

# Approaches to collaborative landscape analysis and planning

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## Abstract

This paper aims to ground the research paradigm of public engagement within the field of landscape and heritage. Both the European Landscape Convention and the Faro Convention, major international agreements that shape both these dimensions, stress the need to reinforce the democratic nature of projects. This participation needs to go beyond informing stakeholders and formal hearings, and community values and ideas should be included in the planning process. This entails addressing the complexities of stakeholder deliberation and the solution of thorny problems. The present study examines in detail four case studies from the Netherlands, Slovenia and Denmark, in which public participation was crucial in different stages of the project development. The methodologies employed, as well as the effect that such engagement had on the general results, will be highlighted. Finally, the discussion of results will evaluate the findings through the lens of deliberative democracy within territorial planning.

## Keywords

public participation, landscape, European Landscape Convention, planning

## Introduction

### The public participation paradigm

Public or non-expert, participation in research has increasingly become an aspiration placed upon the research community by both science and public policymakers.<sup>1</sup> Its proposed benefits include the empowering of local communities and the strengthening of social cohesion and local identity<sup>2</sup>, greater transparency and a democratic spirit, which is reflected in international charters and documents<sup>3</sup>, and in the daily practice of researchers and practitioners.<sup>4</sup> As such, public participation plays a significant role in horizontal (between different participants) and vertical (between national, regional or local levels of representation) negotiations in achieving sustainable futures.<sup>5</sup> The intention behind the implementation of 'a participatory, dialogue-based approach', such as implied in the *European Landscape Convention*<sup>6</sup>, represents a step in this direction.<sup>7</sup>

Although this aspiration is not alien to the field of planning<sup>8</sup>, its scope has changed thanks to the 'participatory turn' of the 2000s.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the paradigm of rural planning in Europe developed from mere resource management into more collaborative approaches in which local communities participate in decision-making concerning environmental quality and forms of agricultural modernization.<sup>10</sup> To this effect, "... landscape governance requires social institutions that can recognize and negotiate among pluralistic conceptions of the good and address the political and pragmatic task of adjudicating among competing representations of a place..."<sup>11</sup>

Despite new governance rhetoric aimed to mandatorily include public participation in planning and managing, it is a substantial challenge to carry this out.<sup>12</sup> Innes and Booher claim that the traditional methods described in participative documents fail to fulfil their task resulting in a governance ritual 'designed to satisfy legal re-

quirements'.<sup>13</sup> An ample literature on that matter shows that these methods seldom fulfil ideal requirements.<sup>14</sup>

One of the outcomes of these changes regarding participation has been the recent development of Integrated Landscape Management –ILM–, which has public participation as a cornerstone. In analysing ILM, Mann has identified clear positive outputs of community engagement in planning but also a glaring lack of effective tools to carry it out.<sup>15</sup> In this paper we first discuss general background to these challenges, and next outline and discuss practical planning examples where tools and methods for collaboration and integrated management have been applied.

### Deliberative theory in planning

The collaborative planning concept, which originated in the mid 1980's<sup>16</sup>, developed as a reaction to the dominating, centralised and top-down rational planning model.<sup>17</sup> According to Campbell & Marshall "collaborative planning resonates with other concepts which have gained currency, both in the literature and in the practical world of local government, in the late 1990s including communitarianism, citizenship, and participatory democracy".<sup>18</sup> In this approach, planning is seen as an interactive governance process concerned with the quality of places and territories while acknowledging daily life experiences of the people affected.<sup>19</sup> These principles are embedded in the deliberative approach to public engagement in planning discussed in this article.

Innes & Booher have identified four models of planning, from the most traditional to the most innovative, where the role and participation of the public in planning increases concomitantly.<sup>20</sup> According to them, the two dominant forms are: a) a technical bureaucratic and political one which embodies 'ritualistic versions of public involvement' (they are still dominating the market); and b) the social and collaborative one, which attach importance to involvement, interdependence of interests, and diversity of the public. The latter, however, have shortcomings which have been highlighted before. A collaborative model of planning, which belongs to a more deliberative approach to participation, is the most advanced alternative involving interests and citizens. Collaborative governance and interactive policymaking, which aim to provide methods akin, yet alternatives to deliberation, exist, but have been side-lined in this paper for analytical purposes. Nonetheless, many of the references and ideas used have ample echoes as well outside deliberation.

John Dryzek is one of the main theorists behind the principle of deliberative democracy, a theory which roots the legitimacy of democracy on free and open debate –deliberation–, when that debate can affect the outcome of political decisions.<sup>21</sup> His political theory, which claims to challenge a liberal view of democracy based on interest aggregation –Social Choice Theory–, is explained in two subsequent publications<sup>22</sup> and the theoretical structures of Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls.

A deliberative system is composed by the following elements<sup>23</sup>:

- **Public space:** a free space for open discussion, which can range from social media to public squares.
- **Empowered space:** a space for discussion promoted or recognized by institutions.
- **Transmission:** a mechanism where public space can influence empowered space.
- **Accountability:** a mechanism of control of empowered space by public space.
- **Decisiveness:** the previous four elements contribute to political decision.

