

Olwig, K. R., Dalglish, C., Fairclough, G., and Herring, P. (2016) Introduction to a special issue: the future of landscape characterisation, and the future of landscape – between space, time, history, place and nature. *Landscape Research*, 41(2), pp. 169-174.

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Landscape Research* on 15 February 2016, available online:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/01426397.2015.1135321>

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/117288/>

Deposited on: 28 April 2016

Introduction to a Special Issue: The future of landscape characterisation, and the future character of landscape – Between Space, Time, History, Place and Nature

Kenneth R. Olwig, Chris Dalglish, Graham Fairclough and Peter Herring, editors

In any discussion of landscape characterisation the elephant in the room is the question of just what is landscape? Another way of putting this question is to simply ask: 'How would you characterise landscape?' What this implies is that there is a certain circularity in landscape characterisation because, through the very act of characterising landscape, one is also defining what one means by landscape. *The European Landscape Convention's* (ELC) definition of landscape as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (Europe, 2000: Article 1 – Definitions, p. 3) suggests a similar circularity because the character of an area, as it results from the action of natural and/or human factors, is dependent upon human perception, which is presumably also, in addition, one of the human factors acting upon the landscape. This circularity, or 'circulating reference,' to use Bruno Latour's term, is fundamental to Denis Cosgrove's analysis of the origin of the modern concept of landscape as scenic space, and his analysis, we would suggest, helps explain some of the questions raised in this special issue concerning landscape characterisation and the future character of landscape (Cosgrove, 1984, Latour, 1999, on Latour and landscape see also Olwig, 2004).

According to Cosgrove the modern idea of landscape as spatial scenery originated in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment with the re-discovery of Ptolemy's cartography. Using the example of the Venetian *Domini di Terraferma*, he showed how there was a connection between the use of Ptolemaic science in surveying and cartography to enclose the common lands of the *Terraferma* and the reconfiguration of these same spatial techniques in order to create perspectival scenic representations of the land thus enclosed – thereby inventing perspectival pictorial representation. This spatial and pictorial mode of representation, in turn, facilitated the architectural reshaping of the land, as envisioned in these scenic representations through designing, planning, and the scientifically based engineering and transformation of the infrastructure of the land. A key figure in this process was the Italian architect Andreas Palladio, but it was in Britain, under the tutelage of polymaths like Inigo Jones, that this perception of landscape flourished, not only as an architectural style, but also as a 'natural' landscape architectural ideal. This landscape ideal proliferated in tandem with enclosure and an agricultural/industrial revolution that transformed the country at the same time as it increasingly polarised the land into spaces dominated by wild nature or by culture; by the country or by the city (Williams, 1973, Smith, 1984). The scenic idea of landscape, along with inspiration from the British agricultural and industrial revolutions, subsequently spread from Britain to the rest of Europe, together with the iconic English landscape garden, as symbols of modernity (Barrell, 1972, Cosgrove, 1993, Daniels, 1993, Olwig, 2002).

Scenic perspectival representation revolutionised perception both literally, in terms of the way the world was physically perceived, and in the more figurative socio-cultural sense of perception. It thus created a new way of conceptualising and thinking about landscape that was based on the *point-of-view* of an individual rather than on the experience of a local community of people sharing the land. The world thus became something to be represented and perceived by an individual person surveying it from a distance as landscape scenery (Daniels, 1989). It was this individual viewer who possessed or 'commanded' the scene, either metaphorically or, as was often the case, concretely as the owner of the enclosed and privatised land that the painter, or poet, was often commissioned to depict (Barrell, 1987). This was thus very much an expert and top-down driven, fundamentally elitist, perception, conception and transformation of

landscape, beginning with the mathematicians, scientists and cartographers who mapped and enclosed the land, continuing with the artists who used these techniques to represent landscape perspectives, and concluding with the architects, designers and engineers who transformed the land in the image of landscape scenery. As an expression of Western civilisation, art and culture, this must be a valuable heritage, worth learning to comprehend and appreciate, but one can question whether this is a culture that is shared by everyone. And what is the effect when other perceptions, conceptions, ideologies, aspirations and practices of landscape enter into the arena?

