
Abstracts in English



The Landscape Space. Theoretical Considerations

Jean-Marc Besse

Landscape was defined a long time ago, in Europe, as the expanse of terrain that can be seen from one particular place, preferably one of a certain height. Even today, we continue to perceive, consider, use, and even fabricate and sell landscape (real and in images) according to this definition. Over the last twenty years, however, the definition has been subject to a series of critical *deconstruction* operations in the fields of history and the social sciences. Many academic papers have posited, explored and illustrated the idea that landscape should no longer be understood as an objective reality but primarily as a way of seeing and representing our surrounding world.

Today, it is generally accepted that the concept of landscape as a view obtained from a height corresponds to an ideological construct aimed at concealing the reality of social and political conflicts through a series of imaginary devices, among other things. However, the main purpose of a critical approach to landscape should be to thwart these schemes to conceal, and to retrieve the processes that produced the landscape representations in the first place.

It is not my intention to question the deconstructionist concept, to which I fully subscribe. This approach to landscape representations has been fruitful from the critical point of view and from a more positive perspective. Nevertheless, I would like to point out a deviation that is currently taking place in the field of landscape research and contribute a few remarks on its implications. In particular, I would like to talk about certain concepts that emphasise the specific type of spatial experience that

intervenes in landscape. In my opinion, this is one of the essential issues for formulating or reformulating a landscape theory.

Over and beyond a critical approach to landscape in terms of representation, it is essential to broach the issue of landscape space and, more specifically, the diversity of *spatialities* implied in the representations, uses and experiences of landscape. Landscape puts into practice, and brings into play, a certain sense of space, which we should examine.

According to the classic definition, landscape is the part of a territory that we can access through sight, from a certain distance – having taken a step back, as it were. The concepts of distance and perspective play a decisive role regarding territory: thanks to this distance or to that perspective, landscape can appear before the eyes of the viewer. The existence of landscape is revealed, above all, to the eyes of an outside viewer. Landscape therefore involves applying a certain sense and practice of space, characterised by visibility, distance and outside-ness. In this chapter, I wish to explore these points, as well as the type of space experience brought about by this landscape concept. What is distance in landscape? At the end of the day, what is the landscape space?

It is, of course, impossible to address this question comprehensively in just one chapter. However, I have made two observations of different (not necessarily related) intention and have attempted to open up avenues for reflection on the spatiality of landscape, which I believe needs to be explored today.

In the first part of the chapter, I approach the subject of landscape space from its phenomenological aspect, discussing the polysensorial dimension present in landscape experiences from the anthropological perspective of the *lived body*. More specifically, I try to show new ways of apprehending landscape, thus revealing what we could call a *landscape of proximity*.

In the second part, which is quite different from the first, I return to the notion of *geographicity*, a central concept of geographer and philosopher Éric Dardel in his reflections on landscape and geographical reality, as a possible framework for working out an answer to the mode of spatiality that is specific to landscape.

Landscape and Communication: The Resurgence of Emotional Geographies

Joan Nogué

This chapter aims to show a joint approach to the concept of landscape from two apparently unrelated disciplines: Geography and Communication Theory. In Geography, there is scant awareness of the enormous communication potential of landscape. On the other hand, Communication Theory clearly recognises this potential, without having explored the concept of landscape as deeply as we geographers have done. Communication Theory has gone into the concepts of space and environment to a certain extent, but not so much into the concept of landscape, which has been a cornerstone of geographic academic tradition over the last two centuries. Moreover, landscape is now a key element in new spatial planning policies, which increasingly are inspired by the European Landscape Convention.

Landscape has never before been subject to so much discussion. There are several reasons behind this phenomenon:- the growing environmental awareness over the last twenty years, indirectly benefitting landscape; the rapid spread of the urban sprawl, transforming the physiognomy of many territories for the first time in history; the proliferation of new infrastructures

all over the territory (often eyesores for the local inhabitants); a greater aesthetic sensitivity among the opinion makers of the mass media; and, finally, the major role that landscape has played in the shaping and consolidation of territorial identities on every scale.

In general, people feel part of a landscape, with which they establish multiple layers of complicity. A person can feel identified with one or with several landscapes at the same time. It is true that the dialectical tension between local and global generated by globalisation is greatly affecting individual places. It is also true, however, that we continue to act largely as a territorialised culture (however virtual this may be) in which landscape plays a major social and cultural role, not only in the creation of territorial identities on every scale, but also in consolidating and maintaining these identities.

