

Towards the East Asian Landscape Convention: Nurturing Diversity via the Protection of Everyday Life-Worlds

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Abstract

Landscape is the stage of everyday life: the arena where cultural and natural processes merge and create the whole realm what is known to us as environment. While in many classical earlier nature protection programs the humans and „nature“ are conceived of the two as opposite phenomena, the former of which exerts almost invariably negative impact on the latter, then recent research in environmental history and archaeology has demonstrated that all existing landscapes have in a smaller or larger degree been shaped by human activity. Even areas such as the Amazon, which have been earlier called Lungs of the Earth and were considered pristine and untouched natural areas, are actually deeply anthropogenic landscapes whose present shape has been greatly influenced by the everyday life of its former inhabitants. Thus, even though the everyday life of modern humans in the so-called First World countries is the source of most environmental issues we know today, the everyday life of human communities is historically deeply connected to the natural environments that are famous for their biodiversity. It would therefore not be correct to exclude human activity from protected areas, instead we should learn to support and/or recreate everyday activities that have been shaping the landscape and given it its present form. Council of Europe has realised the crucial role that landscape, uniting both “natural” and “cultural” realms and staging everyday human activities, plays in protection, management and planning activities and has adopted the Landscape Convention already back in 2000. The present paper argues that East Asia could also benefit from passing a similar landscape convention for a better protection, management and planning of East-Asian landscapes with a due respect for its natural and cultural diversity.

Keywords: landscape; European Landscape Convention; landscape protection; ecohistory; East Asian inland seas