In the wake of agrarian reforms and changes in the market conditions for agrarian products there is—all over Europe—a renewed interest in preserving different aspects of "the traditional agrarian landscape". In 1991 landscape policies were debated as a part of the Swedish election campaign—I suppose for the first time in history. Arguments about "öppna landskap" were common and the Swedish nation seems to be united in the idea of preserving the "kulturlandskap". Arguments based on the actual history of the landscape do play a minor role in these discussions.

Within the Council of Europe a group of specialists on heritage landscapes and sites have discussed definitions of heritage landscapes. From the different proposals two major lines of argument for preservation of landscapes can be followed (Johansson 1992).

On the one hand, arguments for preservation may be based on the landscape itself and the older features still visible in it: the buildings and monuments, the characteristic type of field boundaries (stone walls, fences, hedges etc.), the actual farming practices and the vegetation created and managed by these practices. These arguments are based mainly on the present outlook of the landscape and take no or little consideration of its history.

On the other hand, there is also a general agreement that historical significance can be given to a landscape by the artistic or literary representations that have been inspired there or by the historical events which have taken place there. This argument acknowledges the fact that knowledge of events or circumstances that can no longer be seen in the landscape, can, nevertheless, give meaning to a landscape. This is also valid for landscapes with few features or with mainly very recent features. I suppose that we can all agree that such cultural and historical significance can also be attributed to a landscape with no man-made structures, a type of landscape usually but incorrectly called "natural" or "untouched".

In the part of the argument, which starts in the landscape itself, there is always the danger that scenery will play a more important part than the historical content of the landscape. There is also the much more common danger that the time perspective will be short and much too simple to give a full account of the long-term historical dimension in the landscape. Often the time perspective is reduced to "traditional" vs. "modern". Such a dual time perspective always has a strong appeal to us, because it is much easier to grasp than a long-term, continuous one. With our present knowledge of the European landscape history the "traditional/modern" dichotomy is insufficient. It is now widely acknowledged that the agrarian landscapes of Europe have gone through not one but a series of drastic re-organisations, most of which have left more or less distinct traces in the landscape itself. An argument based on the present outlook of the landscape may thus tend to cover too much of landscape and too little of history, too little real historical understanding of the development of the landscape.

The second argument which is based on the history of art, literature or political history, tends, of course, to be too much history and too little landscape. And even when the argument for preservation is based on landscape features such as the oak woodland in Sherwood Forest: when and how should we tell the public the established facts of landscape history, that Sherwood forest in the Middle Ages was not the
present-day, oak woodland but rather a vast, treeless, heathland, very different from the landscape of the literary Sherwood Forest? (cf. Rackham 1986, p. 293 ff.)

Instead of an approach that favours landscape with a touch of history or an approach that stresses history in the landscape I would thus argue that the history of the landscape should play a much more important role than it does today.

Landscape history is not a well established subject in society, and the awareness of the history of the landscape is generally at a low level. Landscape history has probably a lower status than most other disciplines that deal with the material expressions of human culture. This is shown not least in the way in which landscape is treated in historical films. It is not uncommon to see actors in carefully selected, 18th-century clothes, visiting 18th-century buildings and travelling in 18th-century coaches, through a landscape of large, arable fields well adapted to the modern combine harvester. I think that this is a fair diagnosis of the low status of landscape history.

The arguments can be illustrated with the following photographs. Fig. 1 shows a landscape with small, former hay-meadows enclosed by stone walls and with adjoining hay barns built of stone in a valley bottom of Swaledale in the Yorkshire Dales in England.

It is almost a rule that the rural landscapes that are the first to be selected for preservation – as museum landscapes, if you wish – have an immediate time depth which is very shallow. By this I mean that the main features that constitute our immediate scenery are mainly late. Their appeal to us as “traditional” and “historical” is nevertheless so strong that one is almost tempted to brand such landscapes is “ingratiating”. For some reason, stone structures – walls and houses – have, at least for Swedes, this very strong appeal of time depth and historical aspect.

The landscapes of northern England, such as the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District, naturally justify their role as a common European heritage. It is not only the immediate scenery and its content of objects that constitute this, but also its representation

Fig. 1. Haybarns and stone walls in Swaledale, Yorkshire Dales, England (photo by author).
in literature and television, in which I suppose that Postman Pat and the writings of James Herriot have had the most profound influence on the European audience.

