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Research Article

The forgotten rural landscapes of Central and Eastern Europe

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Abstract

Interactions between nature and man – the underlying forces in landscape – have over time caused diversity. Usually, geographers and landscape ecologists deal with spatial diversity; in this paper, we would like to also consider temporal diversity. We argue that Central and Eastern European landscapes (using the examples of Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia) are much more diverse in time (layers) than Western European ones. This difference requires the use of different indicators in order to measure and study landscapes and special problems, threats, and possibilities of management and future development – but most important is the consideration of different perceptions. We also show that this diversity reduces the readability of landscapes, creating miscommunication and a transformation of meanings. We further argue that the link between humans and landscape is lost in Central and Eastern European countries due to temporal diversity, and that this link will be created anew in a globalizing world. To overcome alienation, we need slightly different classifications/typologies for each country in this region, with the aim of a sound future management of cultural landscapes.

Introduction

In the early 1990s, human geographers (see e.g. Keisteri 1990; Jones 1991; Duncan 1994, 1995) debated intensively over the term *landscape*: what it means, what is in it and what is out of it, and what the proper use of it is. They pointed out that (a) the term *landscape* hides several layers of meaning; (b) the term *landscape* contains several unsolved conflicts (such as collective control vs. private ownership, objective vs. subjective, mental vs. material); (c) the terms *landscape* and *nature* are interlinked; and (d) landscapes can be understood only in their historic context (Jones 1991). At the same time, in the realm of landscape ecology only some scientists asked that holistic principles be applied to landscape studies (e.g. Naveh and Lieberman 1994; Antrop 2000; Antrop and van Eetvelde 2000). However, due to political pressure and management problems, cultural issues are also increasingly gaining importance in landscape ecology. In turn, cultural geographers who tried to ignore nature in landscape studies are also acknowledging that landscapes are about ecology and semiosis (Cosgrove 2003). The need for studying nature and culture together in landscapes seems to be evident.

This paper focuses on rural landscape change and its meaning in Central and Eastern Europe. This area has had a different history from the rest of Europe, so obviously the landscapes – both in terms of concepts, meanings and appearance – should be different. Also, there seems to be the idea that in this region the traditional rural landscapes still survive, while in the more industrialized Western Europe they have mostly been wiped out by urban sprawl (Antrop 2004), the loss of open spaces, and industrial development.

Sometimes we tend to forget about the past in landscapes, and focus only on the future. Different times have created different visible patterns that reflect historic development, but which have also changed people's attitudes towards management and planning, as to whether the natural or cultural parts of landscapes were to be appreciated. Decades of control from outside has influenced farmers' willingness to participate in planning, or has even led to them neglecting to plan as such altogether. This neglect might easily result in ground being lost, and in the developing of an attitude that everything is possible, with the accompanying negative repercussions on the very character of a landscape.

We endeavor to find answers to two questions. First, how has this inner forgotten willingness to cherish traditional rural landscapes – which represent the outcome of past generations' struggles to combine nature and culture – and misinterpretations from the outside influenced the landscapes of Central and Eastern Europe? Second, do we need different typologies or classifications for the sound management of these landscapes? We will answer these questions by explaining the term *landscape* in the specific Central and Eastern European context, exploring the time layers in these landscapes, and then discussing the results of landscape change in terms of landscape practice and scenery in regards to a sound future management.

Rural landscapes of Central and Eastern Europe

The first question asked in the previous chapter points to the old dichotomy of the meanings of cultural and natural in the landscape, i.e. whether the natural and the cultural traits in the landscape are opposite or complementary. Let us first study the everyday use of the term *landscape*.

In everyday use, the term *landscape* is very often understood as a portion of earth/land, the appearance of that land and its view, picture or scenery (see Table 1). The focus seems to be clearly on nature, i.e. landscape is understood primarily as nature, or at least this is what has been taught to people in school. However, if asked, cultural issues are revealed as being extremely important – but are considered less significant because of the subjective and personal character of these notions. Also, that there seems to be no notion of time in the everyday use of the term *landscape*. Apparently, the rapid changes have not been recognized yet in the everyday language.

