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***THEMATIC HORIZONTAL RESEARCH REPORT FOR***  
***THEME 1***

***LANDSCAPE STORIES. From tradition to sustainability***

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
INTRODUCTION	2
HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND	3
THE FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH SYNTHESIS FOR THEME 1	6
THEMATIC UNIT 1. THE LANDSCAPE OF AWE	7
THEMATIC UNIT 2. THE LANDSCAPE OF MILD EXPLOITATION OF NATURE	12
THEMATIC UNIT 3. THE LANDSCAPE OF FORCEFUL CONQUEST OF NATURE	16
THEMATIC UNIT 4. THE DESTRUCTION OF LANDSCAPE	18
THEMATIC UNIT 5. LANDSCAPE IN ART	20
CONCLUSION: UTOPIA OR SUSTAINABILITY?	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY	24

## INTRODUCTION

Rural landscapes form an essential part of our heritage; they are significant witnesses of the past and present relationship between man and the natural environment. They constitute an integral part of natural and cultural heritage being a timeless archive where the ways people have lived and organised themselves are depicted. A **landscape** consists of the visible features of an area of land and is a complex notion with many overtones, calling for a deeper understanding of both nature and culture which are both also multi-layered. According to the European Landscape Convention launched in 2000 by the Council of Europe “*Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*”.

The first formal use of the term landscape comes from the geographer Otto Schuler in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century who defined two forms of landscape:

- the **natural landscape** (*Urlandschaft*) or landscape that existed before major human induced changes and
- the **cultural landscape** (*Kulturlandschaft*) a landscape created by human culture.

The rural landscape mirrors the relation of man with nature along its evolution and the development of man's material civilisation. Human interventions upon the landscape for cultivation, mining, exploitation of water resources and the wind, habitation, communication etc., have resulted in decisive changes of the landscape. Over time the landscape underwent a variety of transmutations, demonstrating different aspects of the relationship between man and nature: awe and respect of man for nature, that makes his survival possible, man's efforts to conquer nature, making his survival easier and more secure, and lastly, the irrational and complete imposition of man over nature in present times, aiming to maximise the exploitation of natural resources, without realising what this means for future generations.

There are four general stages that can be identified in the evolution of the relationship between man and nature over time. These stages –awe, mild exploitation, conquest, destruction- followed one another during the process of social and technological evolution, but they also coexist in the present time as each stage does not eliminate/ the previous one. Thus, these stages represent coexisting facets of the relationship between man and nature.

The **first stage** is characterised by man's fear and admiration for nature; the landscape becomes the bridge for their metaphysical relationship. Its elements gain symbolic meanings for man's survival. Trees, water, mountains, rocks, acquire a symbolic existence, and are linked to magical spirits, fairies, heroes and gods. Out of the symbolic meanings of the landscape, myths, songs, poems and rituals are born.

The **second stage** reflects the first phases of man's dominance over nature, which is characterised by respect for the landscape, the use of simple technologies and local materials, the emergence of «lay wisdom», the discovery of clever construction techniques, the invention of environment-friendly survival and economic development methods.

The cultivation of the land with simple agricultural tools brings about the first changes to the landscape, in combination with construction methods using stone, wood, hay or soil, and the mapping out of roads for transporting people and goods. These elements become «landmarks» of the landscape which is clearly now being transformed through man's influence; this influence however remains mild and does not upset the harmony between man's activity and nature.

The **third stage** is characterised by the intensity of man's dominance over nature, the use of complex technologies and non-local (globally developed) materials and construction methods. The intensive and extensive cultivation of the land with mechanised and automated production methods and the use of agrochemicals maximise the exploitation of natural resources and transform radically the landscape. At the same time, the materials, the aesthetics and the use of buildings and other man-made interventions, become the new «landmarks» that undermine the cohesion of the landscape, disconnect it from the natural environment, upset its historical continuity, and impose its "globalisation".

In the **fourth stage** we are confronted with the destruction of the landscape that results from the irrational exploitation of natural resources. Fires, floods, cyclones, droughts, brought about by climatic change, other violent reversals of environmental balance brought about by human activity or efforts to maximise profits from the exploitation of natural resources –for tourism, agriculture, industry, housing- result to desertification, cut off of the landscape from its natural characteristics, the emergence of a «landscape of horror» which warns us that nature's endurance is limited and that our civilisation, which depends on such endurance, is at risk.

By projecting these stages and the facets that they signify in the relationship between man and nature, the research and consequently the exhibition, attempt to raise certain basic questions for the future of this relationship that reflect upon the future of our civilisation. Are we led to a utopia that either ignores the violent and irrational attempt of man to dominate the natural environment or accepts its absolute destruction as inevitable? Or can we perhaps redefine our relationship with the landscape through a radical change of our attitude and behaviour and accept sustainability as our top priority and our duty to future generations? Reading the "landscape stories", as revealed stage-by-stage through the evolution of the relationship between man and nature, we are guided to a "recognition" trip along those elements of our cultural heritage that offer important lessons for sustainability and the redefinition of our relationship with the landscape.

## **HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND**

The "landscapes stories" were researched in the two participating countries, Greece and Italy, uncovering ethnographic elements that stand as witnesses of the different stages described above and reviewing modern practices of reasserting man's conquest and reshaping of the landscape. In Greece, the research focused on the whole of the country, with special reference to mountainous areas and large plains of the mainland as well as the Aegean islands and Crete. In Italy, the research focused on the wider region of the

Apennine range, and in particular on the Bevenento Province with its characteristic Samnitic tradition.

**Greece**, due to its very long and important history is characterised by the richness and diversity of its cultural landscapes. Such landscapes are rife with landmarks, symbols of time and space: they include those that shape agricultural land (terraces, fences, parapets etc), land communication means (footpaths, bridges, roads) and buildings for various uses, isolated or in groups (settlements). A remarkable continuity is still present in many Greek landscapes, especially those that are insular, to be found either in upland areas on the mountains or in the islands. The first and second stages in the evolution of man-nature relationship, as this has been imprinted upon the landscape, are visible in most rural areas of Greece, through a variety of monuments or more humble heritage constructions, including bridges, paths and buildings or settlements, ancient or more recent; and through myths, legends and rituals that are still practiced in rural areas, providing a remarkable link between antiquity and present times. Indeed, these rural customs, myths and traditions keep the memory alive and have become through time the main determinants of rural cultural identity. Place names (*toponyms*) of Greek rural areas also reflect mythology, history, religion, values and details of everyday life, personal names and variable characteristics of the Greek world. Many rural places still keep their ancient names offering a close link to the past human history of the area: these names may be prehistoric, archaic, roman, Byzantine, and in some cases Venetian and Arabic. In the more recent history of Greece, since medieval times, the long periods of occupation, both by western conquerors (Venetians, Franks) and Ottomans have influenced the way rural settlements developed, the way they were positioned in the landscape and their architecture. Thus landscape has become a “palimpsest of symbols” where socioeconomic evolution, migratory movements and religious symbols left their mark.

