

## **Landscape: A Geographical Review**

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### **ABSTRACT**

There is always a confusion in using the terms landscape/land use/ land cover. People use these terms interchangeably instead of knowing its real meaning. Of these it is true that the word 'landscape' is as much inter disciplinary as it can. Besides geography it extends its presence in literature, plant and animal sciences, anthropology, photography, architecture, theatre, gardening and of course all spheres of life. In each discipline the word distinguishes its unique meaning and occupies its unique space. As the term is inter-disciplinary in all its aspects, its evolution, perception, definition, characteristics, types, approaches used, problems and conservation measures differs in chronology.

**Key Words :** Landscape, Evolution of the concept of landscape, Perception of landscape

### **INTRODUCTION**

The word landscape has complex and multiple meanings according to the perception and background of the users. Also, the meaning of the term changes with changing environmental conditions. Historical geographer Muir (1999) states landscape history and landscape heritage, the practice of landscape history, the structure and scenery approach, landscapes of the mind, landscape, politics and power, the evaluation of landscape, the symbolic landscape, the aesthetic approach, landscape and place. Technological development and the means used to meet the needs of expanding urban populations have multiplied the effect of man on the landscape today (Daifuku, 1977).

Landscape does not only refer to a complex phenomenon that can be described and analysed using objective scientific methods; it also refers to a subjective observation and experience and thus has a perceptive, aesthetical, artistic and existential meaning as well (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988). Consequently, the perceived landscape is immediately analysed by the observer, compared and evaluated with his/her knowledge and previous experiences. Landscape was also used to refer to an organized, managed or even administrative

territory as expressed by the French concept 'pays', the German 'Landschaft' and the Dutch 'landschap'. Finally, the term landscape is also used as a metaphor, such as in media landscape or political landscape.

Since the Renaissance period, different ways of dealing with the landscape have developed, each with its own perspective, concepts and methods. Three groups can be recognized: the natural sciences (where landscape ecology has a leading role), the human sciences (with historical geography and historical ecology, but also the humanistic and semiotic approach to landscape), and the applied sciences (with landscape design and architecture and planning). Common concepts, goals and language are not evident and it is not obvious how to make a new synthesis under the umbrella of a transdisciplinary landscape science. However, when it comes to management and planning all are dealing with the same land; a synthesis is needed and transdisciplinary cooperation is unavoidable (Antrop, 2000).

### **Evolution of the concept:**

Early landscape descriptions dealt with the geographical characteristics of foreign regions or countries. With the renaissance period in the 15th century

the first paintings and pictures of landscapes appeared in the Western world (Olwig, 2002). Kolen and Lemaire (1999) see this as the emergence of a landscape conscience. The systematic exploration and description of landscapes begin with the Age of Discovery, characterized by a rapid development of cartography and the growing interests of naturalists.

Alexander von Humboldt defined landscape concisely: "Landscape is the total character of a region of the Earth" (Zonneveld, 1995). Humboldt and Vidal de la Blache implicitly include the perception of landscape and its aesthetic qualities in their work, they do not study landscape perception and aesthetics as such.

Troll (1939), inspired by the new way of observing the landscape using aerial photography, Carl Troll developed an ecological and integrated approach to the landscape and said "aerial photography is to a high degree landscape ecology". He introduced the term landscape ecology and called it an "Anschauungsweise", a way of looking at the subject and he considered it "a marriage between biology and geography" (Zonneveld, 1995). The introduction of the term landscape ecology thus promoted a new holistic and interdisciplinary synthesis in landscape research and also reconfirmed that perception is an integral part of the concept of landscape. At the same time Richard Hartshorne in 'The Nature of Geography' (1939) considered the term landscape with its multiple semantic meanings to be too confusing and abandons it as the object of study in geography in favour of concepts as region and space (Muir, 1999).

Due to the optimistic development in economy and technology, the common focus of geographers upon landscape was lost. Gradually geographers in Western Europe lost their interest in the landscape as a regional synthesis as well as in the visual appearance and aesthetics of the landscape as subject of study. Landscape synthesis was the concept used by few researchers during that time (Moss and Milne, 1999).

