

## **Best practice**

# **Education on landscape: theoretical and practical approaches in the frame of the European Landscape Convention**

Benedetta Castiglioni (Padova, Italy)

Abstract - The first specific measures that the European Landscape Convention proposes in order to “achieve sustainable development” are devoted to “awareness-raising” and to “training and education”; each Country has to “undertake to increase awareness” and “to promote [...] school and university courses”. Considering the strong link existing between landscape issue and sustainability, landscape education is considered as one of the possible paths in ESD.

The paper deals with objectives, strategies and methods of landscape education in its connections with the features of ESD. The theoretical point of view is put in relationship with some examples of national and international projects and practices, in geography teaching and in other formal and informal contexts.

In particular the author presents the Cultura2000 European project 3KCL – Karstic Cultural Landscapes as a best practice for education on landscape. In this project nearly 600 pupils of different school level in three areas of Italy, France and Slovenia approached their neighbouring landscape, got to know it through activities carried out with an interdisciplinary staff of researchers, and disseminated their results through a travelling exposition and the web site. The project’s theoretical frame, structure and methodology, coherently conceived, present some interesting peculiarities: the strong relevance of the relationship dimension, at different levels; the scientific and critical approach to the complexity of landscape; the contemporaneous relevance given to the emotional approaches, as a medium for a deeper and wider knowledge; the strong co-operation among researchers, teachers and pupils, oriented to a common aim; the both local (due to the focus on the neighboring landscape) and global dimension (due to the international perspective of the project). The project results can help in defining some guidelines for education on landscape, towards a higher relevance of landscape issue in the educational context.

**Keywords:** Education on landscape, landscape and SD, best practice, karst landscapes

## **1. Landscape and sustainability**

The European Landscape Convention, a recent very important document, is a point of reference that cannot be omitted by people who have interests, in a wide sense, concerning landscape: geographers, of course, and scholars of other disciplines with a mostly cognitive approach, but also for landscape architects and planners, with an applied approach. Local administration and common people are involved in the implementation of the Convention, too.

The general aim of the Convention is to “provide a new instrument devoted exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe”. The long preamble explains the normative as well as the scientific and social frame in which the member States of the Council of Europe signatory act: many focal points are underlined, among them one of the firsts states “Concerned to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment”.

Which are the links between landscape and sustainability? In which sense protection, management and planning of landscapes deal with sustainable development?

Some other statements of the Convention help in explaining these questions, beginning from the definition at the Art.1: “*Landscape* means an area, as perceived by people, whose features is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”: in this sense, landscape is not only conceived from an ecological point of view, but it involves human (historical, cultural, economic, social, etc.) aspects as well as non-material characters arising from perception. Landscape is a part of our heritage, a resource we inherited from our past and we have to care about, towards our future. Moreover, landscape contributes in determining well-being of people and consolidating territorial identities.

With the same perspective of the most recent documents concerning SD (i.e. the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice on Environmental Matters, mentioned in the preamble), the European Landscape Convention gives high importance to people. If the involvement of people lays at the very beginning, in the landscape definition itself, landscape “protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone” and each action towards landscape has to take into consideration people aspirations. In addition (and this is our main interest in this case), to underline the importance of an effective participation, the first specific measures that Countries have to undertake (art. 6) are devoted to “awareness-raising” and to “training and education”.

Many researchers are implementing in different ways (like both landscape and sustainability can be approached in different ways) this strong link between landscape and sustainability (see Antrop, 2005) proposed by the Convention. Among them, the idea that landscape can be considered as a medium between people and territory is growing up, this is a key to understand and to implement in a sustainable way the relation between the population and environmental and spatial context (Castiglioni, De Marchi, 2007). From this wide-ranging approach to landscape, the peculiarities and values of education on landscape arise.

## **2. Education on landscape: aims, values, examples**

Using the metaphor of the “theatre” (Turri, 1998) in which people play the role both of the actor and of the audience towards landscape, landscape itself can be considered as “interfaccia tra il fare e il vedere quello che si fa” (the medium between making and looking at what we made); in this perspective, to achieve a positive relation with the environment and with man-made landscape change, learning to see represents the requirement for learning to act.

Education on landscape concerns different dimensions of human life: the sensorial (in particular visual) dimension, as it can be considered as an “education of the sight”; the cognitive dimension, for its “explorative” character, towards a better comprehension of natural as well as human aspects and factors; the ethic dimension because – as noted above – it involves the responsibilities of human actions in the landscape itself; the social dimension, as landscape belongs both to the single person and to the communities that live in it and that perceive it.