In Greece, as elsewhere in Europe and in the Mediterranean more specifically, the countryside has suffered the consequences of the industrial revolution, and especially was changed drastically during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to uncontrolled development, ad hoc land uses, fires, desertification, over-exploitation etc. These two extremes, the ancient or traditional landscape, full of symbols and meanings, and the contemporary landscape affected by aggressive economic development, coexist, often side by side, giving many examples of the different stages of the processes that formed and shaped man's relationship with nature. The dilemma in contemporary Greece is dwelling on the exploitation of the landscape heritage reflecting the battle between environmental values and economic development. This is becoming very acute in islandic and coastal areas which have already experienced radical transformation of their natural environment in order to accommodate the demands of tourism, thus downgrading the very element that sustains tourism: their environmental heritage.

In **Italy**, the countryside is also the complex result of several millennia of history in which they are layered civilisation and cultures. As Piero Bevilacqua says, the complexity of the Italian landscape is due to the “fingerprints” that many civilisations have left in the cities and rural areas. These civilisations have provided, over time, a large contri-

bution of new plants, cultivation techniques, ways to capture and use water, buildings and artefacts. This makes unique the Italian countryside and identifies common elements with the landscapes of many other European countries. For the purposes of the CULT RURAL project, a specific investigation has been conducted in the historical region of Sannio. The Sannio (Samnium in Latin) is located in mid-southern Italy, and was "governed" by the civilisation of the Samnites in the VII-VI century b.C. and I-II century a.C. The territory of the Samnites was mostly concentrated in an area which today coincides with the regions of Abruzzi, Molise, Campania, Basilicata and Puglia. The Samnitic influence is still strong in determining the culture, landscape, society and beliefs of an important section of the rural populations of the Italian territory.

The adaptation to different regional conditions and different economic and social structures has diversified the countryside. Environmental factors, cultural systems, types of settlements and architecture of farm buildings, merged to shape unique rural landscapes. The main agricultural systems, such as "Cascina" (farmstead) or the farm houses of "Mezzadria" (sharecropping) et al, are the most obvious signs of a very complex structure. Similarly, the traditional practice of transhumance, which marked the landscape with the main routes of herds' passage, such as the characteristic Tratturo (an ancient transhumance path), which joined the plains of Apulia to the green pasturelands of Abruzzi, crossing all the mid-southern Apennines.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of people working in agriculture started to decline. This decline was sharpened from the 1950s onwards, when Italian farming experienced the agrarian reform, the mechanisation of farming and the transformation of the structure of farms, leading from family farming to corporate farming. Also, the fast expansion of forests, due to the abandonment of agricultural land in the mountainous areas, is a characteristic phenomenon of that time. In a nutshell, the changes in the last 60 years have seen, as well as a reduction of cultivated area, a more radical change in agriculture and livestock farming, which drastically affected the rural landscape. Greenhouses, tunnels, shade nets, are now widely used in the fields for floricultural and horticultural products, often compromising significantly the aesthetic quality of the countryside. Also, the Italian landscape tends to assume progressively a homogenised appearance, characterised by the simplification and trivialisation of landscape forms and the loss of the cultural aspects that marked the Italian countryside for centuries. This, of course, is a process that involves not only Italy but many other European countries as well as North America. This gives the problem an international character.

## THE FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH SYNTHESIS FOR THEME 1

This report brings together the main points of the research on Theme 1: “Rural cultural landscapes: the interaction between rural communities and the natural environment” carried out in Greece and Italy. It thus presents the main concepts that guided the exhibition “landscape Stories: from tradition to sustainability”.

This synthetic report aims to highlight important aspects of our cultural heritage directly related to the rural landscape – a heritage that we often choose to ignore or undervalue. The exhibition, through an itinerary in time and space, attempts to redefine the instrumental and value-laden relationship of contemporary man with the landscape. By directing our attention to the present –which is often destructive for the landscape, we can rediscover tradition and carry on to the future our heritage of sustainability.

The report is organised in five units, four of which reflect the stages or facets of the relationship between man and landscape, as described above, whilst the fifth examines the perception of landscape’s changes and meaning for man through the eyes of the artists. The conclusions, finally pose the question of whether the future of the relationship between man and landscape is utopian or sustainable. The exhibition adopted the same concept, leading the visitor to an itinerary of exploration of the heritage the landscape, unfolding before their eyes the successive stages of the evolution of man’s relationship with nature. In brief, the units of the research, which also formed the scenario of the exhibition, refer to:

- 1: The landscape of awe**, depicting the primeval, metaphysical relationship of man with the landscape, as reflected by the mythology of trees and water.
- 2: The landscape of mild exploitation of nature**, presenting traditional man-made elements of the landscape that are adapted to its form and consistence, reflecting man’s respect for nature.
- 3: The landscape of forceful conquest of nature**, offering examples of human interventions that transform the environment, upset its balance and inflict wounds on its aesthetic value.
- 4: The destruction of landscape**, showing the consequences of some of the present-day devastations inflicted on the landscape of contemporary Europe.
- 5: The landscape through the eyes of the artists**, guides the reader and the visitor of the exhibition to seek the meaning of the catalytic glance of the artist, which decomposes and reconstructs the landscape through a series of social, cultural and historical codes.

