

INSTITUTIONAL AND NORMATIVE ASPECTS, CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE IDENTIFICATION AND PROTECTION OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

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Abstract: As a result of the changes in the concept of cultural heritage, whose content, territorial scope, boundaries and social functions are expanding, today places of memory go beyond an individual monument, memorial, ensemble – they include culinary traditions and routes, heritage cities, intangible values and cultural landscapes. This article reviews and analyzes the development of cultural landscapes as part of cultural heritage and traces the affirmation of the concept of "cultural landscape" in legislative practices and international documents. Emphasis is placed on the case of Bulgaria, the attempts and challenges to identify remarkable Bulgarian cultural landscapes.

Keywords: Cultural Landscapes; Cultural Heritage; Protection; UNESCO; Council of Europe; ICOMOS; ICOM.

Introduction

In recent decades, the concept of cultural heritage has undergone significant changes, which lead to the expansion of its content, territorial scope, boundaries and social functions. Hence, the sites of memory have long transcended the individual monument, memorial, building or specific object to include architectural ensembles, historic areas and towns, cultural routes, intangible cultural heritage and cultural landscapes. The purpose of the article is to shed light on the state of a specific part of the cultural heritage - cultural landscapes by analyzing international documents, legislative practices and the challenges to their implementation in Bulgaria. The significance of the theme stems from the absence of comprehensive research specifically addressing the issue, together with the fact that in 2025, Bulgaria will host the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, which will hold its 47th session here.

In the international scholarly literature, research and studies on cultural landscapes are mainly focused on the following thematic areas - the impact of man on the environment or cultural landscapes as transformed by human activity (Head, 2000), linking nature and culture (Rössler, 2003), (Rössler, 2006), (Flowler, 2003) ecomuseums and cultural landscapes (Riva, 2017), cultural landscapes as a components of a global strategy (Droste, 1995), (Lowenthal, 2007) and on the challenges of their conservation (Mujica, 2003), (Buggey and Mitchell, 2003).

Despite the fact that cultural landscapes represent a large share of cultural heritage, as well as that Bulgaria has ratified all the international conventions of UNESCO and the Council of Europe, which refer to cultural landscapes, the topic remains not so widely researched in Bulgarian scientific literature. At the moment, there are partial studies that consider various problems related to cultural landscapes such as the synergies between cultural corridors, cultural routes and cultural landscapes (Krastev, 2009), (Todorov and Velchev, 2014) cultural landscapes and tourism development (Penerliev, 2021), cultural landscapes as a type of integral heritage (Velkov, 2009), vine-wine cultural landscapes (Obreshkov, 2024) and about the role and importance of the museum for cultural landscapes (Bokova, 2016).

Cultural Landscapes – International Framework, Definitions, Conventions

The definition of a cultural landscape has evolved over time and has a long and varied lineage, including antecedents in geography and ecomuseums (Aplin, 2007). This progression can be traced in international conventions, legal frameworks and institutions that have a key role in protection of cultural landscapes for future generations. The main international organizations that have specifically made reference to the concept of cultural landscapes and contributed to its recognition within their respective mandates are UNESCO, the Council of Europe, ICOM and ICOMOS.

UNESCO

At the international level, the main organization dealing with the identification and protection of cultural landscapes is UNESCO. The first international document declaring the need to protect landscapes is the 1962 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites (UNESCO, 1962)¹. The document emphasizes the aesthetic value of these landscapes and sites, both natural and artificial.

In 1972 UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, 1972)² was adopted. The purpose of the Convention is to ensure the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage of "outstanding universal value". Among the 730 sites are 30 cultural landscapes, which were inscribed under the cultural landscapes categories. The World Heritage Convention contained in essence the idea of cultural landscape in the definition of sites: "*Works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of Outstanding Universal*

¹ Recommendation concerning the Protection of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites. Records of the General Conference, twelfth session, Paris, 1962: Resolutions, 12 C/Resolutions, CPG.63/VI.12/A/F/S/R. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000114582> (last view: 10-08-2024)

² Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by the General Conference, Paris, 16 November, 1972.

Value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view" (UNESCO, 1972: Art.1).

In the 1990s, the World Heritage Committee included cultural landscapes as a specific category in the World Heritage Lists. Such recognition is an acknowledgment of the importance of human-environment interactions and testimony to the historical development and cultural traditions of various communities. Cultural landscapes are justified for inclusion in the World Heritage List when interactions between people and the natural environment are evaluated as being of "outstanding universal value" based on the cultural heritage criteria.

In 1992 the 1972 Convention became the first international legal instrument that regulates the protection of cultural landscapes with the revision of the Operational Guidelines (OG) of the Convention and the definition of cultural landscapes has been supplemented to „... *are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal*“³. Based on recommendations prepared by an experts from all regions of the world stressed on the importance of protecting biological diversity through cultural diversity within cultural landscapes (UNESCO, 1992).

