

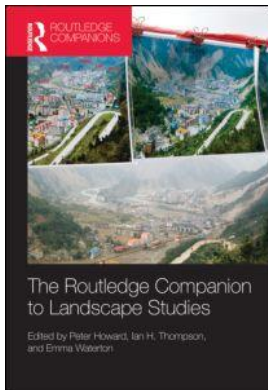
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Perceptual lenses

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The same landscape can mean different things to different people, and a great deal of research into landscape is concerned with description, analysis and explanation of these differences. Meinig (1979) described ten versions of the same scene, through the eyes of different professions, but there are many more than ten versions, and profession is not the only factor in the differences. This chapter attempts to set out a framework for such studies of landscape perception and preference, and uses as a metaphor those types of spectacles used by opticians into which a variety of lenses can be inserted, when carrying out an eye inspection. The metaphor has its limitations; the intention of ‘correcting’ the vision implicit in the eye examination cannot be applied where the intention is merely to explain a preference. Also, some may see an implied presumption that landscape is only a visual phenomenon, whereas modern landscape research, and indeed landscape practice, is quite clear that landscapes are also apprehended through sound, smell, touch and even taste, a truth which will come as no surprise to landscape poets and novelists. Despite these faults, the metaphor remains a useful classification of much landscape research, also allowing the possibility (equivalent to the naked eye) for the work that presumes there to be some degree of perception and preference that is common to all humans – some universally accepted notions of landscape quality.

This division of landscape perception studies owes something to the work of Bourassa (1991), who divided the field into three parts: studies that considered the universality of landscape ideas; those that considered factors common to large groups, most obviously national differences; and those that were very personal. In a landscape architect this latter could be part of the artistic style of a practitioner. Here the final section is omitted, largely on the grounds that many of these personal factors are the result of a particular combination of more widely applicable lenses, that together result in a prescription for an individual. Although the work by Appleton (1994) examining the way in which his own landscape preferences were moulded by his particular childhood and experience is intensely personal, nevertheless age and experience are influential factors for all.

The naked eye – universal preference factors

Studies attempting to explain landscape preference at a universal level go back at least to the eighteenth century, with the work of Burke (1970 [1759]) merely being the best known of

many hypotheses in the Age of Reason. Such theories make an interesting study of themselves, and Appleton's earlier work summarizes many of these, at least those of western origin (Appleton 1975). His own theoretical ideas put forward in *The Experience of Landscape*, which have been refined in several publications since, stand as an attempt to focus attention on human reaction to the landscape being, at least in part, biologically determined by the need for suitable habitat for the human animal.

This work was mirrored from a different disciplinary perspective by Rachel and Steven Kaplan (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989) in the 1980s and 1990s following extensive empirical data with groups of students within the (then emerging) discipline of Environmental Psychology. Their work has since followed the ideas of Attention Restoration Theory in demonstrating the significance in overcoming stress. However, a great deal of Environmental Psychology work has been concerned with urban environments, place attachment and place identity, and is reported in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. A line of research and theory which to an extent lies parallel with that of Appleton comes from Environmental Biology and especially the Savannah theory of Gordian Orians (1986). This opines that preferred landscapes may derive in part from human pre-historic evolution in the savannah landscapes of Africa.

Whatever the findings relating to universal preferences, however, there are many more research lines which have investigated one or other of the 'lenses' that will differentiate one group's landscape preference from another's. While in this chapter these 'lenses' are assumed to be distinct and discrete, this may not hold in reality, as so many of the lenses are related to each other. Culture, social status, profession, life experience and education are here discussed separately, but they are unlikely to be so easily unravelled in reality.

Nationality

The lens of nationality may be the most obvious, and has certainly attracted academic attention for many years. Lowenthal and Prince (1965) published two influential articles in the *Geographical Review* during the 1960s which described some presumed preferences of English people's landscape tastes, noting the preference for deciduous over conifers, for the façade, for camouflage. Both they and many writers since, most obviously Matless (1998), have been careful to distinguish between English landscape preferences and those of other countries of the United Kingdom and Ireland; landscape appears to be one of the most clear distinguishing features of Englishness, a concept recorded by Bishop (1995).

Since Benedict Anderson (1983) and others redefined the concept of nationality in the 1980s, describing national identity as an 'imagined community', there has been much research which shows how landscape forms an integral feature of that imagination in many countries, including the well-known work by Schama (1995), though it remains in doubt whether this is a universal trait. For example, Terkenli (2011) writes about the lack of a landscape conscience in Greece, despite that country's remarkable and often distinctive landscapes. The opposite pole of 'landscape caring' may be represented by Germany. The deep concern especially for local places, known as 'heimat', may have given rise to a national identification with certain kinds of landscape especially during the 1930s (Groening and Wolschke-Bulmahn 1992), though the depth of this obsession has recently been questioned (Uekotter 2007).

