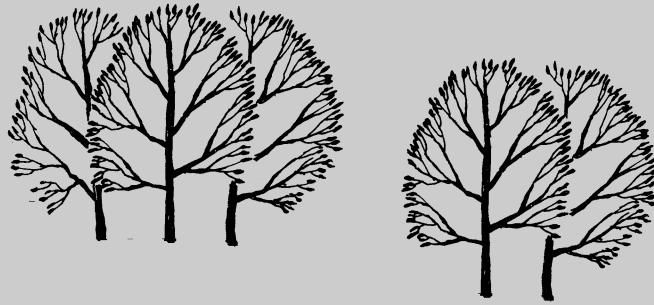


Part 1



Concepts and Overview

*Part 1 explores perspectives through which the landscape manager, planner, and designer makes landscape decisions. **Chapter 1: Landscape Meanings** introduces diverse cognitive filters through which we perceive and attribute landscape meaning, and develops sensitivity to the landscape as a dialogue between physical condition and individual consciousness. **Chapter 2: Peoples, Attitudes, and Perceptions** explores world views, assumptions, and value systems that influence the meanings we attribute to landscape, and the nature of our landscape interventions. **Chapter 3: Education and Design Thinking** introduces design thinking, including the seeds planted by primary and secondary education, and the strengths and weaknesses of formal landscape design education. Part 1 lays the groundwork necessary to pursue, in **PART 2: DESIGN INFLUENCES**, an in-depth exploration of the forces, influences, and issues that should be considered as the landscape designer manages, plans, and designs the landscape.*

Chapter 1

Landscape Meanings

Landscapes are point-in-time expressions of ecological, technological, and cultural influences. *Settings* are specific locations, designed or non-designed, generated by these influences, and experienced by people. The individual, for physiological purposes of survival and security, and for psychological ones of community, esteem, and self-actualization, encodes and decodes *meaning* from settings. *Perceptual meanings* grow from the perceptual characteristics of settings; *associational meanings* emerge from the relationship of settings to the observer's direct and indirect experiences. Relationships between designed settings and their context affect meaning. *Systemic design* integrates these diverse influences, promotes a sense of connectedness, and facilitates individually associated meanings. It integrates with contextual systems that, in turn, become progressively more interactive. Systemically designed settings can be experienced in different ways by different people at different times. Through systemic design intervention, multiple influences are integrated into wholes with enriched experience and intensified meaning, and the landscape becomes richer, and the *place* (mental construct experienced in the mind's eye of the beholder) more alive.

1.1 METHOD OF STUDY

In *Peasant, Society and Culture* (1956), Robert Redfield distinguishes between the classic or learned culture and the popular or folk culture in many disciplines (music, religion, and so on). In *House, Form and Culture* (1969), Amos Rapoport considers the relationships between the learned and popular culture and physical design. He defines the grand tradition of Architecture as the creation of monuments "built to impress the populace with the power of the patron, or the peer group of designers and cognoscenti with the cleverness of the designer and good taste of the patron." He defines the folk tradition, on the other hand, as "the direct, unselfconscious translation into physical form of a culture, its needs and values, as well as the desires, dreams and passions of a people." He sees the folk tradition as "the world view writ small, the 'ideal' environment of a people

expressed in buildings and settlements, with no designer, artist, or architect with an axe to grind."

Within the folk tradition, Rapoport distinguishes between primitive and vernacular buildings. *Primitive buildings* (produced by societies identified by anthropologists as primitive based on technological and economic levels) are built by the common person who is a generalist equipped, as part of cultural heritage, with the limited knowledge necessary to build dwellings. *Vernacular buildings* (produced in societies with more advanced technologies and economies) are built by tradesmen, but the building type, form, and materials are known by everyone as part of the cultural body of knowledge. The building "type" follows the cultural tradition. Individual buildings subtly adjust the traditional theme to specific conditions (family size, site, microclimate, and so on). Focusing on the vernacular rather than monuments of the grand tradition, *House, Form and Culture* was a seminal study of the built landscape. As Rapoport says,

The physical environment of man, especially the built environment, has not been, and still is not, controlled by the designer. This environment is the result of vernacular (or folk, or popular) architecture, and it has been largely ignored in architectural history and theory. . . . In addition, the high style buildings usually must be seen in relation to, and in the context of, the vernacular matrix, and are in fact incomprehensible outside that context, especially as it existed at the time they were designed and built.

Rapoport's statement exposes a major deficiency of modern architectural education: it has focused on high-styled buildings and on form, to the exclusion of popular architecture, contextual forces, and broader meaning. It has studied architecture as form and object, not as process and integration.

Rapoport was not alone in his concern for these issues. Others of the period, such as Adolph Rudofski (*Architecture Without Architects*, 1964), Robert Venturi (*Learning From Las Vegas*, 1972), Christian Norberg-Schulz (*Genus Loci: Toward a Phenomenology of Architecture*, 1980), and Tom Wolfe (*From Bauhaus to Your House*, 1981), were struggling with the lack of relevant meaning in modern, and in the case of the later works, in post-modern architecture.

