Initially, the Watercolour exhibition at Tate Britain (running until 21 August) seemed an essential venue for this occasional column on art exhibitions not to be missed. The medium and landscape are closely entwined in public memory, from the massed output of field artists – box and pad in pocket – to the 1950’s living room standbys of Rowland Hilder. But as several reviewers have noted, curatorial brilliance was required to marshal meaning into the availability of periods, styles and methods by which ‘water-tinted-with-colour’ hits a surface. Could any exhibition of say Oil Paintings or Etchings, survive without geographical or chronological constraints? Spurred on by the accessible BBC1’s programme ‘Sheila Hancock Brushes Up: The Art of Watercolours’ … a long way from the company of Peter Jones and Miriam Karlin … I will take in the Tate before it closes. It is likely however that I will regret the limited appearance of Ravilious, Burra and Heron whose time spans I know and whose images are better enjoyed in one-man shows.

So I preferred to spend my gallery time at an exhibition close to townscape — rather than landscape, in a medium where I want to learn, and on a subject which disturbs major issues as to the way in which professionals analyse and instruct on the view of towns and cities. In terms of landscape this was a journey from Peter Ashley’s ‘Cross Country’ — awaited — through the fringe worlds of Farley & Roberts’ ‘Edgelands’ to a truly urban context.

London Street Photography 1860-2010 — running to 4 September is a generously contained, chronological, exhibition in the bowels (probably street level) of the Museum of London. The selection, largely drawn from the Museum’s collection, is exceptional in several ways. There are very few well-known images, no stars or personalities, and an emphasis on townscape with Londoners.

Through the work of some sixty photographers several themes emerge, though are not forced by display or catalogue. Children occupying and manipulating space are a ready target, but show the continuity of space use. Urban spaces as, usually, quietly contested areas for display of class, affiliation and fashion are evident at all periods. But what is really interesting is the way in which the camera reallocates built form to backdrop. This city really is its people. ‘Scapes’ (land, water, sea or town) traditionally have sought to omit human vitality from their representation, and much of their analysis. Complicit in the plot to depopulate our ‘images of space’ one still meets an uneasy tension when photographing in public places. It seems that things have calmed down since I was ushered out from the open air post-war Coventry shopping precinct as it was ‘private’ — and ‘I couldn’t photograph people’ — but the tension lingers on.

Whilst the viewer can comfortably enjoy the historic images, the final section, with colour prints, raises complex issues of the role of street photography today but still, documentation wins out over artistic contrivance.

As the much photographed celebrities pose daily in selected night time locations, so the uncelebrated react more and more against any photographer who would ‘steal their face’ in an urban setting. I myself have spent far too long trying to code the characteristics of townscape, dropping any human images at the first opportunity, so to me this exhibition was a reminder that more than 50% of the urban image is of flesh and bone, authored by parents and culture rather than by architects. Here the photographer remains the best researcher.
Defiant bravado is perhaps somewhat premature. Nonetheless there is a kind of anger mixed into my emotions as I dig – anger at the soil, the low entrance gate against which I cut my head open (my predecessor was much shorter than I), the pigeons waiting to descend like locusts on anything I try to grow, the slugs, the weather – and Dylan Thomas’s lines come to mind: ‘Do not go gentle into that good night’, ‘Rage, rage against the dying of the light’. Recently I have been reading an extraordinary (and possibly overlooked) book, *Gardens*, by Kenneth Helphand. Subtitled *Making Gardens in Wartime*, the book is an extensively researched account of gardens which were begun and – insofar as possible – continued even as bullies, to be mocked, cheeked and stood up to come what may. Chapters are devoted to trench gardens in the 2nd World War, gardens created by Prisoners of War and internees in Europe and Asia during the 2nd World War; and gardens created by Japanese internees in the United States during the 2nd World War. A final chapter touches briefly on more recent gardens created in the Gulf War, in the wake of September 11 2001, and in Iraq. An account of what has survived of all these gardens is very brief, since the answer is virtually inevitable: ‘Where have all the flowers gone?’ Of the gardeners, Helphand says: ‘The gardens they have survived were not those of skilled professionals, but of the soldiers and internees who had nothing else to do. They were, some of them, a form of resistance against the extermination camps or the prison camp; they were an assertion of the right to enjoy the beauty of a garden; they were acts of defiance against the inhumanities of war; they were acts of love, of family, of the country, of humanity. They were acts of beauty, of human dignity, of the will to survive.’

