

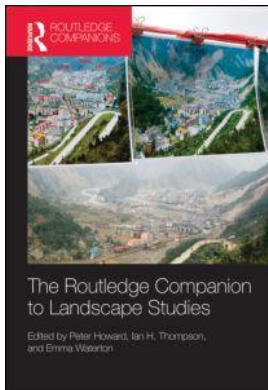
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Landscape and identity: beyond a geography of one place

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‘Landscape and identity are inherent components of culture, one informing the other.’ This statement opened a call for papers for an international workshop, ‘The Right to Landscape, Contesting Landscape and Human Rights’, launching an initiative by the same name in Cambridge, UK on the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) in December 2008 (CCLP 2008). The call for papers attracted much attention on behalf of landscape scholars and professionals, attesting to a wide spread consent on the significant contribution of landscape to identity as an expression of one of the fundamental human needs and a pervasive human motive – the need to belong.

The Right to Landscape (RtL) concept is derived from an interpretation of landscape as a universal theoretical concept similar to the way in which human rights are perceived. It stems from the notion that landscape is at once the relationship between humans and their surroundings and the manifestation of the confluence of physical subsistence and psychological necessities; it is a place that ought to support livelihood and wellbeing, both values that are at the core of universal human rights (Egoz et al. 2011).

Building on the axiom that landscape and identity are to be interpreted within the sphere of human rights, this chapter highlights some of the dilemmas associated with landscape and identity in the twenty-first century. The discourse on landscape and identity merits more attention and reflection, in particular in landscape architecture, a discipline that is engaged in active production of landscape.

The literature on landscape and identity is prolific; landscape identity is a much referred to topic but it is not always clear what is being discussed, as it is dominated by two main concepts:

- Landscape identity – the identity of the landscape – is the spatial character of the landscape. It is an evaluation of a physical entity that can be analysed according to set criteria;
- Landscape and identity – the relationship between landscape and the identity of humans engaged with the landscape – represents the formative role of landscape in building identity, both collective and individual, in response to the basic human need to belong.

At first glance, these two interpretations may seem parallel and necessitate separate discourses: the first relating to the built environment disciplines, and the latter to social sciences fields such

as anthropology, psychology, sociology and so forth. Nonetheless, the body of interdisciplinary work on landscape is the theoretical foundation for the discipline of landscape architecture, thus, in the context of the right to landscape and the interpretation of landscape as a relationship (Egoz 2010), both concepts are intertwined and addressed as one.

Modern development of the concept of landscape and identity

'A Man is but a mould of his native landscape', wrote the Russian-born Hebrew poet Shaul Tchernichovsky in the 1920s. Such an intense association of landscape with identity was the focus of human and cultural geography discourse in North America in the 1930s. Carl Sauer's seminal contribution to the idea of the cultural landscape refuted nineteenth-century environmental determinism paradigms set forth by German geographer Friedrich Rätzkel that had been imported to North America by geographer Ellen Churchill Semple, a disciple of Rätzkel. It is no coincidence that environmental determinism theories were reinforced in nineteenth-century Europe at the time of the 1848 European Spring of Nations and were conducive for supporting nationalist ideologies of 'Blood and Soil' and asserting national identity through landscape. Landscape has since become one of the foundation stones for building national identity (see for example Crang 1999; Egoz 2008; Egoz and Merhav 2009; Long 2009).

After the Second World War, the discipline of cultural geography that had flipped the causal relationship of landscape and humans from the physical environment as the moulder of human personality and cultural identity to that of landscape as the repository of human culture gained momentum. Scholars such as J.B. Jackson, with his 1950 pioneering publication of *Landscape Magazine*, and English historian W.G. Hoskins's *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955) paved the way for a whole new body of work that reflected on the shaping of landscape and discussed its humanistic meanings. Much of this work was categorised under 'landscape perception' and set the stage for a discourse on landscape and identity that later permeated into other disciplines and formed a significant theoretical grounding for the discipline of landscape architecture. Scholarship in the 1970s continued to see humanistic values endorsed through some ideas on universal values embedded in landscape, introduced by geographer Yi Fu Tuan's insights in *Topophilia* (Yuan 1974). Donald Meinig's (1979) collection of essays, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, summarised and established some foundation concepts about the everyday landscape and identity that have since been generally accepted and further explored. Now it was not only the idea that landscape represents cultural identity but so too does the role of the physical landscape serve as an identity builder.