## **THEMATIC UNIT 1. THE LANDSCAPE OF AWE**

This section depicts the primeval, metaphysical relationship of man with the landscape. Prehistoric men felt the need from the start to deify the imposing landscapes around them, which were often the source of fear as well as admiration. The need for familiarisation led humans to perceive anthropomorphic or divine signs in landscapes. Rocks, mountains, rivers, springs, forests and canyons were the features of stories with heroes, gods and mythical personalities. They were full of legends and folk traditions, beliefs and prejudices, divine blessings and curses. Many of these traditions and beliefs have survived until today and are expressed through popular customs, myths, sayings and prejudices.

Prominent in the folk traditions has been the mythology of trees and water. The research, and the exhibition under Theme 1, focused on these two elements, tree and water, which offer rich and characteristic examples of symbolic meanings, customs, rites and myths reflecting the feelings of awe towards the forces hidden in natural landscapes.

### **TREES**

The **tree** has always had a special place in the process of myth-making for the landscape. It was thought as the home of gods or spirits, and there are many references to holy trees near ancient temples or monasteries in Greece as well as in Italy. Symbol of fertility, vitality and immortality, the image of which is according to Carl Gustav Jung an archetype in the individual and collective unconscious, tree was bound very strongly with people in all ages.

The symbolic meaning of tree is deeply rooted in ancient cosmogonic perceptions being an element that connects the social and natural environment. It combines many myths and popular beliefs, traditions and cultural representations. The tree, with its branches reaching up into the sky, and roots deep into the earth, has been seen as a link between heaven and the underworld, uniting above and below. As such it is also related to immortality fertility and regeneration. Therefore its worship was so prevalent in antiquity. Trees are close to Gods and they are considered to possess a soul being inhabited by spirits (dryads) that must be respected. From this derives the idea of the sacred and divine tree but also of the sacred grove which achieved the status of a religious institution<sup>1</sup>.

In Christianity, trees were vested with regenerating virtues and miraculous qualities: for example, the blessed palm, olive and bay leaves of the Palm Sunday are thought to keep away the evil spirits. There are different ways in which people express their worship to trees, such as prayers, incensing, hanging of icons and offerings over the trunk and the branches. A tree may become sacred because it is considered the symbolic epiphany of the God or a saint. Numerous are the popular beliefs for sacred icons of Christ, Virgin Mary and especially of saints miraculously found close or under a tree. Trees have been

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<sup>1</sup> Jaques Brosse, the sacred tree in *UNESCO Courier*, Jan. 1989



also associated with the **fate** of individuals. In most Greek rural areas it was – and still is – a tradition to plant a tree on the occasion of a child's birth, which is thus connected to the longevity and good health of the child.

### *Greece*

The most celebrated tree in the whole Aegean is the olive tree, which has been worshipped for its therapeutic qualities since ancient times, in parallel to its nutritional value and the qualities of its timber. It is depicted as divine, ceremonial, the «tree of life» with the priestesses dancing in ecstasy around it in the Minoan frescos of Knossos. The olive tree was also used by ancient Greeks in funerary and burial customs, as well as in religious mysteries, as ancient historians and writers stated in their descriptions (Herodotus, Pausanias, and Plutarch). Goddess Athena secured the protection of Athens by offering an olive tree, whilst Hercules inaugurated the athletic games of ancient Olympia with the planting of an olive tree. For the Athenians the offering of an olive wreath and a bottle of olive oil signified the recognition of victory.

The olive tree and its products continued to have a special meaning in the Christian religion. In the Christian sacraments the olive oil has an important initiating, deterrent (apotropaic) and purgatory role from baptism to death. Many are the folk traditions related to it and many are the ritual practices, some still in use. All are linked to people's wish to protect the tree and secure its productivity. For example, at the end of July islanders perform a symbolic action, called “petrification of the olive oil” (*petroma*) aiming to assist the olive to stay undamaged until the period of harvesting: they go to the olive groves before the sun rise and put a stone on the trees.

Very old olive trees have always a “dry heart”. According to a folk tradition from Naxos, during the Crucifixion of Christ all the trees left their leaves to fall down as an act of mourning. Only the olive tree kept its own, because the mourning was inside its heart. According to a Cretan folk narration the olive is blessed because Jesus Christ tried to find shelter under an olive tree which was steeped by His tears. Ever after the olive tree became the most blessed tree and the olive oil has so many functions.

At present, the olive tree is accepted internationally as a symbol of victory, peace, friendship, and good will.

### *Italy*

In the Samnitic culture, many trees are linked to rituals and religious traditions., woods were considered as house for a god, and trees were planted near temples, while dead were buried near evergreen trees. The walnut tree has been a holy tree in the historical region of Sannio. Its fruits, roots and leaves have toxic qualities known since ancient times, but also therapeutic qualities that have been used for the preparation of medicines. These qualities of the walnut tree have been considered as «magical» and led to myths and pagan ceremonies centred on the «janare» witches -daughters of nature deities- in ancient times and during the middle ages.

Walnut is a tree common to many European rural areas and plays an important role for landscape and for food and timber production. Walnut arrived in Europe from Minor Asia since ancient times. Greek and Roman mythology enriched it with symbolic meanings that, during the centuries, were assimilated by popular and rural culture. In Greek mythology, walnut was linked to the goddess Artemis (whose name “Caryatid” refers to the sacred walnut), worshipped in fertility propitiation rituals. In Sannio (around Benevento province), the walnut tree is still today rich with meanings and beliefs, as a result of a sedimentation of different cultures and influences. Among these beliefs, the legend of the Witches of Benevento is a popular one.

According to the legend, an ancient walnut tree in Benevento was used by witches to gather and perform primeval rituals, with dances and magic formulas, during specific moments of the year, according with the moon phases and with seasonal rhythms. The origins of the witches legend can be found in cults of ancient goddesses such as Ecate (subsequently identified with Artemis by Greeks and Diana by Romans), Empusa, Lamia. These goddesses were linked with magic and mystic feminine rituals. Ecate, for instance, was worshipped in black magic rituals, which involved dances around a holy tree, a similar practise for rituals dedicated to Artemis and Diana.

The word “*Janare*”, used in Benevento dialect to name “witches”, probably derives from the word “Dianaria”, the servant of goddess Diana. According to this theory, during ancient times the witches of Benevento were supposed to be servants of Goddess Diana that used to perform rituals below a walnut tree to propitiate fertility. The link of the walnut with the feminine divinity continues in the Middle Ages, when *Janare* were characterised as “witches” by Christian church. Together with “*Janare*” all other women that were able to recognise and use plants for medical purposes were characterised as such. However, despite the Christian persecution the legend survives still today, protected and nurtured by rural culture as result of local inhabitants’ adoration towards and peaceful relationship with nature and the environment.