The description of national preferences in landscape has frequently been undertaken by the content analysis of a whole variety of material, literary and graphic, and even musical. Bowring (2002) has investigated the telephone directories of New Zealand to tease out the nation's landscape oriented ideas. Brace (1999; see also Matless 1998) has focussed on the Cotswolds within English identity, making use of the outpouring of a wealth of guidebooks and travel

literature, most notably in the 1930s. The current author has analyzed landscape paintings to demonstrate a national preference for both landscape types and for specific locales (Howard 1991). While the value of content analysis has been clearly demonstrated in unearthing preferences among nations and among regional and other groups, there is still a vast amount of research needed to complete a picture, both many more countries and other kinds of symbolic feature. National anthems and symbols, paintings and print collections, tourist guide-books, poetry and novels, advertising and promotional material all demonstrate differences that can point to national, and regional, tastes. In some cases this can show that many nations have 'golden landscapes' much as some have 'golden ages' in their history. Crang (1999) suggests that Dalarna fulfils this role in Sweden, and Häyrynen (2004) selects Häme in Finland, though also see Harvey (Chapter 13 this volume).

In some countries, and most particularly the United States, nature has been given a central role in the development of national identity, and this has been given close attention both by Olwig (2002), and Lowenthal (2003), and described historically by Worster (1994).

Direct comparison between adjoining countries and their views of landscape is an area still awaiting serious attention. Fall (2005) has looked at different attitudes each side of the Franco-German frontier in the Vosges/Pfälzerwald, but the differences of management that are there discussed only marginally relate to landscape preference. Examples of such different management techniques across many European countries have been documented by Scazzosi (undated) in a multi-volume publication, but again landscape attitudes are only tangential. The opportunities for such work are immense.

Culture and religion

Although the distinction between a national lens and one that represents a particular set of cultural values may, on occasion, be difficult to define, it is nonetheless a useful distinction to make as some cultural values are spread across many more than a single nationality. For example, recent work by Li et al. (2010) offers a particularly clear example of how an aesthetic tradition in one civilization has influenced landscape perception in China. Likewise, the application of the World Heritage Convention to cultural landscapes has highlighted the significant differences between European attitudes to landscape, at least to their historic value, and those prevalent in east Asia (where again there are many variations). Taylor (2009) in particular shows the ways in which peoples of Southeast Asia value their historic landscapes compared with the international western standard, and Yu (1995) has used the influx of western experts, including landscape architects, into China to study these differences.

There have been surprisingly few studies of religion, or broader belief systems, as a factor influencing landscape perceptions. Thomas (1984), from a cultural historical position, highlighted the impact of changing religious beliefs and sensibilities on attitudes towards nature, including landscape, but this has not been followed by a wide range of detailed investigation. Sinha (1995) has focussed attention on the problem of religious heritage sites in India and the variety of perceptions thrown up by this process, and some attitudes more directly related to religious and ethnic differences also emerge in her later edited work (Sinha and Ruggles 2004).

Some work does suggest that there may be less variation in perception between different ethnic groups when other factors are discounted. Two recent research projects concerning different ethnic groups' attitudes to built heritage, one by black and multi-ethnic groups in Gloucester (Shore 2007) and one by the various Surinamese groups in Paramaribo (van Maanen, 2011), have both concluded that the variation in such perceptions is limited.

Nevertheless the ethnic lens can be significant in certain situations as has been demonstrated by Purcell et al. (1994) and Armstrong (2004) in Australia, the latter concentrating on the process of migration itself, and by Harrison and Burgess (1994) and Tolia-Kelly (2004) in the UK.

Language as a cultural element has been shown to be a significant issue even among the European languages as they debated the European Landscape Convention, but the concept of landscape is inevitably coloured by linguistics. Again there have been surprisingly few detailed studies on this issue, but Gehring and Kohsaka (2007) consider the variety of words in Japanese, *fukei* and *keikan*, and the flexure these impose on the concept.

Social status

In 1937 was published a collection of essays, largely from authors politically left of centre, entitled *Britain and the Beast* (Williams-Ellis, 1937). In one of these essays, entitled 'The People's Claim', the Fabian philosopher C.E.M. Joad wrote:

... the people's claim upon the English countryside is paramount, ... [but]the people are not as yet ready to take up their claim without destroying that to which the claim is laid ... [therefore it] must be kept inviolate as a trust until such time as they *are* ready.

(Williams-Ellis, 1937, p. 64)

The eponymous Beast was the British public, who could not be trusted to protect the landscape. This forms a neat introduction to that most studied lens, that of 'class' or social status. There is nothing new about class being a fundamental lens in regarding the landscape as well as building it. Oliver Creighton (2009) shows how class was fundamental in the making of the landscape of the Middle Ages, as does Liddiard (2005). Later landscapes were made for the sports of the wealthy, and Dennis Cosgrove demonstrates in *The Palladian Landscape* how the Venetian terra firma was made almost as stage in which the oligarchs could perform (Cosgrove 1993).