The changing attitude towards landscape was also expressed in many philosophical essays such as 'The Iconography of Landscape' by Cosgrove and Daniels in 1988, 'Philosophy of landscape' by Lemaire in 1970), 'The fear of the new landscape' by Lörzing in 1982, 'Past time, present place: Landscape and memory' (Lowenthal, 1975) and 'Topophilia' (Tuan, 1974). The first attempt to restore the interdisciplinary approach of landscape research was made by the Landscape Research Group, which was founded in 1967, by initiating the publication

of the journal 'Landscape Research'. In 1972 the Working Group Landscape-Ecological Research was created in The Netherlands (Zonneveld, 2000), publishing the journal 'Landschap'. It attracted different kinds of geographers, biologists and ecologists, as well as social scientists and planners. (Rackham, 2000).

In 1981 the WLO organized an international and multidisciplinary meeting in Veldhoven to reflect upon the future of landscape research (Tjallingii and De Veer, 1982). Basically, the broken link with the tradition of landscape ecology as defined by Troll in 1939 was re-established and led to the formal creation of landscape ecology. Also contacts between the Western-European approaches with the schools of landscape science of the Central-European countries was renewed.

### **Perception of landscape:**

The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as "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). This definition contains many important elements as landscape refers to an area, ergo a well-defined territory that is organized and managed. Meinig (1979) described ten versions of the same scene, through the eyes of different professions, but there are more than ten versions, and profession is not the only factor in the difference. Bourassa (1991), divided landscape into three on the basis of perception as, one that considers the universality of landscape ideas, second those considers common factors to a larger group, like a country and third those which considers individually. Appleton (1994) examined the way how childhood experience and age can be the influential factors for one's landscape perception by recollecting his own childhood experience. In his "The Experience of Landscape" attempted to explain the need of suitable habitat that can biologically determine the landscape perception of individuals.

When Benedict Anderson (1983), described national identity as 'imagined community', landscape became an integral part of that imagination. This imagination differs with nations as in Britain people preferred deciduous vegetation over coniferous for camouflage (Lowenthal and Prince, 1965), the lack of landscape conscience of Greeks, despite its distinctive and remarkable landscapes (Terkenli, 2011), or the landscape caring of local people called 'heimat' in Germany, especially in the 1930's (Groening and Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1992).

Claval (2004) describes landscape as the bond that holds geo-ecological relations, spatial patterns, scenic and aesthetical qualities and even social and cultural traditions. Cosgrove (2003) distinguishes two approaches to the landscape: the ecological one and the semiotic one. Landscapes have a holistic, perceptive and dynamical character according to Antrop (2000). Berdoulay and Phipps (1985) recognize two organizational forms of landscape: the ecological one and the visual or scenic one.

A number of methods were also proposed to classify various landforms into natural and cultural landscape. Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the term landscape got interpreted in a diverse way by different scholars in different contexts, where it acquired to have a multidimensional quality (Tress *et al.*, 2006). Meinig (1976) has attempted to summate ten variations of the landscape dimension and its interpretations as: nature, habitat, artefact, system, places, problem, wealth, ideology, history and aesthetic, and prescribe to be responsive of the above, as a step towards effective communication. European Landscape convention defined “Landscape means 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). It suggests that there is no particularity of whether it is a cultural or natural landscape, the meaning of landscape is same whether it is an ordinary one or any extra-ordinary or spectacular landscape; it is perceived by the person, whose character matters.

The perceptive character indicates that landscape is essentially a reality in the eye of the beholder and can only be studied fully when considering the observer as well. Olwig (2002) attributes a political power to the scenic aspect that is expressed symbolically by shaping particular characteristic landscapes. Perceptive qualities of the landscape are important in settlement geography (Antrop 1988). The dynamic character of the landscape refers to processes and to their functioning (Forman and Godron 1986). Landscapes change continuously and build a unique history. The relationship between natural and cultural aspects varies in time and space and forms a basis of the regional component, the chorology and history.

Donald Meinig (1979) proposed that ‘Landscape is an attractive, important, and ambiguous term (that) encompasses an ensemble of ordinary features which constitute an extraordinarily rich exhibit of the course and character of any society’ and that ‘Landscape is

defined by our vision and interpreted by our minds.’ In other words, to understand ourselves we need to look searchingly at our landscapes for they are a clue to culture (Lewis, 1979), and our ordinary everyday landscapes at that, not just the national icons. In the seventeenth century in Europe, particularly England, the idea of landscape was supplemented and enriched when it became associated with landscape paintings, including the Dutch realistic landscape (lantskip in English) school and the imaginary Italianate School history paintings of artists such as Claude Lorraine with figures set in idealised pastoral scenes. Landscape as idea and entity was thus reinforced, importantly, in the western mind as the meeting point of culture and nature. A meeting point that had existed in the eastern mind in a tradition going back a thousand years as can be seen in Chinese landscape paintings (Ken Taylor, 2008).

