

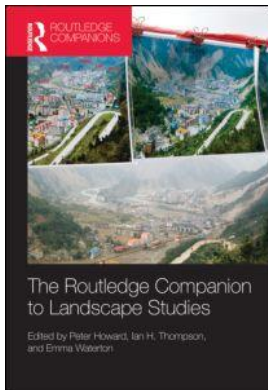
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Landscape culture and heritage

Landscape archaeology

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Landscape has come to be of central importance for archaeologists. Introductory textbooks make this point clearly:

Archaeology is basically about three things: objects, landscapes and what we make of them. It is quite simply the study of the past through material remains.

(Gamble 2001: 15)

Despite the fact that the term ‘landscape archaeology’ has only come into common usage in the last twenty years or so (David and Thomas 2008a: 29), the whole discipline is now informed by approaches that move beyond individual finds or sites to consider relationships between people, places, animals and things at much broader scales. The importance of landscape for archaeology is demonstrated through recent books such as Bruno David and Julian Thomas’s 2008 *Handbook of Landscape Archaeology*, a volume that runs to 65 chapters and over 700 pages, including a great range of theoretical, methodological and thematic perspectives (David and Thomas 2008b).

In the past few years archaeologists have increasingly come to appreciate that the material things they study are important elements in networks of relationships that can be analyzed to understand and explain people’s experience of the world. New possibilities are opening for landscape archaeologists to place their subject at the heart of analyses and debates about society, the environment and the world in general. In many countries, archaeologists’ work is now used to inform conservation strategies, landscape management and spatial planning, so archaeologists are contributing in a practical way. With their exclusive focus on the *past*, earlier definitions of landscape archaeology (even broad-ranging ones such as Clive Gamble’s, cited above) have begun to seem rather narrow. Relationships between people, places and things can be traced and explained not only in past landscapes, but also from the past to the present, and on into the future. The focus of most archaeological work will certainly remain on the analysis of past landscapes, but archaeologists also believe they have something valuable to contribute to managing and improving the landscapes of the present and future (Turner and Fairclough 2007; Fairclough and Møller 2009).

The developing focus in archaeological theory on understanding the relationships that shape landscapes marks something of a change of emphasis compared to recent decades. In the 1980s

and 1990s, much theoretical writing in archaeology was focussed on interpreting representations, textual metaphors and cultural perceptions. Archaeologists have been strongly influenced by cultural geography, where the dominant paradigm at the time concentrated more on analyzing representations than on studies of physical landscapes. Archaeologists engaged usefully with these approaches, but they were often troubled by what appeared to be a retreat from empirical work, since even the most theoretically minded of them like to deal with material *things*. Nevertheless, there was a widespread feeling that these new theoretical approaches presented more satisfying ways to understand social life than earlier ways of working. From the 1950s to the 1970s, archaeologists and historians concerned with landscapes were either writing in rather a romantic mode, without much theoretical self-criticism, or turning to scientific analytical methods that focussed on economic and environmental drivers but seemed to neglect the relationships between people. In this chapter I will outline some of the principal developments in landscape archaeology and consider how emerging perspectives relate to archaeological research more generally. This article can only present a short outline, and interested readers will find longer historiographical discussions in other recent publications (e.g. Johnson 2007a; Chouquer and Watteaux 2012).

Landscape archaeologies

In his recent review Matthew Johnson has explained how landscape archaeologists' interpretations are deeply affected by their theoretical positions, interests and knowledge (Johnson 2007a). This has not always been fully appreciated or acknowledged. Landscape archaeology is by definition an interdisciplinary field, but the nature and strength of influences from the humanities (particularly history and studies of the ancient world), the biological and physical sciences, and the social sciences (particularly anthropology and geography) have significantly shaped different approaches.

