



Themata 5 E-learning Archaeology, the Heritage Handbook





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E-learning Archaeology

the Heritage Handbook

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Cultural biography of landscape

by Marjolijn Kok

& Heleen van Londen

m sco Introduction

As is described in module 2, the interest in the study of landscape has increased among other things because of heritage management. In order to serve the value of sustainable development, a strategic approach is called for in the field of planning. For that, it is essential to disseminate knowledge on the history of landscape and landscape elements. Module 8 will go into the metaphor of the cultural biography of landscape and the recent developments on how this metaphor is put to use as a tool for sustainable development. The metaphor refers to the life history of landscape and as such is a personification. One expects to hear an encompassing narrative from the landscape formation (birth) to the several stages of development (life) that can be traced when looking closely at our environment, so that we can capture the spirit of places (Genius loci, Norberg-Schulz 1984) and value the landscape with its historic elements.

m sco Content of module

Before going into the biography concept some must be said about landscape. How people view landscape is elementary for the way in which its history is written. Some people choose to write about the way in which landscape was perceived by people over time, focussing on the transformation of ideas and meaning. Others however, concentrate more on the physical appearances and major occurrences leading to the transformation of form. The first thing to explain about the biography is the function of a metaphor in history as well as in planning.

> Animation

- > 'In the 16th century there was a forest next to the peak.'
- > 'After the devastation, the medieval castle was rebuilt in the 17th century.'
- > 'At this place our history has changed once and for all.'

After that we will go into the earlier use of the biography metaphor, not of landscape, but of objects. As will be shown, these comprise of research traditions in search of the trans-

formation of meaning attached to and derived from objects. The biography of objects is followed by that of landscape, giving attention theory as well as method. The contexts will be described in which the metaphor can be used for sustainable development. While the biography uses stories as means of knowledge dissemination, a different but parallel approach is presented using maps rather than stories. This module concludes with a reference to Historic Landscape Characterization (HCL). It has proven a successful tool in tracing, mapping and opening data on the landscape.

→ LU Introduction to the cultural biography of landscape by Marjolijn Kok & Heleen van Londen

sco Definition of landscape

Landscape has been defined in many ways, mostly connected to the senses. The dictionary explains that landscape is 'a stretch of land as far as the eye can see'. As quoted earlier, the European Landscape Convention states that 'Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'.

The physical part of landscape is usually referred to as land. It follows that the 'scape'-part means perception. A quick glance into history helps to understand the difference. In the 17th century Golden Age Dutch paintings depicting outside scenery became famous. The Dutch word for the painting 'landschap' became literally adopted and integrated into the English language as landscape. Landscapes were images often of idealized green surroundings.

These paintings were extraordinary popular in England, where they inspired architects to create parks after the images. While landscapes used to be pictures depicting the ideal land of milk and honey or expressing the grandeur of nature, today landscape is meant to be any area. The key is the perception of this landscape.

sco Hermeneutic method for landscape research

> Animation

Reading the landscape

Writing landscape history requires reading the landscape in stead of texts. In the late 70's and early 80's of the last century, the interpretation of landscapes became an influential trend in Geography in the us indebted to the work of W.G. Hoskins and J.B. Jackson in the '50s (See for instance Meinig 1979). Do's and don'ts were published on the methods on reading (ordinary) landscapes.



Interpreting perception and meaning

If landscape is all about perception and meaning, the study of landscape history must deal with interpretation and the way to go about it. This is the field of hermeneutics, defined as the 'art, skill, theory and philosophy of interpretation and understanding, especially related to reading texts.' (Darvill 2002, 176) Well known philosophers have given content to the debate putting the focus on method for the humanities (for example Dilthey) or more general, the way people see themselves in the world (for example Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty).

Historical situated perceiving

Gadamer has contributed to the debate that a person as well as the perceived world is 'always historically located and set within a tradition that is credited by authority.' (Darvill 2002, 176). It is difficult enough to do that in our own timeframe and cultural setting, let alone in history or prehistory. We must be aware of the specific contexts of the persons or groups whose perceptions are studied, as well as our own.

Contextual perceiving the present

Johnsen and Olsen extend the work of Gadamer to archaeology as they see it as essential for our understanding of the past that we situate ourselves in the present historical situation. And state that 'This dialectic is rather a never-ending process where new meanings are continuously produced as the past text enters new historical contexts.' (Johnsen and Olsen 1992, 433). Hermeneutics and phenomenology are closely connected in the sense that they both try to understand the past as something that involves both present-day and past perspectives. The work of Bender (1998) and Tilley (1994) on landscape are good examples of approaches that include hermeneutic aspects. But think also of the ethnological approach in module 7 that focuses on how we in the present-day represent things.

> Exercise

sco Definition of a metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a certain meaning is transferred to something unrelated to create new meaning. The device is often used in literature and especially in poetry to give immediate expression. A famous example by Shakespeare is the poem 'all the world is a stage'. In it he suggests that life is a theatre on which people from birth until death perform.

> **Animation**

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
(William Shakespeare, As you like it, 2/7)

The metaphor is also used outside literature for instance in the field of science and planning, but also in common language use. So everybody is familiar with metaphors, even when they do not know the specific linguistic terminology. Mostly, the reason for using metaphors lies in the strength of communication, especially outside the realm of the expert.

sco The metaphor as a tool

In planning, the metaphor has become a central tool for communicating values behind landscape planning in order to gain importance in the public debate and form strategic coalitions (Hidding 1998).

In a structured way the observations from our visits to the two places can be presented as in the table below. In the metropolitan area of the Western Netherlands, the remaining polder landscape dating from the medieval period in between the cities of The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Amsterdam is called the Green Heart.