Scientifically, there have been several ways of defining landscape (see e.g. Sauer 1925; Jones 1991, 2003; Antrop 2000; Olwig 2002; Bastian and Steinhardt 2003; BelGEO 2004; Claval 2005; Luginbühl and Pedroli in this issue). Keisteri (1990) showed that landscapes consist of material and mental parts and the underlying factors behind these two parts that steer change. Widgren (2004) pointed out that, besides being handled as a resource or scenery, landscapes are important also as a means of communication: landscapes contain customary law, social justice and order, land rights, and everyday practices (Bourdieu 1977). This communication value is further stressed by Lowenthal (1999). As he put it, all that is human is irreversible. We pass on to the next generation our institutional structures and our memories. Lowenthal (1997) also listed three reasons for considering landscape as patrimony. First, landscapes are material, as they are perceived using all of our senses, which make them tangible. Second, landscape is used as a container for a large variety of artifacts, giving them a broader context and hence enhancing their singular values. Finally, landscape is the most fixed and immovable phenomenon in our environment; this quality makes landscape feel secure and reliable.

In Central and Eastern Europe, this stability is illusive. Cosgrove (1984) has described how every socio-economic formation tries to create its own landscape, by wiping off the land the uses and symbolic values of previous formations and replacing these with its own. A formation should here be understood as a set of political, economic, social, cultural and also ecological conditions prevailing in a society. In Western Europe, the change from one formation to another has been

Table 1. The meaning of landscape in everyday use.

Language	Meaning
Estonian *maastik*	*Maa* in Estonian means land, earth, soil, countryside/rurality and country; the suffix '-*stik*' indicates that it is a modern word, originating from the beginning of the 20th century. There have been no investigations as to whether this concept had been used before. The term came into usage through literature and paintings 1. *Maastik* signifies some sort of a territory, of abstract (hierarchical) as well as concrete size 2. 'Landscape' can also refer to a typical part of territory (e.g. coastal landscape) 3. ''Landscape'' can be seen as a visual expression and appearance of the surroundings, a certain organization of space (mosaic) 4. Lately there has been a shift in meaning, and now we are talking about political landscapes, Estonian music landscapes, etc.
Polish *krajobraz*	The term *krajobraz* constitutes of two words: *kraj*, which means 'country', and *obraz*, which means 'picture' or 'view'. So, *krajobraz* can be directly translated from Polish into English as 'picture of country' The term 'landscape' means: view, picture or scenery of close surroundings (neighborhood); physiognomy of the Earth's surface
Hungarian *tàj*	1. *Tàj* means a territory (not to too large an extent) where geographical factors and vegetation are uniform or coherent (e.g. the landscape of the Danube, a hilly landscape), and the visible nature around us (e.g. a winter landscape) 2. 'Landscape' refers to environs (e.g. the environs of someone's house), or countryside 3. *Tàj* also refers to a part of the human body, around the heart or abdomen
Slovenian *pokrájina*, also *pokrajína*	1. *Pokrájina* means a territory varying in size, usually determined by some common features (e.g. a fertile landscape, a tropical landscape) 2. 'Landscape' can be a higher administrative unit in a country, and also an ecclesiastic church landscape 3. 'Landscape' is also an art painting representing a landscape. 4. Over time, 'landscape' has gained a weakened meaning, e.g. 'to open to somebody a landscape of someone's soul'

gradual, and transitions (such as from feudalism to capitalism) took decades, if not centuries. As well, each formation has had time to develop its own landscapes. A political organization defines land use patterns that reflect the legal system of the country (see Olwig 2002; Mitchell 2003). Through arts and communication, a landscape ideal is created, and that later becomes the yardstick for policy and tourism. It contains memories of the past (so vividly described by Schama 1995) and preconditions for the future. These representations also explain whether, for example, a new mine should be understood as a sign of progress or as an environmental hazard. So, we are talking about urban and industrial landscapes, and referring back to the agricultural landscapes of the early 19th century when speaking of traditional landscapes (Vos and Meekes 1999; Antrop 2000).