The concept of the landscape is derived from the German word ‘landschaft’ and it means the shaped lands of small village and surrounding agricultural areas and wilderness (Spencer and Bougher 2010). In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, came the Dutch word ‘landscap’ to refer to a picture of scenery in the Dutch school of landscape painting and that, eventually, spread throughout Europe. The word landscape appeared in English language by 1630, initially for landscape painting, but soon came to denote any view of scenery on land. It was in 1908, that the German cultural geographer Otto Schluter, first used the term “kulturlandschaft” which meant the land shaped by human culture (Spencer and Bougher 2010).

The physical and environmental feature surrounds the settlements, whether human habitat or religious centers are vital to understand the human cultural behaviour. They are the key factors which not only influences the pattern of agriculture, production, settlements and trade but also monumental architecture and cultural landscape. The cultural landscape can be defined as a landscape continuously being altered by human activity. It includes the alteration of natural landscape, formation of villages, towns, and construction of structures, road, bridges, buildings and often religious edifices (Spencer and Bougher, 2010).

The meaning of the cultural landscape not only considers the physical products like the monuments but also the socially produced elements in time and space (Robertson and Richards, 2003) (Cyriac, 2017).

Landscape is also a composite of physical components in various combinations, giving homogenous

visual character to an area that may be classified as a landscape character type or unit. In view of the above, landscape is an area and space that is perceived and experienced as well. Its character and quality, in part or in combination, are the result of action, and interaction between natural and/or human factors (Herring, 2009).

Ian Thompson (2009), in accordance with early interpretation by Jackson and Meinig (1976), has conceptualised the landscape as a text that is open to different readings and reinterpretations. So, 'landscape' is an idea that has an everlasting tradition in academic literature (Meinig, 1976; Cosgrove, 1984) and as a concept or a term, is "as much used as it is ill-defined and imperfectly understood" (Turner, 1975) and so it holds a different interpretation owing to semantic differences, misunderstandings and controversies (Countryside Commission for Scotland, 1970). This interpretation is still a valid observation in today's context, where all landscape studies can be categorized. Cosgrove (1985), has redefined landscape as a 'way of seeing' rather than, as 'an image of an object'. He argued, 'the way of seeing is ideological' representing the way in which a particular class has represented itself and its property. In addition to the above, physical geographers, have often used 'landscape' in place of 'landform' or 'topography' in line with the physiographic, geological, and geomorphologic features of the earth's crust (Naveh and Lieberman, 1994), or the appearance of the land (Rajaprakash, 2012).

European Union in Florence in 2000 quoted: "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors".

Furthermore, The European Landscape Convention gives the following definitions:

1. "Landscape policy" means an expression by the competent public authorities of general principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes;

2. "Landscape quality objective" means the response of the appropriate public authorities to the aspirations of the public for a specific landscape and the features of their surroundings;

3. "Landscape protection" means actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/ or from human activity;

4. "Landscape management" means action to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape within a perspective of sustainable development so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes;

5. "Landscape planning" means strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes (Ventura, 2008).

Landscape has high implications on the Artists' paradigms. It has been an inspiration to all art forms and hence the distinction between the aesthetics of art to that of landscape aesthetics is the way and to what degree it affects our life. It is argued that though a work of art makes us to think and incite a novel perception and idea, or may even alter our course of action. Nevertheless, very few works of art have the capacity to directly change or determine our everyday life (Berleant, 2002).

The discipline of ecology explores landscape in terms of species of plants and animals present, ecological zones, succession and other indicators of ecological process (Dawn Hill and Daniel, 2008). It has predominantly and invariably pointed against human interventions and so it has differentiated and described natural landscapes and human-influenced cultural landscapes as a positive and negative trend. Relations to ecology and landscape aesthetics are also an extensively debated issue (Dawn Hill and Daniel, 2008).

One of the direct and visible impacts of anthropogenic Land use/land cover change is landscape fragmentation (Foley *et al.*, 2005). While direct loss of natural land cover, the primary concern is forest fragmentation in the context of maintaining the 'natural' variability in size, shape and distribution of the mosaic of patches which exists within a landscape with little human influence (Riitters *et al.*, 2000). This variability is believed to be crucial in affecting the movement of species and flow of materials within a landscape (Haddad *et al.*, 2015). Thus the field of landscape ecology is founded on the recognition of the strong linkage between spatial pattern and ecological process (Agarwal, 2015). Mitchell emphasizes that landscape is 'unstable' and 'opened to revision' and that we can decode and rewrite it in our everyday cultural practices (2008). Roseman (1998) does not hesitate to use the expression of 'the souls of the landscape' in order to emphasize its meaning beyond physical setting.

