



Integrated landscape initiatives in Europe: Multi-sector collaboration in multi-functional landscapes



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ABSTRACT

Landscapes are linked to human well-being in a multitude of ways, some of which are challenged by global market forces and traditional management approaches. In response to this situation there has been a rise in local initiatives to sustain the values of landscape. The aim of this paper is to provide a systematic analysis of the spectrum of these initiatives in Europe in terms of patterns of organisation, participants, resources, problems, and landscape values addressed. This review collects examples of integrated landscape initiatives from all over Europe through systematic internet key word searches and canvassing of European umbrella organisations; followed by an online survey of representatives from the identified initiatives (n = 71). Our results show that the most relevant characteristics of integrated landscape initiatives in Europe are: a holistic approach to landscape management (acting in multifunctional landscapes and combining different objectives), the involvement and coordination of different sectors and stakeholders at many levels, and the role as agents of awareness raising and learning hubs. Integrated landscape initiatives mainly depend on impulses of local civil society. Identified barriers to their work include a lack of funding and institutional support. Therefore, political and societal action is needed to increase their effectiveness.

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1. Introduction

Landscapes have been marked by sometimes gradual, sometimes rapid reorganisations to adapt their uses to changing societal demands throughout history (Antrop, 2005; Dannebeck et al., 2009). However, the current speed, scale, and magnitude of landscape change are unprecedented (Jansen et al., 2009; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005). European landscapes face changes linked to globalisation and its associated increasing flows of technology, investment, and trade; intensification and homogenisation; urbanisation and proliferation of built infrastructure; marginalisation and abandonment; and renewable power provision (Antrop, 2008; Plieninger and Bieling, 2012). In response to these challenges, there are growing movements among civil society throughout Europe that demand local and eco-products, are interested in local

traditional knowledge and culture as connected to landscapes, are concerned about the conservation of biodiversity, long for unique touristic destinations, are willing to participate more actively in decisions affecting the landscape, or (if living in the big cities) are willing to start a new life in a rural area (Penker, 2009; Plieninger et al., 2015a; Termorshuizen and Opdam, 2009). These initiatives typically build on collaboration among different sectors and actor groups at many levels (Prager, 2012; Prager et al., 2012; Scherr et al., 2012).

Such collaborative initiatives have been termed “integrated landscape initiatives (ILIs)” (Estrada-Carmona et al., 2014; Milder et al., 2014) or “landscape stewardship initiatives” (Plieninger et al., 2015b). The importance of these new management approaches (landscape approaches) is reflected in the increasing number of studies that were dedicated to them. Schultz et al. (2007) developed a social-ecological inventory of local stewardship groups in Sweden. Axelsson et al. (2011) disaggregated the different concepts laying behind the landscape approaches. Ode Sang and Tveit (2013) studied the perception of landscape stewardship in agricultural areas of Norway as related to landscape preferences. Penker et al. (2014) defined a typology of organisations where volun-

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tary forces are involved in the protection of landscapes in German speaking regions. [Enengel et al. \(2014\)](#) studied the “efforts, benefits and risks” perceived by the members of such initiatives. But until now, no synthesis of the full spectrum of integrated landscape approaches in Europe has been performed. Such synthesis is needed to make the study of ILIs relevant for policy at the level of the European Union. This may inform current European landscape-related policy processes, as well as national policies and regional planning. It also unfolds the current state of ILIs on the European continent, which is important to understand its history and future evolution, and its similarities with equivalent processes in other parts of the world. Similar continental-level reviews have been performed for Africa ([Milder et al., 2014](#)) and Latin America and the Caribbean ([Estrada-Carmona et al., 2014](#)), and [Reed et al. \(2016\)](#) have reviewed integrated landscape approaches in the tropics.

In this paper, we understand integrated landscape initiatives in Europe as projects, programs, platforms, initiatives, or sets of activities that foster a broad range of landscape values ([Termorshuizen and Opdam, 2009](#)) and contribute to the personal and social fulfilment and well-being of people. ILIs contribute to safeguarding landscape values by for example fostering rural tourism as connected to sustainability, local heritage preservation, and rural livelihoods improvement; or by helping farmers to produce and sell local products and consumers to have access to these products while contributing to the protection of the environment, the preservation of local agricultural knowledge, and the strengthening of the sense of community. ILIs are characterised by the following criteria: they act at a landscape scale, involve inter-sectorial coordination, develop or support multi-stakeholder processes, are highly participatory, and work mainly on a non-profit basis. ILIs include bottom-up local initiatives and grassroots movements, civil society associations, non-governmental organisations, local governments organisations, agrarian or environmental platforms and cooperatives, but also initiatives fostered by regional and central governments, by international funds, or by national and international umbrella organisations. They generally act at a place-based level and involve multi-sector coordination.