More recently, Dryzek has published a review of the theory and application of deliberative governance.<sup>24</sup> Within it, he has addressed the capacity that 'minipublics' have for managing specific contexts that in a way resemble the stakeholders of a cultural landscape. In his analysis he has used three case studies based on the way in which deliberation was conceived and included in the system, reaching conclusions regarding how effective that deliberation was.<sup>25</sup>

One strand of deliberative theory has focused on the potential for approaching 'wicked problems', i.e. ill-defined problems depending on elusive political judgement for resolution.<sup>26</sup> Conditions for addressing such problems effectively include: diversity of participants, focus on common problems, openness without uninformed or pre-established positions, combinations of expert and community knowledge, maintaining all ideas on the table. Recently, it has been argued that these wicked problems can only be solved if they are approached with flexibility, deliberation and in a transdisciplinary fashion<sup>27</sup>, characteristics which are shared by the case studies presented here. Kühn has proposed using a new type of strategic planning to solve these wicked problems using collaborative approaches.<sup>28</sup> An example of this approach can be seen in a case study of the North-Western Danish coast, demonstrating that a collaborative approach to strategic planning can help solve a wicked problem.<sup>29</sup>

The deliberative approach has been used in many instances to negotiate problems.<sup>30</sup> The process basically leads to a shared understanding of a problem and agreements of all participants on what needs to be done and what actions can be taken to improve the collective welfare.<sup>31</sup> They promote a deeper involvement of the public and place emphasis on autonomy, popular sovereignty, equality and democracy.<sup>32</sup> There are several possible approaches available for deliberative models of democracy. Some of these show a close link with Jürgen Habermas' social theory<sup>33</sup>, and focus on communicative action and dialogue, which means an approach oriented to 'reaching understanding', or rather 'reaching consensus', through public dialogue.<sup>34</sup> Others borrow from Anthony Giddens' structuration theory.<sup>35</sup> Overall, tension is avoided, and instead, ideas, information, and experiences are shared to create new strategies and synergies. The methods that follow are growing in popularity as they come closer to a successful participation process.

However, as Innes and Booher indicate, the deliberative model still remains “the least privileged, the least recognized, and the least understood of the models”.<sup>36</sup> The dialogues taking place in the public sphere most often fell outside mainstream governmental frameworks and outside the formal laws and regulations regarding participation. They are typically seen as provisional and unofficial. One reason for that is that actions taken within deliberative citizen participation must be agreed upon or carried out by certified experts. Otherwise they may be difficult to implement, overlooked by the public authorities, fragmented or even outdated. Their benefits are often disregarded and their virtues are still met with scepticism by the more traditional political institutions.<sup>37</sup>

This tradition in landscape planning however appears to fall short from the running paradigms of deliberative democracy theory.<sup>38</sup> There is an attempt to improve this, particularly through the Ecosystem services concept which provides a space for a dialogue among different stakeholders.<sup>39</sup> It has been proposed as a platform that allows for the solution of wicked problems –see below– and a framework for further integration of science in policy and public governance.<sup>40</sup> In this concept, a new analytic-deliberative approach is used when carrying out Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA). These include feedback using ‘multi-criteria decision analysis’ –MCDA– which have proven to be more precise than non-deliberative criteria in evaluating benefits, including economic efficiency, while also including cultural values.<sup>41</sup>

The aim of this paper is to contribute to existing scholarship on public participation in rural landscape planning by providing case studies that involved varied but comparable methodologies. This will be done by contending to Opdam’s observation that there is much to be said for applying a deliberative approach to landscape planning. This requires involvement of the community in order to exchange and share knowledge and values, as an alternative and supplement to top-down analysis and solutions. This article builds upon the literature of previous studies that have evaluated participation processes in planning and management. It provides an analytical framework described in the methodology section for assessing some of the tools and methods that can be used, helping to overcome the challenge described above.

## From rhetoric to practice

Based on a literature review, Paul Opdam noted that “it is obvious that the scientific state of the art is not ready to deliver adequate tools to support community-based landscape planning”.<sup>42</sup> Opdam’s contention is applicable mainly to rural landscapes, such as the case studies we have presented here. In European urban landscapes, there is a longer tradition for linking knowledge to participatory action.<sup>43</sup> Concerning rural landscapes increased attention has recently been given to landscape governance including broad involvement of citizens and other key stakeholders.<sup>44</sup> Nared et al. analysed legal frameworks

of participatory rural planning in Alpine countries and highlighted that the role of stakeholder participation in spatial planning has increased.<sup>45</sup> However, in the general planning practice participation processes appears to be weak due to an overall lack of theoretical and technical knowledge according to Nared et al.<sup>46</sup> They claimed that it is mainly done on a pro-forma level, seeking to check the appropriate boxes for the sake of social perception, not an actual desire to achieve significant results. In other words, a gap appears between participation rhetoric and practice.<sup>47</sup>