Advertising creators use the landscape 'support' to provide not only the physical context for a commercial, but also to exploit the evocative power of communication implicit in landscape in order to underpin the emotional arguments with which they are trying to win over the potential receivers of their message. Landscapes are present more and more in advertisements for all types of consumer goods. This is especially true of advertisements for cars and tourism destinations, but also increasingly true of advertisements for other kinds of goods, services ... and territories.

We have here a sort of 'landscape suggestion' strategy, in an attempt to project the symbols, culture and identity of a territory through the prism of its landscape. For the advertising industry, which deals with emotional and other intangible inputs, landscape is a raw material with which to work on the symbolic and identity aspects present in the territory. For this reason, landscape has now become a key factor for advertising cities and territories, not only in tourism promotion strategies but also –and

above all – in the processes of creating territorial identities. A common practice among advertising agencies is to set up communication processes in order to place certain territories in a position of comparative and competitive advantage. At a first level of analysis, this means that advertising work standards are moving into competitive management of space in order to achieve the best possible brand image, usually by extolling the intangible attributes of a certain territory or landscape.

Landscape branding basically consists of seeking out the intangible message implicit in any landscape and using persuasive and emotional communication techniques to bring that message to the target public. The techniques manifestly exploit the communication power of landscape, transferring its values of identity, personality and distinction into the larger process of building up a territorial brand image. Landscape thus becomes an exceptional communication story line as well as a display cabinet for tendencies, given that the tangible shape and intangible values of landscape are very useful for distilling the essence of the cultural heritage of a particular place. Landscape branding ultimately involves deliberate management of the emotions implicit in a landscape. It is an exercise in communication strategy using the intangible values present in landscape, a manipulation of its symbolic, identitarian value within the convulsed, somewhat confusing context of post-modernity. What triumphs here is the power of persuasion, suggestion and attraction of territory and landscape.

Territorial brand identities, particularly those involving landscape, skilfully exploit the intangible emotions implicit in landscape in the interests of positioning spaces in terms of identity. Territory brands – a recent phenomenon – compete to attract the attention of potential users in the saturated advertising market and among competitive post-modern cosmopolitan cities and regions. Branding finds an exceptional *raison*

d'être in the management of symbolic geographies, a perfect excuse to bring about the phenomenon currently taking place in some cities in Europe and in other parts of the world. I am referring here to spatial planning and management based on the creation of a territorial brand image, i.e. planning a city or a territory in order to achieve aims related to the desired image, which will end up determining the future development of the afore-mentioned territories. This is a complete reversal of our way of thinking and managing territories and cities, which are now subject to the tyranny of the image.

In this context, we need to set up a new line of research that will provide a reliable response to the rising demand for studies linking landscape and communication. This comes at a time when landscape is now a key factor in new spatial planning policies, and the subject of much social and cultural debate on the application of the underlying philosophy of the European Landscape Convention. This line of research is also important for a social (rather than academic) reason. We have to learn to recognise when and how our feelings for landscape are being instrumentalised, and to recognise who is manipulating them and why. We should applaud the resurgence of emotional geographies but we must avoid their manipulation and trivialisation at all costs.

The Omnilandscape: A Metacriticism

Michael Jakob

Omnilandscape means that landscape is everywhere. Landscape is on iPhones, computer monitors, television screens, advertisements, yogurt pots, lorries... the entire world is covered with landscape-images. The density of landscape representation

appears immense, like an enormous crust on the face of the earth. Moreover, landscape has taken root not only in the outer world but also in the inner world of our consciousness. Our heads are full of landscapes. Landscape surrounds us, fences us in and suffocates us. Our own point of view is no longer considered, it is cancelled out. What now prevails is the point of view of the consumer, of an anonymous *me*, a *me* who is constantly being presented with an endless series of landscapes, without having asked for them.

The beautiful, radiant, smooth, perfect, timeless and ideally framed image of a landscape is replacing contact with the real world. The cliché now seems to prevail over real experience, which is much richer and more complex. This situation is by no means new: a similar phenomenon developed in the late 18th century, leading to saturation and disillusion with landscape images.