In particular Zanato (2007) underlines three different functions of landscape in a pedagogical context:

- *hermeneutical function*, because we can learn to “read” inside it and through its signs;
- *pragmatic function*, for its essential project dimension, that inquires on responsible management of landscape change;
- *social function*, for it involves and it promotes the development of local identities as well as opening to otherness (both time-otherness, concerning landscapes of the past, and place-otherness, concerning landscapes of far-away places).

Such arguments demonstrate how comprehensive are the values concerned with landscape education, that presents its importance not only towards landscape safeguard and landscape quality improvement, but also in itself, as an important step of an educational route.

Many examples of education on landscape do probably exist in geographical curricula and in other educational activities (in school and in permanent education programs), even if sometimes they could not be explicitly named this way. Many projects, experiences and methods

concerning the topic at international level are collected in a very first reference list in Castiglioni et al. (2007).

Wide projects promoted by local or national administrations and by other organization (under the impulse given by the European Landscape Convention) have been implemented or are going to be implemented. For examples the administration of the Province of Brescia (Northern Italy) promoted during the school year 2006-07 a travelling exposition on the different aspects of the local landscape, involving schools in visiting it and in participating to a special competition on it ([www.ilpaesaggiobresciano.it](http://www.ilpaesaggiobresciano.it)).

At a national level, the Slovenian Association of Landscape Architects implemented during 2004-2005 the project “We are making our landscape”, with the purpose to disseminate knowledge about the landscape to the general public and in particular to stimulate children and adults to observe the landscape in the everyday environment and to perceive the landscape quality, in order to raise awareness. Different steps and activities characterized this project, that involved mostly kindergartens and primary schools: the publication of a series of posters concerning Slovenian landscapes; workshops with teachers; publication of materials concerning the projects, its frame, its values and Slovenian landscapes; competition for arts and photographic works (dividing participants into three age groups); exhibitions and awards of the best works.

Another important project on landscape education is promoted by the Regional Government of Catalonia in coordination with the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia. In order to raise awareness regarding landscape, the Observatory is preparing and disseminating innovative teaching material for pupils in Compulsory Secondary Education. The teaching materials, prepared by people of recognized prestige in these matters, are made up of illustrative prints in a provisional format, allowing the pupils to work in teams on the interpretation of twelve landscapes in Catalonia, and of sets of teaching activities and teaching guides for the academic staff. The materials have already come into use experimentally in six secondary schools, to test their effectiveness. During 2007 these and other teaching materials will be available on the Landscape Observatory web site, so that pupils can use new information technology in the learning processes ([www.catpaisatge.net](http://www.catpaisatge.net)).

### **3. The project “3KCL – Karstic Cultural Landscapes”: a good practice for education on landscape**

Supported by the Cultura2000 European program in 2004-2005, the project “3KCL- Karstic Cultural Landscapes” was lead by the Museum of Natural History and Archeology of Montebelluna (a small town in North-East of Italy) and involved research centers and schools in Italy, France and Slovenia. As the title suggests, the project concerns the peculiarities of three karst study areas, that were analyzed by three research teams, “discovered” by local school pupils and then disseminated to the wide public by the pupils themselves (Figure 1) Approximately the project involved around 40 researchers, 50 school teachers and mentors and 600 different aged pupils.

The project represented a big chance and a challenge, too, to develop and implement educational strategies towards landscape in the frame of education on sustainable development; from the final verification of assets, that involved researchers and teachers, it emerges that through the partnership among different groups of participants and the cultural mediation of the Museum, knowledge about the territory raised, the awareness of landscape’s values increased as well as of the care for its conservation and safeguard.

The general aims of the project were clearly stated in the proposal document: to provide innovative contents, both from the scientific and the educational profile, in the study and interpretation of the evolution of fragile karst eco-system and of their relationship with human

settlements, in order to highlight the value of this cultural heritage, at a European level; to promote a wide cultural dialogue at international level on karst phenomena, that originate unique morphological structures and landscapes; to exchange experiences and good practices; to promote an active role of the schools and of the museum, in order to implement a friendly approach to knowledge for children and young people; to arise children and young people awareness of the delicate equilibrium of karst landscapes.

