

Expressing Yourself to the Planner

Some of us who participated in the conference on Heritage Landscapes in Dublin last autumn will remember a paper read by Mr. Seamus Caulfield from Ireland in which he presented four possible types of interpretation of a Heritage Landscape. As far as I recall, it looked like this:

1. Areas with a sequence of monuments,
2. monuments forming enclosures where the enclosed space becomes the monument,
3. an aggregation of enclosures and
4. the division of the total landscape.

On the whole, it is easy to explain the values in a monument and tell the planner to stay away. You can even convince him that there is an area around the monument – the so called site that he should leave in peace.

In a Heritage Landscape of some size – and the word landscape in itself implies certainly something fairly large – you cannot freeze development just like that. This landscape is a place where people live and work and cannot be denied their rights to go on trying to change and improve their societies. Not everything would be of such importance in the landscape from a heritage viewpoint – usually there would be certain circumstances that draw our attention to it and make us select it for special treatment. Such circumstances might be that the landscape was loaded by some special human activity like extensive cattling in the 18th century, 19th century mining or upper class living at the turn of the century and so on. It is evident that the heritage landscape as a rule does not only consist of a muddle of interesting relics covering the area but that there is some connections between the relics, that these are remains of something that they have in common, that there is a mutual structure in the landscape.

It is this mutual structure more than the individual elements that is the business of the planner. It is this structure he has to understand and respect when introducing changes. We cannot be satisfied only by designating landscapes for conservation. We must also select *within* the landscapes which aspects of it that should be preserved.

Philosophically speaking this will mean that a heritage landscape is really an idea of a certain historical process that has taken place in the area and – if that is so – the significance of the place is then partly an abstraction inside our heads. The abstraction, however, is tied to the physical remains that is part and parcel of the interpretation of the history of the landscape and these remains will themselves be given special values or characteristics in a system. It is then this abstraction – the idea – and the relations of the single remains or objects to the idea that should be mediated to those who have to manage the landscape.

This will mean, firstly, that you have to provide the planner with a description that is capable of treating the environment as an entirety, which is something more than the sum of the contained single objects. This will mean, secondly, that the environmental descriptions must tie the heritage perspective to its physical expression. This is the condition that must be fulfilled

if the descriptions should be of any value in the planning process. What we have to do is not foremost to provide the planner with skilful inventories but with interpretations. Let me now treat those two statements each in its turn.

First: How do you find the entirety? Let us in this example presume that the area was not chosen for its beauty, for the sake of an important battle or any other such passing event. Let us presume that the landscape was chosen because it effectively represents the historical development of the region in a broader sense. Some of the questions that we must answer are “which population has used the landscape” and “what are the resources in the landscape that could be used?” And further “what was the social organisation of the society, who decided on the disposition of land use?” The history of the ownership of the land gets to be a central issue but also the administrative rules which were given to the population. We should map out how skilled people in the area were in utilizing the natural resources, which techniques were used and what relations the area had to the surrounding world.

Secondly: From this mass of knowledge an idea must be given a shape – the conditioning principles that governed the shaping of the landscape with the specific traits that we want to preserve. The analysis would have clarified which important shaping forces there were in the landscape at the time from which our remains are dated and how these remains relate to these forces and then – perhaps even more important – the other way around: “What kind of remains would be related to the systems described?”

In that way the analysis is no longer only confirming itself but will also give us an instrument to detect physical traces that until now went unobserved. The analysis shall lastly clarify which remains are important to the historic structure that we unveiled and which ones are unimportant or only of secondary importance.

How can we express these principles in a planning document? In my experience the planner, to say nothing of the politician, would pass over long historic chronicles checking for one word or other that can help him to structure the mass of information and mould it into program. The chronicle and even the analysis must be broken down into a clarifying *signals* on the historical characteristics that we claim and the attitude we want the planner to hold. Do we claim protection, preservation, conservation or respect, do we want to influence *where* to locate or *how* to design?

An example

Take the historically important island of Lovö, close to Stockholm in the large Mälars Lake (fig. 1). This is an island where, typically for the region, you will find remains of Stone Age and Bronze Age settlements and Bronze Age tombs as well as burial grounds from the late Iron Age. Right in the middle of the island is a medieval church, founded in the 12th century but rebuilt several times in 17th and 18th century.