In the early twentieth century, little or no training was available specifically in archaeology, so archaeologists who studied landscapes usually had backgrounds in other disciplines. One of the most influential landscape archaeologists of the early twentieth century was O.G.S. Crawford. His training was as a geographer, but he had realized during active service as an airman in the 1914–18 war that archaeological sites could be identified from the air and recorded using air photography (Figure 11.1). He spent much of his career surveying features in archaeological landscapes as Archaeological Officer for the UK national mapping agency, the Ordnance Survey. Crawford made a famous and powerful analogy between the landscape and a 'palimpsest' – a piece of vellum used many times for different texts. According to Crawford, the landscape is like:

... a document that has been written on and erased over and over again; and it is the business of the field archaeologist to decipher it. The features concerned are of course the field boundaries, the woods, the farms and other habitations, and all the other products of human labour; these are the letters and words inscribed on the land. But it is not always easy to read them because, whereas the vellum document was seldom wiped clean more than once or twice, the land has been subject to continual change throughout the ages.

(Crawford 1953: 51)

At the time Crawford was writing, this comparison between the landscape and a historical document would have been immediately understandable to his academic contemporaries, since many of them had trained as historians. Indeed, it was from about this time that English



Figure 11.1 Darras Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne, England, looking north. Vestiges of medieval and later agriculture remain as earthworks in the fields at the bottom of the picture, whereas later ploughing has destroyed visible features in the field beyond. Nevertheless, curving field boundaries of likely medieval date still define these fields, and have also shaped the layout of the twentieth-century housing estate across the road to the north-west (Photo: S. Turner, November 2005).

landscape historians such as W.G. Hoskins, H.P.R. Finberg, M.W. Beresford and J.G. Hurst increasingly took account of the physical evidence for what remained from the past. Nevertheless, the research of Hoskins and his colleagues in the ‘Leicester School’ of local and landscape history was firmly rooted in traditional historical methods which entailed the detailed study of documentary sources from particular localities. In this respect their approach was similar to many European historical geographers in the mid-twentieth century (e.g. Flatrès 1957).

The importance of the ‘historic landscape’ was well established for archaeologists by the 1980s and 1990s. Thanks to the success of scholars such as Hoskins in communicating the results of research to a wide audience (e.g. Hoskins 1955), such studies had also begun to influence wider agendas. There was an increasing general awareness of the value of features such as hedgerows or old farm buildings as ‘historic’ features. Research programmes such as Stephen Rippon’s Gwent Levels Project were able to show that historic landscape archaeology could be used to inform and influence large-scale planning of major infrastructure projects, in this particular case a new motorway (Rippon 1996).

Archaeologists working in this tradition of landscape study began to develop various methods that are still widely used today. Crawford’s air photography laid foundations for modern aerial survey. Historical archaeologists have developed new approaches to integrating different sources about the past including documentary sources, place-names, maps and landscapes (Hicks and Beaudry 2006). Surveyors recorded earthworks and other features visible on the surface, and

developed ways to present and map them (Bowden 1999). In some ways, modern innovations facilitated by new technologies such as the use of LiDAR data¹ to identify archaeological sites build directly on this earlier work (Bewley et al. 2005).