Identity associated with landscape became a much-discussed topic across the humanities' fields, generating a plethora of literature. Anthropologist Barbara Bender's conceptualisation of landscape as 'part of the way in which identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, group, or nation-state' (Bender 1995: 3) is considered an inspiration (Tilley 2006) for similar approaches in archaeology, environmental history, anthropology, heritage studies and cultural studies. Within the built environment disciplines, it is today almost a maxim that responsible architecture and landscape designs are, and ought to be, understood as expressions and builders of identity, in particular in relation to regional geography. The roots of contemporary regionalism can be traced to the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century North America Prairie School of architecture. The horizontal qualities of the Midwest landscape became a dominant feature in the form of architecture. Influential figures such as architects Louis H. Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright are associated with promulgating these lines of design language, underpinned by the want to express identity through references to the character of the regional landscape. Danish-born American landscape architect Jen Jensen

collaborated with Wright and the 'Prairie School' style, which included a promulgation of the use of native plants, and formed an eminent legacy in contemporary landscape architectural approaches.

Another considerable influence on landscape architecture today can be ascribed to the writings of architect Kenneth Frampton in the 1980s. Critical Regionalism theory (Frampton 1983) derived from earlier work by Tzonis and Lefaivre (1981), and emerged as a reaction to what was promulgated as 'lack of identity' of the modernist international style in architecture. While Critical Regionalism affirmed the role of the local landscape in shaping identity, it at the same time critiqued a naïve, nationalist 'Blood and Soil' type of identity building process and promoted experiential phenomenological approaches to design. Ideas about regional design gained momentum in landscape architecture discourse in the 1990s, now including notions of sustainability and the value of native planting for ecological and social resilience. Several landscape architects wrote in the spirit of a response to the local landscape in design (e.g. Harkness 1990; Hough 1990; Thayer 1994; Woodward 1997). Since then, this trend has gained momentum in the context of accelerated threats to landscape and resentment to a perceived spatial homogeneity inflicted by globalisation (see Stewart et al. 2007 and Bowring et al. 2009). Asserting local identity as a means of resistance to globalisation is extended upon in this volume in Jacky Bowring's chapter on landscape and globalisation (Chapter 23).

For many involved with landscape architecture education and practice, 'landscape identity' is seen as part of the professional ethos; it is a particular valued issue that the profession has ethical obligations towards (Thoren 2010). One example is the way this stance was advocated in the 2010 International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) regional conference of the Americas in Santiago, Chile, which focused on 'landscape architecture as a discipline cherishing and protecting the geographical identity of a place' (IFLA 2010). Identity is a term also referred to in this century's latest key document concerning landscape, the European Landscape Convention (ELC), where it is stated in the preamble that landscape 'contributes to the formation of local cultures and ... is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity' (Déjeant-Pons 2006).

The many interpretations and lack of a clear definition of landscape identity have caught the attention of Stobbelaar and Pedroli (2011) who address this challenge. Their conceptual model 'The Landscape Identity Circle' is based on axes of four types of identity: personal, existential, cultural and spatial. Each one of these categories relates to the scientific disciplines involved in landscape studies. Stobbelaar and Pedroli's definition is that 'landscape identity is the unique psychosociological perception of a place defined in spatial-cultural space'. They conclude that landscape identity 'is a multifaceted concept, which has implications for the way different stakeholders are taken into account: individual inhabitants, pressure groups, experts and/or policy-makers, all place emphasis on different parts of the Landscape Identity Circle' (Stobbelaar and Pedroli 2011: 334).