Unlike Western Europe, the central part of the continent has in only the 20th century witnessed three rapid turnovers (see Table 2) from one formation to another. The changes of the 1990s have been best documented in terms of land-use changes and their consequences – much less is known and remembered about the transformations regarding meanings and symbolic landscape values, as well as about the results of the former turnovers.

The result of these modifications is four time layers in the Central and Eastern European landscapes. Each of these layers has its own values and meanings that were decoded when the socio-economic formation that created them changed. We can speak of imperial landscapes created prior to 1918, when the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires were at their peaks. This was followed by the emergence of national states, the increase of nationalist values in Estonia, Poland and Slovenia and a sentiment of loss and grief in Hungary, which lost two-thirds of its former territory after World War I. The post-World War II eras brought forth socialist values, scenery, practices, ecology and representations that were in some places intermixed with the remnants of previous ones (such as in the case of Polish private farming). The 1990s brought along another turn with a return to the West, a rapid decline of agricultural practices, and a new recoding of the meaning of the landscapes. Sometimes such turnovers accelerate or slow down processes that would happen anyway,

Table 2. Socio-economic changes in Central and Eastern Europe during the 20th century.

Time	Major historical developments	Phases of rural landscape development			
		Estonia	Hungary	Poland	Slovenia
Since May 2004	EU accession	Capitalist economy phase: large and specialized private farm landscapes, tourist and eco-farms			
1990–2004	Estonia, Hungary and Poland gained independence; disintegration of Yugoslavia	Phase of post-socialist market economy: private farming restored, differentiation of countryside, abandonment of rural lifestyles			
1945–1990s	Enforcement of communist regime, changes in state borders	Socialist economy phase: collective farms		Socialist economy phase: both collective and private farms	Socialist economy phase: collective farms
1920–1940	Estonia and Poland gained independence; Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory in 1920 via the Trianon treaty; Slovenia was ruled by Yugoslavia and Italy	Capitalist economy phase: private farm landscapes			
Prior to 1920s	Disintegration of empires	Early capitalist economy phase: estates and private farm landscapes, land consolidation			

e.g. modernization, industrialization, urbanization, globalization and tourism.

The case studies

We have used four case studies (Figure 1, textboxes 1–4) to explore the ways that past landscapes are forgotten, and which parts of them are remembered. All cases have a slightly different focus, as they are also meant to illustrate the internal diversity, both cultural and natural, of the vast region often called Central and Eastern Europe. In all cases, we have taken an historical descriptive approach, relying mostly on available texts, but have also used interviews, questionnaires and text analysis to show the different destiny of landscapes and the resulting consequences for the present and future.

The Setu case in Estonia illustrates the rise and fall of local traditions and self-confidence through different time periods. The traditional landscape, once with a neglected symbolic value, received new meaning during times of independence for the country – seen as a boost for their identity by the local people, then later became 'ideologically wrong' and got recoded once again. At the same time, this shows that the stronger the ideological pressure or threats from outside, the more the Setu people value their landscape and everything connected to it.

Figure 1. Location of case study areas.

Textbox 1: The case of Setu, Estonia (based on Alumäe et al. 2003; Palang et al. 2000; Sooväli et al. 2003b).

Setu (ca. 1500 km^2) is a region that has belonged to Russia and Estonia, and today is divided between these two. The people of Setu are a mixture of the scattered Estonians who started belonging to Pskov province in the 13th century (while the rest of Estonia was governed by the Teutonic Order), joined later by refugees from Southeastern Estonia. The cultural traits of Setu are of Russian Orthodox origin, but the dialect they speak is more similar to the Estonian language. The Setu region is situated between the Eastern and Western churches and between Slavic and Finno-Ugric tribes.

In the beginning of the 20th century, Estonians regarded the Setus as lower class (with their communal ownership of land, the first schools being founded in the end of the 19th century (Valk 1996), an absence of self-consciousness and their reluctance towards accepting anything new – as well, own-brewed liqueur was mentioned as a problem already back then), although intellectuals between the two World Wars found them important because of their potential to throw some light onto the Finno-Ugric past. The official politics at the time was to 'win them back' for the Estonian side.

