

## O N C U L T U R A L L A N D S C A P E S

A M O S R A P O P O R T

In this largely conceptual paper it is argued that cultural landscapes are the subject matter in the study of environment-behavior relations generally, and in the study of traditional dwellings and settlements specifically. The concept of cultural landscape is clarified by discussing its two components — “landscape” and “cultural.” A number of important consequences of making cultural landscapes the subject are then discussed. These include insights about the components of cultural landscapes that produce their character and ambience; how perception of cultural landscapes relates to modes of travel and, hence, to changes in technology and other aspects of culture; insights into the nature of design as a process; discussion of the role of ordering systems and, hence, a clarification of how cross-cultural studies should be done; and, finally, advocacy of the study of high style and vernacular, and the relations between them, together. This last strategy, it is argued, is essential if either is to be understood.

IN THIS PAPER I ARGUE FOR THE NEED TO USE THE CULTURAL landscape as the subject matter in the study of Environment-Behavior Relations (EBR) generally, and in the study of traditional dwellings and settlements in particular. I have been making this point for quite some time now, and there is currently growing interest in the topic. In Geography, where the concept originated, it is enjoying a revival after an eclipse for some time. There has been a call for its use in Architectural History,<sup>1</sup> and the 1992 meeting of the Society for Commercial Archaeology deals with the transformation of the American cultural landscape after World War II as a result of the car and the highway. In these cases, the built environment is used as an additional term; elsewhere, the two terms are seen as synonymous.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore clear that — as is so often the case — there is some terminological confusion, and it is

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important to clarify what is being discussed. This is a very general requirement — the first step is always conceptual clarification and domain definition. Only then can given problems or questions regarding the domain be addressed,<sup>3</sup> in particular in connection with the subject matter of this journal, the cross-cultural study of cultural landscapes.

I therefore begin this largely conceptual and general paper by discussing the two components of the concept: “landscape” and “cultural.”

### “LANDSCAPE”

The term cultural “landscape” is unfortunate mainly because its general, everyday usage, stemming from its origins, is rather different from its technical usage. The origins of the term are relatively recent, traceable to the Renaissance, and closely related to landscape painting. From painting, as “landscaping,” the concept became landscape design. This application came to influence common usage — for example, through reference to a “beautiful landscape.” The implication is that there is some fundamental difference between a “landscape” and, say, a decayed urban area or a roadside strip. But such usage represents the exact opposite of what a cultural landscape is. A roadside strip or a decaying urban area are cultural landscapes, as are recent neologisms such as “townscape,” “streetscape,” “roofscape,” “housescape,” “wirescape,” and the like. At issue is how one can understand, analyze and interpret all such different types of landscapes.

Implicit in the common usage is a contrast between “manmade” and “natural,” with “landscape” referring to the latter. But as a concept “natural” itself is neither straightforward nor self-evident. Many apparently natural landscapes are, in fact, managed, the attempt being to make them park-like, with undergrowth cleared away and trees thinned. Most studies of landscape preference (e.g., in forestry research) make it clear that the presence of undergrowth, dead and fallen trees, and the like reduce liking for landscapes. Clearly, an image or schema of “natural,” possibly based on romantic models in painting and literature, is being used to evaluate landscapes. It follows that one would expect differences cross-culturally. This is, in fact, the case. To give just one example, golf courses are seen as natural in Japan but not in the U.S.<sup>4</sup>

More importantly, most landscapes are a result of human action — or at least they have been considerably modified by it. This is the principal point of a recent discussion of landscape in general.<sup>5</sup> However, the point was made as early as 1956 that there was no place left on earth which, even if not

manmade, had not been at least modified or influenced by human action.<sup>6</sup> This is much more the case now, 35 years later.

The term “cultural landscape” was introduced to U.S. Geography by Carl Sauer from German Cultural Geography where it originated at the turn of the century. In all cases it designates the result of the interaction of human action and the natural landscape. Thus, in 1906 Otto Schlüter referred to human culture acting on the primeval landscape through the medium of time.<sup>7</sup> The question, of course, becomes at what point “primeval” becomes cultural, how much impact is necessary before some threshold or transition is reached. Clearly, the more modified by humans, the more “cultural” a landscape. Hence, the most modified landscapes — settlements — are cultural landscapes *par excellence*. Yet even hunters and gatherers modify the landscape considerably, as Australian Aborigines shaped pre-contact Australia using fire. Similarly, pastoralists have shaped landscapes, as through the impact of goats on the Mediterranean region, or of cows on high Alpine meadows in Switzerland.

Human alteration of the landscape, however, became much clearer after the advent of agriculture. The gardens of the New Guinea highlands, the rice terraces of Asia, and the date-tree oases of the Middle East are as much cultural landscapes as the dwellings and settlements in their midst; moreover, they form a single system, as is the case with a village in India,<sup>8</sup> or the whole landscape in places like Australia and New Zealand, where exotic plants and animals, as well as buildings and settlement forms, were all introduced, transforming “the look of the land” (significantly also the title of a book about the U.S. rural landscape<sup>9</sup>).

Thus, all (or most) landscapes are cultural in the sense that they result from human actions on natural givens (geomorphology, hydrology, ecology, and the like) over historical time. One can identify the ways in which particular landscapes were settled, developed, used and modified. As such, landscapes include overall spatial organization, land uses, circulation networks, plants, field layouts, fencing, buildings, settlements, and so on.<sup>10</sup>

For our purposes, therefore, “landscape” does not refer to artistic or literal representations of the visible natural world, as it did through the nineteenth century; nor does it refer to “natural” scenery. Rather, it refers to the integration of natural and human phenomena on a portion of the earth’s surface.<sup>11</sup> In this view, landscapes, as systems of settings (see later), are taken to be intimately related to human life, and are primarily for living and working in rather than for just looking at (although they can, of course, serve both purposes). They are

also always “symbolic”: i.e., they always have meaning<sup>22</sup> — which is another way of saying they are cultural.