Best capturing this relationship between landscape and identity is Huff's proposition that landscape is the reification of identity (Huff 2008). Indeed, this perspective resonates with the way the discipline of landscape architecture has traditionally addressed identity by advocating a study of the local/regional context: geography, geology, topography, botany, climate, history, culture and architecture, and designing in response to those. The work produced in this spirit is profuse, most of it echoing an ethical commitment to address identity in a local geographical context. Nonetheless, there is more to landscape identity than the localised geography.

Tensions embedded in concepts of landscape and identity

There is no dispute that landscape is 'a repository of memory both individual and collective ... [and] is a site of and for identity' (Mitchell 2008: 42); this tight association between landscape

and identity is undeniable, but at the same time is also inherently knotty: both the terms 'landscape' and 'identity' have been recognised as elusive and ambiguous idioms. Landscapes have been argued to be complex and dynamic entities, interpreted in different ways and thus the potent subject of conflicts and repositories of power relations and ideologies. There is an extensive body of theory describing these facets of landscape by leading scholars such as Denis Cosgrove, James Duncan, Don Mitchell, J.W.T. Mitchell and Kenneth Olwig.

Discourse on identity in the social sciences, underpinned by a post-structuralist non-essentialist approach, recognises the fluidity and dynamic nature of the notion, referring to 'identities' as plural rather than a fixed concept. Attention was also drawn to the manipulative potential of the concept or, in the words of Christopher Tilley, '[t]he manner in which identities are produced and sustained needs to be understood within frameworks of power relations, dominance and resistance, and their relation to different kinds of knowledge 'western' and 'indigenous' (Tilley 2006: 15). Peteet (2005: 99), in her description of the spatialising of identity in Lebanon's refugee camps, argued that '[i]dentity is apt to be contextualized as an always-in-formation cultural product of sociospatial location and practices within a field of power'. Critics of nationalism such as Gellner (1983), Bhabha (1990a, 1990b, 1994) and Anderson (1991) argued that national identities are fabricated narratives, open to subversion, and dictated in a top-down manner. It is worth mentioning, however, that not all scholars accept that view of an artificial creation of national identity. Edensor (2004), for example, suggested that national identity is formed through the mundane everyday activities in society.

In heritage studies and archaeology, scholars have acknowledged similar pitfalls highlighting the complex, sometimes covert, agendas embedded in collective identity building (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Zerubavel 1995; Elon 2000; Smith 2004, 2006; Harvey 2008). As such landscape architects may be unaware of their active role in reinforcing nationalist narratives while marginalising other stakeholders (see Egoz 2008; Egoz and Merhav 2009). It is this realm of the exclusivity of landscape and identity that merits more attention in landscape architecture, the discipline that engages with a 'reification of identity'.

Landscape and identity in flux

Landscape architecture's focus on the geography of place reflects a perception that landscape and identity are asserted through rootedness in one place – a sedentary condition. Rootedness, whether relating to grounding in physical place or a quest to belong, is predominantly a landscape metaphor (Egoz 2011b). The opposite of 'to root' is 'to uproot' – a word connoting violence, traumatic displacement and destruction. Both the ideas of 'rootedness' and 'uprootedness' are potent identity builders. Political contestation in intractable conflicts over territory and ownership often fuels profound emotional responses through landscape symbols of identity (Braverman 2009). In conflicts such as the Israeli–Palestinian one landscape plays a prominent role for both sides (Bardenstein 1998; Egoz and Williams 2010). The Palestinian narrative of dispossession intertwined with yearnings for their home landscape is a powerful emotional identity builder (Peteet 2005). Israeli Zionist identity-building is too charged with compound landscape narratives: a return to an ancient 'biblical' landscape along with a modern day, pioneering ethos of building and physically rerooting in the landscape (Egoz 1997, 2008, 2011b; Chowers 2002; Helphand 2002).