### Towards a scholarship of participation

The public participation paradigm responds to a general challenge of traditional forms of expert roles in society, such as the so-called dissemination model –also known as “deficit model”– in which the boundaries between experts and the public are blurred but not eliminated.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, many have called for a true multi-voiced knowledge, where everyone is a specialist, and only some are certified, in order to undo narratives imposed from above, and de-colonize discourse.<sup>49</sup> How exactly the argumentative nature of science can be interlaced with public concerns has recently been argued by stressing the importance of incorporating this argumentation into public deliberation.<sup>50</sup> It has been challenged, however, whether comprehensive public participation actually enhances the impact of research on society, or should experts focus more on Participative Action Research principles, which see the participation as a tool towards improving people’s lives, not as an end in itself.<sup>51</sup>

This debate, hence, has much to do with how knowledge is conceived in our society. A common response to this is to increase the amount of knowledge transmission, and facilitate the positive effects that science has on society: knowledge transfer. In planning this usually involves a closer relation between research and the planning process and governance.<sup>52</sup> Nassauer and Opdam have suggested that design represents a way to link research and practice.<sup>53</sup> By most definitions, landscape is the medium that enables a synthesis in which design and creativity play a key role in incorporating processes and values into management and planning.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the incorporation of landscape ecology principles and practices into design is, though still fraught with problems, a valuable goal to be pursued.<sup>55</sup> Fortunately, the more extensive use of various tools can facilitate the incorporation into datasets of the various levels, priorities, processes and visions that are involved in landscape management.<sup>56</sup>

Dryzek himself has addressed the potential of applying deliberative theory to environmental sciences.<sup>57</sup> Already in 2005, during the participatory turn, a comparative study from various Canadian provinces highlighted the diversity of participatory approaches and how effectively they used public opinion.<sup>58</sup> In it some examples did not include participation at all, so their conclusions bridge nicely how the public was used and perceived in processes before and after the turn.<sup>59</sup> The various me-

thods and factors used there are in clear relation with the methodology of the present paper.

Conrad et al. have claimed that “...there is ... a need for more explicit assessment and evaluation of public participation procedures, introducing a stronger element of rigour”.<sup>60</sup> The scholarship mentioned is designed to provide the critical apparatus for honestly assessing public participation methods and techniques. Various studies have focused on further incorporating deliberation into research and application, as in the case Lihme, Denmark.<sup>61</sup> A success story, or cautionary tale, can also be found in the Drentsche Aa in the Netherlands.<sup>62</sup>

One such study can be found in the production of a Forest Landscape Management Plan in Italy, which involved a detailed participation process at an initial stage, that turned out to be very successful –as proven by a second participatory process– both in implementing the management plan, and in providing the participants with many benefits.<sup>63</sup> The public participation process was divided into five stages: communication and information, stakeholder analysis, first consultation stage, synthesis and preparation of the scenarios, and second consultation stage.<sup>64</sup> The analysis used four attributes: procedure, moment of participation, learning interaction and delegation of power.<sup>65</sup> The effect and the representativeness of public participation in the final result of a planning process was assessed for five different Norwegian examples.<sup>66</sup> Recently, a critical assessment of participatory planning policy regarding climate adaptation has focused not on whether that participation was efficient, but on whether this participation proved beneficial for the ultimate outcome.<sup>67</sup>

There is ample experience of the different methods used to ensure public participation. The pioneering study of Mumpower, for instance, contrasted the various techniques with the constraints they suffered, including the competing reasons for doing participation, as well as the negotiation of different expectations.<sup>68</sup> Recently, an array of techniques has also been pondered based on various case studies of urban planning.<sup>69</sup> The onset of digital technologies and the internet appears to have facilitated public participation on a scale and capacity previously unseen.<sup>70</sup> Notably, the role of Geographic Information Systems for this purpose –known as PPGIS–, has become central to the very idea of participation.<sup>71</sup>

Measuring the success of participation is as old as the paradigm itself, as the ‘ladder of participation’ created by Sherry Arnstein bears witness.<sup>72</sup> This method has been used and criticized from various disciplines attempting to address participation assessment.<sup>73</sup> And yet, it is still used to the very present.<sup>74</sup>

## Approaching landscape through deliberation

According to Primdahl and Kristensen<sup>75</sup>, three dimensions are crucial in landscape characterization and com-

munity involvement in collaborative landscape strategy-making:

- Landscape as a common good
- Landscape rights: users vs. owners
- Landscape as a development factor

Whereas the first two are closely related to conflict management, the latter is linked to place-making. Both must be dealt with in all landscape planning processes, although the ‘right’ combination of conflict management and place-making is context-dependent.<sup>76</sup> Landscape analysis and planning, therefore relies on a flexible methodology, that better reflects the negotiated nature of alternative approaches in different contexts, and with different goals.

### Methodology

In this study there are four experiences derived from case studies which have taken place in the more traditional realm of in-person exchange. The cases have been chosen because they have been followed through to the implementation phase, and they have included a deliberative approach to the research, planning project or implementation phases. The experience and techniques used for participation are shared, and evaluated, and conclusions will be reached regarding the best strategies with which to ensure their success.