During the Soviet period, the school system supported the written Estonian language and the viewpoint that religion belonged in the past. Still, in the beginning of the 1950s, the churches of Obinitsa and Meeksi were built, partly during the nights – whereas younger people demolished small wooden chapels. The old generation lived according to traditional beliefs, but younger people left the marginal region of Setu; as they did not want to seem old-fashioned, and concealed their origin (Valk 1996). Tourism brochures stressed only new elements of the cultural landscapes.

Since the 1990s, with the Estonian independence movement, the Setus have been re-discovering their roots and traditions.

Textbox 2: The case of Roztocze, Poland (based on Skowronek 1999; Skowronek et al. 2003).

Roztocze (2391 km^2) is a clearly-determined geographic region situated on the Vistula and Bug River interfluve, belonging partly to Poland and partly to Ukraine. The loessial western part is called the Goraj and Szczebrzeszyn Roztocze, the sandy and forest-covered central part is called the Tomaszow Roztocze, and the southern part is named Rawa Roztocze (Buraczynski 1997).

Suitable natural conditions have attracted different nations to the Roztocze region. Ethnical diversification of the population of Roztocze manifested itself in the 14th century, and since the 16th century, Jews and Armenians have arrived in the area.

After Poland regained independence in 1918, no significant changes in the ethnical structure and landscape of the Roztocze took place. The religious structure reflected the ethnical one: 62.4% of inhabitants were Catholics, 24.1% were members of the Russian Orthodox Church, 0.4% were Greek Catholics, 0.01% were Protestants and 13.1% were Jews. A considerably different ethnical picture formed in the eastern part, where 60% of the population was Ukrainian. In the religious structure, Greek-Catholics dominated (Town Index for the Polish Republic, Vols. 4 and 13, 1924).

The makeup of the Roztocze population changed dramatically as a consequence of the events of World War II. Jewish settlements in Poland virtually ceased to exist (Chalupczak, Browarek 1998). In accordance with contemporary political principles, Poland aspired at the time to be a nationally homogenous country. The main centers of the Ukrainian people were incorporated into the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic. Those who stayed were resettled by Polish communist authorities to the so-called 'Western and Northern Lands'. Owing to those events, several dozen villages and hamlets in Roztocze became totally depopulated and re-afforested. Extraordinarily, land ownership has not changed there since World War II, and traditional agriculture has outlasted collectivism. A quite different situation can be observed in Rawa Roztocze. Former landowners were forcibly displaced, and their lands were incorporated into large collective state-owned land holdings.

Contemporary Roztocze is an area where unique natural and cultural values have survived, characterized by poor industrialization, an irregular settlement network, a low urbanization rate and the prevalence of traditional agriculture in land management. Due to the high rates of unemployment in the area, young people tend to emigrate to towns and abroad. There are characteristics that testify to the cohabitation and intermingling of the Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish populations. Since the early 1990s, after substantial political reforms, the people's perception of cultural heritage has started to change. The role and significance of cultural heritage (i.e. synagogues, catholic, uniate and orthodox churches, as well as cemeteries, former countryside architecture, archeological and historical monuments, unique land use patterns, and folk traditions) has been perceived as being very important to local society. Moreover, regional authorities would like to improve the present unfavorable economic situation through the development of tourism activities and the introduction of agri-environmental policies.

Textbox 3: The case of Kras, Slovenia (based on Urbanc 2002a, 2002b).

Kras is a large limestone plateau approximately 500 km^2 in size that drops in altitude from the southeast (500 m) to the northwest (95 m). In spite of its less favorable natural conditions, it has always been inviting for settlement due to its proximity to the sea. Slovenes settled here in the beginning of the Middle Ages, absorbing the remnants of the Romanized population and keeping the established settlement pattern. The influences of various ethnic, economic, and social spaces met and intertwined here. Kras experienced various forms of government, with different divisions into administrative and ecclesiastical units. It was the intersection of three lingual territories – the ruling class was of German and Italian origin (and briefly French), while the core population was Slovene (Rejec Brancelj 1999).

