



INCLUDE and the European Landscape Convention

Sustainable development, public involvement in planning processes, holistic approaches, and interdisciplinary co-operation are issues that characterize today's environmental, social and cultural debate. These issues also provide the backbone of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) that has come into force in 2004 and has now been signed by over 25 countries, including Sweden. For more information see: www.coe.int/EuropeanLandscapeConvention.

The ELC and its implementation into Swedish law and practice has been the focus of the annual Autumn Meeting of the Swedish National Heritage Board (RAÄ) (www.raa.se/hostmote). Many of the topics discussed there apply directly to INCLUDE and the further work with the ELC may benefit from our research.

The Landscape Concept

According to the ELC, a landscape is "*an area as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*". Landscapes are a basic component of our natural and cultural heritage. They are a dynamic complex of tangible and intangible values, of structures, functions and meanings that change over time and depend on the eye of the beholder. Protection, management and planning of landscapes entail rights as well as responsibilities for everyone.

The Sector problem

Yet, the landscape concept is hardly acknowledged in Swedish law. There is no single authority that has the overall responsibility for managing and planning landscapes, and the dialogue between the concerned authorities is often limited by economical and administrative constraints of their sector membership.

To implement the ELC in Sweden, we need:

- improved communication among all parties;
- improved understanding of ecological, social, cultural and economic dimensions in landscapes;
- improved public involvement in decision processes;
- integrated planning and management approaches.

Infrastructure planning as best example

The need for interdisciplinary and inter-sector communication and public involvement is most evident in the planning of infrastructure. Since roads and railroads encroach on all kinds of habitats, administrative territories and protected areas, conflicts with user interests, heritage values and environmental quality objectives are inevitable.

Since many years, researchers now involved in INCLUDE together with the Swedish Road and Rail authorities are active in developing adequate landscape approaches to meet the needs of the different planning and management levels of the sector. It is understood, that the traditional focus on designated areas and objects is insufficient to remedy its environmental impact. More attention must be paid to the effects on value and function of landscapes, rather than on structure. Mitigation must relate to environmental quality objectives and sustainability goals.



Photo: A. Seiler



Need for landscape objectives

Sixteen national environmental quality objectives (www.miljomal.nu) define broadly the desired state of the Swedish environment and pinpoint a set of interim targets that shall be achieved in due course. They also provide also framework for developing concrete goals at local and regional level.

However, there is no specific objective for landscape development, nor is the landscape concept clearly recognized as such. Also, public involvement in defining objectives at local level is sparse.

Planning of landscapes – as well as planning of infrastructure – needs concrete and measurable environmental objectives that match the ELC and that can be referred to already at the very start of a new exploitation enterprise.

Forum for co-operation

Trans-sector and trans-disciplinary co-operation is the key to a successful implementation of the ELC in Sweden. INCLUDE supports this dialogue and co-operation by offering a forum where landscape and sustainability issues can be studied and discussed using practical and concrete examples of infrastructure development and management.

INCLUDE Seminar – Feb. 22nd 2007

As one step in this direction, INCLUDE will arrange a seminar concerning landscape objectives, criteria and indicators in the context of transport infrastructure. Invited international speakers will discuss these issues with the participants of the seminar based on an INCLUDE report on this topic.

Invitations to this seminar will be mailed to various authorities and institutes during December 2006.



Photo: A. Seiler

Swedish conference on sustainable landscapes

In response to the discussions held at the Autumn Meeting of the National Heritage Board, INCLUDE advocates a Swedish national conference on sustainable landscapes that should be jointly organised by authorities such as:

- National Heritage Board,
- Environmental Protection Agency,
- National Board of Housing, Building and Planning,
- Swedish Road Administration,
- Swedish National Rail Administration,
- National Board of Fisheries,
- National Board of Forestry,
- National Board of Agriculture,
- Sweden's County Administrations,
- Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

The implementation of the European Landscape Convention in Sweden now lies under the responsibility of the National Heritage Board. We therefore propose that the RAÅ also takes the lead in the preparation of such a national landscape conference.

Further reading related to INCLUDE

- Anonymous 1999. Mål, mått och uppföljning av natur- och kulturvården i transportsystemet - en strategi. - Vägverket, Publ 1999: 171.
- Anonymous 2001a. Infrastruktur för ett långsiktigt hållbart transportsystem. - Regeringens Proposition 2001/02:20.
- Anonymous 2001b. Mål och mått för natur- och kulturvården. - Vägverket Publ 2001:50.
- Eriksson, I.-M. and Skoog, J. 1996. Ecological assessment in the planning of roads and railroads. - Swedish National Road Administration, Publ. 1996:32 and Swedish National Rail Authorities, P 1996:2.
- Nilsson, L. and Sjölund, A. 2003. Targets and measures for consideration of natural and cultural heritage assets in the transport system. - In: Irwin, C. L., Garrett, P., McDermott, K. C. and Rappole, J. H. (eds.), Proceedings of the International Conference on Ecology and Transportation. Center for Transportation and the Environment, North Carolina State University, pp. 626-641.
- Seiler, A. and Eriksson, I.-M. 1997. New approaches for ecological consideration in Swedish road planning. - In: Canters, K., Piepers, A. and Hendriks-Heersma, A. (eds.), Proceedings of the international conference on "Habitat fragmentation, infrastructure and the role of ecological engineering" Maastricht & DenHague 1995. Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, Road and Hydraulic Engineering division, pp. 253-264.
- Seiler, A. and Sjölund, A. 2005. Target-Oriented for Ecologically Sound Road Management in Sweden. - GAIA 14: 178-181.
- Trocme, M., Cahill, S., De Vries, J. G., Farall, H., Folkesson, L., Fry, G. L., Hicks, C. and Peymen, J. 2003. COST 341 - Habitat Fragmentation due to transportation infrastructure: The European Review. - Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

INCLUDE is part of TransportMistra and is jointly funded by the Swedish council on strategic environmental research (MISTRA), the Swedish Road Administration, the Swedish National Rail Administration, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the National Heritage Board, and the Swedish National Board for Fisheries.

For more information visit our homepage:

www.includeMistra.org

