Introduction

Daniel Terrasson

The issues of landscape and sustainable development have given rise to an abundant amount of literature both in the scientific and political fields. This is not new, and the number of works and symposia dedicated to each topic has grown over the last decade.

These two notions share a certain number of common points, including the multiplicity of definitions and interpretations, a powerful presence in media debate and difficulties of appropriation by scientific disciplines. Too often, these terms appear as portmanteau words, used in an incantatory fashion, with a meaning which can vary even throughout the same explanation without seeming as though the author is fully aware of it.

In spite of these ambiguities, these two notions came into the field of public policy in very different ways. Sustainable development arrived fairly recently, fully packaged, a general framework which would impose itself in an obvious way. Moreover, it appeared through international debates and was adopted by European policies. The notion is mentioned for the first time in 1997 in the Treaty of Amsterdam (‘… to promote the economic and social progress of their people, taking into account the principle of sustainable development …’), before the Council of Europe proposed the integration of sustainable development objectives into the policies of member states in June 2001. Since 2003, France has had a national strategy for sustainable development (SNDD), which divides this objective into different sectoral policies.

As for landscape, it has been present in French national policies for a long time, even though at first this was in a disparate manner in various sectoral policies (energy, urban planning, sites …) and especially centred on the protection of exceptional landscapes. Nevertheless, with the Landscape Law in 1993, landscape became the object of a specific policy. The European Landscape Convention, adopted on 20 October 2000 by the Council of Europe and ratified by 35 countries, has made landscape protection and management an object of cooperation on a large European scale and of development of the living environment of its population. If today it seems fundamental to put landscape and sustainable development together, it is because the evolution, noted in national texts, but especially brought about by the European Landscape Convention, tends to make landscape a res publica. It tends to bring it out of the technical field and turn it into something which concerns everybody and should be debated by everybody (Olwig, 2007).

In the scientific field, the analysis of the implications of sustainable development principles on public policies is the object of several works, especially relating to natural resources, biodiversity, primary production (agriculture, forest, fishing), towns, the southern countries. On the other hand, the interactions between landscape and sustainable development are rarely talked about; landscape ecology has developed studies of biodiversity in relation to landscape, but considered from a different point of view to that of the social sciences. We find landscape approaches to sustainable development (for example, the thesis of Robert Axelsson in 2009) where landscape is reduced to the scale of process analysis. There are, however, a significant number of works about the sustainable
nature of landscapes among which we could highlight those of Willem Vos and H. Meekes (1999) or Graham Fairclough (2001). These works share a certain number of questions about the sustainability of landscapes, which is particularly well summarised in a text by Marc Antrop (2006). Other authors evaluate the impact of landscape on local economic development. We can also find other examples in literature relating to towns, aesthetics, etc., but confrontation between the notions of landscape and sustainable development is only rarely discussed in all its complexity.

Only two publications provide us with a more global understanding of the interactions between landscape and sustainable development – the work *Landscape and Sustainability*, published in 2000 under the supervision of John F. Benson and Maggie Roe, and the special edition *Landscapes and Sustainability* published by the review *Landscape and Urban Planning* under the supervision of Marion K. Potschin and Roy H. Haines-Young (2006). The first work offers a reflection on different dimensions of sustainable development (ethical, economic, social …) and the concepts associated with it, such as multi-functionality, in order to try to deduce its implications for landscape practice. In the editorial of the second work, Potschin and Haines-Young ask the community of landscape ecologists about its relationship with the notion of sustainability:

> Do we, as landscape ecologists, make reference to sustainability to legitimise what we usually do? Or is looking at things from a landscape perspective something different and unique in the way we target sustainability challenges, or the answers we are looking for?

These two publications are nevertheless far from exhaustive on the subject and in the introduction to the second edition of the work *Landscape and Sustainability*, in 2007, Maggie Roe underlines the progress which has yet to be made:

> Looking back on the last six years, it is difficult to identify any consistent progression in sustainability thinking and practice in relation to landscape. … The rhetoric that uses ‘sustainability’ has perhaps matured … [B]ut have we really matured in our views of landscape and sustainability?

By starting from a different point of view, this book aims to bring a new clarification to the relationship between landscape and sustainable development. Through the observation of different concrete examples of public action involving the issue of landscape, by examining either the reasons for policies put into practice or the debates which these actions create, the idea is to develop a reflection on this relationship. The approach, therefore, starts from the land itself, in order to create a more conceptual reflection. The texts which we have put together here are supported by research work carried out within the framework of the programme ‘Landscape and sustainable development’ (PDD) created by the French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and the Sea (MEDDM) between 2005 and 2011. This programme was in the context of the implementation of the European Landscape Convention, and had two expectations: to develop research from the perspective of informing public decisions, and to put the investigation of French and foreign, mainly European, teams into perspective.

---

Introduction

This work is the fruit of collective cooperation between the research teams and the Scientific Council of the PDD programme, who were concerned with going further than the mere juxtaposition of studies in order to develop more generic information.

The book is structured in three parts. In the first part we examine issues of biophysical reality and landscape practices which are seen from two different angles. On the one hand, we look at the different forms of articulation between a material landscape modelled by structures with trees and paths as fundamental elements, and also landscape as perceived through social representations which arise from practices, from maintenance policies or from development. On the other hand, landscape can be considered an economic resource exploited by different sectors. Landscape companies occupy an important place in this aspect, and the diversity of landscape practices and the evolution of other sectors, especially agriculture, allows us to examine other potential uses (maintenance of paths, for example) or the creation of added value to products (in the case of olives).

The second part concerns the implementation of territorial projects and the place landscape has in them, as seen through six contributions. Depending on each case, landscape may be considered a resource, or as in tension or synergy with other resources, for example, energy or agricultural resources. It can have even more complex relationships with local development, especially when we refer to heritage. The time dimension plays an important role which will be discussed particularly in two situations, the relationship between project and heritage at the emblematic site of Saint-Émilion, and a more theoretical approach to the problems of intergenerational transmission from the point of view of economic science.

Finally, in the third part, five contributions help evoke the issues of governance and participation, whose importance is underlined by the European Landscape Convention. This will be the opportunity to ask ourselves whether the landscape issue has specific aspects or offers particular opportunities as an issue which concerns, holistically, a wide range of public policies.

This work is not exhaustive as far as the relationship between landscape and sustainable development is concerned; the ecological dimension is barely represented, but that is probably the one which is best covered by existing publications. The theoretical developments proposed by economic science deserve to be supported by specific examples. Finally, this research may give instructive examples but cannot claim to cover all situations. We can only aspire to bring an extra facet to the understanding of the interactions between two notions which Maggie Roe qualifies as ‘vast and elusive, contentious and challenging, but ultimately important to you, emotionally, environmentally, economically and socially’ (Roe, 2007: xiii).