## “CULTURAL”

If all landscapes are at the very least modified through human action, are lived in and have meaning, this makes them cultural, since culture defines all human beings, while at the same time dividing them into groups.<sup>23</sup>

This is not the place to discuss the nature of culture in general. But an important issue which bears on the need to study cultural landscapes cross-culturally is their variability. This follows from their relationship to specific groups and, hence, their ability to be diagnostic of groups — whether through the use of house forms, village and field forms, street patterns, gardens and plants, or other elements.<sup>24</sup>

This variability cross-culturally, although still a primary attribute of cultural landscapes, is especially marked in traditional (vernacular, folk) landscapes. These tend to vary in space, but change slowly. They are thus highly group specific, producing variety. On the other hand, high-style and popular landscapes, particularly contemporary ones, vary over time,<sup>25</sup> and are characterized by relatively rapid change or transformation.

Note that the creation of cultural landscapes can be shown to be related not only to various aspects of culture through wants and choices,<sup>26</sup> but to the constraints operating in various situations. Among such constraints are resources, knowledge, technology and, hence, the ability to influence or modify landscapes, or the energy to do so;<sup>27</sup> prejudice, operating either informally or through sumptuary laws about building height, color, location, etc. (as in Beijing and ancient China generally, Cambodia, or the Zoroastrian houses and neighborhoods of Iran<sup>28</sup>); and rules, religion,<sup>29</sup> or self-imposed limitations of various sorts (e.g., the Bedouin, who use permanent materials when the group “owns” land, but impermanent materials when it does not).<sup>30</sup>

The impact of human action on landscapes occurs over time so that a cultural landscape is the result of a complex history. The differential interaction over time of the many cultural characteristics of different populations and groups (both wants and constraints) with a variety of physiographic and ecological specifics of the land (i.e., geographic, biotic, resource, social, and other opportunities and constraints) produces the variety of specific material-culture complexes called cultural landscapes.<sup>31</sup> This is why the attributes of cultural landscapes

become the property of groups: it is this link to culture, as defining groups, that makes them cultural.

## HOW DO CULTURAL LANDSCAPES COME TO BE?

Cultural landscapes are rarely “designed” in the common meaning of this term, although parts may be, for example, the monumental parts of cities. This draws attention to the most interesting and intriguing attribute of cultural landscapes: the fact that although they are not “designed,” they have an unmistakable and easily identifiable character — if one knows the “code,” a single view may suffice. This raises a question: If they are not “designed,” how can cultural landscapes come to be and be recognizable? Put differently, the question becomes how do the many independent decisions of innumerable people over long periods of time come to “add up?”

Many of the most interesting features of cultural landscapes and the reasons why they should be the unit of study in EBR stem from attempts to answer this question. An obvious answer is that somehow the decisions taken and the choices made (and design is a process of choosing among alternatives<sup>32</sup>) are consistent, systematic and orderly. In effect, they produce a style which is best defined as the outcome of a series of systematic choices made over time.

This has several immediate implications, the more general aspects of which I have discussed elsewhere. One implication concerns the nature of design, which is clearly an activity very different from that which “designers” talk about; it is best considered as any change made by humans to the face of the earth. A second implication concerns the relation of design so conceived to thought, schemata, and the like. The fact that cultural landscapes “add up” to recognizable wholes in spite of the apparently uncoordinated activity of many actors over long time periods implies that the people involved must share schemata.<sup>33</sup> Members of a group must have the same, or very similar, schemata (one definition of culture is, of course, precisely in terms of shared schemata, so that groups differ in terms of their schemata and the ideals they embody). Such schemata can refer to ideal landscapes which may be symbolic, cosmological,<sup>34</sup> or non-empirical — mythical, imaginary landscapes such as heaven, hell, paradise, Middle-Earth, Shangri-la, the Dreamtime, etc.

One can then ask how such mental schemata are translated into form, i.e., how landscapes are shaped.<sup>35</sup> Clearly, any translation involves human action; it is people who create landscapes, as they do any environment. They do this by

applying systems of rules that try to re-create, however imperfectly, the ideal landscapes embodied in the schemata.

Such systems of rules can be formal or informal, unwritten or written,<sup>26</sup> however, they provide the frameworks within which the apparently independent decisions “add up.” The decisions and choices are made by following the rule systems. One can see these systems as a specific aspect of the habitual behavior resulting from culture, and also as related to the definition of culture as a framework for assembling particulars.<sup>27</sup>

The application of these rules leads to systematic choices, and it is this systematicity that leads to styles in material culture and, in this case, to recognizable cultural landscapes. Also, as an aspect of culture, rules (like schemata) are in turn related to lifestyles, values and norms, and world views.<sup>28</sup> This also makes rule systems group specific. A homogeneous group within a localized area following rules which lead to systematic choices typically produces a distinctive cultural landscape. It follows that groups that are homogeneous and clustered will produce particularly distinctive cultural landscapes.<sup>29</sup> Different rules (whether prescriptive or proscriptive) lead to cultural landscapes characterized by very different orders.<sup>30</sup>

Homogeneity and clustering are now increasingly rare; in today’s world most groups tend to be interspersed spatially. Any homogeneity that survives is more likely to exist at small scales (e.g., in urban or rural neighborhoods) than at large scales (states or regions), and so the persistence of cultural landscapes is also more likely at smaller scales. Also, in general, the persistence of clear (or strong) orders depends on conservatism, i.e., the existence of tradition-oriented people unwilling (or unable) to alter that which has worked and is time honored.<sup>31</sup> As tradition weakens or disappears, so do the degree of sharing of schemata and the strength of rules. The result is a reduction of clearly distinct cultural landscapes, especially at larger scales, with consequent “blurring” and, hence, a declining place specificity of traditional vernaculars (as opposed to the time specificity of high-style and popular design).<sup>32</sup> A major difference between those cultural landscapes called traditional and other cultural landscapes concerns the extent to which schemata are shared, the strength of the resulting rules and the degree to which people internalize them and feel bound by them, and the persistence of schemata over time.

It should be noted that schemata are also used in evaluating cultural landscapes — that is, real landscapes are evaluated in terms of ideal landscapes. If congruent with ideals, landscapes are evaluated positively; if incongruent, they are evaluated negatively. This is, of course, the case with the evaluation of all environments, for example, housing or urban neighbor-

hoods.<sup>33</sup> More importantly, it follows that there can be no chaotic cultural landscapes. Those described as such are in reality those that are disliked, misunderstood, or inappropriate, because they are incongruent with a particular observer’s schemata, ideals, values, norms, and the like (FIG. 1).<sup>34</sup>

The possibility of such a lack of congruence stems from the striking variety of cultural landscapes and their components (for example, dwellings). Given the apparently smaller variety of uses, behaviors, activities, and so on, this great variety becomes a key question to be explained. My response to this question has been that human activities are more varied than seems apparent, and that this variability lies, above all, in their latent aspects — i.e., in their meaning, which is most closely related to culture, both through life-style and the ideals, values and norms embodied in schemata.<sup>35</sup> The apparently reduced variety of cultural landscapes currently can then be traced to a convergence among these latent aspects.