It is important to bear in mind that today's landscape is closely linked to the rise of modern technologies. Graphic reproduction techniques, photography devices and GPS have not just influenced landscape; if landscape is what it is, it is also due to these technologies. The 20th century illustrates the power of technologies over landscape. The attitude of the image hunter is a good example: once video cameras became small enough and cheap enough for ordinary people to buy, millions began to travel the world, filming it unceasingly to the point of exhaustion. The late 20th century was a particularly intense historical moment of *landscape-setting* the world. The omniscient landscape from that period reveals (like its predecessor 200 years earlier) a close link between the obvious, inherent *iconic* aspect of landscape and its *verbal*, aspect, i.e. the writing up of the images into a story. The narrative sequence thus highlights the object (the landscape discovered by the traveller) as much as the point of view (the traveller's presence in the place). The enormous

scope of these narratives (*the landscape and me, me and the landscape, us and the landscape...*) refer us to the omnipresence of the term *landscape* in our language. We are constantly using the words *paisaje, paesaggio, paysage, landschaft, landscape...* In all the discourses of the great cultural text, landscape is always sure to have a place. *Landscape* is now a universal label. We even use the word in a legal and political context. The term has found its place, for example, in the European Landscape Convention. But is the Convention really referring to landscape when it talks about landscape? Is it not confusing landscape with territory? People who talk about landscape are often in fact referring to the environment, to the territory. The word *landscape* is a symbol, or fetish that masks the state of permanent transformation lying beneath it.

We can of course be pleased that landscape has penetrated even the sacrosanct text of the law, and that national and international texts talk a lot about landscape. However, there is also a need for a hermeneutics of landscape, as well as some philosophical observations on the European Landscape Convention.

The widespread use of the term *landscape* can also be seen in the recent success of the term *urban landscape*. Transferring the concept of landscape to the urban environment poses problems. Historically, landscape was the opposite of city, i.e., the *non-city* (the place beyond the city walls) and the *non-city-thanks-to-the-city* (the reality that exists and is interesting solely because of the citizen's gaze). The city-country dialectic has left a decisive mark on the history of landscape. We should also bear in mind the different paces of landscape and city: landscape space is characterised by the pace of nature whereas urban space is characterised by the pace of human activities. This is a different spatiality, which refers simultaneously to *freedom*, because of its openness, and to *limitation*, order, a structure enclosing the subject. Many differences exist be-

tween the city and the non-city as a potential landscape: enclosure versus openness, closed spatiality versus wide horizons, complex density versus organic organisation, and so on. What is the urban landscape? Is it conceiving, establishing or constituting a part of the city as a landscape? Landscape, in this case, would be no more than a frame, a shape to be filled; a landscape device that can be applied to anything, like a camera that can capture everything, a piece of nature, a piece of city, a piece of face etc. In my opinion, we gain nothing by using this term. On the contrary, it makes us confuse things and forego precision.

The danger that I can see is that everything, absolutely everything, is now turning into landscape. For students of landscape architecture, it is standard behaviour to apply the word *landscape* to everything: an aquarium is a landscape; a wall is a landscape; a street, a vista or a panorama are all landscapes. I also understand *omnilandscape* in the sense that reality is being *coated* by landscape at a verbal level.

I do not intend to extol a sort of authenticity of the good landscape versus the inauthenticity of the bad landscape. There are no good and bad landscapes, except in the reactionary ideology of Paul Schultze-Naumburg, author of the *Kulturarbeiten*, who believed that he could distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable landscapes. Heidegger's distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity is also deeply ideological and dangerous.

What then is disturbing about omniland-
scape? What is inauthentic (not *bad*) about it? What is this *too much* with its implication of *not enough*? Let us put it this way: when we think about landscape today, there is something compulsory, something forced about it. We submit to landscape in complete passivity; we constitute our landscapes mechanically; we are mere landscape-capturing devices. There is no longer any surprise, there is little involvement, there is scant attention, and there is

no encounter at all. What we find is passivity and uniformity in the way we receive and constitute landscape. This state of affairs also affects how we create and manage landscape (that is another expression we need to rethink: can we actually create, construct or lay out landscapes, or do we just intervene in territories that turn out to be landscapes?).

