

ENDANGERED LANDSCAPE

An area threatened with destruction, degradation or permanent disappearance, the restoration of which will be difficult or impossible, and which requires protection measures due to its natural, cultural, social and historical values.

Threats to the landscape can come from natural factors, but most often they result from human activity. The following types of threats to the landscape can be identified: biotic, consisting in a direct or indirect impact of living organisms on the landscape; abiotic, i.e. caused by physicochemical processes (pollution of the environment, groundwater drainage, etc.); threats of natural disasters (flooding, fire); threats arising from the manner in which the land is used, such as settlement and construction and related measures (such as interrupting or narrowing ecological corridors, excessive density of building development or erecting buildings of low aesthetic value, obscuring viewing areas, depletion of biologically active surface, creation of illicit rubbish dumps, technical and transport infrastructure, industrial activities, agricultural and forestry management, use of artificial fertilisers, forest clearing, introduction of monocultures on large areas, exploitation of mineral resources, development of tourism and recreation industry, entering valuable natural areas and exploiting them for tourism).

The landscape traits subject to degradation include: aesthetic, environmental, cultural, economic, social elements. The landscapes at risk of destruction are the plant cover, biotopes, cultural monuments, traditional crafts or social relations. The landscape may be exposed to harmful factors that affect it in a relatively short period of time (e.g. construction of dams on rivers, construction of factories, landfill sites) or over a long period (e.g. gradual lowering of groundwater levels, steppe-formation processes). When it comes to the permanence of changes, it is possible to identify a threatened landscape with the ability to regenerate and one that has been affected by irreversible changes.

A threatened landscape needs to be protected and action should be taken to preserve it. To this end, a landscape policy should be implemented, understood as a set of principles, strategies and guidelines that allow specific measures to be taken for the protection, management and planning of the landscape. When planning such a strategy, social factors should also be taken into account (expectations regarding the landscape or plans in this respect). In this context, landscape management should mean actions aimed at ensuring the maintenance of the landscape, directing and harmonising landscape changes resulting from social, economic and environmental processes (including the introduction of educational programmes, raising public awareness, etc.).

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