Cultural landscapes are thus ultimately a reflection of some schema of an ideal landscape given concrete expression through the application of systems of rules about how to do things: what to leave out or include (i.e., what to choose), what to emphasize and how, how to arrange and organize things, and so on. In this sense cultural landscapes approximate, however imperfectly, some ideal notion of ideal people living ideal lives in an ideal environment. Through the systematic choices made, the physical landscape comes to replicate that ideal as closely as possible, within the possibilities and constraints — “asymptomtically,” as it were. Cultural landscapes thus provide systems of settings for the ideal life, or the good life. They are thus also expressions of preferred or ideal life-styles, and are evaluated — i.e., their environmental quality is judged — in such terms.<sup>36</sup>

Changes in ideal life-styles and the landscapes that go with them (or symbolize them), then, explain apparent changes and even reversals in the evaluation of actual landscapes, their vegetation, and other attributes: mountains, Roman ruins, wilderness, suburbia, native bush in Australia, and so on.<sup>37</sup> An example, recently published, concerns Kyoto. During the classical period (in ancient Heiankyo) the many quarters into which the city was divided were enclosed by walls, and residents shunned the exterior. Streets were seen as an ambiguous and often dangerous space, a spatial zone that was evaluated negatively and avoided. During the Middle Ages, on the contrary, the city’s quarters opened up to the streets, which were then evaluated positively and became the setting for daily social life and many activities including festivals and parades (which were popular among all social groups). The life of the quarters came to be organized around the street.<sup>38</sup>

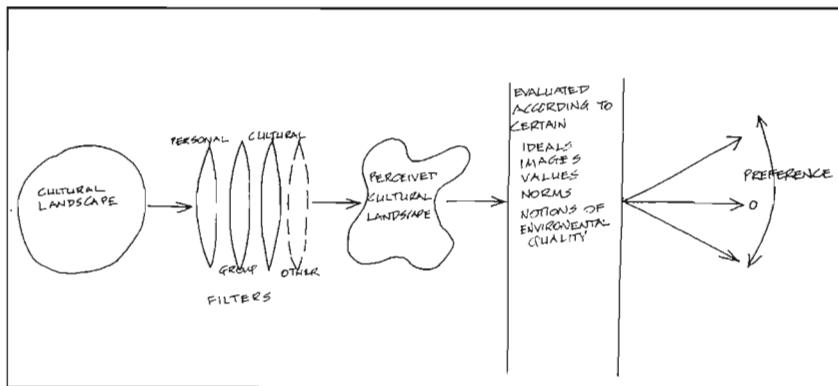


FIGURE 1. Preference for cultural landscapes emerges as a result of filtering and evaluation processes. Based in part on: Rapoport, 1977, Fig.21, p.48.

Thus, as ideals change, either within a group or with the emergence of a new dominant group, so does the evaluation of the environmental quality of existing cultural landscapes, which then change accordingly.<sup>39</sup> Note that there can be negative symbolic landscapes: “dark satanic mills,” decaying urban areas, the bush or the provinces among city dwellers, large cities (as in the anti-urban bias of some cultures), or suburbia. Such negative views can be studied, just as can positive symbolic landscapes or schemata. It would be interesting to study how, and to what extent, positive and negative symbolic landscapes are used in evaluation.

At the same time, it follows that underlying such changes and reversals are constant processes.<sup>40</sup> In the case of the evaluation of cultural landscapes, these involve the matching of perceived environments against values and ideals expressed in schemata. Similarly, the great variety of cultural landscapes results from the constant process of trying to give physical expression to some schema. There may also be constancies, cross-culturally and historically, in both positive and/or negative schemata; this also is a researchable question.

### THE COMPONENTS OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

It is always useful to consider the components of complex systems, and also to ask how these components might be conceptualized in ways useful for particular research questions. One can propose a non-exhaustive list of conceptualizations which are not naturally exclusive, but which are either complementary or differentially useful for different research questions and problems. Even such a non-exhaustive list, however, would become very long, and I will only discuss a few selected examples.

Like all designed environments, cultural landscapes can be conceptualized as organizations of space, time, meaning and communication. For example, space organization reflects and influences communication among people, and also communi-

cates meaning from the environment to people. This is one inadequacy of definitions that emphasize space to the exclusion of time, meaning and communication.

Cultural landscapes consisting, as they do, of a variety of types of environments (fixed-feature elements) and other components of material culture (semi-fixed elements) are therefore systems of settings. I use this term in the sense of a physical milieu which incorporates certain rules communicated through cues which remind people of relevant situations and, hence, appropriate behavior — resulting in patterns of behavior which make co-action possible.<sup>41</sup> I emphasize the importance of settings because cultural landscapes are much more than compositions of manmade or man-modified spaces to serve as a background for the collective existence of a group.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, a cultural landscape is a system of settings within which particular systems of activities (including their latent aspects) take place in space and time, incorporating particular proximities, linkages and separations, and boundaries among settings (and the ways in which these latter are expressed physically). All of these, in turn, reflect and influence communication, and also have meaning.<sup>43</sup> It follows that a dwelling, for example, is not only part of a larger system, but is itself a particular subsystem of settings. Both that subsystem and the way in which it relates to other settings in the larger system in which it is set, are highly variable cross-culturally. In other words, the question “who does what, where, when, including or excluding whom (and why)?” receives very different answers. Put differently, the settings comprising the system are linked in space and time through the systems of activities.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the extent of the various systems needs to be discovered, not decided *a priori*.<sup>45</sup>

It follows that differences among activity systems (and the ways in which they are distributed among settings in space and time) are one of the causes of variability among cultural landscapes. The presence or absence of people in various settings, the tempos and rhythms of their activities, and the

periodicities and channels of movement all play a role in people's perceptions of such landscapes, in the simplest sense of what they perceive and from where. For example, from freeways and arterials one never sees what is behind; the interpretation of cultural landscapes may then not correspond to the larger landscape (FIG. 2).<sup>46</sup>