However, the ideas these men promulgated were not widely embraced by the architectural community. The most published designers were not those exploring holistic and cultural meanings, but rather those pursuing design theories, movements, and styles, such as modernism (expression of an industrialized culture), post-modernism (visual topological explorations), and deconstructivism (dismantling conventional mental constructs whereby the populous decode meaning). Integrative building designers, including Buckminster Fuller (1930s to 1970s), Stewart Brand, Pliny Fisk, and Bill McDonough, have been seen by many as “rebels” at the edge, rather than as leaders of mainstream movements. Landscape management, planning, and design have been somewhat more integrative and inclusive—embracing the grand tradition, the vernacular, and design integration with context.

More and more design professionals and laypersons, realizing the need to address the vernacular, are contending that cultural expressions, such as the strip development or Disneyland, are not inherently bad. They portray the values, dreams, and aspirations of major portions of our heterogeneous culture. However, vernacular expressions that clash with classical notions of design and form, taught in universities (see Sections 2.2, 3.3, and 9.1), are often discounted by designers. By recognizing the value of common places and the meanings that non-designers ascribe to landscapes, designers can create locally relevant aesthetics that convey greater meaning to a wider population, resulting in a rich, evocative landscape that functions as an integral part of culture, and that synergizes designed and non-designed elements for maximum landscape meaning.

1.2 MEANINGS

With a rudimentary understanding of the forces that influence form and a belief that design should respond to these forces, how does one begin to discover the forces that are in effect at a certain place and time, and to understand the meaning of forms as expressions of these forces? In other words, how do we interpret the landscape? What do we interpret, and how do we make landscape decisions?

In the Introduction to *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (Meinig, 1979), D. W. Meinig states that “environment sustains us as creatures; landscape displays us as culture” and “landscape is defined by our vision and interpreted by our minds.”

Landscapes that people inhabit are records of, and transmit meaning about, the culture. According to Mae Theilgard Watts (Meinig, 1979), we can “read that landscape” as we might read a book. Any culture can read its autobiography to discover itself.

The largest portion of the landscape consists of the common elements that Rapoport calls the folk tradition. The smaller portion is the preconsciously conceived, professionally designed elements that he calls the “grand tradition.” Together, the common and the grand express two sides of “who we are”: our innate self and our overt self. They communicate, as Pierce F. Lewis (“Axioms for Reading the Landscape”) says, “our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears in tangible, visible form” (Meinig, 1979). The fact that the vast majority of this landscape is unself-conscious, that we seldom think about it, results in a landscape that more honestly reflects the underlying forces to which it responds.

Landscapes are usually quite difficult to read, for two reasons. First, they are confusing, and often contradictory, as they evolve in response to competing, often contrasting influences, and forces that change over time. Second, we have been educated to focus on singular and grand issues, not to perceive the gestalt of landscape, and not to curiously explore the messy and uncontrolled world around us.

1.3 AXIOMS FOR READING THE LANDSCAPE

To design more responsively in any culture, we can begin by reading that culture’s autobiography—its landscape. In so doing, it is helpful to keep in mind Pierce F. Lewis’s published “Axioms for Reading the Landscape,” which are, as he says, “essential ideas underlying the reading of America’s cultural landscape.” These axioms, published in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, (Meinig, 1979), are summarized as follows, with some added comments concerning the implications of the axioms to landscape interpretation, design, and design education.

1.3.1 Axiom 1: The Axiom of Landscape as Clue to Culture

This axiom asserts that the commonplace elements in the landscape provide insight as to “the kind of people we are.” There are several corollaries to this axiom. The corollary of cultural change says that the landscape represents a large investment and that major changes to the landscape occur only in re-

sponse to major cultural changes. The regional corollary says that if one region looks significantly different from another, the region varies not only ecologically, but culturally as well. The corollary of convergence contends that as landscapes begin to look more similar, their cultures are, in fact, converging. The corollary of diffusion says that landscapes will change through imitation and that the degree of communication affects the rate of diffusion. Finally, the corollary of taste says that different cultures possess different biases as to what they like/dislike, promote/prohibit, and so on.

As we read the cultural landscape, we should keep in mind whether we are looking at an example of the vernacular tradition or the grand one. The first will tell us more about the actual culture and common life; the latter, more about the culture's grand aspirations, as viewed through the eyes of the design intelligentsia.

1.3.2 Axiom 2: The Axiom of Cultural Unity and Landscape Equality

This axiom says that all items in the human landscape convey meaning and that most convey about the same amount of meaning. According to this axiom, a vernacular building communicates about as much concerning the culture as does an architectural monument of the grand tradition. In areas dominated by vernacular expressions, the primary communication will be that of the common person. In areas dominated by the grand tradition, the main communication will be that of the design intelligentsia.

1.3.3 Axiom 3: The Axiom of Common Things

This axiom contends that the bulk of landscape design texts and professional journals communicate the grand tradition of design, and that there is a lack of scholarly writing about common elements of the landscape. The corollary is that we can discover the issues that affect decisions made by others than professional designers by observing the wealth of non-academic literature, such as the writings of Tom Wolfe and Bernard Rudofsky, trade journals, commercial advertisements, travel literature, and books by people studying cultural geography, environmental psychology, or landscape meaning.