## **WATER**

The **water**, being a basic element of the evolution of man, has been also linked with legends and sacred ceremonies in most civilisations. Many symbolisms are associated with water: it represents the membrane that divides the visible part of the earth from the non-visible part under the earth, which is unknown and mysterious. It also represents a substance for cleaning the body and this leads to the notion of catharsis and purification, whilst its obvious importance for the fertility of the earth has led to a diversity of rain initiation ceremonies.

Thus, three aspects of water are prominent in Mediterranean civilisations:

- As a layer, it reflects the primeval waters that originated the Universe. The distinction between upper waters, linked to light and life, and lower waters, linked to death and darkness, can be found in many religions.
- As the main purification medium in religious and pagan rituals.
- As a source of spiritual and physical regeneration.

## Greece

The water is one of the four elements of ancient Greek philosophy, celebrated as a source of life and symbol of nature's birth and rebirth. In ancient Greek mythology, water separates the world of the dead and the world of the living (along River Styx) but it also largely contributed to the regeneration of the earth after the Flood with which Zeus punished the impious. Mythical creatures (dragons) were believed to dominate the places that contained water and prevent people from using it. Good spirits, the nymphs, either in the rivers and lakes (*Naiads*, *Kriniids*, *Potamids*, *Limnads*) or in the sea (*Nereids*), also dominated water and were helpful to people. In the Greek popular tradition *Naiads* have been replaced by the Fairies, *Neraides*, who prefer places close to water springs, fountains and rivers. Usually they appear after midnight and enjoy teasing people, who must avoid them, especially men, who might lose their voice if they speak to them.

Lykeus Zeus was the supreme god who ought to be propitiated to allow rain to fall on the earth and fertilise the land. In ancient Arcadia, for many centuries the ritual appeal to Lykeus Zeus was connected to witchcraft. According to Pausanias, geographer and writer of the 2nd c. B.C, “*Agno is a spring on Lykeus mountain, which, similarly to Istros river, provides the same quantity of water during winter and summer. If there is a drought and the crops and trees dry out, the priest of Lykeus Zeus, after praying to the water and offering sacrifice, agitates the surface of the water with a branch, without immersing it in it. As soon as the water shakes, steam is produced, which forms a cloud, and this attracts more clouds and the rain falls down in a short while on the land of Arcadia...* Today, a few meters away from the peak of Lykeus mountain, in the chapel of Prophet Elias, the rainmaker of Christian religion, invocations for rain are performed during the hot month of July.

Water is also celebrated for its cleansing power, through which it obtains metaphysical qualities. Water cleans the body and by extension, purifies it. Therefore it has a highly symbolic meaning and becomes a key “purgatorial” element in pagan ceremonies and religious rites. In Christianity, water is intrinsically linked to baptism symbolising cleanliness purity and rebirth. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, when Epiphany is celebrated, it is a common practice to bless the waters: the sea waters in order to become friendly to the sailors and the sea travellers and the springs and fountains in order to be purified. Also, many churches have been established close to water sources dedicated to Virgin Mary, Source of Life (*Zoodochos Pigi*).

Water is linked in popular tradition with good luck and the powers of prediction. The custom known as “*The treat of the fountain*” has been practiced on New Year’s Day in many rural settlements of Crete: villagers visit a spring, drink its water and throw in a coin. In some other places people throw small coins in wells for luck, making a wish which they expect to come true. As a central element of life, water is linked to immortality and connected to prediction, as shown by the custom of *Klidonas* which is based on water divination and is still practiced in many areas of Greece. All these practices are passed down from generation to generation, becoming part of the “shared conscious-

ness” of rural communities. Preserved partly or in total, they are vestiges of indigenous knowledge characterised by a deep respect to the environment.

### *Italy*

Water is the vital sap of earth that gives off energy and is essential for agriculture and livestock. At a time when there was no running water in the houses, water supply was assured by springs, rivers and wells. These were considered as sources of life and this made them sacred elements of the landscape.

The deities of the water in the Samnitic tradition of Italy are related to the revival of the matriarchal society. An important water deity was Mefiti (meaning in the middle - between the sky, the earth and the underground world) that has been worshiped for her therapeutic qualities and was linked to the power of the underground waters as well as to the disinfectant qualities of the sulphur emissions from the earth. At the same time the water in wells is worshiped as the symbol of the journey from the «overground» world of the living to the «underground» world of the dead. The well constitutes also a deep wound made into the earth to intercept underground waters. In this perspective, it was a violent act, a manmade structure that penetrated the maternal bosom of the earth. The latter was linked to the belief that digging deep into the earth uncovers underground “truths” that should be hidden from human sight. Human actions and structures that intervene with nature this way, were considered as a challenge to nature, an “offence” that ancient Greeks called *hybris*. This “offence” could provoke the revenge of Gods preserving the sacred cosmic equilibrium.

Thus, those guilty could also pay with their life for this kind of misconduct. Looking down the well means looking at “secrets” that are normally hidden from human sight, as this allows the communication with the *ctonio*, a world inhabited by tenebrous creatures jealous of the light. For this reason an unfortunate observer than leans over the well may be grasped by a ***long hand*** that inexorably drags him below towards the “secret/sacred” world it dared to peer at. In the Sannio area, the frightening creature who lives in the wells is known with the name of *Manalonga* (the long-hand spirit). Its form is indefinable but it was believed to be a feminine spirit of the water, like the ancient Greek *Naiadi* or *Ondine* according to Germanic tradition. *Manalonga* has its parallel in several cultures, with a practical meaning: in the Sannio area for example, *Manalonga* is a bogey for children, used by the parents to keep them away from the danger of falling inside a well.

## THEMATIC UNIT 2. THE LANDSCAPE OF MILD EXPLOITATION OF NATURE

This section presents the characteristic elements of the landscape that reflect the cultural heritage developed during this stage. Traditional cultivations, terraces, small or larger buildings-landmarks, footpaths, routes and settlements, demonstrate a creative «dialogue» between man and the landscape based on pictorial elements, works of art and ethnographic exhibits.