Activities, routes, and speed and mode of travel (i.e., the means of transport) play a crucial role in interpreting landscapes, since they influence what is seen, from where, and at what speed. The criticality of the travel mode is also evident in the role it plays in terms of the ability to stop and look around, the variety of sensory modalities available, and so on. These determinants, in turn, influence people's knowledge, cognitions and understandings, and, hence, their interpretation of cultural landscapes and, at least partly, their preferences.<sup>47</sup>

The combination of sequential views which comprise a perceived landscape is significantly influenced by the speed at which the views are experienced. It is instructive to carry out mental experiments (as it would be to carry out simulations) of differences between landscapes experienced at 4 versus 65 m.p.h. The modal speed at which landscapes are experienced plays an important role in understanding the differences between traditional and contemporary cultural landscapes, transformations in such landscapes, and so on. Also, there are attributes of cultural landscapes which become accessible with the development of new modes of travel — above all (although not exclusively) air travel. Many patterns — of roads and causeways, buildings, settlements, vegetation, and other features — can only be perceived from the air and, consequently, are not otherwise available for cognitive maps.<sup>48</sup> Some may, with more difficulty, be inferred from the ground.

This is critical for planning and design. If cultural landscapes (such as new towns, regional developments, major parks, campuses, etc.) are conceived (i.e., planned and designed) from above — as so many are using plans, models and the like — they may not be at all comprehensible from the ground. What seem to be noticeable differences and clear structures on aerial views and plans, particularly if color and other graphic devices are used, may not be perceptible on the ground. This seems to be the case with Chandigarh, Brasilia, and other newly planned cities. The principle also applies to regional landscapes. To be perceived and comprehended by users from ground level, cultural landscapes need to be conceived, planned and designed from that perspective, as vernacular, traditional ones always were.

All this argues against views that a cultural landscape represents a portion of the surface of the earth that can be compre-

hended at a glance — a desire which betrays the painterly origins of the concept.<sup>49</sup> In reality, awareness of a landscape is additive; it is constructed from many successive views over time and involves sequence, memory, and so on. Since landscapes thus involve an important temporal dimension, they are a four- rather than a three-dimensional reality, as is frequently asserted.<sup>50</sup> The extent, or scale, of such landscapes is thus important, hence the differences, related to mobility and speed, between the cultural landscapes of the New World (the U.S., Canada, Australia, Argentina, etc.) and the Old (Europe, traditional Asia, etc.), with their limited extent and fine grain. Hence, also, the transformations in scale which become important with "modernization."

Since it consists of a series of sequential views combined cognitively, the experience of cultural landscapes is thus dynamic. The specific sequences and how fast they occur may influence how they are combined. Also, unlike the painterly landscape, this process is not something contemplated by a detached observer; it is perceived by active and goal-directed users with varying purposes. Furthermore, awareness of the landscape is not merely visual, but multisensory, including sounds, smells, kinesthetics, tactile textures, air movement, and temperature. It is the combination of all these perceptions that creates the ambience of cultural landscapes, their most important attribute. Ambience also involves people and numerous semi-fixed features. Finally, perception, although necessary, is not a sufficient determinant of how a landscape will ultimately be understood; affect, preferences, evaluation, and associational (latent) aspects — i.e., meanings — are also deeply involved.

The ambience, or character, of cultural landscapes depends both on the nature of their components and attributes and on relationships among elements — how they are ordered or organized. Moreover, the processes whereby this organization occurs and landscapes arise (discussed earlier) are important in understanding cultural landscapes.

Given the close relationship of the organization of the landscape to ideals and schemata, these processes need to be analyzed. For example, a major difference between traditional and non-traditional cultural landscapes involves changing ideals. This is particularly true in terms of the decline in non-traditional landscapes of high-level, symbolic meanings such as cosmological and philosophical ideas (particularly that of the Sacred). Such ideas are not only less important today, but often they are no longer even expressed through cultural landscapes (or even buildings), but through other symbolic systems.<sup>51</sup> In today's non-traditional environments other meanings have become more important, particularly middle-

level meanings such as status, various forms of identity, and the like. The much higher redundancy needed for lower-level, everyday meanings that remind people of how to behave has also had a major impact on the cultural landscape, not least through the proliferation of signs, notices, and the like.<sup>52</sup>

High-level meanings shaped traditional cultural landscapes. This has been studied mainly in the high-style portions of traditional landscapes (although it also needs to be studied in their vernacular portions). Examples include large portions of

order versus chaos, but of different orders. In principle, no manmade landscape can be chaotic (i.e., random), any more than culture can be; there can only be different orders, since landscape and culture are systematically (and systemically) related. References to “chaos” imply an order which, to a given observer, is incomprehensible, disliked or inappropriate. This becomes clear from discussions of Chinese or Islamic cities by U.S. scholars; of U.S. cities by French scholars; of social versus geometric order in pre-contact African cities and settlements of various Indian groups in the U.S. and Canada;

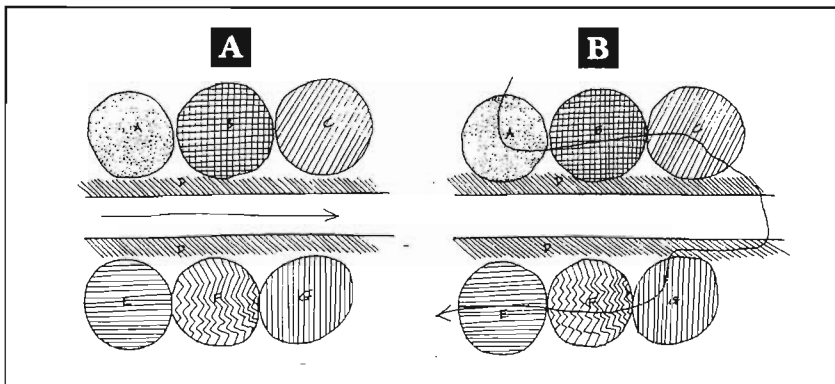


FIGURE 2. Changes take place in the perception of cultural landscapes as a result of different viewing conditions. A: Only cultural landscape (B) is perceived from a freeway, for example. B: All cultural landscapes (A—C) are perceived from the different trajectory shown.