The concepts of rooting, uprooting and rerooting are gaining new dimensions in the twenty-first century. The number of displaced populations is increasing with late-twentieth-century mobility due to economic globalisation and a growing phenomenon of forced migration as a result of climate change (Myers 2002; Gemenne 2011; OIM 2010). For the discipline of

landscape architecture, these changes question the relevance of the centrality of a physical response to landscape identity within a stationary geographical context. Leading thinkers in cultural geography have already challenged essentialist assumptions about place. David Harvey (1990) and Doreen Massey (1999) introduced the notion of ‘space–time compression’ shifting directions in cultural geography. The ‘New Mobilities Paradigm’ (Sheller and Urry 2006) influenced a wide body of work on migration, diasporas and transnationalities (Blunt 2007). The work of Tolia-Kelly, (2004a, 2004b, 2006), for example, includes considerable references to meanings of landscape in that context; other studies centred on attachment to landscape, grounding in place and geographies of belonging (Blunt 2007).

‘Out-of-place’ identity

Tim Cresswell (2006: 31) observed that, when place is perceived as ‘an essentially moral concept, mobility and movement, insofar as they undermine attachment and commitment, are antithetical to moral worlds’. Cresswell’s assertion mirrors a historical and ongoing phenomenon of discrimination against nomad communities often referred to pejoratively as ‘vagrant’ communities. A perception of the inferiority of the so-called ‘landless’, some of which have different traditional ownership systems to contemporary legal property laws, can be found internationally. Studies about gypsies in Sweden (Montesino 2001), Roma in Europe (Bancroft 2001), nomadic communities in India (Lim and Anand 2004) and the indigenous Bedouin in Israel (Abu-Saad 2006; Boteach 2008) all address the vulnerability and deprivation associated with nomadic lifestyles and the inflicted social injustices that result in poverty and its accompanying physical and social impacts on general wellbeing. In contemporary nomadic cultures there is an inherent tension between a right to self-determination underpinned by a particular cultural identity that embodies movement in the landscape, and the need to sustain livelihood. In the modern world, many indigenous populations’ traditional livelihood practices are no longer viable as access to land resources is being restricted whether through urbanisation processes, colonial appropriations or environmental conservation (Lim and Anand 2004). Settlement becomes the default option for survival and, from the state’s point of view, ‘the solution’ for these ‘victims of social development’ whose indigenous knowledge is deemed obsolete (Montesino 2001: 18). Deborah Bird Rose (1996; see also the introductory chapter this volume) and Ingold and Kurttila (2000) have defied this latter assertion, negating the notion that indigenous populations’ knowledge is no longer valuable. Ingold and Kurttila (2000) argue that the meaning of Finnish Lapland farmers’ traditional knowledge of environmental management practices is in effect an epitome of the notion of belonging to place. Local knowledge embodies a profound engagement with the landscape – land, animals and plants. This knowledge represents their landscape identity, hence any imposed western scientific methods to replace traditional land practices means cultural displacement (Ingold and Kurttila 2000).

The human rights of indigenous peoples including the right to self-determination and cultural identity are now recognised by the United Nations, with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was adopted by General Assembly in 2007. Landscape is a critical contributor to identity of indigenous people, but also potential glue for a common national identity for both the indigenous populations and the settlers who colonised the territories that had already been inhabited by people, as Rose (1996) maintained.

Landscape identity and indigenous communities

Deborah Bird Rose, in *Nourishing Terrains*, her report for the Australian Heritage Commission, highlighted the opportunities for building Australian national identity embedded in the

confluence of Aboriginal knowledge and ‘Settler Australians concerns for the future of the continent’ (Bird 1996: 83). She argued that land stewardship, ‘[t]he notion of “caring for country”’, is ‘quintessentially Aboriginal’, and that, ‘[n]owhere in the world is there a body of knowledge built up so consistently over so many millennia. Nowhere are there so many living people who continue to sustain that knowledge and engage in associated land management practices’ (Rose 1996: 83–4).

