

# CIVILSCAPE

NGOs for the European Landscape Convention

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(Italy)*

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## **Landscape evaluation involving local communities**

**Philip A Turner, President,  
ECOVAST**

What a wonderful occasion, in the  
splendid surroundings of the Villa  
Careggi, in the romantic city of  
Florence.

Romance and passion.

Passion for landscapes.

ECOVAST shares that passion - and I send greetings from Arthur Spiegler, ECOVAST Austria, and Michael Dower, ECOVAST UK.

Englishmen, and perhaps Austrians too, are noted for their reserve and coldness. Be assured that our greetings are warm, as is our passion.

We have been pleased to take part in the formation of CIVILSCAPE, and we have nominated Pam Moore, our Secretary General, to join the CIVILSCAPE Board.

## **NGOs**

ECOVAST is recognized by the Council of Europe as an International Non Government Organisation (INGO) with participatory status. We also serve on the Rural Development Advisory Committee of the European Commission (DG AGRI).

NGOs played a formative role in the origination of the European Landscape Convention. In the United Kingdom in 1990, the National Trust organised at York a seminal international conference 'Europe Preserved for Europe', which brought together people throughout Europe concerned with protection of rural landscape.

Immediately after that conference, a group – from the Countryside Commission, the European Federation of National and Nature Parks (now Europarc), ECOVAST and the Landscape Research Group - came together to discuss a pan-European initiative. Adrian Phillips, then Director General of the Countryside Commission (England), took the lead in shaping the idea of a Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Europe's Rural Landscapes.

NGOs then played an active role in the consultation on successive drafts of the Convention.

Prominent in this were IUCN, the World Conservation Union; ICOMOS, International Council for Monuments and Sites; ECNC, the European Centre for Nature Conservation; the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO; and ECOVAST, represented by Arthur Spiegler and Donatella Murtas (Ecomuseo Cortemilia).

NGOs are already making a formidable contribution to implementing the Convention ... though some of them do not yet formally recognise this, nor belong to CIVILSCAPE.

Prominent examples are :

- National Heritage Organisations, of which by far the largest (in terms of membership, land ownership and landscape-related activity) are the National Trust and the National Trust for Scotland - protecting, but also imaginatively managing, their massive estates and varied landscapes.

- ENNHO, the European Network of National Heritage Organisations, of which the Secretariat is provided by the National Trust for Slovakia

Some NGOs own or manage particular areas of land, either for protection or for transformation, or which are focused on environmental education or awareness-raising. Some of them are partnerships between local authorities and other interests (thus representing some sort of overlap between CIVILSCAPE and ENELC European Network of Local and Regional Authorities), for example the Community Forests in England or the Regional Parks in France. Others are voluntary bodies, like the Cheshire Landscape Trust in England or the ecomusées in France (or ecomusei in Italy), or companies, like the National Forest Company in England or the Benetton Foundation in Italy. The most significant European representative of some of this 'family' of NGOs is Europarc, - Fédération

des Parcs Naturels et Nationaux d'Europe.

**ECOVAST, the European Council for the Village and Small Town**, was registered in Alsace, France in 1984 to further the well-being of rural communities, and the safeguarding of the rural heritage, throughout Europe.

Its formal aims are:

to foster the economic, social and cultural vitality and the administrative identity of rural communities throughout Europe;  
and

to safeguard, and to promote the sensitive and imaginative renewal of, the built and natural environments of such communities.

Built and natural – man-made and self-formed -- landscapes are strongly within our scope, and link to our other

main interests of traditional buildings and small towns.

ECOVAST's membership has grown to over 500 members in 20 countries in East and West Europe. The membership is widely drawn, to include individuals, government and non-government bodies, from local to international level.

ECOVAST can thus act as bridge between decision-makers and those who are active at local level, between experts and practitioners. It operates mainly as a network, to assist mutual support among its membership in pursuit of their activity in rural areas.

It has national sections in Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom, and planned in other countries.

These provide a focus for exchange and activity in each country, to benefit

its rural communities and rural heritage.

## **ECOVAST's main activities:**

Villages and small towns

People and policies

Culture and heritage

Buildings and landscapes

Rural development

Management of land

**Integrated - social, economic,  
environmental and cultural**

**Local people deciding their own  
sustainable futures**

ECOVAST's policy approach for rural Europe is set out in our "Strategy for Rural Europe", published in 1994 : this has been translated into many

European languages, and widely distributed. A 2006 update is on our web site. We will be further promoting an integrated approach to rural development, and will strive to influence policy at European, national and regional levels.

CIVILSCAPE also looks towards strategy development to influence national and EU-policies affecting landscape and to put landscape on the European Agenda.

ECOVAST's approach is to involve local people in understanding and caring for townscape, village-scape and landscape, through initiatives such as Heritage Trails, for example in cross-border collaboration between Croatia and Slovenia. We have been involved in the Wine Traditions Network (WITRANET) project, the Transnational Woodland Industries Group (TWIG) project.

People in the landscape, vineyard landscapes and woodland management.

## **ECOVAST-method for landscape identification**

ECOVAST, through an INTERREG project, at a 2006 International Symposium in Austria, has field-tested and published **methods of rural landscape evaluation that can involve local communities alongside experts.**

This takes forward work on the European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe.

We offer the method to the nations of the continent of Europe so that they can **encourage the engagement of local people**, who have their own valuable perceptions of the character of the landscape and can contribute to

the assessment of rural spaces in terms of

- cultural value
- economy
- social significance and
- environmental capital.

Those who govern cannot be effective without the support of civil society.

Policy makers rely on others for implementation.

Landowners and land managers can benefit from the support of local people who have an understanding of the landscape.

Caring for the landscape can be seen as a 'public good', with a demand identified by consumers (residents and visitors alike), and a potential for payment to those who manage in

accordance with policy and locally determined objectives.

Community-led action plans for towns and villages should include the landscape setting and the landscape resources of the surroundings.

Much of my own work in England involves local people in character assessment of the townscape and wider landscape.

And that is what CIVILSCAPE also embraces.

I started with romance and passion and end in an embrace.

We wish all good fortune to CIVILSCAPE.