the Cambodian (Khmer) cultural landscape,<sup>53</sup> the neo-Confucian cultural landscape of Korea,<sup>54</sup> and the cultural landscape of medieval Sri Lanka.<sup>55</sup> All these landscapes have been shown to have been reflections of sacred orders, i.e., high-level meanings. Such a determination also applies to the cultural landscape of Chinese, Indian, and other cities.<sup>56</sup> Many other examples can be found, including the cultural landscapes of tribal societies.<sup>57</sup>

Yet, middle-level meanings can also shape cultural landscapes. One example concerns immigrant landscapes. Although there is some disagreement about the extent to which immigrant meanings played role in the shaping the U.S. cultural landscape, they were clearly important in Australia and New Zealand, where major efforts were made to transform the land into English landscapes. In all such cases meaning is clearly most important, since familiar landscapes are supportive and provide symbols of identity. As a result, the origins of an immigrant group can often be inferred not only through local settlement and field forms, street patterns, buildings, gardens and plants, but through the names given to such things and places.

The organization of the cultural landscape is thus a matter of imposing an order — as is design in the more common sense of the term. As already mentioned, it is not a question of

and in the debate about Maya cities and Australian Aboriginal environments organized through ritual movements (pilgrimages).<sup>58</sup> (A more recent example of the role of ritual movement is the analysis of a certain Sri Lankan village which can only be understood by considering the sacred processions that occur in it.<sup>59</sup>) Among many examples of conflicts among orders are new Aboriginal camps in Australia (where the social order often produces an apparent visual disorder); the use of “deliberate disorder” [sic] in an “alternative” community;<sup>60</sup> the criteria for “slums”;<sup>61</sup> and so on.

The broad implication here is that cultural landscapes cannot be discussed in terms of the observer’s or the analyst’s likes or dislikes. Instead, they need to be understood analytically in terms of what they are, how they can be conceptualized, what their components are, why they are the way they are, what processes were used to translate their underlying schemata into landscape forms, what these schemata are, how the actions of individuals “add up,” how and why landscapes are subject to change (e.g., as a function of changing ideals), and so on.

Of course, some cultural landscapes will be preferred to others by various observers (many of these become tourist destinations). But this preference can also be approached analytically: who likes what, how many like what, for what purposes, why they like it, what about it they like, and so on. Far too much

design writing (“criticism”) has relied on personal preference as a basis for normative statements about such things as suburbia, roadside strips, “modernization,” or “placelessness” (a concept as impossible as that of a “chaotic” cultural landscape — one which, at best, refers only to “places” a writer does not like or understand).

### CULTURAL LANDSCAPES IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

The consideration of cultural landscapes cross-culturally based on the preceding discussion thus consists essentially of a discussion of the underlying ordering schemata, ideals, preferences and purposes of different groups, and how these are given physical expression through the various rule systems guiding systematic choices. Such landscapes may be located in different places (e.g., Australia vs. Japan; Brazil vs. the rest of Latin America), or in the same place over time (Australia from before contact until now, Japan since the Meiji restoration, southeast Wisconsin since contact and settlement). One could also consider different groups in the same locale — whether a homogeneous area when each region is consistent and “pure,” as in traditional vernacular; or an area that is mixed, as today. In the first case boundaries are clear; in the second they are fuzzy (FIG. 3).

The conceptual framework developed can be applied to all cultural landscapes. Since all work on EBR must use comparative approaches,<sup>62</sup> the great variety of cultural landscapes is potentially useful. Realistically, however, selection (or sampling) is necessary, because the overall number of cultural landscapes, historically and cross-culturally, is vast.

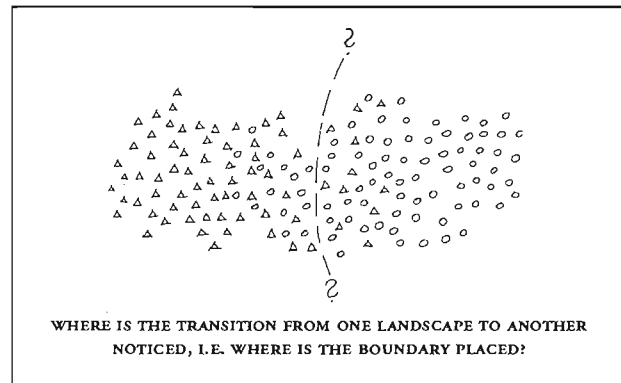
### THE BODY OF EVIDENCE

It is striking that discussions of culture/built-form relations tend to refer mainly to traditional pre-industrial vernacular or high-style examples. A number of fairly complex reasons can be given for this,<sup>63</sup> some of which will be discussed shortly.

I suggested above that one can distinguish between two cases, one in which individuals share schemata to a significant extent and accept the rules which translate these into cultural landscapes, and another in which neither of these conditions apply. In reality, both cases are ideal, and usually some intermediate state of affairs applies. Although the former is nearly the case in some traditional societies, the latter is highly improbable, since there is always some sharing of both schemata and rules. Also, typically, as the degree of sharing decreases, constraints

FIGURE 3. (BELOW) *Difficulty normally exists when attempting to locate transition lines between cultural landscapes. Based on: Rapoport, 1977, Fig.3.17, p.150.*

FIGURE 4. (FACING PAGE) *Clarity of landscape character in homogeneous and heterogeneous areas. Based on: Rapoport, 1990, fig.21, p.138.*

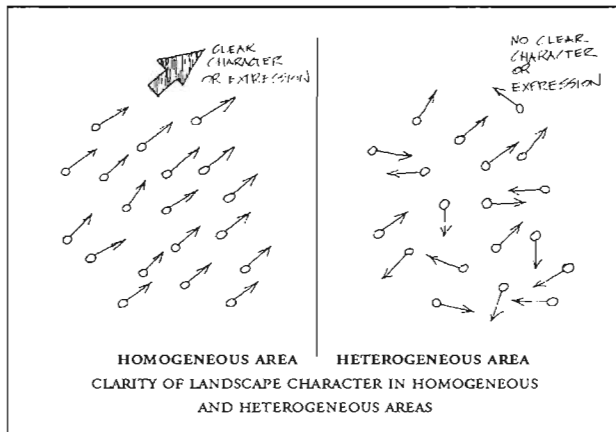


in the form of codes and regulations of various sorts impose some systematization. This is another reason why chaotic cultural landscapes are impossible.

