

## European Landscapes in Transition

European rural landscapes as we experience them today are the result of ongoing processes and interactions between nature and society. These are changing fast: the future landscapes will be different from those we know currently. Written for academics, policy makers and practitioners, this book is the first to explore the complex histories of rural landscapes in Europe as a basis for their sound governance in future. Tensions between the needs of agricultural spaces driven by economic incentives and a variety of non-agricultural functions are explored to demonstrate current challenges and the shortfalls in the policies that address them. Using inspiring case studies that highlight the roles of regional agents and communities, the authors go further than the usual analyses to illustrate the importance of local context. Written by experts currently working to revitalise the rural landscapes of Europe, the text concludes with suggestions for improving landscape policy and planning practice.

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Implications for Policy and Practice

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## Foreword

Landscapes are changing. Everyone can experience this, and all landscapes seem to be affected. Landscapes are always changing, naturally. So why bother? Because there is much evidence that the current changes are not for the better and the accelerating pace and magnitude indicate that changes might be out of our control.

About three centuries ago, important social and technological revolutions began that accelerated and upscaled landscape dynamics, resulting in an irreversible transition from the past. Global driving forces transformed existing landscapes into urbanised and globalised ones in a networked society. Local forces were not able to sustain the traditional land management that had created the characteristic landscapes, in particular the rural and (silvo-)pastoral landscapes with a long history and carrying past traditions and memories. They are considered a common good and a valuable heritage that is becoming lost. Particularly in Europe, the diversity of the rural and pastoral landscapes is astonishing and characteristic of Europe's identity. The first assessment of Europe's environment in 1995 by the EEA, the 'Dobříš Assessment', formulated the situation concisely as follows:

*The richness and diversity of rural landscapes in Europe is a distinctive feature of the continent. There is probably nowhere else where the signs of human interaction with nature in landscape are so varied, contrasting and localised ...*

*Despite the immense scale of socio-economic changes that have accompanied this century's wave of industrialisation and urbanisation in many parts of Europe, much of this diversity remains, giving distinctive character to countries, regions and local areas. (European Environmental Agency 1995)*

The main driving forces of this transition are human (demography, economy, politics and technology) and natural (tectonics, climate and calamities), interacting through complex feedback loops. The main driving forces induce

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a variety of processes such as supplying natural resources, production (in agriculture, forestry and industry), urbanisation and communication networking. These forces act from global to local scales and are essentially not sustainable and are indifferent to the persistence of landscapes. When displacement is the mantra of global mobility to increase profit, this is not an option at the local scale, where sustainability can be attempted only by adaptation.

Although the driving forces have been identified and the general trend of the transition is known, much remains unknown about the specific processes at the local scale and the mechanisms that are involved in making the real changes on the terrain. On one hand, geographical space becomes polarised, where people, activities and infrastructures concentrate in hotspots of increasing urbanisation, and on the other hand, vast areas in the periphery of economic activities are being abandoned. Consequently, landscapes everywhere are affected. These changes also affect the attitudes people have towards the landscape. In 2014, 54 per cent of the world's population lived in urban areas, and the United Nations expects an increase to 66 per cent by 2050. Non-urban areas (i.e. rural and natural areas) depopulate and lose services that once were useful for urban places, such as providing food and natural resources. Nowadays, 'nice', 'traditional' and 'natural' landscapes attract urbanites for tourism and recreation, creating new challenges and problems for the rural countryside.

*European Rural Landscapes in Transition* deals with the cascade of processes that affect the complex dynamics of the rural landscapes in Europe, in particular focusing on the agricultural ones. A cascade is an appropriate metaphor here as the authors explore it from the bottom to the top. Learning from local case studies, they achieve understanding of the mechanisms involved in the transition and zoom out to the European scale as a whole. The perspective starts from the characteristics of the rural and in successive chapters the changes and the responses to them are analysed. Special attention goes to the changing interactions between rural and urban. This certainly helps to formulate realistic, optimistic visions of valuable future landscapes, visions that may inspire a landscape-planning policy that sees careful conflict management as an inherent component of equitable and balanced, integrated landscape planning.

Marc Antrop

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## Preface

European rural landscapes have been our common research area for years. Based on each of our research projects and involvement with local landscapes and landscape agents, we have experienced how change patterns and the policies that guide them have been transformed, although not always in ways that properly address the new dynamics. These insights formed our main motivation for writing this book together. It is the result of a three-year journey into the literature and concrete examples of landscape transitions and policy initiatives, and, not least, our joint reflections and numerous discussions on change patterns, concepts, frameworks and policy approaches. We hope that academics, policy makers, planners and students who are seeking to better understand and manage the transitions processes of European rural landscapes will find this book useful.

The European continent is highly diverse with rich natural and cultural histories, and the rural landscapes reflect this diversity. In fact, the variety and heterogeneity of the landscapes, at both the regional and local scales, to a large extent characterises the European continent. This complexity makes it difficult to generalise and identify common ground for research and the practical management of European landscapes. We have tried to balance our analyses and suggestions between generalised approaches and concrete examples and we hope that we have captured the main topics concerning Europe's current transitions and policy challenges.

We, the three authors, maintain responsibility for any errors or shortcomings.

## Acknowledgements

During our research, we have benefitted greatly from critical comments, constructive suggestions, practical support and assistance from many individuals and institutions. The three of us share the privilege of working for academic institutions which provide opportunities for conducting work like this. Therefore, we are grateful to the Institute for Mediterranean Agrarian and Environmental Sciences (ICAAM), the University of Évora, the Department of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management, the University of Copenhagen and to Alterra and Wageningen University for providing the practical conditions for writing this book. Thanks also to the main sponsors of the Future Landscapes programme: Realdania Foundation, Nordea Foundation, 15th June Foundation and the Danish Outdoor Council for enabling us to start the work with a series of public lectures in Denmark on European landscapes in transition. Thanks also to Sara Folvig for preparing several of the figures, to Stuart Wright for his excellent work on enhancing our non-native English, and to Victoria Parrin, Kirsten Bot and Dominic Lewis from Cambridge University Press who have been of great help in preparing the manuscript for publication as well as being generously patient. Simon Swaffield's and two anonymous reviewers' comments on the original book proposal were also greatly appreciated.

Each of the book chapters was reviewed by colleagues and, therefore, we would like to thank Marc Antrop, Peter Howard, Gertrud Jørgensen, Søren Pilgaard Kristensen, Mattias Qyiström, Simon Swaffield, Richard Wakeford, Karlheinz Knickel and Anders Wästfelt for their critical and constructive comments on the chapters.

We have included numerous examples of specific landscapes and the changes they are currently undergoing in this book. These are presented at the start of each chapter, in text boxes and in the form of eight case studies. Three

of these cases were provided by colleagues, and our sincere thanks go to Janez Pirnat, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Diana Surová and José Muñoz-Rojas, ICAAM, University of Évora, who generously gave us the opportunity to include the cases in this book.

Finally, we wish to thank our families, first and foremost Ole, Vibeke and Annejet, who have been disturbed by home meetings, often several days in duration, and have had to deal with extra busy partners for more than three years.