Some landscape historians (and archaeologists) continue to work in a largely empiricist paradigm, gathering historical and archaeological information from the landscape and allowing it to 'speak for itself' about the modifications and adaptations made by past societies. In a recent critical review Matthew Johnson has argued that in general work in this tradition does not engage profitably with theory and is not sufficiently self-reflexive. Johnson identifies a strong strand of romanticism (Johnson 2007a: 34–69; 2007b), and discusses how Hoskins in particular wrote evocative, nostalgic (English) histories but failed to engage with important issues such as colonialism or the exercise of power (Johnson 2005: 114–19). The relationships between the archaeologists, the nature of the data they were collecting, and their interpretation of those data remained poorly explained.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the development of a new type of landscape archaeology very much influenced by earlier developments in geographical theory and practice. It was particularly concerned with explaining the past with scientific theory and systems thinking (Clarke 1968). It used the 'hypothetico-deductive-nomological' method, which is to say it developed and tested hypotheses with the aim of building better models and finding laws (Greene and Moore 2010: 264–72). This 'new' or 'processual' archaeology had several key impacts on landscape archaeology. Firstly, there was an emphasis on quantitative spatial methods. These are particularly associated with techniques such as intensive field survey, where teams of archaeologists methodically collect and plot surface finds (such as ceramics and stone tools) to identify sites and areas that were the focus of past activity. Such methods provided new ways to create and analyze maps of ancient settlement patterns (Hodder and Orton 1976). The development of GIS, which archaeologists now use as a standard tool, has made it much simpler to analyze this kind of information alongside other archaeological, historical and environmental datasets (Connolly 2008). Secondly, there was much more interest in developing scientific techniques such as palaeo-environmental and geo-archaeological survey which could help reconstruct models of earlier landscapes and environments (see e.g. Rapp and Hill 1998; Denham 2008). Archaeological science remains one of the most vibrant and essential parts of the discipline (Greene and Moore 2010: 190–241). Thirdly, archaeological excavation itself was used to investigate very large areas. The techniques developed ranged from excavations designed to reveal archaeological features over extended, continuous areas (e.g. Hamerow 1993), to very small trenches or 'test pits' scattered across landscapes whose aim was to analyze the extent and chronology of past activity by identifying artefacts deposited in the soil through settlement or agricultural activity (e.g. Jones and Page 2006). Many of the methods that began to be developed in this period have continued to be used and refined to the present day (for succinct and up-to-date reviews, see Carver 2009; Greene and Moore 2010).

The impetus for theoretical change in landscape archaeology came once again from the social sciences, and particularly from geography. From the early 1970s scholars developed new, post-modern critiques of what they regarded as positivist, data-driven interpretations that were trying to create single 'truths' about what happened in past landscapes. They were critical of the apparent lack of interest in social processes and social theory, and a general failure to appreciate that landscapes were not neutral 'containers' but contested spaces (Tilley 1994: 9; Olwig 2004). 'New' cultural geographers began to develop new ways to understand landscapes. They argued that it is landscapes as they are perceived that are most important for how people relate to the world, and that landscapes are best understood as ways of seeing through a cultural lens: landscapes are material, but they only really exist when they are apprehended by a viewer (Widgren

2004: 457–8; Cosgrove 2006: 50). For cultural geographers such as Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988) landscape was always changing, constantly negotiated and culturally constituted. There is no longer any possibility of discovering single ‘authentic’ meanings in landscapes. As Ken Olwig has argued, their work presented a ‘direct challenge to what many landscape researchers have seen to be their scholarly mission’ (Olwig 2004: 48). In practical terms, the growing emphasis on landscapes as representations has led many geographers’ studies away from detailed empirical research towards more general, theoretical work.

As in geography and many other social science and humanities disciplines, archaeological theory also went through a period of post-modern revision in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Hodder 1986; Shanks and Tilley 1987). Positivist agendas which concentrated on understanding adaptive processes and the economics of subsistence systems were criticized on the grounds that they failed adequately to engage with social and cultural aspects of life, and particularly the reasons why societies changed. The new ‘post-processual’ archaeology emphasized interpretative approaches to social life in the past based on a wide range of theoretical perspectives including post-structuralism, postcolonialism, hermeneutics and phenomenology. Influenced by Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens they highlighted how people shaped social life by developing archaeologies that interpreted agency, structure and practice (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984; Hodder 1986; Barrett 1994; Thomas 1996). They attempted to understand how people experienced the past by adapting phenomenological perspectives to archaeological landscapes (Tilley 1994; 2004; Bender et al. 2007). One of the key differences between much writing in ‘new’ cultural geography compared to the post-processual and interpretative archaeologies practised over the last two decades is that archaeologists have continued to engage with material culture (for a detailed discussion, see Hicks 2010). Thus Daniel Miller’s anthropology of consumption focussed on the ways material things were used in social relationships (Miller 1987), and Ian Hodder’s contextual archaeology made the analogy between objects and texts: material culture could be ‘read’ or interpreted as reflecting elements of social life (Hodder 1986; 1990). The emphasis on context, combined with the great time-depth of the archaeological record, has led many archaeologists to share the *annaliste* historians’ concern for analyzing trajectories of change over the long term (Gosden 1994; Morris 2000).