It is, however, the case that when schemata and rules are shared, the results tend to be much clearer than when they are not — which is another aspect of “adding up.” This can be shown through a diagram of personalizations in homogeneous versus heterogeneous areas (FIG. 4). Evidently, the former case, where the expression is clear and strong, is much easier to discuss; it is also much easier to show in that case how the landscape is related to a schema or ideal.

This partly explains the common use of examples such as the Dogon, the Chinese or Indian city, and so on. Also, as already pointed out, the expression of schemata in cultural landscapes weakens as other symbolic modes become available — literacy, imagery in media and elsewhere, possessions, goods, etc.<sup>64</sup> Thus, less of any one schema is communicated by any single contemporary landscape. At the same time, such landscapes are characterized by a multiplicity of schemata and images which coexist, and even clash.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, competing, and possibly incompatible, rule systems of individuals and groups may exist in such a landscape; there may also exist other rule systems that attempt to constrain this diversity, such as codes and regulations of governments, lending and in-





surance institutions, and so on. All this makes such cultural landscapes much more complex (or, possibly, complicated) — but, to reiterate, they are never “chaotic.” As one example, consider this brief list of influences that have been suggested as having played an important role in the development of the U.S. landscape during the 1950s: the interstate highway act (how the landscape is seen — a means of movement); McDonald’s (as an icon); Disneyland (idealized landscape — images and ideals); Gruen’s Northland Regional Shopping Center; the Boeing 707 (extended world-wide home range, mass tourism); FHA/VA mortgages (suburbia); and so on.<sup>66</sup>

Such diversity of systems makes it much more difficult to study, analyze and deal with certain contemporary cultural landscapes. Clearly, the contemporary U.S. cultural landscape is more difficult to analyze than that, for example, of colonial Virginia, Nantucket, or Charleston, S.C. — let alone that of the Dogon. It contains a coexistence, tension and clash of different orders; there are also lines of non-resolution and fracture. This can be seen in single places, as in Nantucket or Charleston, where a traditional unitary model — almost as clear as that of traditional Mykonos or Bali — exists side by side with the modern development of suburbs, malls, roadside strips, and so on. The overall U.S. landscape is thus a result of distinct, alternative, coexisting visions of ideal landscapes, and the tensions among them lead to complex, confusing, but dynamic landscapes.<sup>67</sup> Such landscapes require much work to interpret, and one finds attempts to explain them (for example, the dispersed U.S. city to Europeans<sup>68</sup>). At the same time, they are becoming more common, even on Mykonos and Bali.

Such confusion and complexity also possibly make it necessary to study such cultural landscapes differently. Although there is great variability overall in possible ordering systems in the case of traditional cultural landscapes, in any given case these can be assumed to be few in number, highly consistent and shared, and related to consistent and shared rules. More-

over, the ordering systems emphasize cosmology, myths, and social structure. In contemporary situations, underlying images and schemata are far more diverse, and come from very different sources. Many such influences come from photographs, TV, films, and advertising. If they come from paintings, literature or politics, they often come via the media. As a result, analyzing films, TV, tourist literature, popular novels, newspapers and magazines, advertising, and the use of settings as backgrounds in all these sources, becomes critical both to understanding the nature of schemata (which they shape) and studying particular schemata. It is thus not only essential to experience landscapes directly and to study representations of them, but also to analyze them using all the sources mentioned above.<sup>69</sup> The images and concepts presented in these sources may, in fact, correspond to the cosmologies, sacred schemata, and myths of traditional cases.

All this provides an additional reason to study traditional environments. Since things can be seen more clearly and unambiguously in them, they provide a good entry point to the study of cultural landscapes. Having understood the systems and processes evident in them, one can move to the study of less clear-cut cases in a way analogous to that I presented in my discussion of Third World environments, vernacular environments, and spontaneous settlements.<sup>70</sup>

It follows that the body of evidence must be as large and diverse as possible and include all cultural landscapes both cross-culturally and across time — or, more correctly, samples of all of these. Most cultural landscapes are largely, or essentially, “vernacular,” since, at best, portions of them are designed in the typical high-style fashion (particular spaces, parks, buildings, or political landscapes). Therefore, cultural landscapes comprise most of the available evidence — which is an additional rationale for studying them rather than the relatively few high-style environments.<sup>71</sup>

However, as already pointed out, relationships among elements are as important — and may be more important — than the elements themselves.<sup>72</sup> For example, one cannot study the Parthenon without looking at it in the context of the Acropolis any more than one can study a vernacular dwelling without looking at its yard, streets, village, fields, and so on — the whole house/settlement system (or system of settings). Also, although high-style elements form only a small part of the cultural landscape, relationships between high style and vernacular may be very significant. Using the cultural landscape as the unit of analysis not only allows one to look simultaneously at archaeological, traditional and contemporary landscapes, but it allows one to study vernacular and high style together.

## HIGH-STYLE AND VERNACULAR IN THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Typically, high style and vernacular have been studied separately, in isolation from one another. Yet neither can be understood fully without reference to the other. This follows both from the importance of relationships in the cultural landscape and the notion of systems of activities that occur in systems of settings. To continue with the example above, one cannot understand the Acropolis outside the context of contemporary Athens. It only makes sense within that context, as is also the case with the Maidan-i-Shah and the elements surrounding it within the urban fabric of seventeenth-century Isfahan. In each case it is essential to consider the sequence from a dwelling: first movement through the streets and other settings of the city, then either a climb up to the Acropolis and the experience of its contrast of space, colors, views, smells and activities, or emergence onto the vast *maidan* as it was then with its polo field, trees and water-courses, surrounding palaces, mosques and *medresses*, and specific ambience. A significant part of the perceptual quality, affective impact, and meaning both of the high-style and vernacular elements in such experiences comes as a result of their juxtaposition and contrast. This is also the case with a Sepik River *haus tambaran* in its village, a Gothic cathedral in its urban setting, the Imperial City in Beijing, a south-Indian temple in its urban or village context, and so on.<sup>73</sup>

The relationships between high-style and vernacular elements can be of two kinds. I hypothesize that most common is the situation where the high-style elements are embedded in the vernacular, which then serves as the matrix. This is the case with all the examples given above, and many others. What is important here are the transitions and contrasts in all sensory modalities between the dwellings, spaces, and other settings of the vernacular matrix and the special attributes and qualities of the high-style elements (buildings, spaces, or whatever). The second and, I would suggest, less common type of relationship is where the high-style elements structure the vernacular ones, which can then be understood as infill. Among examples are major linear spaces in cities, such as those described by Bacon, or urban grids.<sup>74</sup> These two types of relationships may be ambiguous, depending partly on an interpretation of figure-ground relationships, and their temporal relationship may also play a role. Thus, from one perspective the Haussmanian boulevards of Paris can be considered a structuring framework, but because they were inserted into an existing vernacular fabric, they can also be considered as elements within that matrix. Such an analysis may also apply to Pope Sixtus V's plazas and axes of Rome. Research on these and other aspects of such relationships are badly needed (FIG. 5).