Between 1992 and 2001, a total of 13 expert meetings on cultural landscapes were organized⁴. The inclusion of Cultural Landscapes in UNESCO's World Heritage List provided an important step towards the international recognition of this type of sites and encourages national and regional authorities to enhance conservation and protection measures.

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is the other main international organisation dedicated to the protection of landscapes. The European Landscape Convention⁵ defines landscapes as „... *an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*“ (Council of Europe, 2000: art. 1). The Council of Europe places an emphasis on the relationship between landscape and human beings: it is mankind that has always contributed, through time and in different ways, to the formation, transformation and management of today's landscapes. Also, it refers to the link

³ Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention: Report of the Expert Group on Cultural Landscapes, La Petite Pierre, France (24 - 26 October 1992). Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383579> (last view: 10-08-2024)

⁴ To see more about chronology of the background of cultural landscape meetings as well as decisions by the World Heritage Committee: Rössler, M. UNESCO world heritage centre background document on unesco world heritage cultural landscapes Prepared for the FAO Workshop and Steering Committee Meeting of the GIAHS project. Available at: https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/giahs/docs/WorldHeritage_CulturalLandscapes_MechtildRoessler.pdf (last view: 10-08-2024)

⁵ The European Landscape Convention (ETS No. 176) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on 19 July 2000 and opened for signature by the member states of the Organisation in Florence on 20 October 2000. From 1 August 2018, the European Landscape Convention becomes the Council of Europe Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2006).

between nature and culture and even „making no distinction between cultural and natural landscapes“ (Council of Europe, 2018: p.31). The European Landscape Convention states that landscape has an „important public interest role in the cultural field“, as well as contributing to the „formation of local cultures“ and „it is a basic component of the natural and cultural heritage“ (Council of Europe, 2000: Preamble). Furthermore, in the body of the Convention, Article 5a invokes states to recognize landscapes in law as an expression of the diversity of people’s shared cultural and natural heritage. Finally, Article 5d makes an appeal to integrate landscape into cultural and other policies.

It is worth to mention that the Council of Europe had linked the cultural factors to the landscape element even before the adoption of the 2000 Convention through two important recommendations. The first one is related to the protection and presentation and enhancement of the rural architectural heritage and the collective memory of rural Europe (Council of Europe, 1989: Recommendation No. R (89) 6) and the second one is concerned with the conservation of cultural sites integrated with landscape policies (Council of Europe, 1995: Recommendation No. R (95) 9).

ICOM

It is noteworthy to mention the contribution of ICOM regarding cultural landscapes. This contribution lies at Resolution No.1 (ICOM, 2016)⁶, which implies that museums have a certain responsibility towards the landscapes where they are located, to which they are able to bring their own specific knowledge and skills. The main mission of museums is to oversee the safekeeping and protection of the heritage that lies both within and beyond their walls. According to the Resolution, that is because „museums are part of the landscape“ and they „collect tangible and intangible testimonials linked to the environment“, hence the collections forming part of their heritage cannot be explained without the landscape. The similar is the vision of the Siena Charter (ICOM, 2014)⁷, according to which involving the museums in the management and care of the cultural landscape means to develop their natural vocation, by extending their responsibility from their collections to the cultural heritage and surroundings: their local towns, villages and communities.

ICOMOS

Among the other international organizations that deal with the cultural landscapes, it is important to mention ICOMOS principles and recommendations on the value of cultural heritage and landscapes for promoting peaceful and democratic societies. The Florence Declaration on Heritage and Landscape as Human Values is such a document (ICOMOS, 2014). It promotes a broad debate and provides insights for encouraging sustainable, harmonious and intercultural development, placing people at the centre of the cultural debate where cultural diversity is expressed through heritage and landscape values. Also,

⁶ Resolution No.1: The responsibility of Museums towards landscapes. Adopted during ICOM’S 31st General Assembly, Milan, Italy.

⁷ The Siena Charter. Museums and cultural landscapes. A document proposed by ICOM Italy at the International Conference in Siena, July 7th 2014.

the Declaration acknowledges that landscapes are an „integral part of heritage as they are the living memory of past generations“ and can provide tangible and intangible connections to future generations. Furthermore, it recommends actions as „cultural landscapes should... be interpreted as places where sustainable development strategies can be successfully applied“ (ICOMOS, 2014: art. 2.2 a). It also recognizes cultural landscapes as a driver for growth and stimulates public awareness and political action that are needed to implement effectively national and international commitments related to cultural landscapes.

Overall, the summary review and analysis of international documents shows that the concept and definitions of the cultural landscape have different parallels and dimensions, they are multilayered and include various elements of cultural heritage, such as tangible and intangible elements of the interaction between man and nature.