1.3.4 Axiom 4: The Historic Axiom

This axiom addresses the significance of a knowledge of history when reading the landscape. On the one hand, our behavior is conditioned by the past, and understanding past decisions can prevent us from "reinventing the wheel" as we respond to ongoing processes. On the other hand, many artifacts are relics of conditions that have since changed, and a knowledge of history will prevent misinterpreting these as expressions of active forces. A knowledge of history helps us "read" the artifact.

This axiom has two corollaries. The corollary of historic lumpiness asserts that major cultural change occurs in sudden leaps, and that the landscape changes little between these leaps. The mechanical (or technological) corollary asserts that leaps of cultural change are usually associated with changes in technology or communication, and that a knowledge of the level of technology and communication is essential for one to interpret an element, or the entire landscape.

As we apply the historic axiom to reading the landscape, we should keep in mind that we are reading physical elements not as abstract forms, but as expressions of conditions and influences. We should also be aware that we are currently in a period of unprecedented cultural and technological change; accordingly, our landscapes are changing at an unparalleled rate.

1.3.5 Axiom 5: The Geographic (or Ecologic) Axiom

To understand the meaning of elements of a cultural landscape, we must study these elements in relation to their geographic or locational context. Our interpretation of the elements should be as much a response to their relation to context, as it is to the physical characteristics of the elements themselves.

Today, this axiom seems to be lost to a great number of practitioners of the grand tradition of architecture. It has been replaced with the notion that the designer's "overriding concept" gives meaning to the design. This trend has progressed to the point that a great number of projects that receive professional acclaim are communicated during the design phases as an "uncompromised" expression of the building, on a plane of green grass that recedes to infinity, where it meets a blue sky. However, once constructed, the building is perceived in its context. While the element in the drawing might be the element that was eventually built, the contextual rela-

tionships are dramatically different, as are the perception and interpretation of the element and the designed landscape.

1.3.6 Axiom 6: The Axiom of Environmental Control

According to this axiom, cultural landscapes relate intimately to the physical environment, and an understanding of natural systems is essential if one is to read the cultural landscape accurately. Since any landscape is a point-in-time expression of forces, this axiom implies that an understanding of the ecological forces that have created a region is essential to understanding the meaning of that landscape.

This axiom speaks for a regional attitude toward landscape design, as well as an appreciation for regionalism in design education. The regionalism suggested here is not, as is often implied in architecture today, the “reference” to an established or relic tradition by some design detail or “abstracted form,” but rather a systemic and integrative response to the multiplicity of forces that interact to create a given landscape. This axiom speaks for regional design traditions that evolve from, and integrate with, regional forces.

1.3.7 Axiom 7: The Axiom of Landscape Obscurity

While landscapes carry many meanings, they do not convey these messages in a pure and objective manner. Rather, they are somewhat nebulous and schizophrenic. Each statement is subject to many interpretations, and each is communicated in dialogue with a multiplicity of other statements. Discovering appropriate meanings requires that the landscape designer ask the right questions and remain sensitive to the multiplicity of landscape expressions.

The landscape designer should be sensitive to the obscure, dialectic character of the landscape, and to the fact that people prefer “open-ended” landscapes that enable the viewers to complete their message, and that can carry multiple meanings. We should be aware of the human tendency to reduce complex entities to singular statements, and of the reduced landscape meaning and reduced desirability that results from this tendency. We should seek to design open-ended landscapes that communicate multiple meanings as discussed in Christopher Alexander’s “A City is Not a Tree.”

With the preceding axioms, one has basic tools to interpret the landscape. As one makes these interpretations, it is essential to realize, as Axiom 7 says,

that the process is not passive. Landscape elements that convey many meanings through obscure expressions are subject to various interpretations. If the landscape is, as Meinig states, “interpreted by our minds,” then the “reader” of the landscape is integral to its meaning. Restated, the same landscape means different things to different people.

1.4 LANDSCAPE INTERPRETATION

In “The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene,” Meinig (1979) explores “observer bias.” He states that “any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes, but also what lies within our heads.” He suggests an exercise in which a diverse group of people is taken to a view that includes both city and countryside, and the participants are asked to describe the landscape, and to identify its elements, composition, and meaning. In this seminal article, Meinig then exposes different biases that affect landscape interpretation by discussing ten different perceptions of the viewed landscape. Meinig’s ten versions of the same scene present an excellent overview of the range of landscape interpretations that people are prone to perceive. These ten views are listed below, with comments and a visual image for each viewpoint. These images should not be seen as physical settings that express only this meaning, but rather as the tendency of a viewer to perceive this type of image, often with only the slightest cue from the setting, and often in the face of other stronger cues that encourage the observer to see the landscape from different viewpoints.

1.4.1 Landscape as Nature

This nostalgic romantic view, that reached its apex during the Romantic movement of the eighteenth century, holds nature dominant and humans subordinate. Nature is seen as pristine (a wilderness) without the presence of people (Figure 1-1). This conservationist view holds the natural landscape as an entity that should be preserved at all costs, for its own sake. Proponents prefer decisions that leave the landscape in an unmodified pristine state. They see all human works and human gestures in the landscape as feeble efforts that dim in comparison to the majesty, power, and magnificence of the natural landscape. The purity, power, and magnificence of the natural landscape are the vanguards of this view. Humans are relegated to a secondary, inconsequen-



Figure 1-1: Landscape as Nature

tial position and are considered the negative influence in a natural landscape of perfection.