**Table 1.** Case studies and phase in which public participation took place

Case studies	Phase which included local participation		
	Research	Planning	Implementation
Črni Vrh (SI)	X	X	X
Flynderso Nature Park (DK)		X	X
Kosovelje (SI)	X	X	X
Midden-Delfland (NL)		X	

Specific issues to be described will be the public participation methodology (data source, data gatherers, workshops, use of mediators and facilitators, exhibitions, kitchen-table discussions, etc.), the effect of this participation on the recommendations, and the evidence of the impact of this participation on the final result. These issues will be analysed and discussed in the discussion section.

## Case studies

### Črni Vrh plateau (Slovenia)

The Črni Vrh plateau is in the Municipality of Idrija in Slovenia which was included, together with Almaden (Spain), in the UNESCO World Heritage List, as the largest mercury mine in the world. The Črni Vrh plateau, encompassing several karst fields, sinkholes, and forested mountain ridges, is in the southern part of the



municipality. For ages, this unique environment, with its harsh living conditions, has offered its inhabitants a rigorous but prosperous way of life. Since the Middle Ages it has been in contact with other regions thanks to a road connecting it with the coast. The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century saw a rapid development of cottage industries (joinery, basketry, rake-making, shoemaking, lacemaking, and the production of linen and pails). Additionally, in the inter-war period tourism also flourished.<sup>77</sup>

The municipality of Idrija was a case study within the project SY\_CULTour – *Synergy of Culture and Tourism: Utilisation of Cultural Potentials in Less Favoured Rural Regions* –, which started in March 2011 and lasted 3 years. The local community of the Črni Vrh plateau was chosen as a specific pilot area after consultations with the municipality and with the Idrija and Cerklje Developmental Agency –ICRA– in 2012. At the time, 654 people lived within the pilot area's main village, and 1250 on the whole plateau. Additionally, Črni Vrh had never benefited from involvement in comparable development projects in the past, and the municipal government showed keen interest in testing new strategies that would produce sustainable development.<sup>78</sup>

Initial fieldwork followed standard methodologies, including documenting listed cultural heritage assets, and the definition of landscape characters. Local participation, therefore, followed a traditional appraisal survey on behalf of the research team. It would, however, have a profound effect in the second part of the research phase, as well as in the implementation phase.<sup>79</sup>

Initially, the strategy was to use local mediators, people who could be used as relays and collectors of local stakeholders. This method failed to bring together a representative group, prompting the research team to contact stakeholders – public institutions, companies, tourism, individuals etc.– directly for the first workshop in Fall 2012. A combination of internet search, field work, and phone conversations provided enough information to identify and select individuals who could be instrumental to the project. This started a process where contacts led to further contacts, and even to other participants becoming interested. Eventually, more than 40 people attended the first meeting. Overall, the following 7 workshops convened forty-five to fifty people. In these meetings the Geopark Idrija was always included, due to their interest in the oversight of further development in this area in the future.<sup>80</sup>

The participation was high and people were willing to meet, discuss and, for some of them, to work on the implementation of different planned tourist products –e.g. preparing a guiding booklet, organizing a bilateral meeting between Slovenian and Italian community, visiting local community in Italy, opening the Military museum, organizing activities around sowing and later picking flax, etc.–. The participants of the workshops were mostly individuals, but among them were also local holders of cultural values and representatives of local associations. The first workshop hosted many representatives from

official institutions: The Municipality, the Developmental Agency, the Tourist Information Centre and Geopark Idrija. The second one, however, had only one representative present.

Local participation had a great effect in the research phase, primarily by enhancing the inventory of cultural values available. Not only was there an extension of the official lists, but also the types of heritage became more diversified. For example, before local input was included, only one item of intangible heritage was included in the official register – bobbin lace-making–; after the workshops the focus shifted from listed tangible heritage – old homesteads, churches, WWII memorials– to practices and skills inherent to the area. Locals themselves started to point out specific cultural values that they believed had development potential. This revealed the following structural pattern<sup>81</sup>:

- Cultural heritage lists are developed by experts with the intention of preserving and recognizing heritage. These lists are neither designed for, nor useful for, finding strategies for local development.
- Local communities are much more sensitive towards what good can come out of the heritage, which is why they quickly associate it with a development potential. The 'lists' they can come up with might be completely different from the official lists.

Local participation significantly changed and enhanced the list of cultural values. Another important finding discovered by the research team during participation process was the fact that cultural values are especially important for providing social benefits such as building local cohesion, fostering an intergenerational dialogue, maintaining local identity, promoting the local living environment, and empowering people. In the initial stage of the project the cultural values were rarely associated with economic gains.

One of the project outputs which symbolises the engagement of the local community is the guide booklet for the Črni Vrh plateau which was published with the support of the SY\_CULTour project, by the local community and the Geopark Idrija, as well as an annotated map.<sup>82</sup> The locals publicly presented both products. Another output was the creation and inauguration of a military museum. Finally, several activities began which celebrate the intangible heritage, and they are still ongoing: more specifically, flax farming and other product-based activities.

