

## MANAGING DYNAMIC CHANGE AND SUSTAINING THE LANDSCAPE HERITAGE

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### INTRODUCTION.

Townscapes and landscapes are two very important and related, but differing aspects of the outdoor environment. Landscapes, at first, may seem to be simple and very familiar things. In many cultures they have been invested with pleasing associations, for example with the concepts of Paradise and beauty, and with poetry, paintings and drawings. Perhaps one result of this is that it is very easy to think that all the issues that are connected with landscapes are also simple, familiar, beautiful and relatively undemanding. This attitude is easily reinforced when landscapes are compared with urban and industrial environments which are often seen as being the opposites of landscapes. However, a longer experience and a closer examination demonstrates that, even if landscapes are less complex than urban and industrial environments, they are nevertheless still very complex; they are dynamic and living. In addition to this, they are often a very important component of urban and urbanised, industrial and industrialised areas.

If we wish to sustain the landscape heritage, one of the most important questions we must address is that of how, in practice, can policy makers, planners, designers, managers and all the other people whose actions significantly affect the landscape, deal with this complex phenomenon in a structured, rational and well informed way when making decisions that affect landscapes and the heritage that they represent? How might we secure or improve the chances of achieving good and high quality decisions and results?

This paper focuses on sustaining the landscape heritage, recognising that it is a living and dynamic thing. It addresses the general question of how we might improve the achievement of good and high quality decisions and results. It will do this under two main headings. **The first, concerns the conceptual basis that we use in relation to sustaining the landscape heritage. The second looks at some practical ideas for improving the quality of decision making and their implementation.** The ideas that are put forward are based on the author's work and experience, mainly in Europe, over a period of more than 25 years.

### A CONCEPTUAL BASIS

#### **1 Humans and their Environments.**

The world around us and the environments in which we live, are complex and full of dynamic interrelationships between one thing and the others that are around it. This is the nature of life, of living things and natural systems.

Humans are just one element of the whole natural global system. As a species, and in terms of the numbers of us, we have been very successful in adapting and exploiting the environments in which we live. I would suggest that one of the reasons why we have been so successful is that, generally speaking, we have **a unique and exceptionally well developed ability to engage with our environments.** One of the directions that this exceptional ability has taken is through our **physical engagement** with our environments. Another direction is through our **mental engagement** with them. The latter includes the emotional, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of the human mind. In both cases, the use to which we put this engagement might, perhaps, be described as the satisfaction of a desire to improve some aspect of the quality of our life.

Perhaps this exceptional ability is a very deeply rooted characteristic, or an instinct, in the human species that will always need to be responded to and satisfied both in its physical and mental forms. Perhaps it has an important part to play in achieving a satisfactory quality of life and fullness of humanity.

In numerical terms, humans have been so successful in exploiting their environments, that there is now increasing and widespread recognition that the negative aspects of this success have reached, or are rapidly reaching, unacceptable levels. It is not just a question of humans creating degraded environments and degrading them for ourselves, but also for all other forms of life. In the broad context of Nature, these other forms of life have as much right to exist as humans. They are also integral elements of the environments upon which humans depend. The natural and the human dimensions of the environment are interrelated. This is the case whether the geographical context is global, continental, poly-national regions, national, sub-national regions, or localities.

## 2 Landscapes.

The connection between environments and landscapes is that landscapes are one kind of environment. But how might we explain more precisely what landscapes are and what is covered by the concept? In other words, how might they be defined?

Over the years I have thought about this and, primarily from a British and European perspective, I have gradually evolved the following definition which I have found very helpful. I can claim no more for it than this, except perhaps that other people might also find it useful. My suggested primary definition is that:

“A landscape is a concept, a real or imaginary environment, image or view in which the land and natural and semi-natural elements are prominent, dominant or the only ones. Landscapes may, and often do, include humans and man-made components as well. Landscapes are the product of the appearance, uses and perceptions of places that are part of the outdoor environment”

This comparatively simple definition is, however, just a starting point for understanding the richness of the concept of landscape, and it is necessary to augment it and demonstrate its different dimensions. I have done this by adding a number of explanatory notes and these are as follows:

**2-1. Natural elements** are those things that are entirely the creation of Nature, such as the surface of the ground, land, rocks, water, vegetation, animals, open space, climate, the atmosphere and the sky. **Semi-natural elements** are those things that while made up of natural elements are the result of human intervention. For example, plantations, pasture, moorland and man-made bodies of water. **The Man-made components** include such things as buildings, structures and constructions of all kinds, from houses, castles, churches, temples, factories, to defensive structures, earthworks, roads, railways, bridges, canals, reservoirs, dams, power-lines, other forms of infrastructure, works of art, and ornaments of one kind or another.