Landscape is the product of a continuous transformation process, characterised by successive changes. These changes may stem from geological or climatic phenomena or from human interventions. The cultivation of the land and the construction of the first buildings signal the start of landscape's transformation, which continued for thousands of years as a mild intervention upon the landscape. The use of agricultural tools and the shaping of the landscape to make cultivation easier (e.g. with the creation of terraces in sloped surfaces) left the first imprint of man's dominance on nature, with new landscape forms emerging that included cultural elements. This new landscape was enriched with «landmarks», such as buildings bearing different uses, materials and forms: constructions for habitation, transportation and communication, manufacturing or worship are clad with local materials taken out of the landscape itself, adopting forms that are inspired by the nature surrounding them or based on simple and functional building methods.

Some examples are given below, concerning paths and transportation routes, bridges, dry stone buildings and terraces, rural settlements and other characteristic landmarks that adorn the landscape, combining a function necessary for the rural economy and ingenious use of technology and local materials.

**Footpaths** represent one of the first interventions of man on the landscape over the ages. They served the need of communication with other people, transportation of herds and commodities, access to distant cultivations or other productive activities, and took a variety of forms: from narrow cobbled roads or walks marked on the earth with simple means by animal farmers to the construction of larger scale passages, comparable in function with present-day motorways. An impressive example of such a passage is the Italian *tratturo*.

**Tratturi** (from the Latin word *tractoria* which means the public right to use a road) were passages used by animal farmers to move their herds along trails of grassland, from valleys and plains to the mountains and vice versa when the seasons changed. This practise started thousands of years ago when men, hunters at the time, followed their prey along natural paths that animals seasonally used because of the fresh pasturelands (during the summer) or to avoid snow (during winter). In the Apennines, the long mountain range that crosses Italy, sheep transhumance represented for centuries (8<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> century b.C.) the basic food generating activity for many pre Romanic civilisations of central and southern regions (e.g. Samnites). Sheep transhumance during the Roman times devel-

oped to an important economic activity (as an indication in Latin, sheep = pecus and money = pecunia).

Across the centuries, transhumance paths increased in importance and developed from primeval natural paths to “grass freeways”, a well organised system of routes which spawned taverns, villages, farms and pastoral huts. One of these routes is called “Regio Tratturo” (the Tratturo of the King). This route is 221 kilometres long and was originally 110 metres wide, linking the village of Candela, in the warm plains of Apulia with the village of Pescasseroli on the fresh high mountains of Abruzzi. The Regio Tratturo path and the transhumance system represent an important part of the rural heritage for many Italian regions. Society, culture and economy were influenced by these trails and this is still evident today in architecture, local customs and landscape, representing symbols of peaceful and sustainable exploitation by humans upon nature.

**Bridges** are probably the most important example of the dominance of man over nature, because of their function as well as their aesthetic value. Many legends and traditions describe haunted bridges and angry rivers, vindictive natural or evil creatures, and even human sacrifices that imply the revenge of nature over human dominance. A characteristic example of such a legend is that of Arta bridge, in Epirus, Greece, where the wife of the head craftsman had to be sacrificed in order to appease the spirit of the bridge and allow its construction to be completed. Bridges were built in pre-industrial times with natural materials, mostly stone and wood. Stone bridges, many of which remain intact today, represent miracles of technology. Many examples of this unique technology of the arch-shaped stone bridges are found in Epirus, a region in north-west Greece, and especially along the mountain range of Pindos.

**Dry stone constructions**, made with local stones recycled from the tending of the fields, with excellent endurance in weather conditions, have been used from a very early age in the Mediterranean to provide shelter for humans, animals or crops, pave foot-paths and roads, delineate property, improve sloping land and make it suitable for agriculture, provide a shell for cottage industry activities. Dry stone masonry (xerolithia, in Greek), that is walls built with stones without any binding material, are typical, among other things, for the building of two characteristic landmarks of the pre-industrial landscape: terraces and circular huts covered by dome.

**Terraces** are formed by successive dry stone walls, thus converting sloping ground to level farmland that can be cultivated. The terraces are used even in our days for cultivating olive trees and vineyards in Greece and Italy. They represent an important intervention of man in the course of his effort to exploit hill and mountain slopes for cultivation. By utilising local stone, the dry stone walls that support terraces blend chromatically and in texture to the wider landscape, while the curves created by the terraces shape a new landscape of exquisite grace and aesthetic value. These walls also protect the ground from erosion, bear well the pressure of the ground and the water (because they do not have any connecting material); and encourage biodiversity, by offering shelter to cowslips, butterflies, spiders, lizards, snakes and snails, but also to rare species of

plants. Terraces transform open spaces to landscapes of heritage, while at the same time they improve the micro-environment and the micro-climate.

**Dry stone circular huts** date back to the later Neolithic period, when dry stone buildings with a roof made of branches were constructed; and the prehistoric period, when, besides the megalithic monument and cyclopean walls, smaller religious or functional dry stone constructions were also erected in slopes of hills or mountains. These are found in many regions of **Greece**, and in particular in the island of Evia, called “*drakospita*” (dragon housed). Dry stone huts with a domed roof, are still found in many areas of mainland Greece and in the islands. They were traditionally used by shepherds for overnight stay, rest during the day, storage of their products or most prominently, cheese-making. These are called *tholoi* (domes) in Magnisia, Kefalonia, Tinos, Lefkada, Kalavrita and in the mountain area of Serres; and *mitata* in Crete.

In **Italy**, dry stone huts represent an important point in the process of evolution of the transhumance architecture; they are called *stazzo* and have the functions of shelter, storage, milking and cheese production. In cases that the *stazzo* has also additional functions, it is adjoined to other constructions, like sheep cotes and dog enclosures. Dry stone huts blend into the landscape harmoniously, through their shape, size and texture, representing one of the earliest examples of man’s efforts to come to terms with his environment, using his skills and wisdom to transform it to his benefit, but with respect.