Kras, as a junction to Austria's only port – Trieste –, flourished economically with the rest of the Monarchy of the Habsburg Empire. But the Industrial Revolution (a railway in 1857, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1859) disintegrated the traditional agrarian society. Accessibility and the immediate vicinity of Trieste were the reasons that the study of karst forms and phenomena began in Kras, which made it famous around the world. Due to its links with Trieste, Slovene national awareness was poorly developed, although the use of the Slovene language in elementary schools and public offices was guaranteed.

The period between the world wars, when Kras belonged to Italy, was marked by ethnic, economic, ideological, and linguistic pressures that resulted in economic stagnation, the further collapse of farms, and intensive emigration. But again, affluent Trieste was able to act as a 'shock absorber', helping to cushion against severe problems.

After World War II, the territory was divided between Yugoslavia and Italy; the region's capital – Trieste – remained with the Italian side. The period of economic and population decline ended after the border was opened in 1960, when the 'green border' reconnected Slovenia with Western Europe. Commerce with Trieste was revived, and simultaneously this relationship acquired a new dimension, as the people of Trieste began to visit Kras and thus gave tourism a strong boost. The settlement system remained basically unchanged, as did the outward appearance of settlements and houses. To a great extent, agricultural land was cultivated mostly by semi-farmers who clung to traditional farming.

Since 1991, the landscapes suffer from forest overgrowth (Gabrovec and Kladnik 1997), which is the consequence of an abandonment of livestock farming. Large-scale agriculture is not possible due to natural and historical factors. Individual features that reflect the effort and ingenuity of past generations are becoming lost, but wine growing survives, as it has different dynamics of work and it is linked to the local identity and, more recently, with fashion. We can conclude that geopolitical location as a traditional factor significant for the development of the landscape in Kras has been accompanied as of late by trends in lifestyle. Italians and Slovenes alike appreciate the historical and cultural heritage of the region, as well as its Mediterranean-style food and wine culture.

The Roztocze case in Poland shows the legacy of the diverse ethnical composition of the local population. Due to forced resettlements and holocaust, the artifacts in the landscape are gradually losing their meaning for current inhabitants. The physical reality is there, and for the sake of promoting tourism in order to develop the region, new meanings are attached to objects – in order to bare the remembrance of the district's troubled times.

The Kras case in Slovenia shows the significance of state borders and political divisions. Its location on the state's margins has always been a benefit, if not one obstructed by the Iron Curtain. Trieste – despite being on the other side of the state frontier from 1945 onwards – has promoted economic and social development and soothed structural problems. Modern trends in lifestyle reflecting the Mediterranean realm help in supporting agricultural activities and in sustaining cultural landscapes.

The Hungarian case shows the influence of different management regimes on landscape and people. A national park with a clear management practice has supported the emergence of new identities, while parts of the landscape adjacent to the national park suffer from abandonment and marginalization.

Summing the case studies up, they point at the following issues. First, all the cases show how different formations have had different influences on the people and landscape patterns in different countries, despite the fact that the succession of formations has been basically the same. Second, how ideology as an underlying factor determines unfavorable natural conditions as suitable; how changes in geopolitics draw political borders, causing migration and a loss of identity; how trans-boundary landscapes evolve differently, and thus how socio-economic (and political) formations really do matter in daily life. Third, the remains of former formations are not wiped away consciously; rather, they vanish gradually, though some of the physical artifacts regain some value after some time has passed – landscapes are a patrimony. In contrast to the third statement, the

Textbox 4: The case of Fertö-Hanság, Hungary (based on Konkolyné Gyuró 2000; 2002).

