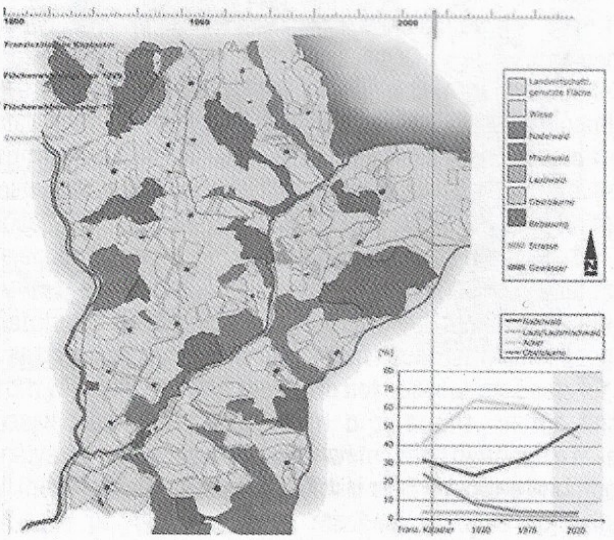

Figure 14:
Scenario for the landscape of St Peter in der Au in 2020

The scenarios for the year 2020 were developed on the basis of interviews undertaken with farmers owning and or managing land within the various landscape regions defined during the initial part of the study. Their experience of recent changes in relation to wider market pressures, together with their own personal situations as their assessments of what this would lead to over the next decades in terms of their management of the landscape were the basis for making predictions about how the landscape would change on a parcel by parcel basis within their own farms. This information was then used to develop a broader scenario for the whole of the landscape zone based on these observations and looking at the likely results in the context of the landscape changes which had already happened over the past 180 years.

Alternative future scenarios were postulated on the basis of these possible changes and these were then visualised in order to be able to present the public with different options for landscape change as a means to elicit their reactions as part of the participation process. All this information, together with a series of interactive three-dimensional representations of the landscape of the district were presented in the form of a web site in order to provide a basis for the wider and deeper public participation that was being sought. Due to the time limitations under which the project had to be completed, however, it was unfortunately not possible to actually get any public feedback with which to test the effectiveness of this form of presentation of the issues of landscape change and evolution for the general public. However the general experience gained suggested that the objective of presenting complex and sophisticated information about the development of local landscapes in the form of interactive web sites was quite feasible, and would especially lend itself to development and refinement in the context of a long-term project, such as that which is intended within the context of the ALPEN Programme.

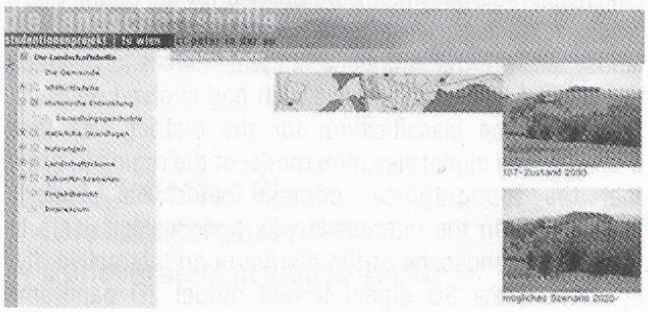

Figure 15:
Presentation of future scenarios for part of the St Peter in der Au landscape

The further development of the ALPEN Project as a departmental web site Following the testing of the basic approach within the context of the 'Landschaftsbrille' Project, work has been started to develop a systematic approach to the presentation of the full set of sample districts for a province on the department web site (www.landscape.tuwien.ac.at/ (Fig 16)