**Rural settlements** offer unique opportunities for studying the harmonic integration of larger scale interventions in the landscape. Traditionally, rural settlements represent the best synthesis of people’s ability to modify the environment to their own advantage with the least impact. Typical examples of harmonious blending with the landscape are settlements whose morphology and colours fit in with their surroundings: the village of Anavatos in the island of Chios is hard to discern from a distance – it becomes a part of the rock on which it is built- whilst the villages of Zagoria in Epirus follow the morphology of the slate rock on which they stand. In contrast, island settlements, especially in Cyclades, constitute a white decoration of the grey rock that hosts them. The medieval settlements of Benevento, in Italy, fit in the undulations of the hills and mountains that surround them, projecting their fortification-like shapes, maintaining and enhancing the colour range and the shape of the wider landscape.

Moreover, it should be noted that the unique vernacular architecture of a region reflects and supports that region’s own identity. Beyond its aesthetic value, it provides a unique and irreplaceable record of certain aspects of intangible heritage: local responses to the conditions of everyday life, such as technology and skills, and ways of organising social life. The way buildings are shaped depends on the limits imposed by local resources; the productivity of the farm and the buildings related to the crop system. The layout depends on environmental and social factors, including safety. Recurring materials, shapes and volumes, always connected to local conditions, define specific architectural types that become representative of the various places. As for the climate, the structure is arranged so as to make the most of local environmental conditions, e.g. in central Italy south-facing walls have wide façades and arcades, while north facing ones are thicker;

while in the Aegean islands south-facing walls have small windows, to protect the building from the hot sun of the summer.

Other **landmarks** of the rural landscape include isolated small-scale buildings, such as chapels, shrines, fountains, wine-presses, hedges, windmills, watermills, pigeon lofts, castles, etc. These buildings through their unique regional architectural features create the «identity» of the landscape, by blending harmoniously with its morphology and colours. In **Greece**, typical landmarks in the countryside are the wine and oil press-houses, the pigeon lofts, the windmills, the watermills and the water fountains, some of which are decorated with monumental sculptures. Among the most exquisite landmarks are the small churches and the monasteries, as well as small roadside shrines showing the way to churches. In the islands, the churches and chapels that decorate the landscape are votive offerings of the seafarers or their families. They take simple or more complex forms, adorned with one, two or three aisles, covered with domes or roofs –with or without lanterns- and simple or more sophisticated wall joints, the small churches are the most eloquent expression of humility and spirituality.

In **Italy**, along the transhumance routes, landmarks served also as fixed points for the orientation of shepherds and the location of their positions during the movement of herds. The most recurrent structures along the tratturi are the taverns, but also the rural churches, able to offer spiritual comfort and shelter. Taverns were usually situated in proximity of rivers or water springs and performed several functions, beyond offering rest and food to travellers and shepherds, such as places for the exchange of animals and trading. Along the tratturi, during the centuries, other kinds of buildings have been constructed, most notable of which were the masserias, large agrarian buildings that were the centre of the agricultural economy from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, but especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They consisted of groups of agricultural buildings with many and diverse functions, bearing witness to many generations of families that lived there.



### THEMATIC UNIT 3. THE LANDSCAPE OF FORCEFUL CONQUEST OF NATURE

The mild dominance of man over nature that was characterised by a dialectical relation with the landscape, was followed by a stage of intense dominance that started with the industrial revolution. The tractor made it possible to cultivate large stretches of land, and in conjunction with harvesting and threshing machinery and pesticides increased productivity in agricultural activities and imposed uniformity on the agrarian landscape. Typical landscape landmarks, such as dry stone walls and hedges disappeared and were replaced by new milestones such as wind turbines or dams. Intensive cultivation altered the scale of the rural landscape and, driven by the objective of maximum exploitation of natural resources, led to its radical transformation. Thus, the industrial revolution signals a new type of human interventions that transform the environment, upset its balance and inflict wounds on its aesthetic value. Intensive mechanised cultivation, new roads, dams, quarries, wind turbines, impose indiscriminately their presence and result in new shapes of landscape.

At the same time, materials, aesthetics and the use of buildings are no longer related to the local conditions, and human intervention upon the landscape acquires a global character: one sees the same silos, the same wind turbines and the same dams all over the world. The globalisation of technology and materials cuts off the landscape from its locality. The landscape becomes fragmented. Mild exploitation survives in mountainous, non accessible and island areas, whilst the morphology of landmarks and settlements changes according to the needs and requirements of modern technology. Areas of mild exploitation alternate with areas of intense exploitation and landscape “pockets” emerge: tourist landscape, protected landscape, agro-industrial landscape, cultural landscape etc. The cohesion and continuity of the landscape is seriously injured.

Landscapes inevitably change. It depends on one’s attitude and culture whether to perceive the change as intrusion or not. For example, do we perceive photovoltaic panels **and** the cylindrical bales of hay as intruders in rural landscapes, both of which were invented a few decades ago? Do we perceive wind turbines **and** modern farm buildings as intruders? Do we perceive the genetically modified crops as intruders?

It has been observed through the ages, that new human interventions are usually perceived as intruders of the “traditional” landscape, only to become a positive element of the landscape some years or decades later. Farmsteads, windmills and railways that changed the landscape some centuries ago, today have become monuments to be protected and in harmony with their territory.

In the meta-industrial era, globalisation in the economic, socio-political, technological and cultural realms has had significant consequences for the environment. Many of the environmental challenges have become shared concerns across the world: land use changes, climate change and global warming, reduced water availability and quality,

loss of biodiversity, soil degradation, sea-level rise, all have serious impacts, especially upon rural areas, affecting rural landscapes and leading to their degradation.

It has been also accepted that few areas in Europe remain in their natural state: in most landscapes there are traces of human interaction resulting from centuries of migration, human settlement and land reclamation and exploitation. In terms of land use, agriculture can be singled out as having had one of the heaviest influences on Europe's landscapes, because it affects habitats and species which depend on such natural elements as soil, vegetation and access. In parallel, the influx of economic activities, such as industry and tourism have contributed to the deterioration and character change of rural landscapes, while external pressures, such as demands for urban expansion or production of renewable energy have also had an effect.

The demands which will fall upon the landscapes of Europe in coming years form a massive challenge to all. They include:

- expected large-scale migrations of people, into and within Europe, and from the countryside to the cities, leading to heavy demand for new housing, services and infrastructure in the receiving regions;
- massive investment in infrastructure – railways, roads, airports, electricity services, water supplies etc) and in industry, agriculture and other development;
- heavy emphasis on renewable energy, including investment in wind turbines, hydro-electricity and solar-energy plants, which all have major impacts on the landscape;
- measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, for example through heavy investment in coastal and flood defences;
- continuing massive growth in tourism, with the demands that it makes for facilities of all kinds.