Proponents of this view are prone to remove people and their visual expressions from the scene. They see the cultural landscape as an aberrant, imposed, and unreal landscape. The undisturbed landscape, even though in many cases a relic no longer expressive of formative influences, is considered the real and appropriate one. This view is held even when, in many cases, the natural landscape envisioned has been physically absent for centuries, and if re-created would not sustain itself in the context of present forces, which themselves can be seen as inappropriate.

This viewpoint separates people and nature. It tends, in many cases, to be a reactionary stance that comes to prominence in periods of landscape degradation, in response to human wholesale environmental destruction. Philosophically, it establishes a confrontational relationship between nature and people, with people as aggressors and despoilers of a legitimate, pure, and pristine natural landscape.

Proponents are often politically active at a grass-roots level. They promote legislation that preserves the landscape and limits people's ability to have an impact on the environment. Proponents work actively to create parks and wildlife areas, and to codify ordinances and standards that place constraints on the ability of planners, designers, developers, and others to have an impact on the environment. Environmental impact statements are primary vehicles proponents of this view promote to encourage decisions that will not adversely affect the physical and ecological environment.

Designers who strongly embrace this view perceive their primary societal value to be that of conserving, nurturing, and protecting the environment. Many of these landscape design professionals work in public service for city, state, or federal governments. Others work with grass-roots environmental groups; others, in environmentally oriented private practice offices. Still others teach in landscape architecture or related academic programs.

1.4.2 Landscape as Habitat

In this view, the landscape is a home for humankind. People are envisioned as working with and altering land to increase its productivity and redefine it as a resource, and functioning to domesticate the earth. Nature is the benign provider. People interact with nature; accept its basic organization, structure, and behavior; and modify nature so as to convert its materials into resources that sustain and enhance the quality of life. People manipulate the landscape but are motivated by a desire to harmonize, steward, cultivate, and manage the landscape so as to maintain its bounty (Figure 1-2).

This view, interrelating people and environment, reached its zenith in this country after the American Revolution, when people embraced the traditional structure and spatial arrangement of the agrarian landscape. Wilderness and cityscape were judged against the agrarian landscape and found to be lacking. Landscape as habitat takes its cues from the landscape, with human gesture responsive to condition, and development patterns integrating with natural ones. Landscape as habitat also pursues landscape interventions as physical expressions of ecological roots and seeks to modify nature to enhance its benefit to people. In this view, humankind is one with an environment consciously modified for human benefit. Every landscape is an expression both of nature and of culture.

According to this paradigm, quality of life is seen to be integrally linked to a healthy habitat, decisions



Figure 1-2: Landscape as Habitat

that function to maximize the human potential are deemed appropriate, and the maintenance of a quality, healthy environment is promoted. Decisions that degrade the environment are abandoned, and nature heals its wounds.

Perhaps the most well-known proponent of this viewpoint was R. Buckminster Fuller (Section 3.1.2). His *world games* sessions for exploring “spaceship earth’s” carrying capacity, and maximizing its ability to sustain cultures, greatly increased our understanding of the landscape as habitat.

This is a synergistic view of people integrating with, and becoming a part of, a managed nature. It tends to be dominant in vernacular approaches and in low-technology, third-world cultures directly dependent on the land for sustenance. These cultures modify the environment to harvest materials as resources but have little ability or desire to change nature in a profound manner. The cultures have a dialectic relationship with the landscape and realize that to use nature, they must obey it. The underlying assumption is that nature is a kind and gentle provider that, if respected and nurtured, will sustain life and provide a healthy, meaningful existence. People who hold this view see their primary societal

role as facilitators, helping nature sustain humankind.

In third-world and low-technology cultures, addressing the landscape as habitat is often necessary for survival. This view has also endured in some first-world, high-technology countries. In both cases, the landscapes that have evolved have two positive characteristics. First, they tend to be characterized by a high degree of harmony, with human gestures integrating with ecological expressions and providing a person-environment synergy. The cultural landscapes that evolve under this paradigm are often seen to have a strong sense of place (Section 13.1) and are preferred by a broad range of people. Many people travel great distances, often at considerable expense, to visit the quaint hamlet, remote village, or unique neighborhood evolved from this world view.

The second benefit is that these landscapes tend to be efficient and self-sustaining. Since human gestures are integrated with ecological ones, natural forces do not set about to destroy these gestures but rather reinforce their condition (Chapter 4), function, and maintenance.

1.4.3 Landscape as Artifact

This anthropomorphic view sees the landscape as an entity created by people (Figure 1-3). The holder of this view sees human expressions everywhere, and perceives the natural landscape as little more than the stage on which the cultural drama is played and recorded.

From this viewpoint, nature no longer exists. The entirety of the landscape is human-created. The soil, for example, is not seen as a human-modified biologically active medium, but rather as an entity “created” by the complex human activities of clearing, tilling, fertilizing, mulching, planting, irrigating, supplementing, enhancing, and so on. Waterways are not seen as streams and integral parts of a hydrologic system, but rather as engineered infrastructural conduits. The quintessential expression of this view is *made-land*, whereby coastal marshes have been anthropomorphically filled and re-created as major metropolitan areas (for example, most of the land area of Boston, Massachusetts). Another example of this view is the building itself: a human artifact, complete with a human-created climate and atmosphere.