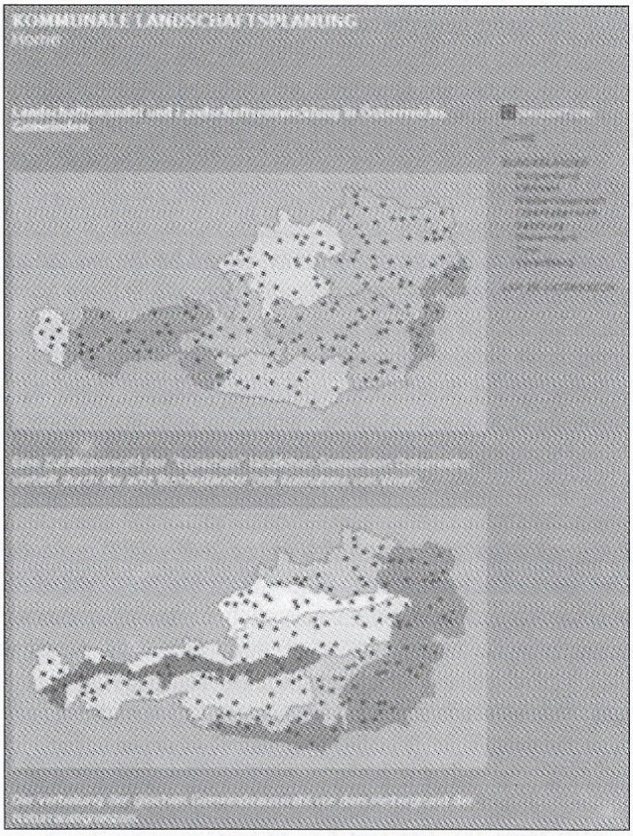

Figure 16:
Main web page of the ALPEN Project

Here the distribution of the case study districts is illustrated both with relation to their location within the administrative provinces (Fig. 17) and to the 'natural landscape regions' (Fig. 18)

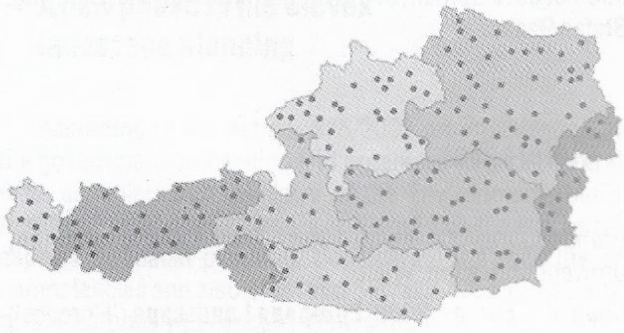

Figure 17:
Location of case study districts in relation to the administrative boundaries of the 9 Austrian provinces

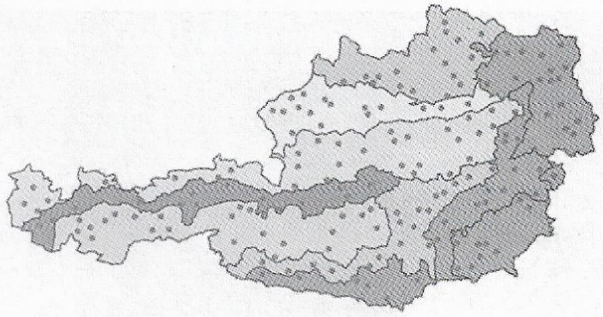

Figure 18:
Location of the same case study districts in relation to the 'natural' boundaries between different forest yield years.

The case study province chosen to start work on the project was Burgenland, partly as one of the smaller Austrian provinces and partly because of its relative closeness to Vienna, where the project is based (Fig. 19). At this stage the basic presentation of the selected case study districts for the whole of Austria has been presented, and is displayed both in relation to their distribution between the provinces and across the natural landscape regions (as defined by the forest yield zones).

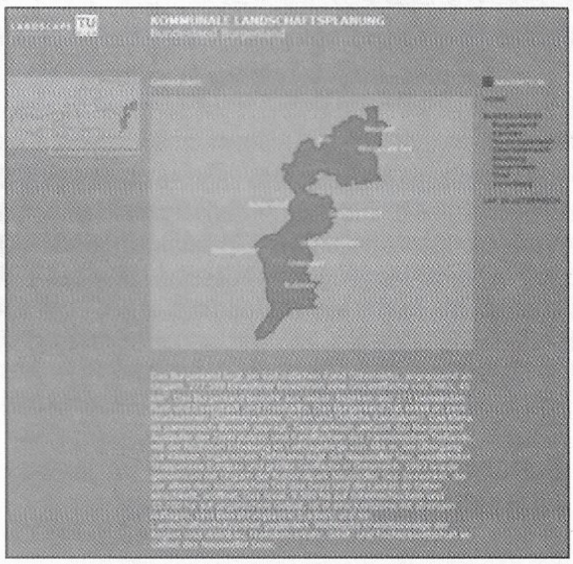

Figure 19:
Location of the selected case study districts within the province of Burgenland.