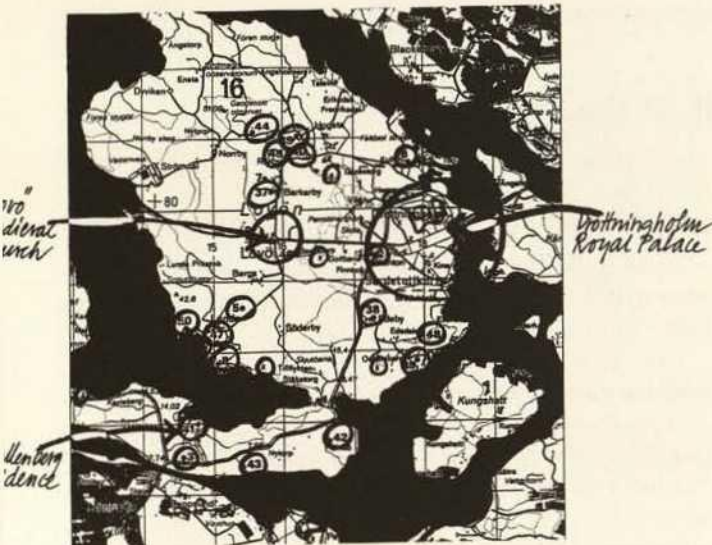


Fig. 1. Lovö – listed objects and sites of historic interest

In the east part of the island is a well preserved royal palace in the Versailles style from the 17th century, surrounded by a baroque park and an English garden in which a delightful Chinese pavilion is situated as well as the only still fully complete 18th century theatre in Sweden. The palace with its surroundings, including the pavilions, was accepted last year on the World Heritage List. In the western part of the island is the summer residence of Sweden's most important industrial family – the Wallenbergs – with their private burial ground. There are other summer houses from the 19th century spread over the island, some of them so well preserved that they are listed. Some of the farm houses have developed into small mansions. The distribution of the ancient monuments and of the historically valuable buildings according to our inventories is shown on the map (fig. 1).

Let us see how this conventional description and inventory of a Heritage Landscape might be translated into a document for planning. A look at the geography of the area makes it clear that the land in this part of Sweden is rising from the sea and has been rising since the end of the Ice Age – the great inland ice having at that time pressed down the land several hundreds of meters.

A computer model (fig. 2) shows the land as it was in the Stone Age, the island then consisting of small islands – today hilltops – in the Baltic Sea. In the Bronze Age the land has grown substantially. The future Lovö now consists of fewer and larger islands. Finally, in the Viking Age the island is roughly as we know it today, the water in-between the small islands having developed into a large central plain.

The series of computer maps also shows us how man has settled in the area and how these settlements developed. Note the Stone Age and Bronze Age settlement on the former islands – now hilltops – and the Iron Age settlements close by but lower down, marked by local burial fields. The model shows how prehistoric settlements shifted with the rising land – the “retreating” sea giving new rich land to farmers through the centuries. The Iron Age farms then are not any longer found on the former, smaller islands but on the new land lower down. There they are situated on the non-arable land in-between the arable land on both sides. Natural resources like the woods on the hills and the sea were further away.