I would say that if everything is landscape, then nothing is landscape, since nothing truly surprises us. Omnilandscape is linked, of course, to representation and more specifically to the domain of the image. It would be too simplistic to blame the image and to say that there are too many images, too many landscape-images, in the world today. The problem, however, lies in the sameness of these images, in the fact that all landscapes are becoming increasingly similar to one another. To paraphrase Guy Debord, we travel in order to see the banal and we do this in a banal way.

We need to find a new attitude in order to leave the omniland-
scape behind us. Perhaps, like the *slow food* movement, we should go back to slowness and patience, to taking time out and paying attention to things, including the aesthetic sphere.

Architecture and Landscape: Geographies of Proximity

Daniela Colafranceschi

The “architecture-landscape” binomial confirms our growing need to tag something onto the term “landscape” in order to illustrate its current interdisciplinary condition, or simply in order to understand more clearly where we are at. It is as if we did not have enough with just one word. This occurs for two reasons. In the first place,

we can no longer define certain conceptual models with one single term. In the second place, landscape is increasingly revealing its unique “in-between-ness” and its specific “interface” function, which prompt us to explore and analyse a new landscape-related phenomenon.

The enormous interest in subjects such as city and territory, or urbanism and environment, fosters expectations of multiple wide-ranging interventions. Social values, scientific thought and artistic expression all throw up tensions that generate new ways of approaching and interpreting nature. In this case, as in other creative activities, hybridization with other experiences will lead us towards new possible landscape models. Art, architecture, anthropology, geography, philosophy, urbanism and the ephemeral garden understood as a conceptual space for experimenting and for researching the landscape system at multiple intervention levels: from Land Art to minimalist gardens.

Landscape is not only a formal reference model for current architectural and urban development projects but, more importantly and perceptibly, a process model. In the face of this, our consciences and perceptions become relativistic and problematical. “Landscape” now embraces the parameters of a contemporary urban condition bereft of the former connection between architecture and nature. It teeters in critical, uncertain equilibrium between the city and the country, with a shifting cultural dimension that spills over into other social, artistic and intellectual manifestations. The term “measurement parameters” is useful insofar as it reveals uncertainties, hopes and the pursuit of new equilibriums to explore and the new relationships that may grow out of this. When we talk about architecture and landscape, we must bear in mind that the role of nature is no longer that of a static backdrop or a passive subject. Nature can also be the subject of a project as well as

an integrating feature. In this respect, projecting on landscape means projecting on architecture and nature at the same time. Nowadays, the dichotomy between natural and artificial allows a process of absolute symbiosis, in which architecture moves away from its traditional definition (and composition) and towards a new naturalist dimension. Architecture “interprets” landscape, just as landscape “informs” architecture within the construction of a geography of proximity. I will now attempt to explain one of the relationships occurring between these two concepts.

“Architecture interprets landscape” refers to architecture seeking empathy, participation and involvement with the surrounding urban landscape, with which it sets up a dialogue on an unprecedented physical and conceptual scale. This is no longer a dialogue between form and function, between content and container, between figure and ground in the architectural work; it is a dialogue between architecture and the idiosyncrasy of the external phenomena. This dialogue expresses, reflects and embodies the contemporary relationship between buildings and public space, between architecture and city, between urbanism and landscape.

“Landscape informs architecture” refers to the evolution of a composite architectural language that resorts to, takes on, and refers directly to landscape; and to how certain project concepts find their point of formal reference in landscape.

In the hybridization between figure and ground, between architecture and topography, it is hard to see where the former start and the latter end; the margins and borders of both concepts are deliberately blurred and merged together.

The scale of buildings has changed, as has the scale of the relationships established with the context and with the surrounding environment. The scale of the project has changed and, as a result, the scale of its designers. The nature backdrop

of a project is now the protagonist. Landscape is considered not only as the theatre of our existence, in which we are both actors and spectators of our cultural phenomena (as clearly illustrated by Eugenio Turri), but also as the object of a project, as a tool for architectural, urban or territorial intervention. I conceive of landscape as a sensitive skin, capable of absorbing successive layers of ideological baggage; capable of registering the cultural condition of our lives, the historical and social conditions of our urban, rural and agricultural realities, and our surrounding geographies.