I rather think even that is not all. By creating defiant gardens humans reclaim their place in Eden. Our gardens argue on our behalf – look, they say, see how we flourish in stony ground, see how determined are the people who have created us. Have they not earned the right to be readmitted to Paradise? Even as we accept that our gardens are short-lived, when we sustain an unending battle against weeds which we know will win in the end, when we make a garden that is likely to be blasted to smithereens at any moment, defiant gardens contain an implicit demand – ‘children and successors, and on behalf of all humanity – that beyond the temporal lies Eternity; that our labours should not be in vain.’

The Highly Commended Prize of £100 is awarded to Gregory Llewellyn, Queen Mary College, University of London for his dissertation entitled: ‘Cross-Country, Unmitigated England’. The author’s profile on ‘Blogger’ deserves a landscape assessment.

Kate Conroy, University of Cambridge for her dissertation entitled: ‘Lyon in the Nineteenth Century: Landscape and Identity’.

Notes

The celebrated landscape of the Great Trossachs Forest is famous for its natural beauty, but while the mountains and hill are the result of natural forces, everything else, including Loch Katrine and its surrounding ‘ascent’ woodlands and open land, is the result of human intervention. This is not to say that the landscape of the Great Trossachs Forest had no influence on the development of the landscape. The Trossachs National Park was established in 1960 to protect the landscape and to ensure that it is maintained for future generations. The park is managed by the Scottish Natural Heritage, a government agency, and is a major attraction for tourists. The park is home to a diverse range of wildlife, including birds, mammals, and plants, which are protected under various conservation laws. The park also offers a range of activities for visitors, including hiking, cycling, and fishing. The Trossachs National Park is a popular destination for both domestic and international tourists, and it is estimated that the park contributes over £100 million to the local economy each year. The park is also an important source of fresh water, providing drinking water for the surrounding communities. The Trossachs National Park is a testament to the importance of protecting the environment and preserving the natural beauty of the landscape.
result of human activity; this is a deeply cultural landscape. As the group cruised along Loch Katrine on “The Lady of the Lake” Coralie Mills (dendro-clinicalist) and Mari Stewart (Research Fellow in Social History and Forestry at the University of the Highlands and Islands) gave a commentary on the wooded landscape on the south shore of the loch. What we see is the result of 250 years of sheep farming, described as ‘wood-and-pasture’ rather than ‘wood- pasture’, to distinguish this system from the more intimate management of woodlands for grazing animals familiar for example in the New Forest of Hampshire. Some of the ash trees had been dated back to the 17th century, making these the oldest known dendro-dated ash trees in Scotland. (http://www.dendrochronol.co.uk/)

The first stop at Loch Arkaig highlighted the issues faced by managers in arriving at landscape decisions, where a multiplicity of organisations and individuals have knowledge, make claims and have views. Proposals for the establishment of new native woodland had met initially with stiff opposition from local people who feared that the identity of the landscape would be lost. Questions of how to manage community engagement and the relative legitimacy of different perspectives generated among those that must be addressed in order to diffuse conflicts and arrive at sustainable solutions. The Fern Group (2008) has recently produced guidelines and principles for public engagement (http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/Principles_of_public_engagement.pdf/)

The final field stop overlooked an area of forest near Loch Chon that had been subject of a landscape plan for over 10 years. Landscape Architect Nicholas Shepherd explained the plan to restructure the forest. Restructuring must now take account of the many functions of landscape, including its cultural identity, and the effects of structure on wildlife. It was clear that the brief given to planners necessarily reflects current policy discourses, and the swings of fashion in this area have been handled through wider stakeholder involvement.