The tendency in recent years has been to protect rural landscapes by designating it as national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty, reserves etc, and preserve also the manmade features and buildings that have given landscape its character in pre-industrial times. Numerous EU regulations and decisions have been issued to this effect. But further to that, a new consciousness needs to be developed that everyone has a stake in landscape, it is important that everyone should have the opportunity to have a say on how it changes and develops, and how it is used and kept in good condition. The European Landscape Convention has made an importance contribution to this direction, binding governments to the protection of rural landscape and the preservation of its natural and cultural features.

## THEMATIC UNIT 4. THE DESTRUCTION OF LANDSCAPE

Beyond the conquest of nature by force, as discussed in the previous chapter, the relationship between man and nature has taken the route to devastation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The rural landscape is a witness to this devastation.

Throughout history, changes in the balance among the elements of nature created catastrophes. These changes, up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were the result of natural causes and contributed to a great extent to the revival of nature and the evolution of the morphology of the planet. With the advent of industrial revolution and technological progress, human intervention upon nature's elements, whether purposeful or not, has upset their balance and created preconditions for catastrophes. Climatic change is the most evident of the phenomena that have disturbed the natural balance, with such consequences as forest fires, drought, floods, hurricanes, melting of the glaciers, desertification of agricultural land etc. It is important to understand where and how natural disasters might arise and what can be done to reduce their impact on people and the environment.

It is a commonly accepted fact today that Europe's natural environment, its production systems (agriculture, fisheries, forestry, terrestrial ecosystems) and other key socioeconomic sectors (tourism, energy, human health care, built environment) are under great pressure from both environmental change and socioeconomic development. Society faces a wide range of natural disasters that can have serious social and economic consequences for people and their livelihoods, and negative environmental consequences, causing destruction to delicate habitats and ecosystems as well as to the landscapes that harbour them. For example:

**Flooding and landslides** are expected to increase in frequency and magnitude. Since 1998, Europe has suffered more than 100 major floods, causing extensive damage. The massive flooding in central Europe in 2002, for example, was the worst since 1845 – and scientists predict this is only the beginning of the trend as climate change accelerates. A recent example of severe flooding in the winter of 2009, preceded by gale-force winds that neared 200 km per hour, left its tragic mark in the regions of Gironde and Landes in southern France, where one of Europe's largest forest areas exists. The first estimations in France were that between 30 to 50 million cubic metres of trees, mainly pine and poplar, were felled by the storm; and that it could take a century before the Aquitaine forest can return to its former majesty after its destruction. The tragedy conveyed by the devastated landscape of Gironde and Landes reminds us in a vivid way that the dominance of man over nature has limits that cannot be trespassed.

Several countries in Eastern Europe show signs of accelerated **desertification**. At the same time, each year since 1990 the average land area and population affected by **droughts** has doubled. Water scarcity is a problem that affects most EU Member States and around 100 million inhabitants in 26 river basin districts throughout Europe.

The wide ranging impacts of climate changes in the last decades have also affected **agriculture**, both in terms of quantity and quality of produce. Agriculture, however, is one

of the major components of the European rural landscapes, giving them their distinct character and value. The abandonment of agricultural land, either because of the reduction in the value of production or because of rural migration towards urban centres, is already affecting the landscapes of Europe. It is characteristic that in Italy from 1920 till today the extension of forests has almost doubled at the expense of cultivated areas. At the same time, agriculture, as mentioned in the previous chapter, threatened the biodiversity and the shape of rural landscapes, especially through the expansion of monocultures, achieved by eliminating natural elements that were considered unnecessary or an obstacle to mechanisation, i.e. trees, hedges, ditches or small rural buildings.

The loss of the rich and varied **biodiversity** that was once typical of the European landscapes has affected drastically their character, following the drastic changes in intensive exploitation of natural resources by industry and agriculture, the pressure of expanding populations, industrial technologies and transport, and last but not least, the change in climate.

**Forest fires** should also be considered: they have important economic consequences, which are likely to increase under a warmer climate, with an enlargement of the fire prone area and a lengthening of the fire season. In 2007, fires destroyed a vast wooded area in Greece, in the regions of Peloponnese and Evia, devastating not only the landscape, most of which has great historical and archaeological value, but also the rural communities that inhabited the burnt area. During the same year, the historical Mount Parnes was burnt and the fires were repeated two years later, in 2009, in the wooded slopes of Attica, very close to Athens. Similarly big fires were experienced during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Spain, France and Italy. Indeed, burnt forests represent a recurring landscape in the Mediterranean countries, with tragic consequences on the economic and social viability of their broader territories. The burnt landscape represents a dark facet of modern civilisation.

Another type of human intervention that spoils the landscape and creates catastrophic conditions relates to **waste**. Poor management of urban and industrial refuse and in particular uncontrolled waste disposal in forests, gorges, hill and mountain slopes, rivers, streams etc increases the risk of fires and the pollution of surface and underground waters. However, this is part of everyday reality in many Mediterranean regions, including Greece and Italy. The landscape of waste is a landscape of catastrophe that threatens our civilisation.

## **THEMATIC UNIT 5. LANDSCAPE IN ART**

Art has provided an alternative, more emotional view at the landscape and the interventions of man in his effort to conquer it and subjugate it. This view complements the more objective consideration of the landscape and the changes affected by man on it, either with respect or conceitedness. In the exhibition, visitors are invited to derive their own conclusions, assemble their own path of impressions, thoughts and feelings and decide what kind of future they would like for themselves, their children, and the children of their children. They are guided in this errand by the catalytic glance of the artist, sometimes nostalgic, sometimes sarcastic and sometimes looking with grief to the future created by us all.

The glance of the artist helps us to probe more deeply into this problematic, complementing it with emotion, lyricism or abstraction. In the exhibition, the utopian landscapes are shattered to passing impressions, “fly” in the air or are shut in a suitcase so that we can take them with us as mementos, un-linked and cut off from their immediate environment. They become small fetish, hanging disorderly from the strings of our memory, without cohesion or identity. They are broken up into pieces, many of which have no relationship to a territorial landscape, but are mixed with emotions caused by threatening questions, such as those related to violence or blind consumption. Multicoloured or black and white, the landscapes of modern artists reconstruct coastlines, mountains and gardens, castles and trees with hardness or nostalgia, relieved by romanticism or full of sorrow for the shattering of the relationship between man and nature.