**2-2.** The subject of landscape includes all the factors and processes, both natural and human, by which landscapes are formed. It also includes all the associations, meanings and significances with which landscapes are invested by humans.

**2-3.** A single landscape may be experienced from one or more viewing points, and at each point it may be viewed in one or more directions. When there is more than one point, they can be thought of as forming a group of related viewing points. As a group, they provide a ‘core’ to the landscape. The viewing points that make up the core may be linked by being along a particular route or by being contained within a

particular area or boundary. The core is the place, the location or the particular area from which the landscape is experienced by the observer.

**2-4.** The land that lies beyond the core area may make an important contribution to the character of the core and it may be referred to as the ‘setting’ (i.e. the setting of the core area). Together, the core and the setting make up the landscape. The core or its setting may be of any size depending on the circumstances. They may be extensive or small.

**2-5.** A landscape includes anything and everything that can be seen or perceived not only by the eye, but also in the mind and the imagination. This extends to anything that is associated with any part or aspect of the landscape.

**2-6.** From a visual point of view, one way in which the components of a landscape may be analysed is in terms of areas, objects and details. The objects may be linear or non-linear. In the latter case, the object might be an individual item covering a relatively small area of ground or it may be a single point.

**2-7.** The arrangement or configuration of the components (or their relationships to each other in space) is an important aspect of the character of a landscape.

**2-8.** Landscapes have different states of existence. For example, they can exist as:

a full scale physical reality.

a portrayal by means of pictures, maps, plans and descriptions, literature or music.

a perception or evocation in the mind and imagination. These may be stimulated by a physical reality, a portrayal, a description, or by a literary or musical evocation.

a self generated image, ie one that originates in the mind or the imagination.

These different states of existence are interrelated; they can influence each other.

**2-9.** In relation to landscapes of a physically real kind, and at the broadest level of characterisation, they can be described as being, or containing:

Wilderness

Vernacular landscape (rural, urban, urbanised or industrialised)

Designed ornamental landscape, garden or park.

Wilderness is a natural landscape in which the effects of human intervention are entirely absent or minimal.

## 3 Heritage.

Having looked at the concept of ‘landscape’, I would now like to turn to that of ‘heritage’.

For me, the word ‘heritage’ signifies not only tangible objects but also intangible ideas, skills and feelings. It includes those things that we inherit from other living people

as well as things that we inherit from the past. It also includes those things that we, in turn, pass on to others in the present or the future. It encompasses both the natural and the cultural (human) dimensions of heritage. The historical dimension is one aspect of the cultural.

#### 4 The Integrated and Holistic Approach.

The separate concepts of ‘landscape’ and ‘heritage’ are both complex, and the complexity of each is combined in the joint concept of ‘landscape heritage’. It seems to me that one of the best ways of coming to terms with complexity is to recognize the concept that I refer to as the ‘Integrated and Holistic Approach’ to analysis, assessment, decision making and implementation. In other words, when we are thinking about practical issues in the environments around us and also about making decisions that affect them, we need, to adopt the Integrated and Holistic Approach. But, what do I mean by this approach?

In principle, **the Integrated Approach** is based on the idea that individual phenomena (objects, events etc) are, or may be, interconnected and reliant on each other. **The Holistic Approach** aspires to the ideal of being able to appreciate an individual phenomenon not only as an entity in itself but also in terms of the interrelationships that exist between three things. These three things are (1) the entity as a whole, (2) its context as a whole, and (3) the constituent elements of both the entity and its context.