### **Flyndersø Nature Park (Denmark)**

Flyndersø Nature Park is a 90 km<sup>2</sup> landscape project located in Skive Municipality in North-western Denmark. It is a remote rural area with a low population density – by Danish standards–: only 25 hab./km<sup>2</sup>. The post-glacial landscape is currently used for extensive farming, woodland, heathland, and wetlands. It is an area, relati-

vely rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage, including historic peat production feature, manor houses and medieval villages.

In 2006 an administrative reform merged many small municipalities into larger ones, one of which was Skive, which englobed 5 previous municipalities. One of the core challenges this rural population faced was economic decline. To combat it, one proposal by the council was to create a nature park, which would add new assets to the municipality as a living and visiting place. Their interest dovetailed with a new university-led research project, which provided funding for action research activities. Thus, a consortium was formed between the university and the municipality aimed at doing preparatory work for the nature park.<sup>83</sup>

The project involved deliberative dialogue with the local community. It started by preparing a planning process in collaboration with people who were invited through open announcements in the local newspaper as well as personal invitations sent to particularly engaged citizens, identified by municipal planners. Municipal staff and outside experts also attended the process which ran from January 2012 to September 2012. The process was organized with open-ended sessions, meaning that nothing had been decided beforehand except the testing of the idea of a regional nature park. The chief municipal planner expressed it in this way to the participating citizens: 'If you want to move fast with this park process we will follow you, if you want to make the process slower we will slow down as well'. Patsy Healey's concepts of strategic planning were used as an inspiration for guiding the process, including the tasks of mobilizing attention to the landscape as a whole, scoping the situation, mobilizing resources and generating frameworks for strategic projects.

The process included an excursion and four expert lectures –with an attendance of 50–80 people each–, which allowed the local population to engage with the potential values of the area. Also, an interview survey was conducted including app. 80% of farmers with properties over 5 ha. The survey provided information about landowners' agricultural and landscape management practices, their values and plans for the future.<sup>84</sup> The lectures and the survey constituted the first part of the planning process mainly aimed at mobilizing interest for the project and creating a first common understanding of the planning area, as well as its potential. Nonetheless, ideas for developing the area were already being presented and discussed.

The second part of the planning process included three workshops in a span of 6 weeks. They reviewed the values and potential of the area, and formulated visions for strategic projects. In this process, it became clear that the area was not perceived as a coherent whole by the 25–30 participants –understandably, as they came from different communities within or from outside the area–. This was an enormous challenge which was overcome through trial and error. On the one hand, a landscape character map was provided<sup>85</sup>, but local people failed to

derive cohesion from it. This led to the use of new and broader character units as a template to establish what areas had to be protected, maintained or transformed in future planning.

This process resulted in a new coherent view of the landscape, a view based on the ecological and geological significance of the area and resulting from a deliberative planning process which included a high number of participants. This new tangibility was quite evident towards the end of the process. A written strategy document was produced outlining what the landscape should look like in 2025, including possible strategic projects to be carried out. To prepare and oversee the implementation of these, voluntary working groups were formed.

The strategy was presented publicly and, after minor edits, formally adopted by the municipality for the implementation of its nature park. This was included into the municipal plan, which opened further opportunities for fundraising in support of the working groups and the implementation of specific projects. Some municipal budgetary constraints froze the implementation in 2014, but in 2015 the process continued after a large grant was given by a charitable foundation and public pressure compelled the politicians to continue with the park. Now, with funds, a project leader has been appointed and there is strong cooperation between the municipality and the local community; the process is back on track.

Local participation in this project included landowners –many of whom were farmers–, and landscape users. In the final strategy, it was the user perspective in combination with the nature curation perspective that predominated. This is natural since it was a nature park that was being created. On the other hand, this perspective thwarted any further discussion of possible farming uses of the land, including multifunctional farming, which might have been rewarding. A potentially contentious issue, access rights to private land, was overcome rather easily as many landowners were willing to allow this in order to improve the ecological development of their land.

Ultimately, participation worked because there was actual room for decision-making, and a trust between the participants was quickly established, partly due to the facilitating and mediating role carried out by the university academics involved. Local participants greatly enriched their understanding regarding cultural and natural heritage of the area, as well as recreational possibilities. Finally, participants willingly participated in the implementation process, supplementing a municipal administration which initially had neither the resources nor the will to carry it out.

This case is an example of bottom-up processes leading to a proposal for a regional nature park designation of a mosaic landscape in central Jutland. Local landowners and residents have played a key role in formulating the aims and content of the park and their pressure was key when local political priorities seemed to threaten the establishment of the park. The case also represents an example of intensive activities focused on establishing a

common awareness of an area as a coherent landscape, rich in natural and cultural histories.