The articles in this special issue explicitly or implicitly take their point of departure largely in the heritage of landscape perception and engagement that historically emanated from Britain, in particular as it developed in the course of the 20th century in the context of increasingly sophisticated methods of representing landscape character for use in landscape planning. These methods often became tightly intertwined as well with a nostalgic concept of 'countryside' protection that was prevalent in highly urbanised Britain from the early 20th century, and were subsequently spread to continental Europe due in important measure to the role of landscape character and landscape characterisation in the *ELC*. This diffusion of the methods carried with it the circularity between landscape character and perception mentioned above. A particular issue with this circularity is the problem that cartographic and perspectival representation, by which place is reconfigured as Euclidean space, is characterised by a fixed and timeless perception of landscape – as fixed and timeless as Euclidean space itself. This perception leads to a weakness within some landscape characterisation methods with regard to the mechanics of time and change, and the character of change itself. An unfortunate tendency for a landscape character assessment defined by these methods is that landscape thereafter comes to be seen as being literally and symbolically *essential*, and thus as something to be protected, ipso facto, from further change, or even to be “restored” to a supposed earlier state, for example as wild nature. This tendency to freeze landscape is paradoxical because the landscape is itself the product of long-term complex patterns of change, and the purpose of landscape characterisation is to frame planning and policy action.

The Special Issue of Landscape Characterisation

The genesis of this special issue partly lies in the felt need of a number of university based scholars and scholarly professionals to reconsider the future of landscape characterisation in the light of changing ideas of landscape, especially under the democratising influence of the *ELC* and the future character of landscape that the Convention might bring about. The issues that these scholars confronted basically concerned the question of how landscape is defined in relation to space, time, history, place and nature – and (because the techniques of landscape characterisation were designed to drive practical decision-making processes in fields such as spatial planning, development control and 'countryside' management) future human lives. The articles are the product of an intensive process of gestation focused on a public seminar held at The Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry in Stockholm in March 2014, sponsored by the Landscape Research Group, The Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry, The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning, and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

Landscape Characterisation and the Question of Time, Nature and History

The issue begins with an article by Ingrid Sarlöv-Herlin, a Swedish landscape architect, based at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Sarlöv-Herlin introduces here the history of landscape characterisation in its English context. In her contribution, 'Exploring the national context that shaped the Landscape Character Assessment method' Sarlöv-Herlin focuses on the *Landscape Character Assessment* method (LCA) that pioneered a cartographically and visually based method of assessment which initially focused upon landscape as spatial scenery. This method grew in part largely out of the aesthetic, design, planning and infrastructural concerns of landscape architecture, and in part out of the traditional concern of landscape geography with landscape as a scenic, geographical structure grounded in geology, geomorphology and climatology, and with the cultural landscape layered above the physical landscape (Sauer, 1925).

A problem with the traditional scenic approach to landscape that has been recognised for some time, is the question of how to encompass time. The map and the perspectival representation of landscape, as noted, freezes landscape at a particular moment in time, and it is difficult to extrapolate the process of temporal change from such 'stills,' even when arranged in a series (Darby, 1962), which in any case dodges big questions of survival and legibility (*sensu lato*). This issue, among others, is addressed in the two following articles in this issue. 'Lens, mirror, window: interactions between Historic Landscape Characterisation and Landscape Character Assessment,' is by British archaeologists Graham Fairclough and Peter Herring who, while working, respectively, in English Heritage, England's governmental agency for the preservation of heritage, and Cornwall County Council's historic environment department, collaborated with many others on creating *Historical Landscape Characterisation* (HLC). This is a method that sought to broaden LCA's focus on the visual, the spatial and the rural by incorporating historical change into landscape characterisation, while maintaining and enhancing, at a potentially more local level, LCA's practical applicability for planning. Such issues also form a starting point for the next paper, 'Integrated landscape management and the complicating issue of temporality,' by the Swedish geographer Marie Stenseke. Inspired by the 'time geography' of the Swedish geographer Torsten Hägerstrand, Stenseke approaches the question of time from the perspective of the geographical tradition of landscape geography, which, as noted, has historically sought to incorporate nature into its scenic model of landscape. Examining a number of case studies from France, Sweden and Britain, Stenseke is particularly concerned with the problem of how characteristic nature areas are spatially bounded in landscape planning in a situation in which the relationship between nature and society and relationships within society are evolving.

Enclosed Private Spaces versus Common Places?