When these two approaches are brought together, I refer to the combination as the as the **Integrated and Holistic Approach**. The combined approach accepts that:

- (1) All the components of a place are, or are likely to be, significantly interrelated. These components include for example: people; flora and fauna; buildings and structures; landscapes and gardens; movable objects and collections.
- (2) Separate places may have common characteristics because, for example, they draw on the same source of ideas or use similar elements. These common characteristics create interrelationships.
- (3) There are significant interrelationships between the fields of: policy making; management; upkeep; design; artistic and aesthetic judgment; professional practice; practical experience; scholarship; research; and theory.
- (4) People usually recognize that within their experience of life, there exist different types and numbers of communities, territories and ‘cultures’. As individuals, they may or may not have links with them. When they have links, the links can differ widely in their nature and strength, from being very well to being very weakly developed for example. The nature of a particular link might change during the course of an individual’s

lifetime. This capacity of individuals (and communities) to have different and variable strengths of connection with different and variable aspects of life, is a form of multi-culturalism. It also operates in a dynamic way.

(5) These various kinds of interrelationship must be recognized and responded to, both in principle and in practice.

5 There are other concepts that I include within the Integrated and Holistic Approach. For example, there is **the Socially Inclusive Approach**. For me, and in the context of this paper, this means that the concept of heritage is relevant to all people and all sections of society. Different individuals and different groups are likely to have different interpretations of it and different points of view from which they interpret it. This needs to be recognized and responded to in intelligent, unprejudiced and appropriate ways.

6 Another concept that I include within the Integrated and Holistic Approach, is that of **the Quality of Life**. This is a term that is often used in the UK, to indicate that for satisfaction in life, quality is as important as quantity. This concept has wide application. It applies to non-living natural systems and to living ones; to human life and to non-human life; to the biological and material aspects of life and to the mental.

7 The concept of the quality of life is closely related to the concept of **Full Humanity**. Full Humanity can be interpreted as meaning a state of being in which one has achieved, in mind and in practice, a high level of consideration and benevolence towards other people, and also a high level of understanding of oneself and of one’s experience of life and the world in which one lives with all their different components, including non-human life and natural systems. Helping other people to do the same is an equally important part of achieving full humanity. Within Full Humanity the private dimension is as important as the public, the institutional and the corporate dimensions.

8 The Integrated and Holistic Approach is not a new way of thinking! It has been familiar to artists, writers and philosophers throughout history, but there is a strong need in the modern world for it to be more widely recognised and practised. This is because of the strength of the present general tendency towards specialisation and the fragmentation of thinking that this can easily lead to. This does not, of course, mean that specialisation is not a positive force in the world, but if it is pursued in a narrow-minded or unbalanced way, it can have negative consequences. Often these negative consequences are unintended, but their effect is still negative.

## **SOME PRACTICAL IDEAS.**

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1 If the concepts that I have outlined are thought to be useful, the next inevitable question is how might they be adopted in practice? I would like to address this question by looking briefly at two important aspects of it. **The first, is how might people be helped to acquire a working knowledge and a fuller understanding of them? The second, is how to help people to apply them in practice.**

2 In relation to the first aspect, one of the best ways to **learn about and understand the Integrated and Holistic Approach** is to become very familiar with the history, the character and the circumstances of one particular place and, over time, to continue the process of building up one's knowledge and understanding of it. A very valuable aid in this respect is to prepare a **systematic Site Record**, including a Topographical and Historical Record of the place. Start in a simple way. Make frequent use of it for reference purposes, and add to it as more information becomes available.

The general principles that are learnt from an in-depth understanding of one place, can be extremely helpful in coming, more quickly, to an understanding of others. When the nature of the interrelationships that operate at one place are better understood, it becomes much easier to work in an integrated and holistic way at others and also to co-operate with colleagues from other disciplines and professions.

Clearly education, training, advice, information and guidance have an important part to play.

3 In connection with helping people to **apply the concepts in practice**, again education, training, advice, information and guidance have an important part to play. At this point I would like to stress the contribution that I think can be made by properly trained **Specialist Advisers**.

A main characteristic of the kind of advisory work that I am advocating is that Advisers will normally operate by making relatively short individual inputs, not only into the care and management of particular places but also into related activities such as, the planning, design and implementation of site-based projects; contributions to studies, discussions, education and training programmes, helping people to understand and engage with things, and the making and implementation of policies.