Pictorial representation of the landscape has always been one of the favourite subjects in the arts and a source of inspiration through time. In all forms of visual art, painting, sculpture, engraving, micro sculpture, as well as in many forms of artistic handicraft (pottery, embroidery, weaving, batik) from ancient times to the present day, landscape art has produced important works.

In ancient times, Minoan art has celebrated the landscape, as shown in pottery decorations, stamps, as well as the frescos of the Minoan palaces, where often the landscape dominates or defines an anthropomorphic picture. A similar narrative approach is observed in the frescos of the Cycladic civilisation as well as in decorations of vases, whilst in Mycenaean art the representation of the landscape becomes more schematic and abstract. At the peak of ancient Greek art, particularly during the classical period, the landscape acquires a special role in daily life, as architects and sculptors are inspired by it and try to mirror it in buildings and statues. In ancient Greek and Roman pottery and reliefs, the landscape is used as an abstract but important element which identifies the place, as for example in the case of an olive tree and a rock representing Acropolis. Also, landscapes are the most common subject, together with mythological scenes, of Roman art in wall paintings and mosaics in houses and tombs.

With the predominance of the Christian faith, painting acquired initially a symbolic and allegorical role while later on the religious subjects prevailed. In Byzantine art, the landscape is depicted in an austere, stylised and non-real form and is utilised only to

emphasise the holiness of the scenes, as for example in the scenes of the Crucifixion (imposing mountainous landscape). Paradise scenes are an exception as in that case a rich, heavenly, almost naturalistic landscape depiction is called for. In post Byzantine art and especially in wall paintings the landscape becomes a substantial element of the representation, although it never becomes the sole element of a picture.

During the middle ages, in the paintings of Europe, the landscape appears initially deified and accompanies religious scenes. During Renaissance the landscape acquires an important narrative role and is used in such themes as hunting or to express political utopia, whilst slowly becomes more prevalent and is depicted more and more at a large scale. A reference is due in this context to the famous painting by Georgeone “The tempest” dated around 1505 (Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice), with its imposing landscape and the disproportionably large human figures at the foreground of the picture.

Later, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, topiography emerges as an autonomous subject in art, starting from the Dutch painters and creating a School in Italian art that served as a model for the realistic art of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Dutch artists with their idyllic landscaped subjects, inspired by real landscapes, became indeed a pictorial model and sparked off a series of “realistic” paintings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, in England a naturalistic landscape painting style emerged, represented by Constable and Turner who in turn influenced later-day painters, such the French impressionists.

Impressionism provided a turning point in landscape painting that led artists to leave their studios, work in the open air and depict accurately the light and their personal “impressions” of the landscape at the moment of creation. At the post-impressionist period, the freedom of expression increased greatly the possibilities open to artists in landscape depiction. In contemporary art, artists are inspired and sensitised by the landscape, question their art and become creative. Sometimes they depict the landscape realistically, sometimes with awe or a nostalgic mood, and sometimes disjointed, distorted, illusory, utopian. Cubic landscapes, futuristic landscapes, surrealist landscapes, phobic landscapes, abstract landscapes dominate painting. Artistic expression, liberated from rules and restrictions, develops a continuous dialogue with landscape, conveying admiration, fear, sorrow or hope through painting frames, videos, installations or sculpture.

## **CONCLUSION: UTOPIA OR SUSTAINABILITY?**

The relationship between man and landscape undergoes a crisis in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This crisis reflects on the future of our civilisation and requires from all of us to put forward questions and try to answer them. Can we redefine our relation with the landscape through a radical change of attitudes and behaviour, on the basis of sustainable development? Or do we prefer to close our eyes to the coming catastrophe, adopt the romanticism of the past and/or merely be sarcastic about the mistakes of our present civilisation? Do we want to develop a sustainable relationship with the landscape or are we trapped in a utopian reality?

The «landscape stories» as they unfold through the successive stages of the effort of man to dominate nature, help us to reconsider the lessons learnt by the mild development stage and adapt these to the challenges of the present day and the requirements of sustainable development. Nevertheless, the development of the rural territory is not a uni-dimensional concept. It brings together many dimensions -economic, social, cultural, technological- and an integrated approach is required for sustainable development. Similarly, the landscape is a multi-dimensional space that is made up from many parts or “pixels”: agriculture, natural environment, exploitable resources, people, society, history, cultural heritage. These parts should form a cohesive total if we wish to reach the aim of viable and sustainable development.

Landscape is about the relationship between people and place. It is the setting for people's lives. Thus, landscape has:

- Economic value: it offers opportunities for economic activity; businesses, visitors and residents are attracted to good quality landscapes.
- Social and community value: it can contribute to community cohesion and sense of ownership.
- Cultural value: it contains or relates to elements of history, art, folk traditions.
- Environmental value: it encompasses all the natural elements that make this “place” distinct.

Landscape is therefore a vital resource in the development of any region. The way landscape is used, managed and protected and even created, determines the sustainability of development. Moreover, we must realise that our landscape is changing, and the pressures it has to withstand originate from many sources, such as the need for sustainable housing and jobs; the globalisation of production and consumption; or climate change

Change should be managed to have positive effects. This demands a common approach by farmers, policy makers, administrators and the civil society that is not easy to realise. Many issues come to the fore regarding landscape change: the revitalisation and protection of biodiversity; the preservation and restoration of vernacular architecture; the study of local traditions to benefit from the wisdom and ingenuity of older technologies and cultivation methods; the wise use of energy and water resources.

The recent years are witnessing a wide range of protection and preservation efforts aiming at maintaining the landscapes for the future. Indeed, people often start to value

something when it is threatened and the recent consequences of extreme natural phenomena that have lead to large scale devastation (forest fires, desertification, floods, hurricanes, drought etc in Europe prove that. The European Landscape Convention provides a framework to protect valued landscapes and to help manage landscape change. It also offers the opportunity to the member states to learn from each other and share experience. It states that

*“The landscape... ... has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity...;... is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity; ... is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas;... its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone.”*



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