

PECSRL 2018 – European Landscapes for Quality of Life?

The management of cultural heritage landscapes as new challenge in Wallonia La gestion des paysages patrimoniaux culturels comme nouveau défi en Wallonie

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How to manage cultural heritage landscapes shaped by decades of agricultural labor while farming is disappearing? How to keep it up notwithstanding new economic development? What are the assets of these landscapes from an economic point of view, especially in low tourism areas? This paper presents the results of the first case study of research on the management of cultural heritage landscapes across the Benelux. The meander of the Ourthe in Neupré-Esneux, at the edge of Liege, is currently the only “Grand Site Paysager” acknowledged in Wallonia. It is an incised valley covered by forests and pastures, and crossed by bike and walking paths. We looked at the management options. If literature has broadly scrutinized the determination of cultural heritage landscape, including in Wallonia, their management is still an important issue. What activities could/should they host? Which guidelines should be given? How to handle the diversity of values and uses? If the answers to these questions depend mainly on the local and regional context, we argue that lessons could enhance both the quality of landscape and the wellbeing of the users elsewhere. Following Lahaye’s suggestion to analyze conflict in protected areas from a triple point of view: the uses, the values attributed to the landscape and the development of these sites, our analysis is twofold: first, we gathered stakeholders’ perceptions, including their opinions on the new classification and secondly, we analyzed their functions in the landscape and their uses of it. The neighbors of the site appreciate the acknowledgement of the quality of the landscape, for some it reinforces their sense of place. The new label attracts day trippers, their impact on the local economy is weak but annoyances could be strong depending of the groups. Nevertheless, the upkeep and restoration of the landscape is more problematic because of the costs and restriction of use.

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