According to the landscape-as-artifact viewpoint, people have conquered nature and reshaped it to their purposes, and use it as an expression of self. They no longer need, or desire, to respond to natural



Figure 1-3: Landscape as Artifact

patterns, because they are irrelevant in the presence of an all-dominating technology. Human beings can and should re-create a better landscape, free from the constraints of natural patterns. In this view, humankind is ecologically dominant and superior to nature, and is the quintessential form-giver. The landscape is redefined and reordered in the human image. This anthropomorphic order is not an integrative one, but rather an overt individualistic one.

Like the other views, the landscape-as-artifact viewpoint is a mental construct that has reoccurred at various times in history. However, until recently, because of limited technology, its expression has often been a rather localized phenomenon. For example, people could anthropomorphically re-create nature in the garden, but this restructuring could not be greatly extended in scale. We have recently achieved the ability to apply this view on a much larger scale, due to a rapidly escalating technology. With this increased potential, we have also come to perceive humankind as the technological re-creator of the global condition. This view is driving the engineer to reshape the landscape physically and the biotechnologist to redefine life forms and life processes.

The landscape-as-artifact viewpoint addresses the human desire for self-expression, and when combined with our massive technology, has had profound environmental ramifications. The application of this technology to the wholesale re-creation of the physical condition, without an appreciation for integrating with natural processes, has resulted in widespread pollution and natural-system degradation. This degradation includes problems with groundwater and surface water quality and quantity, loss of topsoil and soil productivity, ozone depletion, and an almost infinite number of other environmental problems (Chapter 16.2). The landscape-as-artifact view is a short-term, ego-driven viewpoint that is unaware of, or insensitive to, the problems created by its implementation.

1.4.4 Landscape as System

In this holistic view the landscape is a system consisting of interdependent subsystems, with elements seen as expressions of and cues for understanding, systems and their underlying processes. This is a relatively new, rapidly expanding and evolving

viewpoint. It began as a reaction to a reductive Newtonian science and to a propensity to study things and pieces rather than seeking understanding of complex interrelationships. The landscape-as-system viewpoint has grown rapidly since the emergence (1930s) and growing acceptance of the science of relativity as the view of reality. This new scientific viewpoint is holistic and integrative and sees meaning accruing not primarily from elements, but from interrelationship of elements, with system behavior, and with generative processes. The landscape-as-system view also holds that elements holistically express the various systems of which they are a part.

In this mindset, people and nature are expressions of a systemic oneness. The landscape, as system and subsystems, is the entity understood and managed for environmental and human well-being. Landscape health and wellness are considered essential to ecological and human health and wellness, and human wellness is expressive of a healthy environmental system.

From this viewpoint, elements are not things but integrations of systems. For example, a building is an element within urban experiential, structural, and infrastructural systems. It is an integral part of a spatial system (seen as mass from the outside and as space from the inside) that is experienced temporally as the viewer moves through the landscape. The building is also part of a climatic system and can be designed for optimal water and energy exchange with the landscape (Figure 1-4).

The landscape-as-system view sees actions in relation to system dynamics and life-cycle flows. Hu-

man behavior and design decisions are considered in their internal and external systemic contexts, and evaluated in terms of reactions (primary, secondary, tertiary, quaternary) and implications to health and productivity of the landscape as system. Good landscape decisions are those that promote management of the landscape and its subsystems and maintains or enhances carrying capacity, health, and productivity.

This viewpoint's popularity has grown with increased cultural awareness of system breakdowns that have resulted from our recent history of anthropocentric behavior. In contrast to the landscape-as-artifact view, the landscape-as-system viewpoint promotes sustainable, culturally relevant landscapes, integrates form and function with landscape dynamics, and maximizes long-term health and productivity of the physical and cultural landscape.

Designers who hold this viewpoint pursue a *systems management* approach, viewing landscape design, first and foremost, as the management of systems. These designers see design as a creative response to systemic behavior, rather than as the expression of the designer's ego independent of context. People holding this viewpoint function in various capacities (private professional firms, nonprofits, public agencies, academic practice), promoting effective management of ecological and human systems, engaging in ecological and human system and impact assessment and mitigation, developing systems-based and performance-based ordinances and development controls, promoting systems-sensitive planning and design, integrating the decisions of diverse people over long periods, and teach-

