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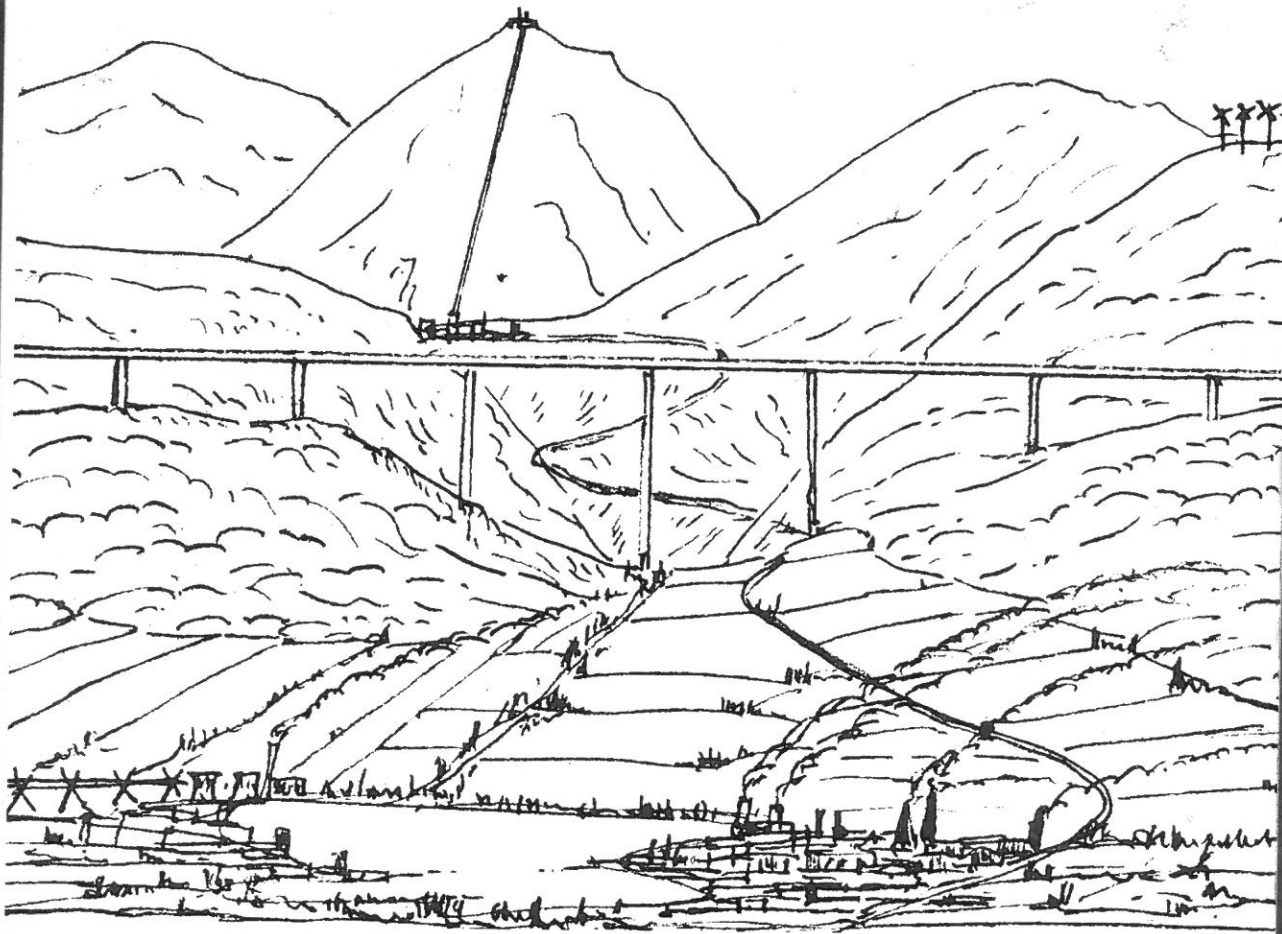
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25 years
IALE 2007 World Congress July 8th -12th

25 Years of Landscape Ecology: Scientific Principles in Practice

Proceedings of the 7th IALE World Congress - Part 2



Editors: R.G.H. Bunce, R.H.G. Jongman, L. Hojas & S. Weel

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The Picos de Europa Mountains, north-west Spain, an inspiration to non-specialist students to study living cultural landscapes

N.T. Dykes¹, H.E. Prince¹, R.P. Lemmey¹, R.G.H. Bunce²

¹ St Martins College, Ambleside.LA22 9BB
e-mail : n.dykes@ucsm.ac.uk

² Alterra, PO Box 47, 6700AA Wageningen, The Netherlands.

Since 1990 Outdoor Studies students from St. Martin's College (formerly Charlotte Mason) have surveyed components of the landscape in the Picos de Europa, north-west Spain. The three main aims of the course are: to introduce students to cultural landscapes; to encourage students to engage with disciplined recording of the landscape and to contribute to the knowledge of the area with the ambition that the results would be applicable to local issues.

The group study uses an environmental stratification for teaching the benefits of objective sampling. Field data on landscape features e.g., meadows, woodland and linear features are recorded from samples and converted into population estimates. These projects were often incorporated into a multi-day expedition through the mountains. The students are non-specialists and although at the sample level data is at times, inconsistent, overall it has proved useful to show trends at the regional level. Strong correlations between environmental and field data have been shown, e.g. using the European Survey method described by Bunce et al, 2005. The experience shows that such students can collect meaningful data and learn much from the experience.

In addition, students complete a personal project on one aspect of the mountain environment. These projects are diverse in nature e.g.; using indicator species to monitor meadow management with respect to isolation and classifying building types to monitor cultural change. The last sixteen years have built a formidable bank of information collated in a working document (Toledano, 2003). These projects have been supervised by specialist staff and have been effective in motivating students to learn about their own interests within these mountain landscapes.

These courses have been a peak experience for hundreds of undergraduates from St. Martin's college (Prince, 2005). The students have been inspired by this living cultural landscape and have completed many excellent landscape ecological projects. The educational benefits reach to a wider audience and contribute to the understanding of such landscapes, which is essential for their long term sustainability. Several papers have been published to inform a wider audience, e.g. Bunce *et al*, 1998. A limitation has been the lack of time for documentation of most of the student studies. The development and trials of various methodologies in the group projects have helped inform the design and testing of the European handbook (Bunce *et al*, 2005). Overall, although there have been benefits for the scientific community, the students have not only learned scientific principles but also appreciate and experience living cultural landscapes not found in the UK..

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