Cultural Landscapes – National Framework, Institutions, Legislation

Even though the Council of Europe Landscape Convention proposed a common definition and Bulgaria has ratified it⁸, it is also true that cultural landscapes vary from one country to another and rarely does national law venture a definition of cultural landscape. The cultural landscape is written in the Cultural Heritage Act of Bulgaria (ZKN) as follows: cultural landscape: „the set of spatially distinct sustainable cultural layers, the result of interaction between man and the natural environment, characterizing the cultural identity of a given territory“ (ZKN, 2009: art.47). Part of the challenges in the identification and protection of cultural landscapes in Bulgaria are related to the legal framework. In the current Cultural Heritage Act, cultural landscapes are categorized into the part of "tangible cultural heritage" and "immovable cultural values" according to the scientific and cultural field to which they relate (ZKN, 2009: IV). This categorization does not fully correspond to the essence of the cultural landscape, which, as all definitions in international documents show, is a set of interrelationships between man and nature and includes both tangible and intangible elements and aspects.

By signing the European Landscape Convention, Bulgaria is committed to implementing a policy for the protection, planning and management of landscapes, which requires their inclusion in legislation, education and raising public awareness. The landscape structure of Bulgaria is characterized by diverse natural complexes, composed of interconnected components such as rocks, relief, climate, waters, soils, vegetation and animal life. The main factors forming the landscape structure of Bulgaria are divided into natural and anthropogenic, with the former including the geological basis, relief and bioclimatic features, and the latter - the impacts of human activity⁹. Landscapes in the

⁸ Ratified by law adopted by the XXXIX National Assembly on October 13, 2004 - in force for the Republic of Bulgaria from March 1, 2005. Pron. DV. No. 22 of March 15, 2005. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=signatures-by-treaty&treaty=176> (last view: 10-08-2024)

⁹ More about the landscape structure of Bulgaria could be found in: (Cholakova et al., 2024).

country are classified according to typological and regional principles, the existing classification needs updating to meet the requirements of the European Landscape Convention, but the state's efforts so far in this sector are insufficient.

There is a huge lack of adequate tools for landscapes conservation, management and planning – texts are still missing to ensure the protection and management of the cultural landscapes through special texts in the Cultural Heritage Act, in conjunction with all other related laws and regulations. In addition, the state also does not have a strategy for the conservation and management of the cultural landscapes that is integrated into the policies for regional development, culture, environment, education and tourism. Most of the requirements imposed by the European Landscape Convention on Bulgaria have not yet been met, such as: to identify and assess all landscapes throughout the national territory; to identify ways to improve the quality of the landscape; to introduce tools aimed at landscape conservation, management and planning; to create conditions for the implementation of landscape policies; to integrate landscape into all policies; to provide procedures for public participation in the implementation of landscape policy; to raise public awareness of the importance of landscapes and to promote training and education in this field.

The complexity of identifying and managing cultural landscapes also stems from the mixed competences of multiple landscape-related institutions. In the implementation of the European Landscape Convention in Bulgaria, a shared responsibility should be taken by the Ministry of Environment and Water, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of Tourism. They should actively cooperate with other relevant agencies, with regional governments and local authorities in the preparation of plans and programs that have an impact on the development and protection of cultural landscapes in Bulgaria. In addition, the complexity of the protection and management of cultural landscapes is indicated by the fact that in the existing laws for protection of the environment, biodiversity, cultural heritage, and other related to natural resources and territorial planning, elements for the protection of the landscape are present. However, a comprehensive system of responsibilities and procedures to coordinate these efforts is lacking.

Attempts have been made over the years at various times to identify potential national cultural landscapes. For example, Prof. Krastev in various interviews¹⁰ presented the possibility of Ancient Plovdiv and the Bachkovo Monastery as potential candidates, as both sites are distinguished by high cultural and historical significance. His other proposals are the Thracian Tomb near the village of Sveshtari and the Rock Churches near Ivanovo, which emphasize the interaction between the natural environment and cultural heritage. Last but not least, the professor also mentioned the possibility of the historical center of Sofia "Serdika-Sredets" during the process of work on the General Development Plan of the Capital.

¹⁰ Culture - Issue 11 (2531), 14.03.23. Available at: <https://newspaper.kultura.bg/bg/article/view/8038#> (last view: 10-08-2024)

Also, in 2012, specialists in the field of history, archeology and cultural heritage expressed their opinion and support for the initiative to raise the candidacy of Veliko Tarnovo for UNESCO as a cultural landscape¹¹. The proposal includes candidature to cover five key sites: the church "St. Peter and Paul", the churches "Nativity of Christ" and "St. Archangels Gabriel and Michael" in Arbanasi¹², as well as Tsarevets and Trapezitsa complexes. Unfortunately, none of the aforementioned examples and initiatives have been implemented to date and Bulgaria still does not have an inscription on the World Heritage List as cultural landscape.