An evening talk by Richard Orman (Professor of History and Politics, University of Stirling) presented many insights into the cultural and political history of the area, and how this has led to the landscape of today. This raised questions concerning the balance between the conservation of historical meaning and the development of landscape as a reflection of the ideas and activities of its current population, and how tensions between these can be reconciled.

There followed a discussion on 15th June in Blair Drummond village hall and this was structured around three questions; a brief summary of conclusions against each of these questions is presented below:

1. Contested Meanings

The meaning of landscape, in the context of management and conservation, is rarely fully agreed upon by all the parties. The same area of land might be an ancient battle-ground, a semi-natural woodland, part of a sheep farming landscape, the refuge for certain rare species of wildlife, and an example of a valued habitat. There are many discourses developed in different disciplines and interest groups and in popular culture, each with a claim on the landscape. For instance, a complex history of scientific and cultural debate underlies the current preference for ‘native’ species and assemblages of species. Similarly, ideas of what is aesthetically pleasing in the landscape (and the more recent concentration on ‘affordances’ or representations as ‘desire coalescence’) used to justify certain interventions in the landscape. Although win-win solutions can often be identified, there will often be a need for compromise. What is the legitimate route (or routes) to achieving these compromises? Do attempts to find legitimate compromises conflict with elements of the power landscape and how may such conflicts be resolved?

Conflicts

• Official discourses e.g. of the value of ‘naturalness’, aesthetic landscape or biodiversity can conflict with each other and with lay discourses.
• Meaning and identity constantly conflict, but are often complex. What are often contested are the landscape management objectives.
• The proposed forest expansion in the Trossachs will conflict with deer. There is a popular perception (misconception?) that deer and open spaces represent a natural state.
• Designations tend to pre-empt discourses on landscape decisions, and these are debated. For example, there is no protection for cultural soils, or of the setting of archeological features. This is a focus of discussion on site rather than on landscapes.
• woodland expansion can conflict with health preservation. Sometimes woodland SAC can conflict with health SAC e.g. necessity to return a native pine woodland to ‘favourable condition’ – allowing it to expand naturally onto health. In the UK we probably interpret SAC regulation too literally.

Community engagement

• Community engagement needs to be more expertly handled, so as to avoid confrontational public meetings, and better to balance the views of people with varying levels of legitimacy and influence.
• The information produced concerning a landscape is often insufficient and biased. A comprehensive understanding (including cultural) of a landscape is a principle of the European Landscape Convention and the Scottish Landscape Charter.
• Most landowners (NT is an exception) do not consider cultural heritage or the need to balance it with natural heritage.
• What is not open for discussion should be made clear at the start of community engagement.

Wildness; naturalness

• With reference to a ‘National Map of Wildness’ – there is no wilderness but we do not know exactly what it is people perceive as wild. About 90% of the Scottish population lives in cities.
• The concept of ‘semi-natural’ is value-laden. ‘Semi- anthropogenic’ might elicit a different reaction. Historical human (often industrial) activity created the biodiversity we now seek to conserve.

Space may just have to be green and accessible to meet the needs of urban populations.

There is a perceived over-emphasis on a backward-looking view in which the landscape is to be returned to something ‘good and pure’ – pre-human. The necessity is to formulate plans informed by the past but taking account of current changes, e.g. climate change and demographic change.

Conservation of meaning

• Conservation often focuses on physical remains rather than landscape meaning.
• Covering all middle hill ground with trees would risk loss of historic features.
• Landscape change may well be welcomed by communities where there is clear public benefit. Western Isles welcome pylons and wind farms because they bring services and jobs.
• Most archeological investigation is now prompted through development proposals.
• Rather than holding public meetings, there is a need to take communities out into landscapes and discuss meanings.

Research questions

• How do we establish what values (services) are to be conserved?
• How do we focus the (limited) resources available for community engagement?
• How can we include young/old ethnic minorities/ tourists and locals?
• The benefits of new (native) woodland need to be explored and communicated, including qualitative values.
• What assumptions do we make of communities?