Some commentators have criticized landscape archaeologists for creating static scientific ‘knowledge’ about the past that cannot accommodate differing viewpoints on historic monuments from the present (or other times in the past) (Riley and Harvey 2005). In the wake of the ‘post-processual’ archaeology of the 1980s and 1990s this is no longer really valid as a criticism of archaeology as a whole, which has recognized that material culture in general and landscapes in particular are given meanings in different ways by different people. However, by highlighting changing interpretations of the same monuments and landscapes over time, Mark Riley and David Harvey illustrate two key points: firstly, that knowledge and perception are fundamental to interpreting landscape; and secondly, that landscapes change (Lavigne 2003; Antrop 2005; Turner and Fairclough 2007).

The trend towards interpretative perspectives, the importance of perception and a real interest in the ‘ordinary’ as opposed to the ‘special’ has been reinforced by recent developments in policy, such as the European Landscape Convention (ELC) Although the ‘natural’ is present in its definition, the Convention describes ‘landscape’ in human terms:

an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.

(Council of Europe 2000, Article 1)

The framework provided by cultural geography, post-processual archaeology and the changing policy context have encouraged landscape archaeologists to respond by developing methods that accommodate these ideas in practice.

An example of one such method is known in the UK as Historic Landscape Characterization (HLC). HLC is an archaeological method that aims to present landscapes with particular reference to their historical development over the long term (Fairclough 2003; Turner and Fairclough 2007, and Herring, this volume). In line with the ELC, the method recognizes that landscape is ubiquitous and that it can be perceived in different ways. However, the interpretations of landscape it presents are rooted in (or constrained by) the recognition that landscape has a physical dimension: landscape as *material* culture (see Figure 11.2). Thus landscape archaeology in general and the HLC method in particular might be used to bring together the perceptual and the material for a better understanding of landscapes. One of the problems has been that as cultural geographers' representational understandings have drifted further and further away from landscape historians' empirical ones, it has become increasingly difficult to see how this might be done. A relational understanding of landscapes such as the one promoted in recent geographical and archaeological approaches might provide a practical way of achieving this aim.

Rather than creating a 'definitive' map of landscape features with particular set values, an HLC sets out to present an interpretation of more generalized historic character within which different sorts of value could be negotiated based on differing viewpoints (see Olwig 2004: 42).



Figure 11.2 Landscapes often comprise thousands of related historic, cultural features. The photo shows a typical landscape of braided terraces and fields with drystone walls near Mikri Vighla, Naxos, Greece (Photo: S. Turner, August 2009)

