

PROPOSAL FOR ORGANIZING A SPECIAL SESSION ON LANDSCAPE ECONOMICS

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Introduction

Landscape can be defined as “an area, perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (European Landscape Convention, Article 1). As such, landscape, by its very definition, has the potential to be linked to economics. Of course, within existing economic fields – such as regional and spatial economics, ecological economics and the more traditional environmental (and resource) economics – some scholarly attention has been given to the economic aspects of landscapes. This attention, however, appears to be fragmented and lacks an overarching relational framework, or even a consistent and systematic analysis.

Especially of interest is that a landscape reflects collective preferences, and that landscape policy measures (i.e. spatial planning) should reflect collective values. However, if economists have estimated the value of a landscape, they often measured the value of its spatial (and mostly ecological) components, such as cultural-historic heritage, certain species etc. This probably explains why the terms ‘nature’, ‘biodiversity’ and ‘landscape’ are often lumped together. The Special Session on ‘Landscape Economics’ goes beyond such a monetary valuation and explores what exactly does the value of a landscape represent. That is, it addresses the question, what constitutes and determines the value and evaluation of a landscape? Values placed on landscapes are highly subjective and will undoubtedly change over time. The Special Session discusses the (objective?) propositions of economics that deal with subjective values related to landscapes.

Moreover, a careful look will be taken at the element of scarcity and the concept of the ‘optimal landscape’, which is determined and influenced by the preferences of its users. How are these preferences expressed and integrated into the landscape? By doing so, the Special Session tries to forge a link between economic theory and landscape issues.

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