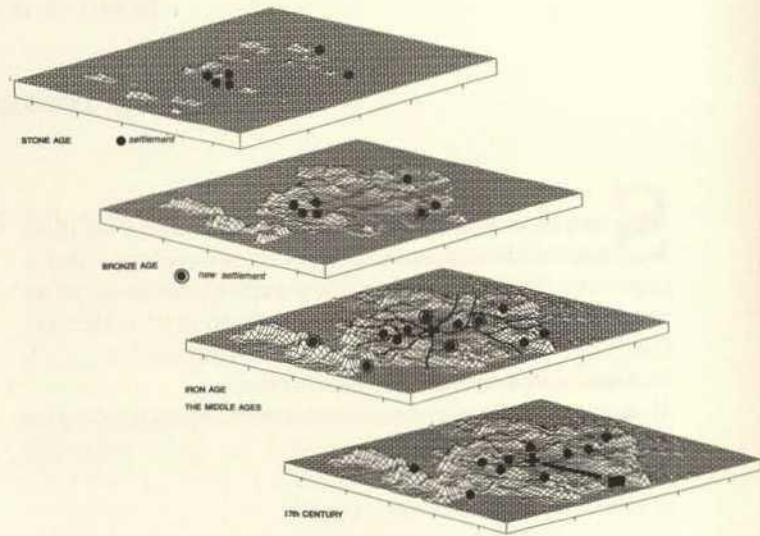


Fig. 2. Lovö -Geographic evolution with settlement development

Today hamlets are situated close to the old burial grounds. The names of most of the hamlets give them away as being very old and these names are also recorded in medieval sources which will also tell you who owned them and how large they were. There is a continuity between the Iron Age farms and hamlets and farmsteads of our time. This shows that the late prehistoric hamlets were in principle the same as today. Now looking at the boundaries of each hamlet: Cadastral maps of 17th and 18th century will show the same boundaries as they exist today. You can presume that these boundaries go down to the Middle Ages and may be to the Iron Age, too. Note how beautifully they perform the task of securing that each hamlet gets its fair part of arable land, woods and fishing water!

It should be noted also that there are twelve hamlets on the island. This could confirm a theory of the military organization of the Vikings: twelve hamlets manning one warship and each hamlet taking care of two oars as it seems to be depicted in a contemporary stonecarving from the region showing us a ship with twelve pairs of oar (fig. 3). When Christianity arrived about thousand years ago our twelve hamlets were formed into a parish that was expected to build itself a church. The church was conveniently situated at the very point where the properties meet in the middle of the arable land. Thus it happens that the hamlets of today are remaining in their Viking positions directed towards the church. The overall pattern of habitation is preserved since the Stone Age.

In the 16th century, when the king settled on the island and built his palace, the development of the hamlets was frozen. They could not split up, the idea being that farms of a certain size were needed in order to be able to collect taxes and rents. A splitting up of farmland between many sons would – so it was felt – make each farmer poorer, perhaps too impoverished to pay taxes at all. For this reason the hamlets still consist of only two or three farms. Soon after the palace had been constructed the church was included in the royal sphere by an avenue with planted trees. It was used as the burial ground for certain favourites to the Royal Family who also paid for the continuous modernization of the church.

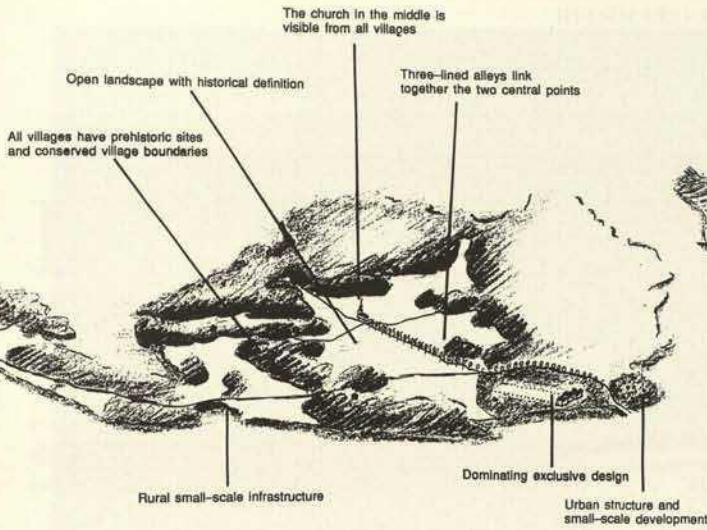


Fig. 4. Sketch of the Lovö landscape.



Fig. 5. Sketch of the historic landscape of Lovö with a new ring road.

Having performed this analysis, the historic structure found could be presented to the planner in a simple sketch that might look like this (fig. 4).

Let us put it to a test by using the circumstance that a new ring road around Stockholm is discussed. It envisaged to cross our island as in the sketch below. Can our historic analysis provide the answer whether this will destroy important cultural values? Can it serve as a basis for the Environment Impact Assessment needed?

Figure 5 shows the projection of the road on our last map. We will find that it passes beyond the farms and that it will leave the historic structure in general unaltered. It is however creating a

border between the hamlets and parts of its woods where the cattle used to graze. Still worse, an exit ramp is situated on the island which in the long run will be highly dangerous to the conservation of the landscape in upgrading already heavy pressure of urbanization to the area. It might also rise popular demands for better roads through the palace area – shortest way for commuters to the city center of Stockholm. If the ring road is decided on then, the conservation of the landscape has to be stepped up from today's passive respect to an active protection not only of objects like the church, the ancient tombs, the island buildings, the World Heritage Site of the Royal Palace of Drottningholm but of the *pattern* of the landscape.



Fig. 3. Relief with Viking oared boat from Lovö