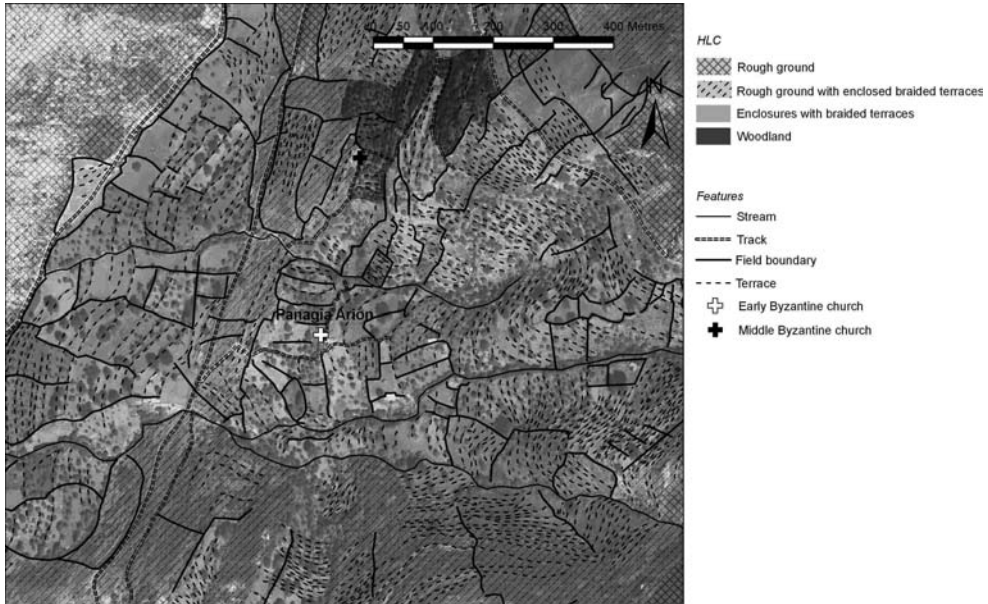


Figure 11.3 A GIS-based map showing selected archaeological features (terraces, field walls, Byzantine churches) against a simple HLC of the Aria area, Naxos, Greece. The analysis is based on sources including satellite imagery and historic air photographs (see Turner and Crow 2010) (Includes IKONOS material ©2006, Space Imaging LLC. All rights reserved).

HLC is also a flexible method: in different regions, different HLC types are appropriate because of differing landscape histories (see e.g. Turner 2007; Crow and Turner 2009; Crow et al. 2011; Dingwall and Gaffney 2007 present an unusual North American example; see Figure 11.3). HLCs are created using GIS, and because GIS allows any number of different attributes to be linked to any given area through a database, HLCs could accommodate a range of different viewpoints on the same landscapes. Even conflicting interpretations could be mapped and considered in the same presentation: this might be extended to include not only how landscape historians (for example) disagree about how to interpret the development of an area in different ways, but also how people with a range of other points of view might value them. HLCs do not inevitably create ‘closed’ perspectives that only relate to ‘authentic’ or ‘official’ histories. Instead they can be open to claims and counter-claims (see e.g. Hall 2006; cf. Williamson 2006: 57–9). One potential application of HLC could be to provide a forum for debate about the value of the landscapes and how we should shape trajectories of change for the future. However, one of the main difficulties has been to establish *how* such debate might be achieved. Explicitly recognizing and exploring the roles and relationships of networks of actors and referents could provide an effective way to do so (see also Tuddenham 2010).

Material and cultural landscapes

Although the ‘interpretative’ or ‘representational’ paradigm was dominant in cultural geography and other fields during the 1980s and 1990s, there were geographers who felt that the move to explain landscapes (and other aspects of culture) as perceptions failed adequately to engage with important aspects of human experience, particularly material engagement. In particular, scholars

such as Nigel Thrift and Sarah Whatmore have focussed on developing *practical* geographies that engage with the material world (Whatmore 2006; Thrift 2007). Their work seeks to overcome the structural divide between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ (or ‘subject’ and ‘object’, or ‘mental’ and ‘material’) that has been present in much research working within the interpretative tradition (Wylie 2007: 153–66).

In many ways the impetus for this new work comes from the urgency of engaging with real-world issues such as the state of the environment (now commonly presented in a dynamic sense as ‘climate change’). Thrift, Whatmore and others build directly on research in philosophy (Bonta and Protevi 2004) and in science and technology studies, in particular discussions of the relationships between actants (actor-network theory, e.g. Law 2004; Latour 2005). Incorporating the material does not necessarily constitute a revolutionary ‘turn’ of the type familiar from later twentieth-century theoretical writing (the ‘literary’ turn; the ‘cultural’ turn, etc.) but instead a ‘return’ and refashioning, working a wide range of perspectives into a broadly conceived but repositioned type of analysis (Whatmore 2006: 601).