By considering a large and diverse set of examples, one might discover whether the hypothesized relative commonalities are correct. One might also possibly discover other types of relationships — and also the more specific ways in which high-style elements fit within a vernacular matrix, or the ways in which vernacular environments can fit into high-style frameworks. There may also be cases where both types of relationships are used together, as seems to have been the case in Shahjahanabad (Delhi).<sup>75</sup>

Note that similar relationships apply in the cultural landscapes of preliterate, tribal societies. I have already mentioned the Sepik River *haus tambaran*, which often has a ceremonial space in front. One might also consider the dance grounds of villages in other parts of Papua New Guinea, the ceremonial spaces of villages in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, and so on. Australian Aborigines have “high-style” settings — sacred and ceremonial sites — even though they are only known or marked temporarily,<sup>76</sup> they contrast with camps and areas of economic value. Among many other examples just in Africa are the capitals of the Zulu and Swazi,<sup>77</sup> the Shona,<sup>78</sup> and the Tswana.<sup>79</sup> In the case of all these and other traditional examples, the schemata in the high-style portions embody high-level meanings (cosmology, the Sacred, the Social Order); however, recent high-style portions may no longer embody such high-level meanings, and are, therefore, very different, often being far less effective — as is the case with the capital portion of contemporary capital cities.<sup>80</sup>

One should note that high-style frameworks need not be physical elements, but can be rules — for example, various governmental regulations and codes (e.g., those for safety and health, the handicapped, etc.), union rules, provisions of lending agencies, insurance requirements (based on law suits and, hence, the legal system), and so on.<sup>81</sup> Although rules always were one kind of structuring framework, they have become very important in structuring contemporary cultural landscapes and, in themselves, embody various ideals.<sup>82</sup> Vernacular (or popular) elements fit, as it were, within this regulatory, high-style framework. As before, the study of such frameworks may require different methods — for example, consulting and analyzing codes, regulations, and the like. It would then be possible to identify the constraints these exert on contemporary vernacular or popular environments. One example that comes to mind is the conflict between such provisions and self-built houses in Australia.<sup>83</sup>

Recall that in the case of most traditional cultural landscapes rules are often internalized and shared, and embody shared values, ideals and norms. They may, however, also be written down<sup>84</sup> or imposed, as in the various sumptuary laws in a

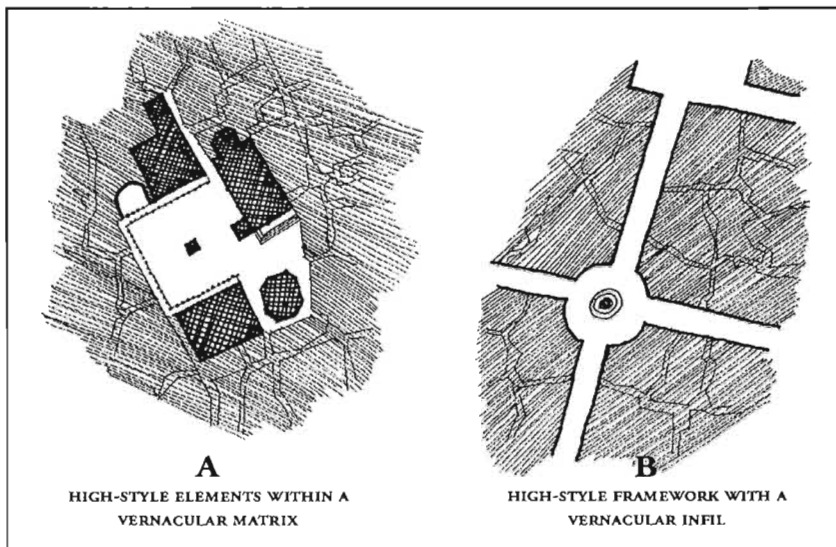


FIGURE 5. Two types of structural relationship between high-style and vernacular elements. A: High-style elements within a vernacular matrix. B: High-style framework with a vernacular infill.

variety of places and periods discussed above.<sup>85</sup> It is significant that recent attempts to preserve or re-create vernacular cultural landscapes have emphasized rule systems (codes and regulations) rather than designing or replicating physical elements directly. Examples include the San Francisco Planning Code,<sup>86</sup> the Essex Design Guide in Britain,<sup>87</sup> recent attempts to save the Vermont townscape,<sup>88</sup> and the work of Duany and Plater-Zybert.<sup>89</sup> In all cases the intention is to replicate rule systems which guide choices, which may then “add up” to recognizable cultural landscapes with specific attributes.

High-style elements can, of course, alternatively be understood as small portions of “designed” (in the common usage) environments, incorporating somewhat different schemata, which may either not be known by the population at large,<sup>90</sup> or which may even be rejected by them.<sup>91</sup> Such elements are often (and quickly) transformed if and when the central authority weakens or disappears, as in the case of Damascus described by Eliséeff and others, and other cases.<sup>92</sup> In the case of traditional cultural landscapes, however, conflicts are both less common and less extreme, and there are fewer conflicting schemata and ideals. At the same time, some aspects of codes and regulations may be accepted and even internalized by users, as is the case in U.S. suburbia, for example. As usual, the extreme, ideal cases define a continuum of intermediate situations.