Both a deeper knowledge of karst landscapes coming from research and the wider awareness of their peculiarities achieved through dissemination activities are fundamental requirements and can represent a very important “first step” in going towards a more sustainable future.

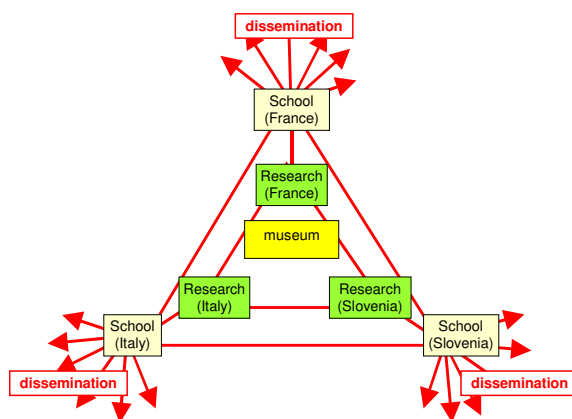


Fig. 1 – The network and partnership of the 3KCL project. The Montebelluna Museum coordinated the whole activities; research partners (Geography Department of the University of Padova – I, Geography Department of the University of Nice-Sophia-Antipolis – F, and Karst Research Institute of Postojina – SI) were in contact among them in order to exchange methodologies and research results, and with their school partners for the direct transmission of research contents (Action 5, see Table 1); school partners had the role of “disseminators”, as they built the materials for the exposition and the website pages, and were in contact among them through the website itself.

As shown in figure 1, the partners were part of a sort of network, made of a complex of relationships, each partner with a specific role. To attain the goals, the project proceeded in parallel along two main paths (Table 1): the first concerned research on natural and human aspects of karst landscapes, and on their relationship, too; the second focalized on education and dissemination: the knowledge achieved in research has been directly shared with school children, towards a wider awareness of a large public of karst landscapes as a very peculiar natural and cultural heritage.

The educational phase can also be divided into three different steps.

The first one (Action 0) consisted in a sort of introduction for the school activities, a general view to landscape, required to frame the study in depth on specific landscape features of the following phases. Specific educational targets were involved, too: learning to look through landscape with attention; recognizing different landscape elements and their relationships that characterize the uniqueness of each landscape; recognizing that landscape sends sensations and excites emotions in oneself and in other people; looking for an explanation of some landscape features, in connection with natural and human factors; understanding landscape change. Specific educational tools were used in order to achieve these aims.

In the second step (Action 5) researchers met the pupils with lessons or excursions and explained to them the research results (obviously with the adequate language).

In the third one (Actions 6, 7 and 8) the pupils themselves prepared the materials (posters, web pages or other materials) to present to a wider public what they learnt.

The structure of these parts of the project is really innovative, both for the direct contact between the research worlds and the school world, and for the very important and active role played by the pupils themselves in dissemination activities. Both these aspects have been considered by the teachers as very important inside the project.

<b>RESEARCH PHASE</b>	ACTION 1 (A1)	First coordination workshop	November 2004
	ACTION 2 (A2)	Scientific study of 3 karst areas	November 2004 – April 2005
	ACTION 3 (A3)	Second workshop: comparative results about the 3 karst areas	April 2005
	ACTION 4 (A4)	Scientific publication and implementation of the website	March – July 2005
<b>EDUCATIONAL PHASE</b>	ACTION 0 (A0)	Introductory activities of “reading landscapes”: teachers workshops, excursions, activities	November 2004 - March 2005
	ACTION 5 (A5)	Contents transmission to the partner-schools	March – April 2005
	ACTION 6 (A6)	Didactic materials produced by the partner-schools	March – June 2005
	ACTION 7 (A7)	Implementation of the web site by the partner-schools	April – October 2005
	ACTION 8 (A8)	Final exposition, disseminations of results	June – October 2005

Table 1 – The project structure.

Final products of the educational phase are the 30 posters of a traveling exposition that was opened in Montebelluna in June 2005, in Postojina in September and in Annot (France) in October. Other materials, different in each country, completed the exposition. The posters' content represent also the main content of the pages of the website [www.3kcl.net](http://www.3kcl.net). This tool has great importance for a wide dissemination of results, reaching not only people living near the karst areas, but, potentially, all the world. Moreover, through the web site the pupils could keep in contact among the three countries, feel the international dimension of the project and, to some extent, “exchange their landscapes”. They learnt about the other karst areas, and – mostly – they were stimulated in finding the way (and the language) to present to the pupils of other countries their “own” karst landscape.