The Fertö-Hanság basin, lowland encircled by hills, lies on the northwestern border of Hungary and extends for 60 km^2. The two micro-landscapes of this basin – one around Lake Fertö, and the other neighboring lowland Hanság – once formed a connected lake and marshland. The hilly Fertö landscape, inhabited since the New Stone Age, has more or less maintained its land-use traditions, while the Hanság plains has been greatly transformed, similar to the water-rich floodplains of rivers in all of Europe.

Inhabitants of this region learned to live with and from the waters over several thousand years, despite the great water level oscillation of Lake Fertö and the connected marshland. At the turn of the 18–19th century, Hungary – as part of the feudal Habsburg Empire – was predestined by natural conditions to be the main food producer of the empire. The growing population, the liberation of serfdom and an enlarged market after the abolition of custom taxes in the second half of the 19th century within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy initiated an increasing and more intensive agricultural production. This was the era when river regulation and the reclamation of marshland commenced with great force; the dried-out marshlands and grasslands were rapidly turned into arable land. Nevertheless, the drawbacks of the reclamations soon became evident. The dry peaty soils needed a water supply; thus a new channel system was constructed. Spatial plans and new roads were laid out by engineers, resulting in a totally transformed "modern" landscape structure in the lowlands. Contrary to the hilly borderland of Lake Fertö, the land use structure remained intact.

Land use systems and territorial divisions of work fell to pieces after World War I, as two-thirds of the former Hungarian territory (and 85% of its forests) now belonged to other countries. Hence, afforestation was the most important nation-wide program of this period, and new wood plantations were carried out in the former marshland – consequently, only a small part the original habitat structure of the Hanság was able to survive the human transformation.

After World War II, Hungary came under the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. Villages of the western borderland, along the Iron Curtain, saw a decline in population because of different political and economic constraints. Statistics concerning land use show an increase in grassland, reed, fallow ground and forests. Owing to the peripheral situation, a considerable part of the region retained or regained its semi-natural condition. Gradually, it continued with placing them under protection. Due to the control and management of the National Park areas, the character difference between the protected and non-protected area has been growing considerably.

In the past 10 years, after the opening of the Austrian border, the differences between the Fertö and Hanság landscapes became even more significant. While the Hanság has remained a 'sleeping' area, the Lake Fertö region is clearly flourishing. Many different types of tourism are based on the lake: thermal baths, wine, and authentically-restored historic buildings are in the spotlight. Interests of economic development and nature conservation are often in conflict. The Fertö landscape, on both the Austrian and Hungarian sides, was classified as a cultural landscape of UNESCO's World Heritage list. The greatest challenge of the future is to restore the harmony between the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, as well as between protection and development.

frequent change of formations – including shifts in value systems and the presence of private property – have led people to become more suspicious of change, as conditions in the present and for the future are unstable.

Discussion: time, diversity, detachment, readability and alienation

There are many interesting questions about these changes in time. First, how quickly does change occur? Political changes can happen literally overnight (like the Russian Revolution of 1917) – how long does it take to enforce the visible and functional changes desired by a new power? Second, how do the value systems of different formations correspond to each other? How much of the previous system should be erased, or, in other words, what remains on the blackboard when it is being cleaned? Third, can we understand what was created during a previous formation? Can we read the landscapes of the past? And could this presence of different time layers be one measure of diversity in landscapes? Finally, provided that modernization, industrialization, urbanization, etc., happened anyway, pushing rural people away from the countryside, does this layered structure increase alienation?

Detachment, readability and alienation

Bourassa (1991) has described three levels of landscape experience: biological laws, cultural rules and personal strategies. Detachment is prescribed genetically – we cannot expect that our children will value the same things that we do, and thus generational conflict is universal. A second level of detachment (cultural) can be brought

about artificially through social representations, inscriptions of new meanings to old, new elements in media, and controversy between official ideology and traditional lifestyle. This is the very case in all of our case studies. A third level of detachment (individual) occurs when people are separated from land by the ruling power, local inhabitants leave or are forced to leave home, and outsiders immigrate, such as in the case of Poland. In Central and Eastern Europe, this third level became almost a cultural level of detachment: for example, tens of thousands of people were deported or forced to leave the country as new borders were settled after World War II.