Otto Schluter (1908) first formally used "cultural

landscape” as an academic term and argued for it by defining geography as a landscape science. This has given geography a logical subject matter uniquely. He also defined two forms of landscape, the natural landscape, that existed before major human induced changes and the cultural landscape, that created by human culture. Thus, the major task of geography was to trace the changes in the two landscapes (Elkins, 1989). A definition of a ‘cultural landscape by Sauer has stated “the cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent the nature is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result” (Sauer, 1925). According to him, for the creation of every landscape, there is need for two factors: nature and culture. The cultural landscape is fashioned from the natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent; the natural area is the medium, and cultural landscape is the result.

The World Heritage Committee of UNESCO has identified and adapted three categories of cultural landscapes: (i) the landscapes most deliberately “shaped” by people, through (ii) a full range of ‘combined’ works to (iii) those least evidently “shaped” by people (yet highly valued).

The European Science Foundation (ESF) expresses that the landscape refers to the cultural meanings and uses of land and can be seen as the human element of the environment. Therefore, the concept of “landscape” can be used to draw connections among people, between people and places, and between societies in their environment (European Science Foundation, 2010).

The cultural landscape forms a historical and cultural frame for many indigenous peoples” (UNESCO Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development, 1955) and expressed its view as “a landscape comprising the visible features of an area including its physical elements, living elements and human elements such as human activity and the built-up environment.” Since a landscape is shaped by human activity, one can use the expression “cultural landscape” (Bridgewater and Bridgewater, 2004; Greffe, 2008).

Natural landscape serves as a backdrop for human activity. Muir (1999) views landscape as an expression of power and social class and the landscape developed as symbolism.

Brayan (1933) says the concept of Industrial Landscape is driven from Man-Environment interaction and, is the concrete expression of human activities and

natural environment. Salter (1971) stated that the culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium and cultural landscape is the end of production .Hence, the cultural performances give birth to various types of landscape *i.e.*, Agricultural landscape, Urban landscape, Rural landscape, Communication landscape and Industrial landscape (Gayatri Prasad, 1980)

Political landscape denotes the location of rulers, their territory and location of levels of administrative hierarchy and the economic landscape indicates the availability of raw materials, production centers, exporting centers, trade routes and tax collecting centers (Thurston, 2002) (Cyriac, 2017).

Antrop (2003) suggested the idea of sustainable landscape might contradict the basic definition of landscapes. It also suggested the difficulty in the concept of sustainable landscape, as landscape changes and new landscapes evolve continuously.

The process of landscape change or landscape evolution has been a serious topic ever since. In 2013, Antrop said, “change is an essential character of landscapes”.

The definition and use of the term “landscape? evolved from that of “material artefact? or material topographies in the early twentieth century, to a phenomenon that is produced through human imagination. The latter, in turn, was understood to be shaped by diverse ideologies and structures of power and influence (Cresswell, 2003). Complex and dynamic relationships between nature, culture and economy – all promiscuous terms according to Castree (2003) when one attempts to explain them – play out in the everyday practices of people to produce the landscape (Rebecca Rekha Mammen, 2014).

Landscape should be considered as holistic, relativistic and dynamic. The concepts of land and landscape are fundamentally different. Land refers to ascertain well-bordered territory, in most cases organised and maintained by its owner. Landscape refers to our perceivable environment and is considered a commoncultural commodity. Landscapes evolve continuously by ‘internal’ and ‘external’ factors. Internal factors are those which may be controlled at the local level, for example by the direct action of the inhabitants. External factors are mostly indirect. International economical strategies and policies may influence, in the long term, the local landscape conditions. Decisions are made on different hierarchical levels of policy making

and manifest themselves by actions on different scale levels (Antrop, 1993).

Thus the exact meaning of landscape depends on the person who lives in it and the environment around him. That makes the concept of “wholeness”. Each element in that particular frame is only meaningful in its whole. So in short it can be said that, landscape is a system, in which each element has a role, but its true meaning of existence can be observed in the ‘whole’.

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