Indigenous people’s profound relationship with the landscape is also prominent in Aotearoa, New Zealand. For the Māori, ‘landscape is who they are and what shapes their identity’ (Menziés and Ruru 2011: 141). The bicultural society builds its common national identity from the landscape through embracing many of the Māori concepts (Stephenson et al. 2010). The weight given to this theme is evident by the following statement of an interdisciplinary Landscape and National Identity research centre established at the University of Otago in 2007: ‘Landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand plays a powerful role in creating personal and collective senses of identity’ (CRNI 2011). Landscape architects in New Zealand are committed to responding to the indigenous peoples’ particular physical and cultural needs. The core curriculum at the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University Christchurch includes bicultural education with an option to focus on Design in a Māori Environment (Challenger 2008).

The relationship between the coloniser and the indigenous people in New Zealand is grounded in the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, which established, in principle, shared sovereignty. While there are still many ongoing tensions regarding allocation of resources between the state and the Māori, New Zealand is internationally and locally perceived as one of the most progressive in the colonised world. In contrast, there are other places in the world where indigenous populations are overtly marginalised and deprived. One such example is the Arab Bedouin in Israel, a population counting about 190,000 in 2010. This ethnic minority is one of the most disadvantaged groups in the country (Molcho 2010). Since statehood (in 1948), the Israeli authorities have been trying to settle the nomads (Leyne 2007). Bedouin tribes’ historic ownership of the vast areas of land within which they would move seasonally was denied. This perception by Israel that the nomads were landless is not unique; it was common in other colonised geographies where indigenous inhabitants were dispossessed. During the late nineteenth century, land in New Zealand could be legally confiscated if its owners failed to cultivate it. Māori collective ownership of land and different values, such as taking on a guardianship role and sustaining the resource of land unfarmed for the sake of future generations, were interpreted by the colonisers as ‘neglect’, thus the Māori were ‘undeserving’; this perspective was a rationalisation for land appropriations by the colonisers (Brooking 1996).

Today, half of the population of Israeli Bedouin lives in poor conditions in seven settlements established by the Israeli government, and the other half in what has been termed ‘unrecognised villages’ on their historic land that had been appropriated by the state. The unrecognised villages are an intriguing landscape. Deemed illegal, they are deprived of all infrastructure and vulnerable to house demolitions by the authorities. Human Rights’ organisations in Israel have been campaigning in favour of legalising the villages for many years. One of the initiatives, Photo Azazmeh, was a project by Israeli designer Ilan Molcho and the Israeli NGO ‘Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality’ (NCF), who ran a participatory photography programme for children of the Azazmeh tribe living in the unrecognised village of Wadi Al Na’am. Molcho was inspired by the work of North American artist Wendy Ewald and her ‘visual literacy’, which empowers children from deprived communities through encouraging them to use cameras to articulate their dreams and hopes. By providing the young people of Wadi Al Na’am with photography lessons and donated cameras, Molcho (2010) believes that ‘photography [is]



Figure 24.1 Azazmeh landscape by Abir Hamamda – age 14.

turning into a tool for realization of civic skills ... and enable[s] children to participate in building the common civil discourse' (Molcho 2010). Rather than being the subject photographed, the young person becomes an active participant in forming and expressing her/his identity. One of the themes the children chose to photograph was their unrecognised village landscape (see Figures 24.1–4), illustrating how the landscape is an inseparable part of the Azazmeh children's identity. This type of activity forms an inspiration for the possibilities for participatory research to understand landscape identity and use landscape as an empowering tool in the spirit of the European Landscape Convention.

Twenty-first century challenges, landscape identity and research directions

[C]itizenship and nationality need not be isomorphic

(Peteeet 2005: 226)

Increasing mobility and the social and psychological tensions associated with migration also necessitate new thinking about landscape architecture's role in sustaining the universal right for dignity. The nomad, the uprooted, the displaced, the migrant, and the refugee's identities will never be set in one static geography. The ethos of '[L]andscape architecture as a discipline cherishing and protecting the geographical identity of a place' (IFLA 2010) is no longer sufficient to address twenty-first-century societal challenges.