### Kosovelje (Slovenia)

Kosovelje is a small village in the Municipality of Sežana in Slovenia, located in the Karst region –a 500 km<sup>2</sup> limestone plateau in South Western Slovenia–. The area is unattractive for agriculture because of the thin topsoil, lack of water and limestone bedrock. It has, however, always been settled because of its proximity to the sea and mild climate. The natural vegetation disappeared due to centuries of human pressure, deforestation and excessive grazing. The result was a rocky desert which was partially reforested during the industrial era. After WWII, natural reforestation began due to the abandonment of traditional land use.<sup>86</sup>

The Slovene Research Agency funded a research project entitled “Cultural Landscapes Caught between Public Good, Private Interests and Politics” (2014–2018). The focus was on public goods, common-pool resources and commons<sup>87</sup> in cultural landscapes.<sup>88</sup> The community of Kosovelje was one of the pilot areas in the project. This case study was sought because it fit certain criteria –an unprotected area, non-intensive agriculture, in the Karst region–, and Kosovelje opportunely showed its interest in local development after having a meeting during the Summer of 2015.

Local participation began early, for their concerns were already a matter of debate before the project started. Later these proved to be a good practice and became fundamental drivers of the project activities themselves. Experience had taught the research team the importance of having a mediator –a person, who knows the situation in the community and who has capacity, or resources, to gather and activate people–. One such person harnessed the synergy between Kosovelje and the research project by arranging an unofficial visit in August 2015, which tapped the extraordinary energy and willingness of this tiny community.

Each activity carried out was previously informed and explained to participants, as well as organized, by the local mediator. This led to a first official workshop in November 2015, organized by invitation by the same person. On this occasion, the local community shared and explained their heritage, revealing the importance of drystone walls that were falling apart. Indeed, these had already garnered the attention of civil society in the Karst, and this project helped foster greater synergy. As a result, two specific workshops took place – one in September 2016 and another one in March 2017 –, aiming to educate residents how to restore drystone walls.

The mediator arranged more individual, face to face, meetings with 15 residents during December 2015 to June 2016 in order to include the opinion of most households in the village. Conducting interviews meant several visits to the place and allowed talking about different topics related to the people, their way of life and the perception of their landscape. A field walk in May

2016 further mobilised local energy and initiative, including people volunteering to provide breakfast, put on an art exhibit, etc. Furthermore, the researchers noticed the positive side effects of just dropping by or participating in other local activities, which helped create social ties between them. Local participation has revealed genuinely interesting aspects, as listed underneath:

- How and what residents consider valuable in their landscapes.
- How locals perceive the benefits of Ecosystem Services.
- Any conflicts regarding landscape use.

With the project activities, locals got better insight into their landscape/living environment; they became more aware of their role towards desired landscape changes. For example, the local drystone walls, which are an integral part of the society's identity and pride, were falling apart. The regional unit of the Institute for cultural heritage conservation did not have the necessary financial resources, so the residents decided to take charge of the restoration themselves. Another example is the overgrowth of agricultural land due to abandonment. Locals realized that it is a threat to their landscape and one or two families nowadays hire a farmer from a neighbouring village to mow meadows on their properties.

The research changed perceptions of a landscape, including perception of benefits and ecosystem services obtained by locals, perception of public good, common-pool resources and commons in their landscape, the key role played by drystone walls etc.<sup>89</sup> The participation of the local population in the research was necessary to underscore the original ideas and perspectives of the locals. Without them the study would have lacked the insight into local context understanding.

The residents became not only more aware of the research project, but they also better understood their landscape. They also saw themselves as the main responsible agent for its preservation. This fact empowered them and contributed to their decision to actively participate in a drystone wall restoration. They raised awareness of public goods and common-pool resources in their living environment. In Autumn 2016 they decided to redevelop an old “pond” in the middle of the settlement that had been filled with stones for decades and finished the construction by September 2018. Appropriately, the construction contains a drystone wall around the pond, providing a public space for gatherings.

### Midden-Delfland (The Netherlands)

Midden-Delfland is an agricultural area in the southern wing of the *Randstad*. One of the characteristics of this area is that it preserved many of its natural qualities, such as the peat meadow landscape<sup>90</sup>, which was very appreciated by the neighbours. Although Midden-Delfland refers to a specific municipality, it has also come to be the collective name of an inter-municipal development project including also neighbouring towns.

The *Gebiedvisie Midden Delfland 2025* –Middle Delfland future vision for 2025– started off as an initiative of Midden-Delfland municipality. The process which started in 2005 gathering together various parties composed of various stakeholders, and the surrounding municipalities, and generating the starting document that would shape the process.<sup>91</sup> The initial meetings included more than 120 people from different stakeholder groups, meetings organized by Future Search using specific facilitating techniques provided by KaapZ.<sup>92</sup> This initial format led to an initial consultation strategy based on a workshop in November 2007 for discussing what aspects of the landscape were most relevant, and how the rural and urban could be further connected.<sup>93</sup> The results of these were used to establish the actual development project associated to the *Gebiedvisie*.