Beyond this a series of sub-pages for the province of Burgenland has been prepared in which the location of the nine case study districts (out of the total of 171) is indicated and which act as links to a series of detailed pages in which the basic data relating to each district is presented (Fig. 20). Further stages of the project plan to first develop this information in depth, and to collect together historic landscape information for the districts in a similar manner to that which was done in the Landschaftsbrille project. This will be expanded to cover other provinces as resources allow (currently this project has no formal funding and is being carried out with the department's own limited resources).

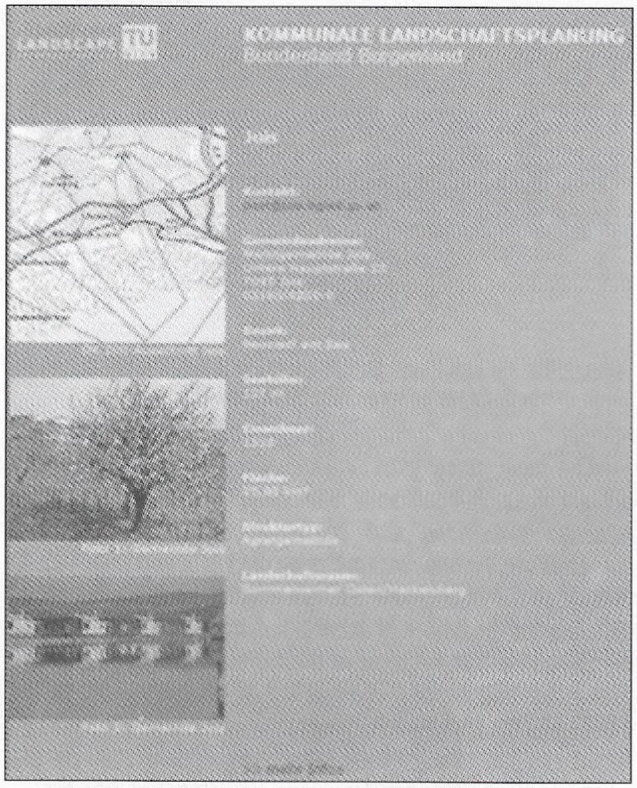

Figure 20:
Initial presentation of landscape data relating to the case study district of Jois

Beyond this the intention is to begin to involve both the provincial planning and nature conservation authorities and the local district politicians and administrations in the project in order to begin to develop the basis for establishing the interactive and participatory elements of the project. This stage has, however, not yet been reached.

Outlook and possible internationalisation of the project

One of the advantages of a grass roots 'landscape planning without landscape planning' approach is that the ideas developed do not have to be linked to any specific form of national or indeed local legislation. This is useful in the Austrian context where there is no unified approach to landscape planning issues within the formal planning and conservation system due to the differences in provincial legislation, but for the same reason the approach which has been developed here could also lend itself to being applied in neighbouring countries as a basis for developing an international landscape planning network as a way of exchanging information and approaches as well as examples of best practice. There is also a potential wider application with regard to the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in the landscape planning process as is called for within the European Landscape Convention.

By sidestepping the issue of the statutory framework to concentrate on the substantive issues of landscape planning, such an approach as outlined here can also provide an ideal basis for the development of international comparative studies on the effects of landscape change and on the reactions and opinions of stakeholders to this.

One precondition which would make this process easier, if there was an opportunity, would be the existence of trans-frontier landscape classification. While there exist some landscape ecological studies at the European level, which have indeed a potential as forming the basis for more broadly based landscape character studies, there are currently no such studies which cross international boundaries as is well illustrated by recent attempts which have been made to bring together national landscape character studies and present them next to each other on a European map Ministrie van LNV et al, 2005). Pilot projects for such studies could also be a further valuable development of the above approach in an international context.

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