The United Nations Human Rights Council recognised that climate change has serious implications for human rights, in particular in its impact on the poorer countries in its Resolution 7/23 'Human rights and climate change' from 28 March 2008. The statement indicates that rights to life and dignity are being compromised:

Global warming will affect, and already is affecting, the basic elements of life for millions of people around the world. Effects include an increasing frequency of extreme weather events, rising sea levels, droughts, increasing water shortages, and the spread of tropical and vector born diseases'

(UN 2008)

In considering such threats, Rixecker (2011) highlighted specific challenges that will need to be addressed. For example, when small island nations, such as Tuvalo in the Pacific Ocean, have to be relocated due to rising sea levels, should the relocation consider the traditional way of life of that community? Would the need for a familiar sea landscape type, a source of livelihood and identity to those people, be taken into account when addressing relocation of such nations? As Rixecker argues:

A 'human right to the environment' might only provide protection of Tuvaluans right to a healthy physical environment, whereas a 'right to landscape' would entitle them to secure a home that is more meaningful and resonates with their cultural references and meanings, thereby ruling out or seriously minimising their relocation to an arid, completely foreign environment.

(Rixecker 2011: 31)

Rixecker's pertinent questions open a whole new realm of thinking about the ethical role of planners and designers, and the need to extend visionary and unconventional thinking to address the right to landscape. This calls for solutions that go beyond functional needs of survival and requires addressing landscape as the confluence of physical subsistence and psychological necessities, among them a right to live in dignity and freedom to define their own identity.



Figure 24.2 Azazmeh landscape by Suheib Ismail Gargawi – age 16.

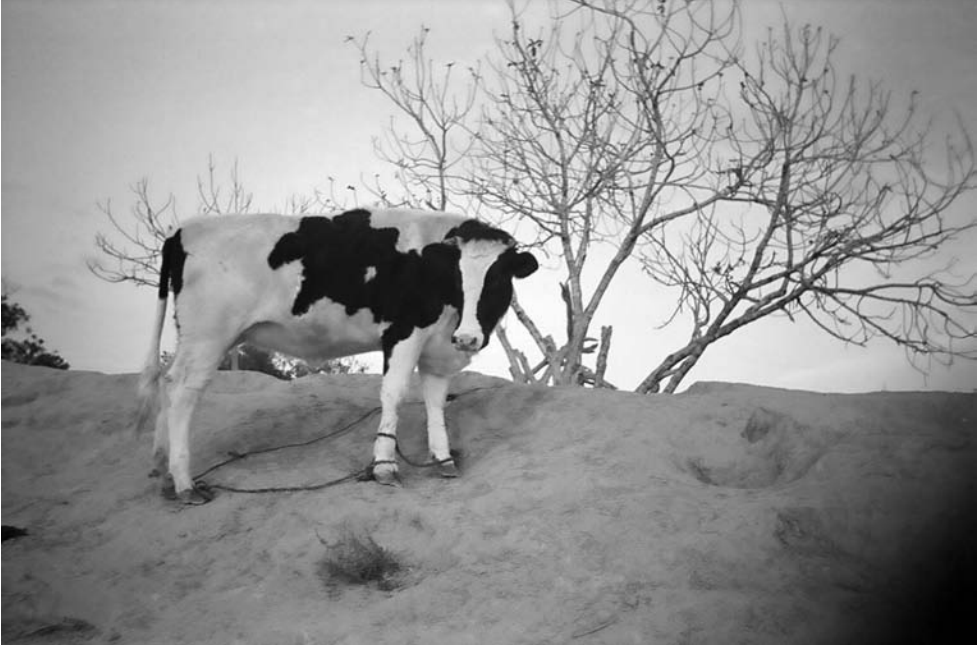


Figure 24.3 By Doa Abu Swheilem – age 14.