All three levels of detachment combined with too-frequent formation changes boost alienation, which is urged on even further by other socio-economic processes like urbanization and industrialization.

Formations in Central and Eastern Europe have changed so frequently in recent times that one generation has witnessed several formations during their lifetime, which is unprecedented. Fast, sharp (in magnitude and direction) and frequent landscape changes (Antrop 2000) cause misunderstandings and incomprehension in landscape 'reading' (*sensu* Widgren 2004) – think of the Setu's rise and fall and the Roztocze's synagogues. Time treats the visible and invisible aspects of landscapes differently – sometimes objects are preserved, like in Kras and Roztocze, and sometimes meanings (e.g. learning the traditions of the Setu). Remaining visible artifacts from previous formations may find new meanings in upcoming generations, due to changed socio-economic formation (Alumäe et al. 2003), especially in regards to developing tourism.

However, barriers emerge between different time layers in the landscape. Although political changes might be rapid, formation changes do not bring along changes overnight. Change starts with affecting valuations, as a new power starts showing new models to be implemented, and new legal systems start rearranging landscape patterns (as explained by Olwig 2002 and Mitchell 2003). There is a certain time lag during which old borders are still being remembered and old values kept alive. However, after some time nobody remembers how it was before the political change – how the previous system functioned, and why some forms were created. The past becomes a foreign country, as stated by Lowenthal (1985) – which means that in order to correctly understand the driving forces of a previous formation, i.e. Widgren's (2004) context, we need to know how it functioned. And this knowledge tends to be lost during formation changes, thus encouraging detachment.

Alienation evokes a lack of traditional landscape identity, and therefore also environmental problems. Detrimental landscape transformations can be observed in numerous places: illegal dumping sites, poor 'socialist style' architecture, inappropriate land planning and management, deficient location of industry and other objects, etc. As a consequence, people are not concerned with their close surroundings, and they do not identify themselves with so-called post-modern landscapes. This raises questions regarding why, how and what to protect in landscapes – objects or processes (Gustavsson and Peterson 2003)?

Ties with the past – overcoming alienation

Can the countries of Central and Eastern Europe overcome alienation, or at least cope with it? Landscape is an instrument, because even today people have more of an emotional attachment to it than they have to a formal region or to nature as such. Landscape is formed by humans, and thus people consider it as a source of life and as a result of their own work. People expect that landscape is a part of their life, and that they are part of the landscape, a process often called dwelling (Relph 1986; Ingold 2000). It was – sometimes, it still is – a strong identity-feeling. When people were artificially detached from their homeland (through means of policy or media), landscape lost its life-supporting and emotional role in people's thinking. At the same time, landscape as it once was plays a significant role for those living abroad. Time erases the bad; landscapes of the past are remembered as something pure, clean, tidy, and golden (see e.g. Palang and Paal 2002).

At the same time, today people are less connected to their land as they used to be in the past. In former times, land was the main or only source of income for the majority of people, so they were strongly associated with their property (land or landscape). Nowadays, due to economic and technological changes, migration (daily, seasonal, permanent) is a normal process. People travel in order to find a job, education and – generally

speaking – better living conditions. Now agriculture for a number of reasons does not constitute the main (profitable) business for the European population (about 5% of total civilian employment is involved in agricultural production in the EU). However, ties to the landscape can assume forms other than agriculture. It is an important part, but urbanization has as a consequence a strong desire to recover the landscape as a site for recreation. Landscape is not equated with land and countryside. Tourism can be a way to show people the diverse functions (life support, etc.) of landscapes.

As the Central and Eastern parts of Europe have more natural areas and rural population left, they may serve the need for traditional rural landscapes for outsiders (see e.g. Luginbühl and Pedroli in this issue; Pinto Correia et al. in this issue) from more-urbanized Western Europe, as well as for insiders for actuating local identity forming. We cannot stop technological innovations (even in isolation) like haystacks packed in plastic appearing in our fields, and it is still more desirable and easier for locals to see these plastic haystacks than to see fallow or overgrown fields. This view is also supported by future scenario studies among locals (Palang et al. 2000).