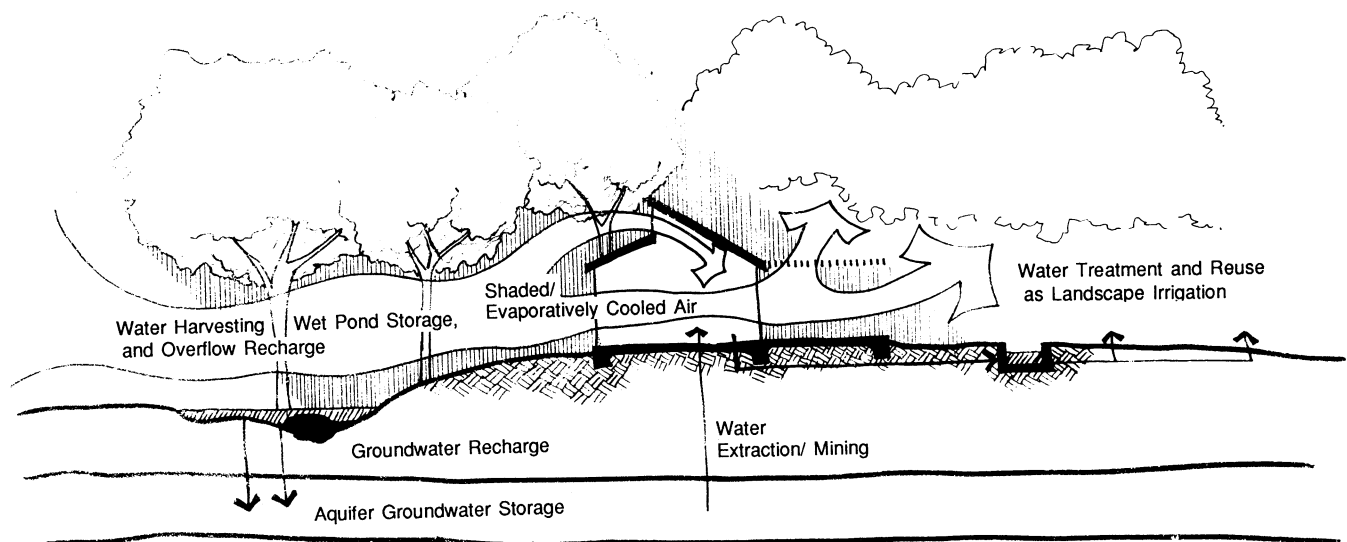


Figure 1-4: Landscape as System

ing others about systems-sensitive urban and regional planning, landscape architecture, and architecture.

1.4.5 Landscape as Problem

This view sees the landscape, including its natural and human-made elements, as a situation needing correction. Ozone depletion, polluted air, urban crime, abandoned housing, spoiled beaches, contaminated estuaries, soiled streams, eroded lands, urban blight and sprawl, congestion, and dilapidated buildings are seen as evidence of this problematic landscape. In this view a pervasive and ubiquitous presence of ecological, physiological, and psychological illness is the essence of the landscape (Figure 1-5).

This mindset can include an appreciation for the preceding four views, including reverence for nature, appreciation of landscape as habitat, sensitivity to landscape as artifact, and response to landscape as system. However, this approach's underlying premise is that all is in disarray. A compelling case is made for this point of view by Rachel Carson in



Figure 1-5: Landscape as Problem (From *Design with Nature*, Ian L. McHarg)

Silent Spring (1982), and by the film *Koyaanisqatsi* (a Hopi word loosely translating to “life out of balance”). Like the landscape-as-system viewpoint, this is a growing view, owing to the rapid rise in technology and exponentially increasing ability to degrade the landscape and thereby change it from resource to problem.

Expressions of this view range from a shrill cry of alarm to a more optimistic view of many landscape designers. These designers take a problem-solving approach (Section 15.1) and sometimes regard landscapes as severe problems needing immediate correction, and at other times as merely challenges to create a better world. In this later sense, this view shares ground with the landscape-as-artifact viewpoint.

The landscape-as-problem view is promoted by education addressing landscape design as functional, infrastructural, behavioral, or aesthetic problem-solving. It precludes the opinion that “in this case, nothing should be done!” This mindset dominated most schools of architecture and landscape architecture in the 1970s and continues in some today.

From this viewpoint the landscape designer applies professional skills, scientific knowledge, and aesthetic sensitivity to the correction of environmental ills. Unlike the landscape-as-artifact view that sees value in human expressions, the landscape-as-problem approach emphasizes the problems these expressions represent. This can be a short-term view (existing situation as problem, little attention to secondary, tertiary, and quaternary problems) or can focus on long-term problem-solving.

Applied with a long-term focus, the landscape-as-problem view tends to produce landscapes with few problems. However, applied with a short-term perspective, actions to solve immediate problems often cause reactions even more problematic than the original condition. This viewpoint can also create boring landscapes, characterized by a placelessness that fails to provide the enrichment necessary to sustain the human spirit and promote psychological health.

1.4.6 Landscape as Wealth

This view is based upon the perception that people “own” land. The primary value of land is its economic worth; all other landscape measures are secondary to investment potential. Land is a commodity whose value is determined in the marketplace, in units of currency (Figure 1-6). This real-estate-appraiser view, seeking “highest and best use,”