2. Legitimacy and Influence

Most theories seek the origins of modern institutional legitimacy in legal or moral principles. Legitimacy in relation to decision-making means the extent to which someone, to the processes and decisions comply with accepted norms (morals), including laws. Most people can readily agree that a decision made by a local community, which takes account of local knowledge and local needs, is more legitimate, and will gain greater acceptance, than a decision reached by a National Government and imposed without local consultation. However, this leaves open the ‘Not In My Back Yard’ argument where local concerns and perspectives do not fit in with national plans and strategies - wind farms and waste-disposal facilities have to be placed somewhere. If local opinion is to be set aside, this can only be done legitimately once every effort has been made to take account of local views and needs and once there is professional expertise. Such action includes looking for win/ win solutions, and for trade-offs and compromises.

In the forestry context, this particularly applies to decisions relating to the location of new woodlands, and the structure and function of these woodlands. How do we balance stakeholder involvement to take into account this element of legitimacy? Have problems arisen in relation to the Great Trossachs Forest that might be resolved by examining the power, influence and legitimacy of stakeholders and their views and values?

• How to balance community interests with statutory constraints and government guidelines? An initial scoping meeting can offer a ‘blank canvas’ but later on in the process it is more difficult to change direction.
• How to balance the National Significance of a National Park (and tourist destination) with public/ local community interests? Whose views have priority?
• Should/could views be ranked/ weighted in terms of importance, or prioritised e.g. ‘expert’ views?, or the views of a specific number of people, or the views of people who have lived in the area for a specific time?
• How can FC be seen as the ‘developer’ and therefore an interested party in debates about landscape. Would it be possible to use autonomous external facilitators to mediate the consultation process? (This happens in other countries where a tax is levied to pay for the services of a facilitator)
• People often have socially held visions of how their landscape should look ‘Imaginaries’ (eg. Arcadia). Debates would need to make these visions more explicit in order to uncover the reasoning for considering them.
• How to engage people who don’t appear to have any interest in the consultation process – seen by officers as a lack of interest. (Stakeholders included a website and the observation that this indicates a need for more sophisticated outreach and an ongoing process of dialogue)
• When communities object to just about everything – or fail to engage at all - this can often be explained by...
3. Expert and lay knowledge

Part of the discourse of participation emphasizes the distinction between expert and lay knowledge, and the need to include and to integrate these during the decision-making process. It seems that when it is widely accepted as an ideal, scientific evidence tends to be seen as one form of expert knowledge, although ‘science’ may be used (and abused) to support the claims (and values) of both experts and lay people. The notion of evidence-based decision-making is widely accepted as an ideal, but given the uncertainty around the science that underpins complex land use decisions, it may be unclear whose evidence should be used. Often evidence is seen as a means to justify a decision already made on political grounds. In the absence of scientific evidence, decisions are often made on the basis of expert judgment. Meanwhile, computer-based decision support tools have been developed for a range of spatial planning issues, but levels of uptake among forest managers remain low. Can we be clear about the roles of expert and lay knowledge in the decision-making process? What process can be envisaged that facilitates stakeholder deliberation about the impacts of policy or management options on the basis of a shared understanding of all the knowledge available to them?

How to employ whose knowledge

There is a need to make connections between landscape change and fundamental concerns in people’s everyday lives

There is an issue of knowledge used to make decisions: different people use different knowledge in various ways to make decisions. There may be an assumption by professionals that they know what knowledge is being used when they don’t (also by lay people about professionals)

There is a need to translate different kinds of knowledge into a form that is useful to different groups and to develop methods and techniques to share knowledge (even if it does not achieve shared understanding)

Temporal considerations

Good communication requires long-term and continuous input, but how and by whom?

How do you update information (in the present climate)?

Knowledge Dissemination

There seems to be a general thirst for knowledge from the public and from sectors about landscape issues

Dissemination of information (how and in what format) is an issue

How do you determine whether poor engagement is through a lack of information, lack of interest or other inhibiting factors?