There is also often an incorporation of high-style elements into vernacular schemata, with consequent transformations. A contemporary example is the desire for modern, Western materials and forms in developing countries and a rejection of traditional vernacular equivalents.<sup>93</sup> However, vernacular schemata may also be adopted and used (after transformation) in a high style, as in the various contemporary neovernaculars in Britain, France and elsewhere — or in ancient Iran, where

vernacular traditions persisted in the high styles of the Achaemenian, Sassanian, and other periods.

In contemporary cultural landscapes, therefore, matters become more complicated. This, however, once again reinforces the importance of considering the cultural landscape as the domain of study and the need to consider the interrelationships between vernacular and high style, rather than studying them separately.

## CONCLUSION

Since the world was and is composed of cultural landscapes, the number of examples is vast. This large body of evidence and its variety can be useful in generalizing and developing concepts and theory. As already pointed out, this mass of material makes sampling essential. It also makes it important to consider carefully and explicitly how any sample should be picked, and which attributes should be selected from the many hundreds that give a cultural landscape its character.

However, not only are there relatively few studies of whole cultural landscapes (as opposed to isolated bits of them), but there are even fewer studies that identify the components of such a landscape. Since adequate data are often unavailable on traditional, historical and contemporary cultural landscapes, it is difficult to know where to start. Moreover, what data are available have not been studied or conceptualized consistently, nor are there any consistent or adequate descriptive languages.<sup>94</sup> Thus, in addition to many more studies of specific cultural landscapes, we need attempts to conceptualize and dismantle them adequately — hence, to reanalyze stud-

ies of parts of such landscapes with a view toward combining and synthesizing them. Only then will such partial studies become useful for generalizations and for constructing models and theory; i.e., only then will they become truly useful.

Also missing, except to an extent in Historical Geography and recent Archaeology, are studies dealing with cultural landscapes over time. Changes in such landscapes have not received much attention, although such knowledge is critical today both in developed and developing countries. The study of such changes is important not only in descriptive terms (so that one knows what changes have occurred), but also in order to understand why changes occur. Such data are also essential to understand preference, given the opposition to certain current changes of landscapes, which themselves result from changes opposed just as vehemently in the past.

I have already mentioned reversals in values (for example, regarding streets, cities, ruins, mountains, wilderness or native vegetation), and I have talked about the problem of evaluation being based on outsiders' "aesthetic" preferences.<sup>95</sup> It would be useful to investigate the meanings such preferred landscapes and changes to them have, and their role in identity, status, and defensive structuring (e.g., in preservation vs. modernization).<sup>96</sup> One example of particular interest is the large amount of literature by designers and others over a period of sixty years or so opposing the spread of suburban landscapes in the U.K., U.S., Australia and Canada. Despite this literature, the process has continued apace, with such landscapes now being the norm in these countries and spreading to continental Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. In other words, with this approach, one can both understand (and eventually explain) both the variety of traditional cultural landscapes and the convergence and increasing similarity of contemporary ones. This applies not only to suburban housing in Asia, Africa and Latin America, but to shopping centers, industrial plants, and office buildings. The approach also provides a way to understand attempts to change these structures, and to make them more "local" — so far rather unsuccessfully.<sup>97</sup>

Other examples include consideration of how various groups influence cultural landscapes, whether in the past (as already discussed), or currently (as in the cultural landscapes of various immigrant groups). One recent example concerns research into Mexican-American landscapes;<sup>98</sup> others concern Greek, Italian and Ethiopian religious landscapes in the Middle East (for example, in the Sinai or Judean desert), or the variety of colonial cultural landscapes (English, German, French, Portuguese, and so on) in Asia or Africa.<sup>99</sup> The number of topics and questions is very large indeed.

One thing, however, remains constant and provides the rationale for this paper. This is that whatever the topic of interest — be it traditional buildings or settlements, historical change, contemporary changes in developed or developing countries, the future — whatever the question posed and whatever the specific component being studied — it is always the cultural landscape which needs to be described, studied, analyzed and understood. Even if only components are being studied (and one must always dismantle in order to study), they must always be considered as part of the cultural landscape and be reassembled after study. The process of dismantling and study must not do violence to critical relationships, and it must facilitate subsequent reassembly; the system under study must be identified, not assumed.<sup>100</sup>

Moreover, analyzing cultural landscapes in these ways is probably the only way to generalize and build theory. For one thing, it can provide patterns, showing both variability and regularities and constancies. For another, it enables different and apparently irreconcilable environments to be related and studied together and, hence, properly understood — for example, vernacular and high-style portions of landscapes and traditional and contemporary settlements and dwellings. These can be studied together on the basis of their commonalities in terms of EBR only as cultural landscapes, and, in turn, only then can they provide a way to derive such environment-behavior relationships.

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89. E.g., P. Leigh Brown, "In Seven Days, Designing a New Traditional Town," *New York Times*, June 9, 1988; *Lotus International*, No.50 (1986).
90. Rapoport, "Levels of Meaning in the Built Environment;" *Meaning of the Built Environment* (Epilogue); and "Levels of Meaning and Types of Environments."
91. Duncan, *City as Text*.
92. Rapoport, *Human Aspects*, pp.218–19; and *History and Precedent*, pp.270–71.
93. Rapoport, "Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design"; *Meaning of the Built Environment*; and S. Kaitilla, "The Influence of Environmental Variables on Building Material Choice: The Role of Low-Cost Building Materials on [sic] Housing Improvement," *Architecture and Behaviour*, Vol.7 No.3 (September 1991), pp.205–21.
94. Attempts have been made since the 1950s, e.g., by Phillip Thiel, Gordon Cullen and Lawrence Halprin. None of these so far published seem adequate; nor have they been adopted.
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96. See examples in Rapoport, *Human Aspects*; and *Meaning of the Built Environment*. Also see L.B. Rowntree and M.W. Conkey, "Symbolism and the Cultural Landscape," *Annals Association of American Geographers*, Vol.70 No.4 (December 1980), pp.459–74.
97. Examples include attempts to make airports "native," to give university campuses local character, or to make office buildings culture specific. On the latter, see B. Barnard, *Cultural Facades: Ethnic Architecture in Malaysia: UFSI Reports* (1984/No.5, Asia) (Hanover, N.H.: Universities Field Staff International, 1984).
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99. Rapoport, *Human Aspects*; *History and Precedent*; and *Meaning of the Built Environment*.
100. Rapoport, "Systems of Activities;" and A.P. Vayda, "Progressive Contextualization."