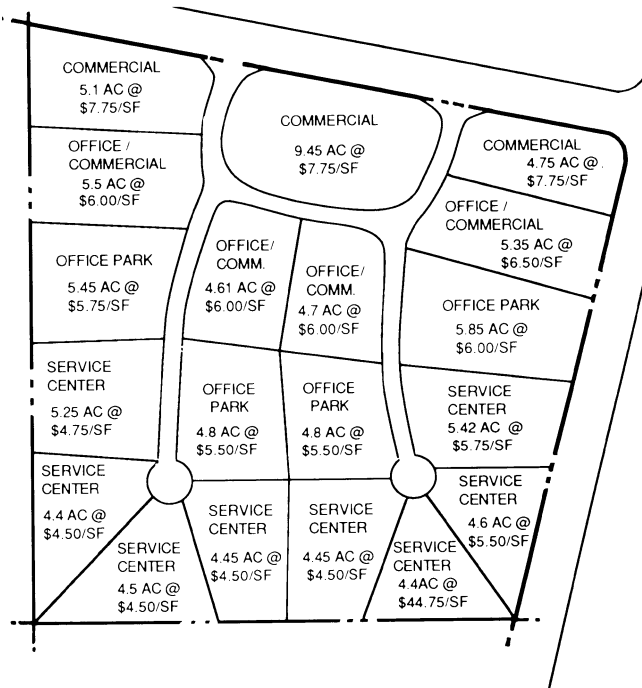


Figure 1-6: Landscape as Wealth

highly integrates various influences via the marketplace to establish land value, and is continually updated in response to new conditions.

This abstract, geographic view translates the landscape into an economic unit, such as square footage of commercial space or number of single family residences. It considers physical land characteristics, market influences, external conditions that influence value, and the intrinsic potential of the land to accommodate the support systems necessary to service the site and promote development. Advocates of this view have a working knowledge of, and appreciation for, the landscape and support systems as economic inputs. Accessibility and the available capacity of support systems (sanitary and storm sewers, electrical and gas service) are often more important than physical characteristics. Sense of place, context, and even the people present are important. Where the rich or poor congregate affect perceived status and economic value; image is a valued economic resource.

Believers in the landscape-as-wealth view consider economic opportunities and constraints intrinsic to the landscape, and those that can be introduced to affect value. They include both landscape as present wealth, and landscape as future wealth. They are futures oriented because the economic value of landscape is, to a large degree, a prediction of its future condition, use, and value.

The landscape-as-wealth viewpoint, strongly seated in our capitalistic ideology, has driven the design of the twentieth-century American landscape. In our materialistic culture and short-term perspective, this approach has enabled us to exploit the environment, grow rapidly, and have a profound impact on landscape efficiency and sustainability. This perspective makes decisions based on economic value rather than landscape carrying capacity. This view served us well during the period of resource abundance created by the exploitation of fossil fuels. But this approach will serve us poorly during the period of resource scarcity, which we have recently entered (Section 16.2).

1.4.7 Landscape as Ideology

In this view the landscape is seen as a symbol of the values, ideals, aspirations, hopes, and dreams of a culture (Figure 1-7). People encode and decode landscape meanings about the culture, its underlying philosophies, and its self-perception. The landscape is the physical expression of the culture, and its hopes and dreams. It is rich in associations, and takes on the personality of those who create it. This view sees the landscape as the embodiment of values and asserts that if we are to change the landscape, we must first change the cultural philosophy that creates it.

This mindset maximizes the cultural meaning of the landscape. In homogeneous, slowly changing cultures, and when complete landscapes are created to convey a single ideology, this view can result in landscapes with a strong and integrated sense. Conversely, in heterogeneous societies and ones that change very rapidly, such as contemporary America, this view generates a cultural landscape that is spontaneous and stimulating. These highly diverse societies can also produce landscapes in which elements relate poorly to one another, and that lack the relatedness necessary to establish a strong sense. Such societies can create overly stimulating, chaotic, and psychologically unhealthy landscapes.

1.4.8 Landscape as History

The landscape in this view is the complex documentation of the history of natural and human activities in a particular location. It is the cumulative record, documented chronologically. Landscape elements have meaning in context to the chronology, events leading to the creation of the elements, and changes the elements heralded. In this view of landscape, everything is positioned in time and se-



Figure 1-7: Landscape as Ideology

quence. Settlement patterns, urban form, architectural style, site detail, and other planned and designed characteristics are means for dating elements, and contributing to the chronology (Figure 1-8).

In this view, the landscape is layers of history. Sometimes these temporal layers are separated in space, as when an entire community is settled during one time period. More commonly, they are interwoven spatially, and the landscape becomes an historically rich, spatial-temporal mosaic. The historical view deciphers this mosaic to develop mental constructs of landscape as living history. To do so, the landscape historian decodes the environment; that is, the historian reads and interprets cues and extrapolates from these cues to reconstruct history. In so doing, the historian is sensitive to which cues normally survive for long periods (such as settlement and urban patterns), and those that are more ephemeral (such as landscape plantings).

The landscape is seen as the record of physical gestures of many generations of people, and of eco-

logical processes structured in time. Proponents decipher this record but usually find it to be an incomplete document. As the landscape historian deciphers the record, organizational patterns, materials, forms, and details tell something about the culture, subculture, and individuals, as well as about the natural forces that created the landscape. To understand the landscape and correctly interpret its elements, the landscape historian views these data in their historical context and in relation to their links with the past and future.