Thus, the project *Landschapontwikkelingsperspectief (LOP) Midden-Delfland 2025* was born, a landscape development scheme shared between 6 municipalities and the local water board. This LOP substituted the 1977 plan whose end in 2009 prompted the need to decide what to do with the area. The LOP was carried out by architecture firm Bosch-Slabbers. It presented three scenarios for future use of the land: a nature reserve, continued farmland, or recreational use. These three scenarios were then considered, and shared, in the consultations done with local communities. At first major workshops, in the style of 2005, were established, called *ontwerptafel* –design table–, in July 2008. But these became difficult due to the competing perspectives of the stakeholders that were present. Therefore, Bosch-Slabbers decided to change the perspective. Thus, Kitchen-table discussions occurred with neighbours, asking them for specific goals, visions, and requesting more global visions, not focused solely on the individual's priorities. This allowed a closer and negotiated understanding of the aspirations and priorities of neighbours. The final result was the creation of a comprehensive Atlas<sup>94</sup>, which included detailed plans for each polder. Each one of these included a description of the qualities and characteristics, and a plan for the development in the 2025 horizon. The LOP was publicly approved and lauded in December 2009.

The implementation stage has been used to enhance the positive momentum derived from public participation. In October 2015 *De 24 uur van Midden-Delfland* –24-hours of Middle-Delfland–, was an intensive workshop which served to generate a report regarding the implementation strategy.<sup>95</sup> This workshop included institutions, professionals and volunteers.

## Discussion

### Public participation methods

In this section, a brief analysis is carried out regarding the participation methodologies used in the four case studies presented, and the effects this participation had on the overall project.

**Table 2.** Participation methodologies used in the case studies

Case study	Open workshop	Event by invitation	Interview
Črni Vrh (SI)	Yes	Yes	No
Flyndersø Nature Park (DK)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kosovelje (SI)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Midden-Delfland (NL)	No	Yes	Yes

**Open workshops:** Workshops with open invitation to local communities can be organised by means of collective e-mails, public announcements, etc. However, results of such calls can be disappointing when it comes to organizing meaningful community involvement, as the phenomenon of self-exclusion or self-selection often occurs, as is common in any context of volunteering. At Črni Vrh, the attempt to use locals as ‘gateways’ to the community proved to be a failure, so the research team resorted to contacting local stakeholders directly.<sup>96</sup> The open workshops at Flyndersø were held after local stakeholders had become engaged in the idea of a nature park through lectures and other public activities. Three workshops took place over a period of a month and a half. Twenty-five to thirty people participated from different parts of the area, both from the study area and from outside.

**Workshops by invitation:** A workshop by invitation requires personal engagement with various stakeholders and members of local communities, to ensure their participation in collective events. Črni Vrh was a venue where seven on invitation workshops were held.<sup>97</sup> Participants were contacted and invited personally after being identified by the local community, internet research and fieldwork. The importance of local mediators, that is people who can harness and engage a local community because they are part of that community, has proven to be crucial in the case of Kosovelje. It was a mediator who became the main organizer of events, and the person who issued invitations. As in the case of the open workshops, the personal and interpersonal qualities of this person was of vital importance in the participation process. Between November 2015 and March 2017 there was one guided field walk, two specific workshops on rural drystone wall restoration and a focus group at the end of the project. The Midden-Delfland project held workshops by invitation called ‘design tables’ but competing interests between stakeholders hampered progress. Recently, another workshop was carried out ‘24-hours of Middle-Delfland’, used to assess implementation and produce a report.

**Interviews:** Interviews have to do with small-scale events where small groups of people belonging to the local community. These do not only include interviews, but also conversation and collaboration, in the spirit of deliberation: a broad exchange of ideas. In Flyndersø, interviews were streamlined through a survey that reached 80% of the landowners.<sup>98</sup> In Kosovelje they were important, always planned by the local representative, and arranged with fifteen different people at their homes, to reach as many voices of the community as possible. Mid-



den-Delfland saw the development of the ‘kitchen-table conversations’, in which the project team actively visited houses, and engaged with locals in their own homes.

### Effect of participation on implementation

The results of the workshops held at Črni Vrh were well above expectations. Participants were asked to add local cultural values to their landscape, and although the official lists were not changed, there is a sharper understanding of the value of listed and unlisted cultural heritage. Community contributions have indeed brought to light a wide range of intangible heritage. It was noted that the official lists lacked local priorities and were sometimes outdated. Research with local participation revealed that cultural values are particularly important in creating social benefits such as building local cohesion, maintaining intergenerational dialogue, contributing to local identity or pride, promoting the local environment and empowering people.

The carefully organized educational and collaborative process at Flyndersø helped form, in the minds of the local community, the idea that it was a coherent landscape, in which all the parts were interdependent. They developed a strategy based on a vision for 2025, and organized working groups to oversee the implementation of the strategy. Deliberative cooperation at Flyndersø led the local strategy to be presented to and accepted by the municipality. Hence, the local government sought further funding for the actual implementation. The receptivity that local population in Denmark found towards this deliberative role renders it unsurprising that for Dryzek and Niemeyer it was also their Danish case study which appeared to best reflect the potential of deliberation within that socio-political context which they labelled as ‘actively-inclusive’.<sup>99</sup>

In Kosovelje, the effect of participation was similarly rewarding, revealing the local perception of cultural values, and made the locals more aware of the positive effect that taking responsibility for their own landscape could have. Two drystone wall restoration workshops were held to give the local residents the opportunity to restore their own landscape and numerous smaller local activities followed. In Midden Delfland, on the other hand, public participation effectively shaped the nuances of the implementation plan carried out.