The historical dimensions of the most obvious features in the landscape are, however, often shallow in their time depth. They lend themselves to a short-term, dual, time perspective (traditional landscape/good old days compared with modern times). If we look deeper into the evidence and use the landscape as an archive, it will tell us a story with quite another time depth. The present density of stone walls, at whose preservation a great deal of effort is being aimed, I understand, is basically an effect of rather late enclosures. One can still see old trees on earth banks which have since been overlain by the characteristic stone walls. This shows that the field boundaries once consisted of earth banks and/or hedges—possibly as late as early modern times.

Going one step back in time to the mediaeval period, this was not just a green, pastoral landscape. It was a landscape of open-field farming, something which can still be seen from the strip lychets underlying the stone walls (Fig. 2).

Further back in time—in the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age, the landscape was not only densely settled, but, as recent research by Andrew Fleming has shown, all land from the moor down to the present fields was divided into long and broad strips by a community of agro-pastoralists, something which indicates an organisation of landscape that contrasts sharply with the present aspect of the landscape.

In the case of Swaledale, and the Yorkshire Dales as a whole, the museum aspects of the landscape, go hand in hand with an archive aspect of the utmost importance. The steps taken to preserve the 19th-century landscape have also preserved a lot of the older features. But it would be strange if the arguments for preservation and the regulations for the future management of the land were to be based only on a knowledge of the 19th-century character of the landscape.

My next example is based on research in the
Southern Swedish highlands. The slide (Fig. 3) shows one feature of a recently discovered type of prehistoric agrarian landscape. This is a clearance cairn which has been excavated and dated to the early Iron Age (Jönsson et al. 1991) This landscape, consisting of small, low, archaeological features in an often rather dense, secondary woodland of spruce, has no direct appeal to the European public and is certainly not “ingratiating”. It is not even possible to take a good landscape photograph of it.

The clearance cairns cover enormous areas, most of which are now under woodland. The investigations show that they represent an extensive form of agriculture dating to the last millennium before Christ. Their discovery has definitely turned the settlement history of this region upside down. One could almost say that all the land, that could be cultivated with a hoe, carries this type of remains. These landscapes have a very high value as a scientific source. For the landscape historian they provide a unique source material on social and territorial organisation and land use. But their discovery has also a much more practical implication. Soil scientists who are mapping and analysing the distribution of soils in Sweden have recently observed that a large part of the forest soils in Southern Sweden cannot be explained by “natural factors” alone. The soil scientists drew the conclusion that human influence of some sort must have been the explanatory factor (Olsson and Troedsson 1991). Based on the results of archeological and geographical research these soils can now finally be explained as having had an anthropogenic origin, due to the land management in prehistoric times. This background is an important fact in the assessment of the future development of soils and the possibilities of a sustained use of the land.

Parallell to the findings of these large clearance cairns-fields in the southern Swedish highlands another type of fossilised agrarian landscape has been explored (Fig. 4). It consists of large areas with broad strip-fields dating from a slightly later period of the Iron Age (Widgren 1990, Muscher 1993). Strip-fields have up till now been seen mainly in association with the development of regular field systems,

Fig. 3. Excavated clearance cairn at Järparyd in Rydaholm, Småland, Sweden (photo by author).
oxen-drawn ploughs and village communities in the medieval period. The fact that we now find them in an other technological and social context remains yet to be fully explained, but so far we can state that this regular division of strips must be associated with the regulation of rights to land within a prehistoric community. The development of the agrarian landscape from the stage of the clearance cairnfields to this regular division of land must have been associated with profound changes in the system of property rights. As a source material to the history of ownership during early Iron Age these fields are of utmost importance.

The immediate appeal of these landscapes is – as I said – not very strong. They seldom provide good scenery and it needs some adjustment of one’s vision to see the features. From the point of view of the landscape as a museum, these landscapes are certainly not the easiest to defend. Their scientific value, on the other hand, cannot be overrated and, in my opinion, they deserve as archives a central role in the European heritage.

Going back to the initial discussion of arguments, it is thus difficult to defend the preservation of these landscapes on the basis of their features and their present outlook. Instead the significance of these landscapes lies in the known, but now mainly invisible, history of its use through time. According to this argument the invisible history of landscapes should have the same status as the invisible political history that took place in the landscape in giving signifi-
cance to landscapes.

Landscape policies are not just administrative measures and there are no simple rules for description, evaluation and preservation of landscapes. Landscape preservation will always be a reflection of the present knowledge about landscapes and of the ideology in society. Landscape policies reflect the contemporary questions we ask about our past and our past landscapes. We can't confine our preservation efforts to the most immediate, most gratiating clichés of 19th century landscapes.

Notes

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