There are many ways in which Specialist Advisers can operate, for example, from providing information and initial guidance, to participating in discussions, making site

inspections, preparing reports, writing articles and papers for publication, lecturing, participating in educational programmes and events, giving practical demonstrations, organizing and leading specialist visits and events.

In my view, an Advisor's role is an educational one. They are mentors. They can help their clients to consolidate and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. They can help them to put the Integrated and Holistic Approach into effect. As individuals, Advisers might have been trained in the planning, design and implementation of projects, but as Advisers it is not their function, within a project, to lead or take on the prime responsibility for these aspects.

Another important attribute of Specialist Advisers is that they should have a high level of awareness and understanding of **the practical aspects of their subject** and know that these are as important as the theoretical ones. They must understand that the two need to be properly interrelated to each other. Specialist Advisers should also have a high level of awareness and understanding of the theoretical aspects.

The input of an adviser might be made on a once-only or on an irregular basis, but there are advantages for the client if a regular pattern and relationship can be established. A regular pattern might for example be established on the basis of a visit and meeting once or twice a year, depending on circumstances.

### **4 The Garden and Landscape Heritage Trust.**

The final practical idea that I would like to mention is the work that I am currently doing with The Garden and Landscape Heritage Trust, or GARLAND for short. It is a not-for-profit organization and I am the Director of it. GARLAND's aims are based on the concepts that I have outlined in this paper and also some other related ones.

**GARLAND's mission** is to help sustain the garden, landscape and topographical heritage by promoting the development of environmental awareness and professional skills. This is GARLAND's contribution to sustaining the environment, improving the quality of life and helping people to:

(i) increase their awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the environments that they live and work in, visit, or have responsibility for;

(ii) sustain and care for these environments, and others, in a better informed and skilled way.

This mission is to be delivered through an Educational and Advisory Programme. It is proposed that when complete this programme will consist of **six main interrelated**

**initiatives.** These will be developed on a phased basis, as resources and opportunities allow. The six main initiatives are:

(1) *A Professional Education Programme* for those who are, or wish to become, actively involved with the garden and landscape heritage or who, in one form or another, have responsibilities for it. It will focus on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Supplementary Education. The constituency for the latter is wider than for CPD and it includes the 'non-professional' sector. The programme will include a range of events from individual lectures, seminars, workshops, short courses and conferences.

(2) *A Specialist Advisory Service* to deliver reliable and high quality information, guidance and advice.

(3) *'Topographicon'*. This is an Environmental Awareness Programme that aims to increase the public's awareness and enjoyment of the Topographical Heritage. It will do this through events and projects that will present and interpret particular places, localities or territories to the people who live and work in them or visit them.

(4) *The GARLAND Online website*.

(5) *The GARLAND Research Programme* through which GARLAND will initiate and commission research, the collection of information, and the production of publications on topics that are of special relevance to achieving its mission and its vision.

(6) *The GARLAND Association* which will be an association of those who contribute to, or support, the work of GARLAND. GARLAND welcomes opportunities to work in partnership with other organisations and individuals.

It is intended that GARLAND will operate on a UK, European and a fully international basis.

## Abstract

Townscales and landscapes are two very important, related but differing aspects of the outdoor environment. At first they may seem to be simple and familiar concepts and the issues that are associated with them may seem to be equally simple. However, a longer experience and a closer examination, demonstrates that, in fact, both are very complex. This raises the crucial question of how policy makers and managers can deal, in practice, with these complexities in a structured, rational and well informed way when making decisions about them and the heritage that they represent.

This paper will focus on landscapes. It will address the topics of a conceptual basis that can clarify the subject, and a practical scheme that can assist decision making. In both cases, the aim is to secure good and high quality decisions. The paper will be based on the author's work and experience, mainly in Europe, over more than 25 years.

There will be three main sections:

(1.) *Some key concepts:* Landscape; Locality; Heritage; Policy; Management; The Integrated and Holistic Approach; The Full Humanity Approach; Assessment.

(2.) *Policies, management and making-decisions*

(3.) Professional Learning and the role of Specialist Advisers.