Gaining and disseminating knowledge is often through designed interaction but we should not forget the possibility of creating opportunities for happenstance or chance encounter

Sometimes it may be the message that is the problem

There is an issue of the sectoral nature of information dissemination and the language/framing of issues that need consideration

Views may change if knowledge (additional and different) is imported

Legitimacy of knowledge

Knowledge needs to be related to legitimacy

Do we need a statutory requirement as the bottom line for landscape engagement? (How does the ELC relate to this/full/fill this role?)

The tourist industry is seen as the prime enforcer of ‘stay the same’ in relation to landscape

There is a need to empower communities so that they feel their contribution to knowledge is important

There is a need to facilitate the expressions of knowledge

Recognition that lay knowledge is constrained by personal experience and coloured by prejudices (but expert knowledge may also be similarly constrained although it is usually presented and used accordingly)

There is a need to cross boundaries between expert and in expert in terms of sharing and understanding knowledge (inter-disciplinary working) but also within organizations (inter-disciplinary working)

The value of knowledge is different from the value of views. Should such knowledge be weighted? If so, how will local views that may in certain knowledge be weighted more than other views?

Dissemination of integrated knowledge and publication of it in academic journals can be difficult

There is a need to educate experts through co-active methods in the value of non-expert knowledge

There is a need to consider the scale of knowledge related to the scale of landscape particularly in relation to the local versus large scale knowledge/overviews that are needed in much policy and sustainable planning?

The intention now is to develop these ideas into more specific research directions, with support from the Landscape Planning and Decision-making Group

Paul Tabbush

Successive storeys. Less designed houses — in older areas perhaps — show their readiness to expand upwards by the... windows. Access alleys cascade in flights of steps, inconvenient, perhaps scary, exhausting if you start below and climb.

BY

Note.


When last I was in Amman in 1965 it was very small and built mostly along the dry central valley which I show here. Now it has grown and spread hugely. It is called ’Greater Amman’ in a scholarly article by Bewley and Kennedy (see note). Among other reasons for its growth, Jordan houses 4.5 million Palestinians. I was shown the house in one small stone suburb that twenty years ago was the only house in the area. It is a peculiar townscape where additional family members may be housed in successive storeys. Less designed houses — in older areas perhaps — show their readiness to expand upwards by the naked reinforcement rods bringing from each pillar of the concrete structure. From a distance across the main dry valley, house blocks resolve into rectangles and verticals punctuated by eyeless unmonumented windows. Access alleys cascade in flights of steps, inconvenient, perhaps scary, exhausting if you start below and climb.

BY

Bad Young

Hearing touched on personal recollections as an emerging landscape architect (my letter on Norfolk Runways, LRE 57) and been asked by the Editor to go further, and now under medical orders not to move for a week after spraining an ankle! (hence no ‘A’ levels) in Bristol’s RWA School of Architecture clinched it. Bad mistake: I never really knew what I was doing there. ’You should have been a forester,’ said an observant grandmother.

A true design sense did later emerge, and at least immunity protected me from the bigoted 1950’s architectural theory. Modernist cults went over my head, and ‘modern’ though my student work tried to be it gave more attention to trees, and external space, and people, than anyone else’s. A still-cherished book, Shepherd’s Modern Gardens, happily munching through in lunch hours during a year out in a Bristol office, led me into magical views of modern
LYON IN THE 19th CENTURY: LANDSCAPE AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE SHADOW OF REVOLUTION
Charlotte Wilkerson, University of Cambridge

“[Landscape] is one of the central elements in a cultural system, for an ordered assemblage of objects, a text, it acts as a signifying system through which a social system is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored” (Duncan 1990:184)

I look at the contested use of space in nineteenth-century Lyon and the ways in which it was appropriated to articulate political, social and cultural messages across different scales (the national, regional and local). The aim thus being to uncover a variety of conflicting and interesting identity struggles; to give a fuller picture than is ever ‘officially’ presented. The key questions I wished to explore were:

• How far Lyon followed the national line of a move towards the modern unified republic.