This research is also linked to an increasing focus on the significance of material things as *things* rather than representations in anthropology. Tim Ingold has called for a deeper appreciation of the *thingly* qualities of things, which for him result from their inherent qualities (Ingold 2007; see also Latour 2007). For archaeologists, the appeal of treating material things seriously is clear, since the principal medium for their work is the fragments and remains of past material culture (Witcher et al. 2010: 120–3). If a ‘more-than-human’ world is the field of investigation where things, animals and other entities have important roles in communities of actants just as people do (Latour 1994; Whatmore 2006), then archaeologists should be well-placed to contribute to our understandings and explanations of it. New approaches to a ‘more-than-human’ world have been developed by archaeologists as ‘symmetrical archaeology’, which is concerned with the entangled relationships between people and things, past and present, and how they are mixed and changed over time (González-Ruibal 2007; Witmore 2007; Webmoor and Witmore 2008)

Archaeologists have begun to consider how to explain the relationships between actants in such networks (or ‘meshworks’: Ingold 2007: 80–2). Once again they have used ideas generated and developed in other social sciences, particularly geography, for example ‘affect’ (Clough 2007: 2). ‘Affect’ is used as a way to help understand people’s embodied engagements with the world and their experience of being entangled with it (Tolia-Kelly 2006, 2007; Whatmore and Hinchcliffe 2010; for a recent archaeological example, see Harris and Sørensen 2010: 150).

For archaeologists, the dynamic nature of the relationships between actants is of central importance. Change is a central aspect of archaeology, particularly landscape archaeology. We are continually concerned with understanding how the landscapes we live in today have changed, and we are now developing better methods for explaining and presenting the chains of relationships that have created the landscapes we live in. To do this, we need a theoretical framework that can accommodate methods and perspectives that have been developed across a wide range of scientific disciplines from the physical sciences through social sciences to philosophy and the humanities. If we are successful, landscape archaeology and its spatial approaches should be able to provide us with an engaging view not only of the landscapes of the past, but also of the ones we are creating for the future (Turner and Fairclough 2007).

I have briefly described how the development of landscape archaeology in Britain and elsewhere has been deeply influenced by many other disciplines. Self-reflexive, theoretically informed research must be at the forefront of efforts to create interdisciplinary landscape archaeologies that draw in theories and methods from many areas of research (Chouquer 2007: 246–9). The relationship with geography has been fundamental, but many sciences, social

sciences and humanities have contributed to the development of theory and practical methods. There is explicit recognition of the importance of tracing the relationships that have influenced and shaped landscape change over the long term; we now understand that the ancient landscapes we study today are the result of hundreds or thousands of years of practice, not fossils stranded in time from Antiquity (Figure 11.1; Watteaux 2005). Related to this, there is the recognition that archaeologists can contribute to the management and creation of future landscapes. Over the past 10–15 years there has been a sort of theoretical *détente* in landscape archaeology that has facilitated the development of integrative, multi-layered approaches to landscapes. Communication, collaboration and co-investigation at all scales will be made easier by breaking down the boundaries within and between disciplines in this way.

For landscape archaeologists, finding ways to broaden the field of people we engage with is crucial. We need to work effectively with other academic disciplines such as landscape architecture, planning, sociology, psychology, environmental science, ecology and geology. If we widen our view to include society in general, we find many public and professional groups – farmers, for example, industrialists or politicians – not to mention the general public who live in, work with, and pay visits to different landscapes at different times. Because the conceptual divisions can be so huge, communication and understanding is often fraught with difficulties. Nevertheless, emerging approaches that emphasize the value of analyzing the many relationships linking past, present and future landscapes could provide practical ways to bring people together as partners in landscape work.

Note

- 1 LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a remote sensing technique that uses pulses of laser light to detect the distance to a target. Detailed models of surfaces (such as the surface of the ground) can be created from scans made using ground-based or airborne LiDAR.

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