As noted earlier, the spatial idea of landscape as scenic space, had a vital origin in the Renaissance Venetian use of cartography both to map and enclose the land as property, and to represent it, through a change in projection, in perspectival space (Cosgrove, 1984). This was thus an expert driven approach to landscape that created what has come to be taken for granted as a world spatially divided into bounded, privately or publicly owned properties whose owners have a legal stake in this landscape and its character, not the least its visual scenic character as 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984). This spatially structured scenic landscape, however, as John Barrell has shown (Barrell, 1972), may clash with the community and place centred landscape values identified with the common lands of the unenclosed landscape that preceded enclosure. These values still survive in the form of social and legal practices of community governance, identity and even as working commons (Cosgrove, 2006; Olwig, this issue). Walls and hedges that prior to enclosure had served a practical functional role in agriculture now could become property

boundaries demarcating a space that excluded the commoners from lands, and their material resources that once were shared in common. When the materiality of landscape, and the social cooperation and work involved in its creation/maintenance, is reduced to spatial scenery, the effect can be profoundly alienating (Barrell, 1972; Olwig, 2005). The *ELC* calls for states to introduce landscape in the law 'as an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity' (Council of Europe, 2000: article 5a, p. 3), but what if the people of a community do not share or identify with the expert driven scenic landscape ideal inherited from the Renaissance? This is an issue taken up in the article 'A question of what matters: landscape characterisation as a process of situated, problem-orientated public discourse,' by Chris Dalglish and Alan Leslie, two archaeologists at, respectively, the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow-based educational charity Northlight Heritage, who focus on the preservation and revitalisation of urban landscape heritage.

The *ELC* mandates that the landscape be regarded as 'an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas' (Europe, 2000: preamble, p. 2). Dalglish and Leslie take their point of departure in an 'everyday' area of Glasgow whose landscape might well be regarded by traditionally-minded landscape arbiters as 'degraded,' to use the well-meaning but nonetheless problematic language of the Convention. This, however, is an area that many residents value in many ways as being of importance to their quality of life. Dalglish and Leslie are concerned, in this context, with the question of time, or more specifically history, in the constitution of the residents' sense of place identity. In this context they point to the role that the landscape has played as an historic 'thing' (or moot) assembly site and common/market, where representative assemblies were held in past times, in the process providing a focus for present day community identity building. In this way the original, 'non-modern' idea of landscape as place and polity is reasserting itself.¹ At the same time expert archaeologists, with knowledge of 'modern' landscape informed by cartography and perspectival forms of representation, also play an important role in the discourse concerning 'things that matter' that takes place at the contemporary local assemblies. Such a mixture of local place-centred discourses and the expert discourse of, in this case, the archaeologists is important because planning decisions must have meaning to the local populace, and they must also be communicable within regional and national planning contexts. Dalglish and Leslie's central argument is that the process of landscape characterisation has the potential to play a crucial role in efforts to achieve more just and sustainable landscapes. However, for that potential to be realised, characterisation must grow into a process of situated, problem-orientated public discourse involving but not simply determined by disciplinary experts.

Jørgen Primdahl and Lone S. Kristensen, Danish landscape planners from the University of Copenhagen, tackle many of the same issues as Dalglish and Leslie, but in a rural context, in their article: 'Landscape strategy making and Landscape Characterisation: Experiences from Danish experimental planning processes.' Primdahl and Kristensen incorporate a Danish version of LCA in working with the residents of an 'everyday' Danish rural area that has undergone a transformation from being a primarily agrarian community to being a new rural society combining the original agrarian population with a growing bedroom community of people working in nearby urban areas. Denmark has a long tradition of public local assemblies which can be traced back to the pre-enclosure

landscape, where farmers met in village 'thing' or 'moot' assemblies to plan the use of their common fields. Primdahl and Kristensen draw on this tradition in developing an experimental planning process that effectively incorporates both local residents and municipal planners in a common working discourse about things that matter. In this way they are able to bridge the gap between the individual landscape manager and the local community as well as between a modern population for whom the landscape is primarily an aesthetic and recreational space, and a more traditional rural population for whom the landscape is a place of productive activity with a long history of community building and landscape-shaping.

Landscape Values

In 'Dynamics of Integrating Landscape Values in Landscape Character Assessment; the Hidden Dominance of the Objective Outsider' Andrew Butler, an English landscape architect based at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, confronts many of the same issues broached by Dalglish and Leslie and by Primdahl and Kristensen, but within the context of the hidden values embedded in planning practice. Butler focuses on more overarching questions concerning the values held by, on the one hand, the people who live within an area and whose activities shape the area, and, on the other hand, the outside experts whose presumed 'objective' judgements predominate the planning process. He gives an overview of relevant literature on values in landscape, ranging from the text of the ELC to the writings of philosophers while, at the same time, making use of concrete examples to show how the values that dominate landscape planning tend to be those that can be deemed 'objective.' This analysis thus also brings us back to the issues raised by Cosgrove in his analysis of the way in which the modern idea of landscape was originally shaped by expert cartographers, scientists, graphic artists and engineers. There is a certain logic to the fact that the professional descendants of these experts, who originally imposed their cartographic structures and designs upon the land – thereby creating the character of the modern landscape and paving the way for dominant contemporary perceptions of landscape as scenery – should also be those who today use similar methods to evaluate the character of that landscape.