Whereas the landscape-as-system viewpoint seeks to understand the landscape as ecological and human processes that build interactive systems, the landscape-as-history view considers these processes structured in time to explain and interpret changes to physical elements as landscape gestures, and thereby to build a more complete historical record. Landscape gestures are viewed in relation to the cultures and individuals that created them, rather than present-day culture and individuals. Yet, the aggregate of these gestures, that is, the contemporary



Figure 1-8: Landscape as History

landscape, is the context within which the historical element is displayed and interpreted, and within which the current drama of life is performed. Therefore, the current landscape affects our perception of history, and the landscape-as-history view affects our current perception and behavior. In this interactive manner, the landscape becomes a living history.

This viewpoint enables us to develop a better understanding of who we are by giving us an understanding of how we came to be. It reinforces our collective consciousness as a culture by focusing on our shared history. However, in our heterogeneous, rapidly changing culture, this view can result in an overly stimulating landscape whose elements lack visual relatedness and can, therefore, be alienating. Also, if focused only backward, this view does not address the relevancy of the individual element to current and future conditions. By looking to the present as living history and the future as history yet to express itself, this view shares ground with

the landscape-as-system mindset and becomes an integral part of daily life.

1.4.9 Landscape as Place

This phenomenological view sees the landscape as sensual experience. It focuses not on elements, but on the sensual (sound, smell, tactile) gestalt. This approach also concentrates on the feel, flavor, and ambiance of place; the richness of mental constructs and associations; and the ability of the place to be remembered over time (Figure 1-9).

Holders of this view take pleasure in the immense variety, uniqueness, and individuality of places. These individuals look beyond generalized understanding and seek to discover the unique sense and value of place that they contend all places have. This can be a powerful view, stimulating numbers of people to travel around the world to experience a special city like Venice or a region like the Alps.



Figure 1-9: Landscape as Place

Adherents of this view believe that the person and the environment are inextricably bound in oneness, and that sensing healthy places is an essential dimension of human health and wellness. This viewpoint has been influenced by the philosopher Heidegger (1977) and the architect Norberg-Schulz (1980). Placemaking as human expression and concentration of meaning is seen as one of the essential efforts of human existence. Section 13.2 pursues this view as it explores design as psychological health and placemaking.

This view, often held by the geographer, is concerned with the characteristics of places and the analysis of how places are organized, structured, and spatially arranged to create the perceived landscape. It is also of value to the environmental psychologist, who seeks to understand relationships between place and consciousness. Place is also a basic unit of analysis in the area of study known as environmental perception.

The landscape-as-place approach is communicated in many ways. Writers eloquently use words to convey ambiance. Photographers, including Ansel Adams, have produced evocative images, and

painters move beyond reproduction to intensify the communication of placeness. Geographers develop cognitive mapping techniques to communicate the mental construct of place, and aerial and locational maps to communicate the spatial arrangement of special places in the landscape.

The landscape-as-place viewpoint focuses on the gestalt rather than on the elements. Landscapes generated by this view downplay the designer's ego and concentrate on landscape character. They tend to be visually coherent, exciting, and sensually rewarding environments. These landscapes, therefore, share characteristics with ones generated by the landscape as system view. Individual gestures integrate with context. They tend not to be pure responses to single issues, but rather to be complex expressions that arbitrate among a multitude of contextual influences.

The landscapes that emerged in slowly changing, low-technology cultures usually had an integrated, systemic sense because of the limited choices available. With our rapidly changing heterogeneous culture and powerful technology, achieving a coherent sense requires a landscape-as-place emphasis and aggressive management of the experiential gestalt.

1.4.10 Landscape as Aesthetic

This view places primary emphasis on the artistic quality of landscape features and the landscape as visual scene (Figure 1-10). In contrast to the landscape-as-place view that sees the landscape experientially, the landscape-as-aesthetic viewpoint takes a detached, abstract approach. It interprets visual forms on the basis of some language of art, such as line, form, color, texture, rhythm, proportion, balance, symmetry, harmony, tension, unity, variety, and so on (Section 8.1). This view might synergize with other ones, such as landscape as history, or landscape as place. However, these considerations are seen as secondary to the primary message: the landscape as a vehicle for communicating aesthetic relationships.

The landscape-as-aesthetic approach is a cerebral view of the landscape that holds truth and beauty not to be in function or experience, but as some aesthetic ideal. Human involvement with the landscape is intended to be contemplative rather than experiential. The landscape is seen as object, and the scene



Figure 1-10: Landscape as Aesthetic

is detached from human behavior. Landscapes are endowed with high viewing value. Whether they function properly or have high cultural meaning is of little importance to this viewpoint.

These ten views, of course, are not a complete list of observer biases. These approaches do, however, provide a comprehensive overview and reveal the complexity of landscape interpretation. This complexity becomes more evident as we realize that these views do not exist in isolation. The observer usually espouses and is influenced by more than one bias simultaneously. The individual's interpretation of landscape is usually a complex synergism of several of these (and other) views.

The manner in which we manage, plan, and design the landscape is profoundly affected by how we see the landscape. How we see is, in turn, based on our *world view*: our basic assumptions and beliefs about the potentials and problems of existence, and how we organize ourselves and act to address these potentials and problems. Our world view affects the potentials we see and those we do not see; it affects the problems we solve, and those we exacerbate because they cannot be anticipated through our world view. Chapter 2 looks at world views in general; Chapter 3 explores how world views are structured by culture and education.

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