#### **4. Conclusion: the project “3KCL” as a good practice in the decade of education for sustainable development**

The uniqueness of karst landscapes, that are widespread but known only where large caves exist, represents a very interesting “experimental field” to propose actions devoted to a better knowledge, comparison and popularization, and to improve the acquisition of more responsibilities towards territorial and environmental matters. Moreover, the through-time reading of remote and recent changes leads to re-discover near but often unknown worlds: landscape can play the function of a “knot” among different cultures and among different generations. The activities and the results of 3KCL project seem to match these goals of the European Landscape Convention, they seem to act in the same direction.

Moreover, taking into consideration ESD reference points ([www.unesco.org/education/desd](http://www.unesco.org/education/desd)), it has to be “interdisciplinary and holistic: learning for sustainable development embedded in the whole curriculum, not as a separate subject”. The 3KCL project is built as interdiscipli-

nary, involving different subjects both in the research and in the educational phase; stressing this point, the whole project is built with a strong relevance of the relation dimension, at different levels: the research world and the dissemination and education world; the three karst areas, partially similar and different, compared; the different landscape aspects that are analyzed, starting from the idea that the landscape itself is the display of the relationship between man and environment, and is at the same time natural and cultural heritage; the relation among teachers and pupils of different age, different schools, different countries; the relationship between the schools and their surrounding territory.

Another peculiarity of ESD is “critical thinking and problem solving: leading to confidence in addressing the dilemmas and challenges of sustainable development”: through the direct relationship with the researchers, children learn not through a “ready for use” box of knowledge, but through a scientific and critical approach to the complexity of environment and landscape; when they prepared the dissemination materials they had to be critical, too, choosing among the most relevant contents and the best way to communicate them.

Moreover, ESD, that is considered “multi-method”, follows “an approach in which teachers and learners work together to acquire knowledge and play a role in shaping the environment of their educational institutions”: in 3KCL researchers, teachers and children really work together and cooperate under the coordination of an “open to change” museum.

Finally, the project is “locally relevant: addressing local as well as global issues, and using the language(s) which learners most commonly use”. As “education and learning lie at the heart of approaches to sustainable development”, we hope that 3KCL project and its activities in landscape education could represent a good example and a “best practice” for such important requirement.

## References:

- ANTROP, M. (2006), Sustainable landscapes: contradiction, fiction or utopia?, *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 75, pp.187–197.
- CASTIGLIONI, B. (2002), *Percorsi nel paesaggio*, Giappichelli Editore, Torino.
- CASTIGLIONI, B. & DE MARCHI, M. (eds.) (2007), *Paesaggio, valutazione, sostenibilità*, Quaderni del Dipartimento di Geografia, n° 24, Padova.
- CASTIGLIONI, B., CELI, M. & GAMBERONI, E. (eds.), (2007), *Il paesaggio vicino a noi. Educazione, consapevolezza, responsabilità*. Proceedings of the conference 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2006, Museo Civico di Storia Naturale e Archeologia, Montebelluna.
- HERBILLON, J. & POUYSEGUR, L. (1996), Lecture sensible et interprétative du paysage : analyse d’une expérience pédagogique, *Mappemonde*, 1, pp. 34 – 39.
- LA ROUX, A. (2001), *Enseigner le paysage?*, Centre Regional de documentation pédagogique de Basse-Normandie.
- LUGINBÜHL, Y. (1996), Le paysage aujourd’hui et son enseignement, *L’Information Géographique*, 60 (1), pp. 20 – 29.
- TURRI, E. (1998), *Il paesaggio come teatro*, Marsilio Editore, Venezia.
- ZANATO ORLANDINI, O. (2007), Lo sguardo sul paesaggio da una prospettiva pedagogico-ambientale, in CASTIGLIONI, B., CELI, M. & GAMBERONI, E. (eds.), *Il paesaggio vicino a noi. Educazione, consapevolezza, responsabilità*. Proceedings of the conference 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2006, Museo Civico di Storia Naturale e Archeologia, Montebelluna.

## Author:

Dr. Benedetta Castiglioni, University of Padova, Department of Geography, via del Santo, 26, 35123 Padova, Italy, [etta.castiglioni@unipd.it](mailto:etta.castiglioni@unipd.it)