



Professor Peter Howard, former International Co-ordinator for the [Landscape Research Group](#) together with his co-editors of the recently published '[Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies](#)', recently spoke at the 2nd LRG annual lecture held at the Landscape Institute.

Video of all three speakers can be found here: landscaperesearch.org/news/lrg-annual-lecture-2012

It is difficult to over emphasise the pleasure I have in being here starting the second Landscape Research Group annual lecture, one step after David Lowenthal. One step down in age at least, but still old enough to use age as a hook on which to hang some ideas about the concepts of landscape as they have impacted on a 'reluctant academic'. So here I am trying to indicate major shifts in the concept of 'landscape' as they have impacted on me. If that sounds very personal, then it merely stresses one of my major beliefs, which is that landscape is indeed very personal, and very visceral. No wonder clever academics find it so slippery.

To start nearly 50 years ago, in a seminar room in Sydenham Terrace, Newcastle in a final year undergraduate geography seminar with John House, where I found myself insisting that one could not exclude people from the concept of environment, as so often our very reason for being in the environment was other people. John House rather thought that we needed another word for 'environment including people', though 'landscape' was not mentioned in that seminar. However, I also spent many hours in the market towns of Northumberland and Yorkshire under the tutelage of Gunther Conzen and considering the urban morphology, and very much involved with Kulturlandschaft. We had a three year course in The Philosophy of Geography!

This was also the time when Hoskins's *The Making of the English Landscape* filled in the rural aspects of learning to read a landscape. In both cases, Conzen and Hoskins, there was a revelatory experience, learning how things that one had seen all one's life had come to pass. Certainly when I moved to Devon in the early 1970s to take up a post as a geographer at the College of Art, just round the corner from Hoskins's home, I was clear what landscape was; it was the result of human efforts on the land over historical time. We had had that vision revealed to us and we had to hand it on to our students, and anyone else who would listen. This 'landscape as revelation' was perhaps best shown not only by Hoskins, but also the revelation of the Dartmoor reaves at the time by Fleming in 1988.



So my discovery, as I settled into a department of Art History, that there was a completely different concept of landscape, with its own historical and scholarly tradition, with its seminal text not Hoskins but Kenneth Clark, was at first difficult to assimilate. Practising students of painting and photography were certainly interested in 'landscape as historical document'. However, some painter colleagues, such as Michael Garton, became engrossed in Hoskins but discovered that it ruined their painting, distracting him from his main task which was how the place looked, not how it had come to be, (as he explained at the LRG Landscape and Painting conference) In this he was at one with Ewart Johns, a geographer of planning, who pointed out the difference between north European landscape painting, concerned with appearance, and that from the Mediterranean, concerned with structure. Ewart left Exeter to become head of Art and the Environment at Lancaster.

Coming to terms with landscape as a genre of picture making (both painting and photography) soon revealed some features; landscape was clearly out of doors, but again lacked people, and largely lacked movement. (Movement though has become a critical part of the filmic landscape) It was almost always rural, so much so that the separate word townscape had to be coined for the urban views. Luckily when appointing a geographer (largely because the Head of Art History's brother was a geographer, Keith Wheeler) the college gave me a year or so to decide how to plough the furrow between art and geography! So there was time to discover what geography had to say about this artistic concept of landscape. There was of course the history of landscape architecture, usually confined to gardens and written by art historians, firmly trained in the connoisseurship tradition of great individuals handing on a torch of progress to others to create a canon of major figures. But otherwise there was surprisingly little, except for a few remarks by Francis Younghusband and the fascinating work by Vaughan Cornish also largely based in Devon around Sidmouth.

Just in time came Jay Appleton's book *The Experience of Landscape*. However severely criticised, this was a revelation to art students. Whether or not he found the right answers, he had certainly found a basic question of real interest to them: 'What landscapes do people like and why?' This was infinitely more relevant than 'How did this landscape come to look like that?' It seemed that we had found in *Landscape Preference* a question around which the artistic concept of landscape could gather. At one LRG conference on Photography at Gregynog I was busy taking photos to reveal Appleton's ideas of deflected vistas and coulisses.



Landscape preference was the centre of much new work, including Steven Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, though I think I was the only one to dare to do so in a quantitative fashion, counting pictures of places at national exhibitions. In an Art History department, I needed some feature to distinguish one's specialty, and historians did not produce graphs! The other element that immediately became clear from the work on landscape preference was that, if there were indeed some common human preferences, then there were also many factors that differentiate the preferences of individuals. The great weight of research demonstrating that landscape was a product of different social groups, could not obliterate the obvious preference (when seen on the walls of art galleries) for different landscapes by different nationalities, (English oaks, German conifers, Russian birches) and then one could add gender, education and, of course, eventually profession, accepting that perhaps the artist's view was not the only possible landscape profession, nor was there a good reason for assuming a priority of the artist's view over that of the infantryman.

5 Academic isolation was probably also the reason that when, on a visit to an IALE conference in Warsaw, I encountered the concept of landscape as a certain scale, (larger than a habitat) it seemed so very odd. On reflection perhaps a scale was normal in landscape painting, if only because of the limits of vision, but it was not scale that defined a landscape in either of the traditions I understood. It is still a concept with which I am unhappy, though it seems to be widespread in archaeology as well as ecology. It seems that my garden is too small to be a landscape. Just like the 18th century only the rich can afford landscapes?