The final article, 'Virtual Enclosure, Ecosystem Services, Landscape's Character and the "Rewilding" of the Commons: The "Lake District" Case,' by the American-Danish geographer, Kenneth R. Olwig, who is based at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, takes up issues of value similar to those raised by Butler. He does this through an analysis of an area in England with large expanses of un-enclosed commons, and a rural economy dependent upon community cooperation. This is an area that contravenes many of the presuppositions tied to the modern idea of landscape that emerged with spatial enclosure and the rise of the idea of landscape as scenic space. The article examines specifically, in this context, the naturalist driven call by NGO's and GO's to 'rewild' areas that have been under pasture since time out of mind by removing grazing animals, and perhaps even replacing them with predators like wolves, and replacing the pastoral landscape with trees and scrub. This is a form of 'rewilding' that differs from the "rewilding" of abandoned urban areas to forms of use that preceded modern urban settlement, for example by restoring urban river meadows, and restoring grazing to those meadows. The article is concerned with the way that landscape planning in places characterised by commons and commoners tends to lead to a form of virtual enclosure deemed to be necessary in order to make the area conform to 'modern' ideas of landscape as a spatial phenomenon that can be enclosed according to uniformly characterisable properties as, in this case, the presence of wild nature.

Conclusion

There can be seen to be a certain circularity to landscape characterisation because the very act of characterisation also has a tendency to define what it is one means by landscape. This means that characterisation does not necessarily look 'outside the box' of the character that it has predefined, for example as a form of enclosed spatial scenery as represented, perceived and shaped by experts past and present. The practical manifestation of this problem, as the authors in this special issue show, is that this kind of landscape characterisation can have difficulty capturing both the fluid and changing realm of the natural world as it interacts with human cultures, and the lived common sense of place that communities develop to areas over time and through history. The call for landscape characterisation, as by the *ELC*, to reflect such place identity, and democratic processes, has inspired a re-examination of the democratic heritage of landscape. This exploration has led, as can be seen in this collection, to new ways of compensating for the difficulties that the traditional characterisation of landscape as scenery has met in dealing with time, history, nature and place.

Footnotes

¹ 'Non-modern' is used by Latour as a means of avoiding modernism's linear, teleological, categorisation of history as proceeding inexorably from the pre-modern to the modern (Latour, 1993, on Latour and landscape see also Olwig, 2013).

References

- Barrell, J. (1972). *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barrell, J. (1987). The Public Prospect and the Private View: The Politics of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain. In J. C. Eade (Ed.), *Projecting Landscape* (pp. 15-35). Canberra, Australia: Humanities Research Centre Australian National University.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Cosgrove, D. (1984). *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. London: Croom Helm.
- (1993). *The Palladian Landscape: Geographical Change and Its Cultural Representations in Sixteenth-Century Italy*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- (2006). "Modernity, Community and the Landscape Idea." *Journal of Material Culture* **11**: 49-66.
- Daniels, S. (1989). Marxism, Culture and the Duplicity of Landscape. In R. Peet and N. Thrift. (Eds.) *New Models in Geography*, vol II (pp.196-220). London: Unwin and Hyman.
- Daniels, S. (1993). *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Darby, H. C. (1962). "The Problem of Geographical Description." *Transactions and Papers, publ. 30, The Institute of British Geographers* **30**: 1-14.
- Europe, Council of (2000). *European Landscape Convention*, Florence. CETS No. 176. Strasbourg, Council of Europe.
- Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never been Modern*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- (1999). *Pandora's Hope Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.
- Olwig, K. R. (2002). *Landscape, Nature and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- (2004). "This is not a Landscape": Circulating Reference and Land Shaping. In H. Sooväli, H. Palang, M. Antrop, G. Setten (Eds.), *European rural landscapes: persistence and change in a globalising environment* (pp. 41-66). Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- (2005). "Representation and Alienation in the Political Land-scape." *Cultural Geographies* **12** (1): 19-40.

- (2013). "Heidegger, Latour and the reification of things: the inversion and spatial enclosure of the substantive landscape of things – the Lake District case." *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* **95**(3): 1-23.
- Sauer, C. O. (1925). "The Morphology of Landscape." *University of California Publications in Geography* **2**(2): 19-53.
- Smith, N. (1984). *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Williams, R. (1973). *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press.