• To what extent Lyon’s own history and identity affected the reworking of the landscape.

• In this way, how were elements of memory used and politicized with regard to the spatial appropriation of the landscape.

The French Revolution and the century that followed are of profound importance to any reading of the contemporary western nation and the ways spatial strategies were involved in experiments with synecdochal national representation. Lyon considered itself to be the second city of the kingdom and the largest industrial city. Almost half of Lyon’s population depended on the manufacture and sale of luxury commodity silk cloth. Yet, Lyon was a prime example of classical urban hierarchy, within which tensions became clear and played out over the eighteenth century. In this way, Lyon becomes a crucial site of interest and one which did not simply follow a ‘Parisian model’.

Dialectics in the landscape formed narratives regarding Lyon’s identity. I am arguing that a reading of the landscape begins to uncover these complex narratives. Structured on a scalar basis, I first assess Lyon’s national modernist (sic) identity with regard to landscape re-appropriation post-Revolution according to (or opposing) regime orders coming from the capital. This was shown in Lyon’s conformist adoption of urban planning schemes, public monuments and anti-clerical measures. The way this modernisation is cross-cut by the desire for regional republicanism is then explored more deeply across the landscape. Notions of anti-Patriosophy arising from the memory of Revolutionary violence underlie the construction of many monuments and regional resources.

Finally, in part two the intricate local internal workings and contestations of the city as a result of revolutionary events and memories are explored. Looking at key sites, one can see how historical events in reality and representation are manipulated and reappropriated. Those considered part of the imagined (and fickle) community of the ‘F’autres’ are seemingly glorified freely, and Lyon’s centrist identity dominated any notion of the fair representation of Revolutionary memory. Yet by engaging the urban imagination to reconnect those who were ‘forgotten’ or considered ‘Other’ to what was projected as desirable, an insight into the true state of affairs can begin to be achieved. CW

INITIAL MEETING OF THE GERMAN SPEAKING WORKING GROUP OF LRG

On May 13, 2011, twenty two researchers from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy at different stages of their careers met in Hannover to establish a German-speaking working group within the Landscape Research Group. As not all of them were already LRG members, Prof. Peter Howard (International Activity Coordinator in LRG’s Board of Directors) gave a stimulating overview on the objectives of LRG and the opportunities it offers. He stressed inter-disciplinarity and inter-professionality (i.e. cooperation between academics and practitioners) as its core missions. The participants adopted a concept that is intended to guide the group’s future work.

The German-speaking working group aspires to strengthen network relations between landscape researchers in the German-speaking area and beyond; to organise conferences and seminars which may result in joint publications, to provide information on funding opportunities, and to facilitate the formation of research consortia. Markus Leibnath from the Leibniz-Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (IFUR, Dresden) and Ludger Gailing from the Leibniz-Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning (IWR, Eßlingen near Berlin) function as spokespersons of the newly established group.

One of the first activities will be a seminar in spring 2012, presumably on the urgent issue of energy landscapes. This event will be combined with an excursion in which practical examples of energy-driven landscape developments will be examined. We plan to launch a website.

Since May the list of e-mail addresses already increased in number from 22 to 36, including all previous LRG members from German-speaking countries. It is intended to further raise the share of formal LRG members in the German-speaking working group.

The Hannover meeting was organized in conjunction with a conference on the constitution of cultural landscapes, in which the word ‘constitution’ refers to processes of social construction. It was the final conference of four parallel research projects which were funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). More information in German on this conference can be taken from: http://www.4r-netzwerk.de/veranstaltungen/kulakon_abschluss2011.shtml

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ML/LG

CHAOS AND SERENITY IN LANDSCAPE

People’s allotments near The Emirates Stadium, Arsenal

Anish Kapoor’s mirror illusions in Kensington Gardens

28th February 2011.

The views and opinions in this publication are those of the authors and the senior editor individually and do not necessarily agree with those of the Group. It is prepared by Bernadette and Bud Young for the Landscape Research Group and distributed periodically to members worldwide as companion to its refereed main journal Landscape Research.