The artist's intense concern for a particular place so often exhibited by my colleagues as well as by the artists I saw in the exhibitions, kept people firmly in the picture, and the discovery of the work on 'insideness' by Ted Relph was another of my revelations, showing me a lens of crucial significance. The problem of incorporating the insider's landscape in our management plans remains acute.

Thinking of insiders I wondered whether the volunteer might be a link between insider and expert, but I was disillusioned by some work in my then home village, largely owned by the National Trust, with those who volunteered for that organisation. Already in the village there had been considerable concern with the Trust wishing to make public, field and lane names that the local people considered to be the property of the insiders. (Communities need secrets but academics tell the world.) One lady said that the Trust certainly respected their work and treated them well. I pointed out that she and many other volunteers had a great deal of expertise of



real value to a conservation organisation, but they seemed to do only unskilled work. Did not the Trust listen to their advice? ‘No we soon learned that suits don’t have ears’. No indeed. The habit of top-down direction by those trained is very deeply ingrained, despite the honourable efforts by the Trust to attempt bottom-up. The concept of ‘chains of command’, however useful in a destroyer, may not be helpful either in academic life or in landscape decision making. This issue recurs again and again in the current book.

8 In 1992 came Blois. This was a conference I organised with the French group Paysage + Aménagement, working under the aegis of LRG. LRG have always been brilliant at supporting madcap ideas. Amid extraordinary evenings in Loire chateaux, the Brits came away with a very clear idea that, to the French, Landscape = Food. Both countries were pursuing similar policies, the Brits to produce good countryside, the French to produce good food or terroir. Landscape could not be usurped only by artists, nor only by vision. A visit later that year to Craster on the Northumberland coast, where they smoke kippers, was clear evidence that landscape is smell and sound as well. This is a critical element in the new post-ELC landscape, and at Blois the first paper was given, by Adrian Philips, proposing a European Landscape Convention.

The other revelation to me at Blois was to bring together two landscape concepts. The French thought of ‘designed landscape’ within the canon of landscape designers, whereas the British thought it included the whole countryside. This circle was admirably squared by David Lowenthal, who pointed out that to an American, the ‘whole of Europe is a garden’.

Responding to university demands, and chains of command, I moved landscape towards heritage, and founded the IJHS, encountering many other disciplines including museology and archaeology. I met the concept of stakeholders. Among the stakeholders the insiders were usually mentioned. Even if no-one had much idea how to involve their views, other than the traditional way of getting local people to add little human stories to strategies and policies already decided. I also realised that the literature routinely omitted that academic experts were themselves a significant stakeholder group with a very clear agenda of their own. They were not neutral gods far above the fray. In fact, acting through their quangoes and ngos they were immensely efficient at getting their way. The other combatants in the daily fight for our landscapes, the insiders, were already severely hampered by their ignorance of the fancy language invented by the academic fraternity, and by the way that their local



landscape secret knowledge had been researched, published and betrayed. When Caesar at the Colosseum had to put thumb up or down the experts were sitting behind him whispering in his ear. At a meeting of museologists, the indoor heritage specialists, at Dubrovnik, I became aware of the disputes of intellectual control between museum galleries. The traditional division such that there were geological, archaeological, ecological, art galleries, all curated by the appropriate disciplines, shone a spotlight also onto the outdoor heritage, and the extent to which many countries now have multiple designations of conservation, usually curated by one discipline. The concept of an England where very large parts of land act as galleries effectively policed by one particular discipline is a very tempting one. The World Heritage Convention certainly encourages this, so some UK sites have been intellectually colonised by archaeologists, some by architectural historians and this one, the Jurassic Coast from Exmouth to Swanage by the geologists.

The Convention was also a great revelation. Putting people firmly into the landscape was only part of its impact. The convention is partly responsible for the move in our landscape thinking from the Caspar David Friedrich where a well-heeled young male touring gentleman looks out over a spread of outstanding scenery, to Millet's the Angelus, where two people who routinely work the land, insiders, and very flat 'ordinary' land at that, stop for moment as the sound of the Angelus rings across the flat. The link is clearly spiritual as well as temporal. This is a landscape in course of being made. It is I suspect performativity in action, but I also struggle with words sometimes.

11 My final light (Oh I hope not Final!) on the road was this book itself. In our deliberate attempt to cover most of the disciplines with a serious concern with landscape, and to organise them across disciplinary boundaries, we have, all three of us I am sure, discovered pathways through the forest that we had no idea existed. That has been very rewarding, but also a little scary. I remain ambivalent about the future; is the fact that landscape is such a disputed concept (whatever the ELC might define) mean that ordinary people can take charge to cherish their ordinary landscapes because the expert and academic community will be too disunited to stop them? Or does it mean that ordinary landscapes have no effective defence against whatever globalised economy (and the new Planning Policy) can do to them? Time will tell, but I suspect that the role once played in the making of the landscape by the landowner is now being usurped by people like us. Do I perceive a strange alliance emerging between the professional landscape conservation lobby (safe in their protected areas behind the palisade of their designations) and the development lobby so that all NIMBY development can take place in 'ordinary, undesignated landscapes' as long as the Protected Areas are protected? Is that what Biodiversity Offsetting means?



A final thought. This quote ('the people's claim upon the English countryside is paramount; the people are not as yet ready to take up their claim without destroying that to which the claim is laid; the English countryside must be kept inviolate as a trust until such time as they are ready...') comes from Beauty and the Beast, from the left of centre philosopher CEM Joad in 1939. And the question I must ask is 'Are they ready yet?' and if, like me, you are tempted to answer 'No' then I must ask 'And whose fault is that?' and 'What do we have to do about it?'