Cosgrove (1984) also set the scene for the recent interest in the relationship of landscape to theories of cultural capital (from Bourdieu), hegemony and dominant ideology in his work *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. While working with Daniels in *The Iconography of Landscape* (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988), these ideas were applied to the landscape in its graphic and pictorial form. They were far from alone and further explorations of the role of social position in landscape were expounded by the archaeologist Barbara Bender (1998), the art historian W.J.T. Mitchell (1994), and the geographer W.J. Darby (2000), concentrating on the particular meanings of the landscapes of the Lake District to its many visitors. Broadly this is certainly an area that is fully theorized, and the variety of social differences and conflicts that arise have been shown to exist in many places and at many times, though there are many gaps in the detailed map of such conflictual and competitive landscapes. Research that demonstrates that no such dissonance existed would indeed be novel.

However, there are some specific areas and ideas that add colour to the broad understanding of 'landscape as class battleground', with all the implications for perception involved. Deusen (2002) has analyzed the construction of an American public square as a space for class warfare, which inevitably colours the perception of those involved, a theme taken up also by Nasar and Jones (1997). Setten (2004), from a Scandinavian perspective, has looked at the competition between different social groups for the moral high ground with respect to the conservation and management of landscape. It is therefore now impossible rationally to argue that landscape,

however rural, is innocent of class prejudice and social competition. Yet, as we were reminded by Inglis (1987) many years ago, the countryside has still clung on to a perceived bucolic simplicity and innocence, especially in the minds of many urbanites, and this perception is reinforced regularly on the television screen.

Rurality

Whether rural people perceive rural landscapes differently from urbanites, and conversely for townscapes, has not been much examined, although there may be a problem in distinguishing such a 'lens' from that of 'insideness' or profession (but see Arnberger and Eder 2011 for a discussion of these differences in Austria). A great deal of work on rural landscape preferences tends to equate rural dwellers with farmers, but Milburn et al. (2010) have examined attachment to land of non-farm rural landowners, and a Dutch group have studied the acquisition of rural identity (Haartsen et al. 2000). As this new rural group now wields very considerable power in landscape management and planning, considerably more research is required.

Gender

Despite the major work by Massey (1994), a recent editorial was able to state 'the study of landscape, as it relates to gender, has been somewhat ignored' (Dowler et al., 2005). Although in western culture the earth, nature and landscape were for so long regarded as female, notably by Burke and other eighteenth-century writers, there remains little direct research on differences in the perception between the genders. Of course, the presumed femininity of the earth may not create different perceptions. Bondi (1992) has looked at gender in the urban landscape and Strumse (1996) has recently looked at wider demographic perception differences in Norway. The perception of dangers in woodland, especially urban woodland and parkland, by women, has received some attention by practical landscape architects, and more academically by Burgess (1998). From a more anthropological perspective, the significance of women sharing in the making of a landscape and nation was the theme of Alon-Mozes (2007). There is clearly work to be done, with landscape preferences as displayed by men and women garden designers perhaps an obvious topic, especially given the substantial numbers of significant women designers, something that is less obvious, historically, in painting for example, but also in many other types of landscape.

Age and experience

Following his ideas concerning universal perceptions of landscape, Appleton (1994) went on to attempt an analysis of those attributes of his own landscape preferences that could be attributed to his life experience, at a very personal level. This draws attention to the questions of age (including physical size) and experience, difficult though it is to separate this lens from that of professional expertise.

Children's place perceptions have had considerable attention, especially in play areas specifically designed for them (see Jansson 2010; Malone 2002). Some years ago Tuan (1978) devoted some attention to this, closely followed by both Ward (1978) (with an urban interest) and Hart (1979). Simkins and Thwaites (2008) looked at the experience of primary school-age children, whereas Tunstall et al. (2004) used the technique of children's photographs to look at their perceptions of river landscape, a technique also deployed by Aitken and Wingate (1993).

Both Tuan (1977) and Dearden (1984) demonstrated how past landscape experience, especially of travel, present environment and recreational activities, together with familiarity all have an influence on landscape preferences. So much may now be taken for granted, but there has been a great deal of work more recently on the role of landscape in matters of health. While much of this work on the health-giving benefits of landscape may not directly impact perceptions of landscape (see Lau and Yang 2009). Ottoson and Grahn (2008) make it clear that traumatic experiences do affect responses to nature. (See also Nordh et al., Chapter 26)

Insiderness

The lens that is today a major factor of research and of academic concern is that of 'insiderness', the degree to which a respondent is part of the community which regard the landscape as 'their place'. The urgency of this research, and indeed the controversy that it generates, is due in part to the legal requirement for participation enshrined in the European Landscape Convention. This can very easily lead to a conflict between the views of experts and the very different perceptions of 'insiders'. In general, of course, this refers to local people, the longer term residents being more 'insider'. But there are many other insiders too, members of organizations for example, but these may be covered by the lens of profession or activity. The most seminal work in this field must be Relph (1976), who delineated several categories of 'insiderness' though it has been the local insider who has taken centre stage, to the extent that localism has now become a major political dogma.