### Potential benefits of the deliberative approach in landscape planning

In order to effectively assess this potential, it is necessary to re-examine what John Dryzek argues should be ‘deliberative democracy’<sup>100</sup>:

- **pluralistic** in embracing the necessity to communicate across difference without erasing difference;
- **reflexive** in its questioning orientation to established traditions (including the tradition of deliberative democracy itself;

- **transnational** in its capacity to extend across state boundaries into settings where there is no constitutional framework;
- **ecological** in terms of openness to communication with non-human nature;
- **dynamic** in its openness to over-changing constraints upon and opportunities for democratization”.

The case studies described in this paper show a clear link to the deliberative model. They distance themselves from traditional participation techniques, but still borrow some essential parts of the social sciences research methods, like inviting ordinary people to come together and reflect over values and visions of how the world should be. Yet they don’t make the same mistakes as the social sciences research methods described earlier. These cases benefit from a pro-active participation approach where all involved parties shared ownership of plans and where the results intend to be advantageous for all involved parties.<sup>101</sup> As Sjölander-Lindqvist et al. point out, several crucial dimensions are to be looked at to secure a successful participation process – such as the actors’ relationship to the sites, places and landscapes, and the amount of engagement that occur over time.<sup>102</sup> The cases show a clear social movement in which citizens both have a close relationship with their landscape and cultural heritage, and are not afraid to volunteer in their free time (e.g. Črni Vrh plateau and Kosovelje). The examples from Slovenia sometimes achieved veritable self-mobilization, a type of participation in which people participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions; this is particularly true for the Kosovelje project.

Another point to a successful participation process is paying attention to the context. “The boundaries drawn for participation need to be understood in a social, geographical and historical context as this will affect what interests can be advanced”.<sup>103</sup> The cases prove that a holistic approach of the problem –at a landscape level- is necessary in order to adapt to the plurality of contexts, actors and purposes. Simultaneously, it is the unique context and particularities of the place and the inhabitants that are at the core of the process in each case. Adaptation and flexibility of the participation methods are key elements to the success of dialogue and negotiation in planning processes. In this respect “participatory measures [...] need to be adapted to a plurality of contexts, actors and purposes” to be perceived as legitimate and sustainable.<sup>104</sup>

Although the degree of participation varies from one case to another, all cases demonstrate that the encouragement for more interactive conversations among public officials, interest groups and individual citizens has created new synergies among all these parties and helped them create local agendas that are sustainable and applicable.

One important dimension described in the cases was the time factor as mentioned by Sjölander-Lindqvist et al. and Swensen et al.<sup>105</sup> The element of time here reflects on two aspects that are closely linked. Firstly, there is a need to recognize that participatory approach

ches are time demanding. In fact, the social processes that involve a fluid, democratic set of arrangements within civil society often require time and patience to be successful.<sup>106</sup> It is often a contentious issue for busy administrative bureaucracies and with regards to stringent budgets. Secondly, there is a need to recognize that space-time is integral with human action, experience and social practice.<sup>107</sup> This suggests that the relationship between people and landscapes evolves through time, as an ongoing process. The notion of time applied to participatory approaches concurs with Stephenson's 'cultural values model'.<sup>108</sup> These values "that are shared by a group or community, or are given legitimacy through a socially accepted way of assigning values"<sup>109</sup>, are imbedded in the landscape through a continuum of forms, practices and relationships that evolve in time. Participation methods are one way to collect the temporal and dynamic nature of cultural values in the landscape. It is generally considered that differing conceptualisations of time play in shaping our understandings of the world.<sup>110</sup> Dialogues and negotiations bring these interests together, which has been revealed in the subscript of all the examined case studies.

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## Conclusions

The four case studies presented here demonstrate the importance of community participation in landscape projects. Although there is still a long way to go in terms of tools and approaches asked for by Opdam<sup>111</sup>, the case studies presented above show that progress can indeed be made towards deliberative forms of landscape governance. The spirit and the letter of the European Landscape Convention, which seeks to empower local stakeholders, is becoming increasingly acceptable. It is important to acknowledge a significant caveat to these conclusions: larger scale scenarios, competing interests and conflictive situations probably affect whether these methods can be applicable. But the answers to those challenges may well be found in the negotiated nature of deliberation.

When going beyond the traditional approaches and engaging with deliberative action, this type of participation can take project engagement to a new level. Local communities feel more involved and are even willing to volunteer in their free time. This leads to greater community care, and stewardship for a local landscape, which ultimately benefits the landscape as a cultural heritage.

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