The aim of this study is to provide an overview of integrated landscape initiatives across Europe. This is achieved by a systematic review of the available online information and expert knowledge within major organisations and networks in the field, as well as by an online survey of initiatives representatives. Specifically, we raised the following research questions:

1. In which landscape and land use contexts are European integrated landscape initiatives operating?
2. Which motivations and aims do integrated landscape initiatives typically have?
3. Which participants and stakeholders are involved in integrated landscape initiatives?
4. What structure and functions do integrated landscape initiatives have?
5. Which activities do integrated landscape initiatives implement and how are they related to landscape-level outcomes?
6. What successes have integrated landscape initiatives achieved and what problems are they facing?
7. How do integrated landscape initiatives contribute to landscape stewardship?

2. Method

2.1. Identification of integrated landscape initiatives

Firstly, we performed a systematic search for ILIs all over Europe between February and October 2014. The greater part of initia-

tives was collected through internet keyword searches performed in English in the Google Search engine. To identify relevant keywords and hence ensure that a varied and representative sample of ILIs was obtained, we performed a thorough scoping exercise (e.g. agricultural landscape, landscape heritage, landscape dynamics, and a list of all of the countries targeted; for a detailed list of search expressions used see Table A1), and the keyword searches exercise was only finished after saturation was reached and no new entries were provided. Initiatives were also collected by canvassing European landscape researchers and representatives of European umbrella organisations (e.g. Landscape Europe, Council of Europe, and European Landscape Network). Secondly, we recorded basic information on each initiative in a database (name, duration, contact details, and general characteristics) and screened the initiatives for agreement with the criteria of landscape initiatives (see examples in Table B1). Thirdly, we surveyed the initiatives that complied with the criteria. In a later step, we added some initiatives to the initial collection through the answers provided by respondents to our survey when they were asked to propose other ILIs.

In the end, a total sample of 507 organisations was compiled (84% collected from keyword searches, 10% suggested by experts and umbrella organisations, and 6% recommended by survey respondents), and after the selection the resulting survey population was 338 initiatives from 33 European countries. Seventy-five percent of all initiatives in the final sample were from the United Kingdom, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Romania, Austria, and Estonia.

2.2. Survey

We invited the 338 initiatives collected to participate in a self-administrated online survey. This survey was designed to gather in-depth information on each ILI. We used [Questback's EFS platform \(2014\)](#) for our survey. Predefined answer categories were given for most of the questions asked, but respondents could always add an open response if the list of given options did not match their reality. In addition, the survey included some open-ended questions. The survey was structured in eight sections, including information on: 1) respondents, 2) landscape characteristics and spatial context, 3) initiative's origin, aims (in terms of the landscape values addressed), structure, and financial resources, 4) activities developed, 5) stakeholders and sectors taking part, 6) dissemination channels, participation processes, and awareness raising activities, 7) outcomes achieved, problems, and successful aspects, and 8) feedback to the survey and additional information (for a copy of the survey, see Appendix C). The activities and outcomes were organised in five domains: 1) natural resources management and conservation, 2) farming and agriculture, 3) cultural heritage and traditions protection, 4) rural livelihoods and human well-being improvement, and 5) multi-sector coordination and planning (to foster the accurate management of the landscape specially in terms of cooperation among sectors and stakeholders, enhancing the role of local communities, and building of social capital).

A total of 136 respondents opened the survey, and 86 completed it, with a resulting response rate of 25% (average response rate for online surveys is 24.8% ([Mirzaee, 2014](#))). Fifteen responses were excluded because they did not meet the selection criteria described above. Therefore, 71 ILIs from 23 countries ([Fig. 1](#)) formed the final sample for our analysis.

In order to identify a possible self-selection bias in the response rate we studied whether smaller or bigger initiatives were less likely to respond to the survey, using contingency tables and chi-square test of association. The results did not show any statistical significance.

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