Work by the Sellgrens (Sellgren and Sellgren, 1990) in the wake of the devastating hurricane of 1989 across south-east England demonstrated how different were the views of professional foresters and landscape specialists from those of local people, who largely thought the disappearance of trees was to be welcomed, opening up the views. The importance of the small NGO Common Ground in this move to the local with their campaigns for parish maps, orchards and for defending local preferences has been recognized by Crouch and Matless (1996). A similar move in the cities was recognized, with D. Mitchell's (2001) article underlining the significance. More recently, there has been a steady stream of research examining the attitudes of local people in particular circumstances. Studies of the English national forest (Cloke et al. 2003), of rural character in New England (Ryan 2006), of archaeological landscapes in Devon (Riley and Harvey, 2005) and of forests in Vermont (O'Brien 2006) are examples. Perhaps the most fruitful research, which overlaps very clearly with issues of participation, has come from anthropologists using techniques of participant observation. Krauss is a good example of this, using such techniques to examine the fierce debate about the future of the Wattenmeer in Schleswig, and also the Portuguese context (Krauss 2006, 2010 and this volume, Chapter 6). This is a firm reminder that most people have more than one set of preferences, depending on what part they are playing at the time.

Profession

The professional lens is clearly related to the educational, but professions also often have a distinctive way of seeing of their own, as well as a lens common to all experts. The latter is particularly apparent in participation exercises with the general public. Among the former specific studies, there is work on architects, by Pennartz and Elsinga (1990), on foresters by Bradley and Kearne (2007), and on farmers, by Primdahl et al. (2010) and Setten (2005). Perhaps the major work of Andrews (1989) might also be put into this category, as an insight into the

particular preferences of artists. Doubtless this list is not complete, but it suggests there are many professional users of the landscape where an investigation into their perceptions might be rewarding. One obvious case is the infantryman, another is the meteorologist, where the evanescence of landscape will be more significant than usual.

At the other level – the clash between experts and locals – Syse (2010) has looked at debates in Argyll concerning power generation and transmission, and the work of Krauss (2010) is clearly relevant in this context, but this is another field where there is much to be done.

The level of education can best be regarded as a subsidiary lens within the broad remit of ‘profession’, but certainly there has been some work that looks at the variations between those with different styles of education. Carlson’s (1995) work showed a significantly different appreciation of certain aspects of nature with those who had greater aesthetic knowledge, and Thompson and Barton (1994) looked at the difference between eco-centric and anthropo-centric attitudes.

Activity

The aesthetic view of landscape might have seen that the making of pictures, whether in paint or photography, would be the pre-eminent activity in deciding on landscape values, and certainly there has been much work within art history examining artists preferred places (Andrews 1989; Howard 1991). However, the work of Urry (1990) demonstrating that tourists have a perception different to others has been followed by a continuous thread of interest in particular activities and their ways of perceiving places, including visitors (De Lucio and Mugica 1994). The most direct example is research by Jakobsson (2009) into the experience of walking, and more strenuous walking is also critical to the research of Eiter (2010). Walkers also take a prominent role, along with mushroom-pickers and beekeepers, in the work by Surova and Pinto-Correira (2008) in Portugal.

Medium

However important the other senses (see Scott et al., 2009), there is no doubt that in landscape perception research, if not in landscape perception, the visual is paramount. Lowenthal (2007) reminds us that looking itself is an activity. Looking, however, is usually conducted to some end. There is often a product; sometimes this has no more concrete form than as a memory (and perhaps some landscapes are more memorable than others, irrespective of their significance at the time of looking). At other times, the ‘look’ is committed to a tangible product, usually a picture but perhaps a sound recording. In the former case there is no doubt that the medium greatly influences the message, that different media concentrate on different landscapes, water-colourists on water for example (Howard 1991).

Conclusion

There may be factors which are common to all human beings as they perceive places, but there are certainly also many factors that create differences between us. This chapter has made no claim to provide a filing space for every item of research into landscape perception. There may be many more lenses than are here discussed, and the lenses may operate together rather than singly. Clearly there are some lenses which are well-researched and others where new work is sorely needed. Perhaps here is merely offered, in the words of Winnie-the-Pooh, ‘a useful box to put things in’.

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