

## **Workshop on landscape characterisation methods**

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Athens 17 and 18 December 2011

### **Background Document**

The Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos (Med-INA) is a non-profit organisation, working since 2003 on the interface between nature and culture, promoting an integrated approach to the management of the natural and cultural heritage. (For details, see [www.med-ina.org](http://www.med-ina.org))

Intimately linked to the natural and cultural heritage, landscapes are a key factor in individual and social well-being. Med-INA studies and promotes landscape management and conservation issues in Greece and the Mediterranean, applying innovative landscape methodologies that can help tackle key environmental issues, empower community participation, enhance local identity and promote sustainable development. In this context, Med-INA played a decisive role in Greece's ratification of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) in 2010 and participates in the Council of Europe activities relating to the ELC.

Currently it develops a project titled 'Implementation of the European Landscape Convention in Greece' through which it actively assists the Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change in the implementation of the ELC. Amongst the various actions undertaken by the organisation is the development of a tool that will allow the landscape characterisation in local scale. This tool will be used mainly by planners and will be incorporated in their planning methodologies.

Research so far has revealed that various methodologies exist, all with a different starting point but with a similar scope: to understand the character of the landscape and to make decisions on its best management and future development. However, most of these methods are mainly designed for non-Mediterranean contexts and do not necessarily handle the issue in a holistic manner.

The workshop on landscape characterisation methods aims to examine:

- How applicable existing methods can be for understanding the character of landscape in the Mediterranean and Greece, and
- Whether it is possible to adapt existing methods / tools to use for these particular contexts.

During the workshop, the main landscape characterisation methodologies will be presented, demonstrating also examples of good practice, as well as problems that arise in their application. All methodologies will be examined comparatively and proposals for their further development and / or relevance to the Mediterranean and Greek contexts will be made.

The disciplines represented in the workshop include geography, archaeology, history, social anthropology, ecology and environmental management, planning, architecture and landscape architecture.

### ***Plenary 1 – chair Thymio Papayannis***

In this first plenary, we will demonstrate the methods of three main landscape characterisation approaches, UK's LCA and HLC and the method of the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia.

### ***Plenary 2 – chair Chris Dalglish***

Following on from the presentations the afternoon plenary aims to examine current ways of practice, in order to discuss our vision of landscape management and planning in the future. It is important to understand the philosophy and scope both of the various methods applied and of the participants of this workshop. Therefore, we will encourage a general, positive discussion at this plenary so as to set the base for elaborating existing methods, designing 'new' methods and achieving best practices.

In order to facilitate the dialogue between us, the discussion will be structured around the following questions:

- How might we best conceptualise the relationship between a landscape's past, present and future?
- How do we envisage the stewardship of the landscape? Are these approaches adequate to provide us with a base upon which we can secure best practice and effective policy measures?
- What do we aspire to in terms of public participation in landscape characterisation?

### ***Plenary 3 – chair Steven Warnock***

In this third plenary, we will present the rationale of the approach of landscape character assessment in Greece (local scale), which is currently under development. We will also present the state of Greek landscapes in correlation to current socio-political and economic trends.

Three thematic group discussions will follow:

Thematic session 1: *Bringing the past (archaeology and history) to the debate; understanding change and planning the future of landscapes*

*(facilitators: Chris Dalglish, Aphrodite Sorotou)*

Archaeology is inherently multidisciplinary in its approaches, a unique characteristic among the many disciplines that need to work together for the appreciation of the landscape. Both theoretical and applied archaeology study the landscape for several decades now, in an attempt to understand the ways in which people in the past constructed and used the environment and space around them. Landscapes of the Mediterranean and Greece on the other hand are the result of constant re-organisation of land in order to adapt its use and spatial structure to the consecutive demands of the

past and modern societies. These societies have also changed their values accordingly and so did the way of using and shaping their landscape. The ability to read and tell the story of a place strongly enhances understanding its identity and identifying landscape values. Archaeology can help us address these issues offering at the same time the tools for assessing landscape and landscape change, thus it can play an important part concerning their future management and development.