Where can this hybridization take place? The answer is obvious: on the margins and the peripheries, in the outlying areas, the peri-urban zones and the “empty spaces”. The conceptual limits have already been discussed and exemplified. With regard to the physical limits, the above response implies that a landscape project is also a conflict-solving project, and confirms that the “marginal” condition offers more potential for projects designed to solve critical or delicate issues, before taking on new meanings.

Landscape as a border, landscape on the edges, landscape as an in-between space; landscape seen not as a grey zone between a black strip and a white strip, but rather as a wide-open space with its own identity, as a space that is the sum and superposition of many shades of grey carrying new and different meanings. The pre-established limit no longer exists; there is only a blurred unstable edge generating another territory, another in-between zone, capable of including, embracing and amplifying the conflicts and endowing them with sense, meaning and social imaginary: a new scope that generates a new space, an extremely intricate “place” through which new meanings constantly flow, pass and transit. I refer to the empty spaces where the city becomes lost and blurred, all those spaces between “city” and “landscape” upon which we confer the destiny and the

future of our metropolises. The challenge is being played out in the free space, in the public space, in the collective space, the only spaces capable of resolving the conflict, the critical situation of these territories, the complexity of its issues.

Is Landscape Simply Recognition? On my Attention Problems at Barbizon

Federico López Silvestre

Ordinary flowerpots have an enormous attraction for contemporary artists. They use them for many purposes, for example as a veiled reference to autism. Having noted this frequent recurrence, let us return to landscape. In fact, the flowerpot also comes in useful for speaking about landscape. In its metaphorical value as a cudgel, this everyday garden object enables us to understand the limits of one of today’s most popular landscape theories, namely, the recognition logic approach to landscape.

There are two basic starting points for landscape theory. One claims that landscape is representation, and the other claims that landscape is not representation, landscape simply is. Although neither theory is satisfactory, the former falls into recognition logic, which sustains that aesthetic enjoyment of a landscape comes through recognition of some previously known artistic quality. Education is without doubt fundamental for explaining our way of seeing the world, but the problem with this recognition logic is how to explain the discovery of landscape by the first pioneering artists who took aesthetic pleasure in it. Is our experience of landscape really limited to the recognition of something artistic?

Some years ago, I visited Barbizon, cradle of the Picturesque movement, where everything is indeed picturesque. However, in spite of the obvious “artistic-ness”, with everything about the place recalling paintings by Millet and company, I did not like Barbizon. Why was this so? Are the artistic formats of the past not an example for our palate and a stockpile for our gaze? For landscape to exist, an eye must necessarily delimit the world and remove the slice that we call landscape from the uncut cake of nature. Landscape needs my gaze, but it also needs all that surrounds me. Essentially, this means that for the landscape experience to be possible, it must not only start from the «raw material» (trees, paths, mountains, clouds, houses) that gives content to our gaze but also, and above all, this external factor must work as a «call».

In effect, if I am to «attend» to all that surrounds me as landscape, there must be something in it that catches my «attention». Many philosophers have referred to this key issue of «attention». As opposed to Hegel, Kant’s approach may not be completely inappropriate, since it is sometimes possible to attend to the world without going «from up to down», i.e., from the subject to the object. In his *Critique of Judgement* (1790), Kant’s *reflective judgements* do not characterise our mode of judging the natural and the human, but rather discern our manner of facing the dynamic, as opposed to the foreseeable or the mechanical. Having said that, what remains today of *reflective judgement*?

In our surrounding world, there is certainly a lot of sugar-coated pleasure, pre-learned lessons, and false landscape, either mechanical or plastic. We landscape scholars sometimes surprise ourselves quietly enjoying “picture postcard” scenery that has been beautified for tourists by the local authorities. However, the environment experience that «happens» and, in doing so, «becomes landscape», is not this. Today, the entire planet has been understood,

subjugated and compartmentalised a thousand times over. Schiller and Humboldt’s nature is no longer with us; it only flowers today in marginal or unexpected places. Business campuses, golf landscaping and serial housing development are now replacing what used to be constantly revised and re-imagined architecture. This brings us back to flowerpots, rows and rows of large, standardised flowerpots, reproduced over and over again. Given all this, is it still possible today to have a landscape experience based on the external and its «call»? Despite everything, my answer is clear. I believe that it is possible because, by action or omission, everything on this flowerpot-planet ultimately derives from the human being who, nevertheless, can be «nature».