

Book Review: Cultural Landscape: Assessment, Protection, Shaping

Cultural Landscape: Assessment, Protection, Shaping is the first monograph volume in a series as part of the international project "Protecting Historical Cultural Landscapes to Strengthen Regional Identities and Local Economies" and is partially funded by the European Union Programme INTERREG III B CADSES. The volume is edited by Jozef Hernik and Jacek M. Pijanowski and provides an overview of projects and research related to understanding landscapes from a cultural perspective. The work is unique because it also includes spatial considerations that contribute to landscape developments and change within cultures.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE Assessment, Protection, Shaping

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This project aims to assess and develop strategies for the preservation and shaping of cultural landscapes. The results can later be used in other regions for similar purposes with idea that spatial technologies and approaches will be used to support these projects. This work also seeks to develop new techniques and methods that can be used for detecting landscape related changes and therefore includes indexes of area significance (IAS) that can be used to provide prescribed methodologies to maintain these unique areas. ECOVAST, a method for landscape identification officially recognised by the Council of Europe is also presented.

In part one, landscape assessment is presented with the beginning article by Krzysztof Koreleski describing systematics and review of the rural land valorisation methods. He points to the earlier work of Naveh and Liebermann who looked at landscapes in a holistic fashion, considering them beyond physical boundaries and aesthetic terms, but to also include spatial, structural-functional and visual dimensions. Several other reviews involving other methods such as general ecological model, landscape ecological planning, AWK Polish method, ABC Canada, man-economy-nature-territorial systems and geoeological approaches are also presented.

Halina Kubowicz, Karol Noga and Jan Szczurek discuss methods for assessing landscape transformation. Cadastral mapping through the use of an Austrian example is discussed and the authors point to the difficulties of using cadastral maps for determining landscape transformation suggesting the mathematical nature of measurement does not fit neatly into cultural transformation, as might be expected. As cartographic mapping progressed and attribute information was added to cadastral products, then settlement patterns, road use and other features could be seen to support transformation. The graphics and maps in the article support the work well and their colour and fidelity is attractive and easily readable, while also showing examples of landscape transformation.

Index methods for landscape valorisation is presented by Urszula Litwin. The landscape can be indexed according to several factors including physiographic, historical, legal, economic and technological factors relating to the construction industry. It is not often that we hear of the last. Indeed, we might consider our present day landscapes and how we are influencing them with the current types of technologies and applications that we are developing and using. Litwin identifies several historical perspectives across Europe and how different nations have assessed and considered indexing over time. The author further presents an overview of how spatial distribution of the variables relating to these indexes are applied before discussing Indexes of Area Significance (IAS) more completely.

Author Arthur Spiegler writes about ECOVAST which evolves from work extending across Europe which attempted to raise awareness in public and government about the common landscape. This work resulted in eight key verbs that are used to understand and implement landscape efforts. Each country is asked to: identify, assess, state objectives for, raise public awareness, protect, manage, celebrate and plan their landscapes. Gernot Stoglener and Jochen Schmid discuss the development of landscapes with respect to Austria and outline future possibilities. A goo overview of the Austrian landscape is presented with respect to agricultural and forestry use.

The Cultural Landscape Project East Thuringia is presented by Catrin Schmidt. A process described as 'levelling off' is creeping across the region whereby unique individual areas are fading and disappearing. This presentation is fascinating for its deep appreciation of the region and the uniqueness of the identifiable cultural images, both visual and social, that constitute the Thuringia landscape.

Part two of the volume addresses issues relating to landscape protection. Austrian landscape strategies and projects are discussed. Authors Reinhold Christian and Ralph Feichtinger identify the region around Harbach as undergoing transformation toward what might be called agricultural eco-development, including a rise in organic farm production and a change toward increasing different cattle breeds.

Other projects in Thuringia, such as the Reinstadt markets, point toward the development of landscape changes based upon the current models of economic, environmental and social development. Biotopes are presented by Korinna Thiem, who looks into the nature of waterway conflicts, their ecological functioning and values. Interesting work on infrastructure and sewerage is discussed by Jan Pawelek which delves into the water supply systems and how sewerage disposal has impacted landscape changes. Additional presentations include work related to hydro-morphological river transformations and issues related to historic waterway changes. Meanwhile natural aspects of landscapes within Poland are discussed and issues like soil and natural vegetation supported by these landscape types is referenced.

Part three of Cultural Landscape: Assessment, Protection, Shaping consists of articles pertaining to shaping the landscape. Jozef Hernik and Grzegorz Olejniczak review the European spatial development perspective which takes a wider view look at the 27 member states of the European Union. In principle spatial development is concerned with maintaining diversity across the Union using a balanced approach. Krzysztof Gawronski presents on the topic of spatial planning as a tool for protecting the landscape and shaping its outcomes. Several issues in the spatial planning process, using a Polish example are discussed. Several other authors discuss such as farm buildings as indicators of cultural diversity, quality of landscapes as culture and development relating to culture.

I found this monograph to be very interesting. The content through different perspectives from different authors provides an opportunity to understand problems, issues and engage discussion on the wider issues of sustainability. Cultural landscapes include many factors and variables that can be used to identify and ensure processes on the landscape maintain an appreciation for diversity, recognising differences among people both historically and into the future. The book is well designed and the graphics support its content exceptionally well. I look forward to reading the next volumes of this series and would encourage others to read this material ☐ you will enjoy it as you learn.