Figure 24.4 By Naim Muhamad Gargawi – age 14.

The involvement of landscape architect Jala Makhzoumi (2009, 2010) in the reconstruction of the villages struck during the 2006 war in Southern Lebanon is but one example of the use of the right to landscape concept in this way. Through semi-structured interviews with residents, Makhzoumi found that the 'village landscape is an enabling medium through which traditional culture is preserved, local identities constructed and rural heritage acknowledged' (Makhzoumi 2009: 13). Design was thus addressed in this way.

In Malaysia, landscape architect Nor Atiah Ismail (2010) studied the rural migrants who settled in urban environments. These communities altered the designed landscapes provided in their neighbourhoods in order to recreate more familiar landscapes similar to those they had left behind and to maintain their identity. Through documenting the landscape alterations and conducting unstructured interviews with the residents, Ismail revealed the motivations that drove the landscape changes. Such an understanding helps landscape architects gain tools to accommodate migrants' needs and assist with their social adaptation to new environments.

These two examples highlight how the theoretical body of work on landscape and identity is able to support research and drive innovative designs that assist with migrants' adaptation. The key is to adopt a stance that focuses on people. While cherishing the character of a local landscape has ecological value, responding to the essential human need to belong without erasing a rich body of memory that is part of both individuals' and collectives' identities is an ethos yet to be embraced by landscape architects internationally.

The evidence of the beginning of a development of such an ethos is the European Federation of Landscape Architects (EFLA) and their commitment to the UNESCO/UNHABITAT Right to the City initiative, which addresses inclusive urban policies and innovative practices for migrants (see Brown and Kristiansen, 2009). Recently, the EFLA advertised a photographic competition entitled 'Landscapes of Diversity', 'emphasising a fundamental role of external public space as meeting point for all, indistinguishable in terms of race, generation and culture' (EFLA 2011). This initiative bears the flavour of the moral commitment of the European Convention's to values of democracy and equality (Egoz 2011a), embodied in the definition of landscape as 'an area, as perceived by people' and the obligation to public participation in decision-making about their landscape (ELC 2000). Adopting the stance that a driver of landscape design includes people's right to define their own identity resonates with the conviction that 'Landscape and identity are inherent components of culture, one informing the other'.

Epilogue: 'A Man is but a mould of his native landscape' and 'roots in two different lands'

A MAN IS BUT

By Shaul Tchernichovsky

... A man is but a piece of land
A man is but a mould
Of his native landscape ...

(Translation from Hebrew, cited in Helphand 2002: 7)

PINE

By Lea Goldberg

Here I cannot hear the voice of the cuckoo.
Here the tree will never wear a cape of snow.
But it is here in the shade of these pines
my entire childhood comes alive.

The chime of the needles: Once upon a time—
 I called the snow-space homeland,
 and the green ice that enchains the stream,
 and the poem's tongue in a foreign land.
 Perhaps only migrating birds know—
 suspended as they are between earth and sky—
 this heartache of two homelands.
 With you, I was transplanted twice;
 with you, pine trees, I grew,
 my roots in two different lands.

(Translation by Rachel Tzvia Back 2005: 91)

These two poems epitomise the dilemma of identity and landscape:

Shaul Tchernichovsky (1875–1943), was a Russian-born Hebrew poet who, after arriving in Palestine, his 'home' and emotional Jewish ancestral land, reverberates his longing for the native landscape of Ukraine he has left behind.

PINE, by Lithuanian-born Hebrew poet Lea Goldberg (1911–70) who, like Tchernichovsky, shared the Zionist passion for a homeland, mirrors the migrant's split landscape identity even when migration is a choice and a fulfilment of a dream. In *PINE*, however, Goldberg captures the potent role of landscape to help ground one in two disparate landscapes.

The four images are from Project *PhotoAzazmeh*, courtesy of Ilan Molcho and the young photographers.

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