Despite the grim picture, there are still good examples that should be mentioned. The Council of Europe Landscape Prize is a distinction that is awarded to local/regional authorities, associations/NGOs which, as part of the landscape policy of one of the States Parties to the Convention, have taken measures for the conservation in management and/or planning of their landscape with proven long-term results thus can serve as an example to other territorial authorities in Europe. In 2021 the Committee of Ministers conferred a Special Mention of the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe on: The Salt of Life project, Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation, Bulgaria¹³. The project achieved the preservation of the landscape of the coastal lagoon of Atanasovsko Lake, a testimony of the symbiosis between man and nature. It has strengthened the public's attachment to the ecological, social and cultural values of this exceptional landscape that has undeniable aesthetic appeal.

Also, Rila Monastery Nature Park is recognized as a good example of combining cultural landscapes and natural resources within the framework of the Natura 2000 initiative¹⁴. This area is distinguished by high cultural and natural value and includes a UNESCO World Heritage site - the Rila Monastery. The main objectives of the park management plan are aimed at creating an optimal relationship between the protection of natural and cultural resources, as well as the efficient use of these resources. The consensus reached between the stakeholders has led to the successful implementation of the management plan, with the park continuing to symbolize the inextricable link between nature and spirituality.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the dynamics in the expansion of the concept of cultural heritage is reflected in international documents and practices, including for the protection and management of cultural landscapes. This represents a challenge for some countries, including Bulgaria, where efforts to identify and protect cultural landscapes are

¹¹ Veliko Tarnovo's candidacy for UNESCO as a cultural landscape can be raised. Available at: <https://www.veliko-tarnovo.bg/bg/novini/mozhe-da-bade-izdignata-kandidaturata-na-veliko-tarnovo-za-yunesko-kato-kulturen-peyzazh> (last view: 10-08-2024)

¹² More about the potential of the Tarnovo Holy Forest could be found in: (Piperkov, 2015).

¹³ Landscape Award of the CE: More information at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/bulgaria> (last view: 10-08-2024)

¹⁴ EU COM, Culture and Creativity, Natura 2000 and cultural landscapes. <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/bg/cultural-heritage/cultural-heritage-in-eu-policies/natura-2000-and-cultural-landscapes> (last view: 10-08-2024)

accompanied by insufficient legislative regulation and a lack of coordinated strategy. Good practices are observed, but they are far from sufficient.

Based on the analysis of the legal documents of the international organizations and their relevance to Bulgaria, some recommendations could be made. It is recommended that the National Assembly of Bulgaria consider to start solving the problems of cultural landscapes. This includes the protection and management of the cultural landscape being integrated into the Cultural Heritage Act of Bulgaria and related laws. It is also necessary to think about changing the place of cultural landscapes in the Cultural Heritage Act. The current categorization does not correspond to its essence and does not provide procedures for their identification and protection. The state must adopt a strategy for the protection and management of the landscape, develop adequate policies and instruments for planning with the participation of society and the private sector. Special attention should be paid to the sustainable use of cultural landscapes for cultural and ecological tourism, as well as public awareness of their value.

Finally, future research needs to focus on the development of new methodologies for the identification and protection of cultural landscapes, as well as on the creation of cross-sectoral strategies that integrate cultural heritage with the environmental, economic and social aspects of sustainable development. The integration of cultural landscapes in tourism and educational initiatives, as well as in local and national plans and above all in the programs and policies of the relevant Ministries, is more than necessary.

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ИНСТИТУЦИОНАЛНИ И НОРМАТИВНИ АСПЕКТИ, ПРЕДИЗВИКАТЕЛСТВА И ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ПРИ ИДЕНТИФИЦИРАНЕ И ОПАЗВАНЕ НА КУЛТУРНИ ПЕЙЗАЖИ

Резюме: *Като резултат от промените в концепцията за културното наследство, чието съдържание, териториален обхват, граници и социални функции се разширяват, днес местата на памет надхвърлят отделен монумент, паметник, ансамбъл – те включват кулинарни традиции и маршрути, градове наследства, неосезаеми ценности и културни пейзажи¹⁵. Тази статия прави преглед и анализ на развитието на културните пейзажи като част от културното наследство и проследява утвърждаването на понятието “културен пейзаж” в законодателните практики и международни документи. Акцент се поставя върху случая с България, опитите и предизвикателствата да се идентифицират забележителни български културни пейзажи.*

Ключови думи: *културни пейзажи, културно наследство, опазване, ЮНЕСКО, Съвет на Европа, ИКОМОС, ИКОМ.*

¹⁵ За целите на статията „културен пейзаж“ се използва като синоним на официалното понятие в законовите актове – културен ландшафт. Това не дава отражение на текста на английски език.

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