The aim of this session is to discuss and contribute our views on the importance of understanding past processes of landscapes as an element of their character and as a decisive factor for managing their future:

- What should we be looking to the past?
- If archaeology can tell us a lot about the diachronic natural and cultural forces of change, in what ways can it help us inform the way in which we manage landscape change now?
- Is the HLC method sufficient enough for the interdisciplinary approach of landscape characterisation?
- Are the LCA approaches to cultural aspects of the landscape sufficient?
- How could archaeological tools be used creatively in landscape characterisation methods?

*Thematic session 2: Mapping the multifaceted character of the landscape; datasets, gaps and solutions*

*(facilitators: Maria Goula, Ioanna Spanou)*

Cartographic data is an essential component for the development of any type of plan in every country. However, the content and scale of maps differs significantly according to the scope and reference of each plan and the availability of reliable input data. Landscape character assessment is a process which requires extensive data collection from different fields and sources, much like –and even more than– a typical spatial or urban planning study (see: geomorphology and topography, land cover and uses, settlement patterns, field systems, culture, human perception etc).

The aim of this session is to examine a series of issues concerning the mapping of the landscape at various scales (in GIS environment), depicting a range of complex data and interrelations of elements and features, bridging the gaps resulting from insufficient or incompatible data:

- Ways and feasibility to map in a holistic and comprehensive manner:
  - Interrelationships between biophysical and cultural factors,
  - Human perception (aesthetic aspects, emotional qualities etc.),
  - Past, present and future contexts.
- Appropriate mapping scales for each level of assessment and the pros and cons of different scales for assessments at the same level (eg. 1:25,000 or 1:50,000 for a local level LCA).
- The availability of base maps in digital or paper format (e.g. geology, contours, soils, land cover, historic settlement, land use and field patterns etc).
- Datasets which are usually the most difficult to be obtained and/or integrated in the project database (particularly in correlation to those cases where data sources are diverse, such as Ministry of Culture's input on archaeological and

cultural heritage elements, Ministry of Agriculture's primary sector data, other agencies' geodata, orthophotomaps etc).

- Ways to produce and/or adapt the data required for the assessment to the appropriate format and scale (level of detail) in the, likely, event of missing, outdated or unreliable data. Which data in each field should be given priority for collection or production for a proper LCA?

Thematic session 3: Establishing a common participation strategy for landscape characterisation and management

*(facilitators: Kalliope Padiaditi, George Dimitropoulos)*

In landscape planning and management, public participation is considered inherently the right thing to do, and has been widely acknowledged for resulting in a number of benefits –arguably being one of the most significant aspects that landscape planning has to offer as compared to 'traditional' planning processes. However, simply using the term 'participation' in an abstract manner conceals the variety of approaches used around the world, the different strategies, methods and techniques of engagement that may be pursued in order to effectively respond to the needs of diverse plans and projects. Aiming to build a constructive participatory process at all levels, which will be sustainable in the long term, it is imperative that the nature of the process itself is put to the epicentre of discussion, that different approaches, 'traditional' and 'innovative' techniques are compared and analysed in terms of their benefits and constraints, and that institutional, economic and social feasibility issues are taken into account when designing the engagement procedure.

The aim of this session is to conduct a conversation and contribute experiences and views which will help us answer a series of questions so as to develop a participation strategy in the framework of landscape characterisation and management processes:

- What is the purpose of participation? (Why do we need it?)
  - Data collection?
  - Awareness raising?
  - Review / evaluation of proposed plan / strategy?
  - Other?
- Who should be involved? (Stakeholder Analysis)
  - Statutory bodies (central and local government)?
  - Civil society (e.g. NGOs)?
  - Universities and academic institutions?
  - The general public?
  - Other?
- At which stage(s) of the process should each stakeholder category be involved?
- Which participation methods are best suited for each stakeholder category or purpose?