Does change matter? On the one hand we want to preserve the past – or an illusion of it – as part of our identity. New landscape practices definitely create new patterns and new scenery. Austrian houses in Hungary and Scandinavian houses in Estonia indicate economic welfare for the locals. At the same time they fall out of the context, and do not fit in with the traditional practices so much appreciated by outsiders. So the dilemma stands as to whether we should try to preserve the appearance of the landscape typical of a certain time period, or whether we should simply focus on sustaining the idea behind the landscape (see Gustavsson and Peterson 2003 and Pinto Correia et al. in this issue for more). Or perhaps the future lies with identifying the deep structure of natural and cultural systems that can provide a robust basis for sustaining the space of place at a regional scale, as Swaffield and Primdahl (in this issue) put it.

Conclusions

The paper shows how quickly changing socio-economic formations have encouraged alienation, as people are not able to identify themselves with too-rapidly-changing postmodern landscapes. The time barriers between the formations are so thick that people do not understand the context of the former formations; meanwhile, the time layers are also so thin that new landscapes (both material and mental) have had no time to become traditional. Similar processes have also happened in the rest of the world, so we can argue that the rapid changes of the 20th century have merely increased the speed of changes otherwise caused by urbanization, globalization and other societal processes.

One cannot restore the old links, as the contexts, processes, and functions (Widgren 2004) in the landscape that have changed with time. We should aim at creating a new link, through making the landscape matter again. To achieve that, several ways are possible. One of the options might be rethinking the everyday use of the term landscape.

The biggest problem seems to lie with keeping people in place, giving them sources of living, and thereby letting them attach new meanings to their landscape. And again, this is the constant struggle between a landscape that signifies possibilities for better economic wealth for the insiders, and a landscape that provides possibilities for amenities and power play for the outsiders.

Both in Roztocze and Fertö-Hansag, young people leave their villages for towns, in search of higher incomes. Kras, on the other hand, shows how economic prosperity has been inducing a strong relation between humans and the landscape; though this prosperity comprehends completely new dimensions (see also Morris and Evans 2004). Among agricultural activities that previously shaped this landscape, only wine growing still exists; and others, in spite of decline, have supported modern economic development.

In order to maintain the existing landscapes, a number of actions taken by local, national and European authorities are needed. They include the appropriate assessment of natural and cultural values and their incorporation into feasible land management plans. These plans should also take into account the enhancement of the social and economic conditions of local populations. In essence, this is connected with the notion of 'sustainable development'. The preservation of culturally and environmentally-friendly landscapes depends upon the availability of financial resources and local participation.

However, there is a great degree of uncertainty as to the intensity and direction of the potential changes described above. In this context, the European Union should play a significant role through its agri-environmental policy. Regional authorities are also important – they should take care of regional cultural inheritance using proper and coherent land use planning tools and techniques. Legal and planning mechanisms are usually in place; it is just a question of the time required for new formations to stabilize themselves.

Are there any implications for research? As the past is so much present in the Central and Eastern European landscapes, finding ways to maintain this diversity and creating suitable typologies and indicators for policy assessment is one of the ways forward for future studies. A researcher should always be aware of the multiple understandings of the notion of landscape, as they differ between languages, interest groups and academic backgrounds. Another issue is to be kept in mind, namely the historic contexts that enable us to understand better how a landscape 'works' and therefore to predict possible future development considering current economical, social and political realms. How to maintain and preserve local landscape heritage as a part of a wider European heritage and keep a close link between humans and landscapes?

Finally, attention should be paid to development of transdisciplinary methods of cultural landscape assessment. Historical geography is much needed to explore the past ecological situations and preconditions for future. Widgren (2004) has shown how historical geographers have tried to find out whether there could be common ways for reading landscapes; Jones (1991) has argued that landscapes can be understood only in their historic context. As a final point, Massey (2001, p. 261) has concluded that 'The argument that one cannot read off process from form has also been an important one within human geography' could be also considered in landscape ecology.

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