> **Animation**

The metaphor draws attention to the centre area of the urbanisation and states that its value must be acknowledged, i.e. that the green character of the landscape has a vital function and that further development there should be stopped or tempered. Politicians and the public alike have embraced this value. While this value is not implemented in law, it has become the core of planning and zoning plans. Municipalities that do want to expand are frowned at. The metaphor can be powerful in building a case.

In Module 2, it is explained that the protection of historic landscapes can be achieved through implementation into planning, through transdisciplinary research and strategic coalitions. In the Netherlands, more than average attention has been given to the metaphor (Bloemers 2003). In 2001, 'the cultural biography of landscape' was put on the agenda as the metaphor that could work to gain importance in the debate as well as to form coalitions (Bloemers and Wijnen 2001). The metaphor of the cultural biography of landscape was seen to promote the idea of historical time-depth and the wealth of landscapes and at the same time to facilitate transdisciplinary projects (Hidding et al. 2001). The biography metaphor already existed in several science disciplines as will



be outlined below. However, it was lifted into a new context of use.

sco Narrativism as a method for using metaphors

In history, metaphors are also well-known. The historian, Hayden White (1978), emphasizes the active role of historians in the creation of stories. He states that historians do not 'find' history, but instead make it by arranging events in a certain order, choosing which event are included or excluded in the narrative, deciding on the type of questions asked and giving meaning to events. The metaphor in the narrative is used for representation of the past. In this field of research the use of metaphor has been formalised within the paradigm of Narrativism.

According to Ankersmit (1986) Narrativism tries to characterize periods and events that are related through causality. What characterization is chosen depends on the view of the researcher. This means that the perspective chosen delineates the elements that are taken up in the historic narrative. Different perspectives automatically lead to different histories. Writing history according to narrativism is therefore subjective. Meinig (1979) has demonstrated this effect very well by writing ten different versions of the same scene.

The use of the metaphor like the cultural biography of landscape is so wide that it does not tell us what elements are chosen. It only tells us that a time-depth perspective is chosen. In Ankersmit's view the metaphor chosen to write a specific history should explain the selection of certain elements above others. In this way the metaphor is a guiding principle when selecting data and others can comment more informed on this selection. To return to the metaphor of the 'Green Heart' (sco6) if someone chooses to write the biography of this landscape certain elements can not be omitted. The relation between urban environments as dependent on the rural areas for vitality cannot be avoided. The same area can also be caught in the metaphor of a sinking ship, when this metaphor is chosen the narrative will have to deal with the development of peat reclamation and associated activities that have led to the current situation in which the area is situated far below sea-level.

Part of the method of using metaphors is not just a critical evaluation of the data after the selection of a specific metaphor, but also a critical analysis of why this metaphor is chosen. In other words, it should be explicated what the aim is of the use of a specific metaphor within historic writing. Especially when historic narratives are used in environmental planning and policy-making it should be made clear what choices are made.

→ **LU Cultural biography of objects:**
transformations of meaning by *Marjolijn Kok & Heleen van Londen*

sco The cultural biography of objects

The concept of the biography has been introduced into the social sciences before it was picked up by archaeologists. Biography in its simplest form means a life history. Anthropologists have dealt with actual biographies of people, but also with idealized biographies that can inform us about how societies like to see themselves. Anthropologist Kopytoff extended the notion of the biography to objects. He does this from an economic perspective and states this clearly.

> **Animation**

What would make a biography cultural is not what it deals with, but how and from what perspective. A culturally informed economic biography of an object would look at it as a culturally constructed entity, endowed with culturally specific meanings and classified and reclassified into culturally constituted categories (Kopytoff 1986, 68).

Central to Kopytoff's idea is that through exchange the meaning of objects is transformed. It is at the moment of exchange that the meaning of the object comes to the fore. For example, when a painting like 'the Nightwatch' of Rembrandt would be sold by the Dutch National Museum that would lead to an uproar in society. It is seen as part of our common heritage and not something that can be sold to the highest bidder. Gosden and Marshall have extended the notion of the cultural biography of objects into an archaeological context. They set the idea of the cultural biography of objects against the use-life of objects as used within processual archaeology. Use-life studies view the object as passive, undergoing change. The advantage of the cultural biography of objects is that it can deal better with social interaction. Central to their idea is the notion that:

> **Animation**

..., as people and objects gather time, movement and change, they are constantly transformed, and these transformations of person and object are tied up with each other (Gosden and Marshall 1999, 169).

The cultural biography of objects is related to Tringham's concept of life-history in so far as it:

> **Animation**

... seeks to understand the way objects become invested

with meaning through the social interactions they are caught up in. (Gosden and Marshall 1999, 170).

Other than Kopytoff, Gosden and Marshall see that other contexts such as ceremonial performances are just as important as exchange in the construction of meaning. Transformation of meaning can take place in diverse ways and at different moments in the object's biography. The theoretical background of the researchers will therefore be of importance for deciding on which parts of the biography they will focus.

sco Method of the biographical approach to objects

The biographical approach becomes only viable if the object of interest is studied through time. Only then the transformations of meaning can be understood. How this should be done is often less clearly set out. As usually method is explained by examples. These examples, however, appear to have a similar characteristic in that they are thick descriptions as conceptualized by Geertz (1973).

> Animation

It is not just a technical description of what happened to a particular object, like person A gave a book to person B, (is a simple description) but a description which incorporates cultural meaning, like at her retirement from the restaurant business grandmother gave the family recipe book to her daughter, (is a contextualization of action) so that she could continue the traditional way of cooking that had attracted so many guests (is a historization of the action) and gave the family pride (in a social meaning given to the action).

This need for thick description has led to an adoption of the concept of the biography of object mainly by anthropologists, however, there are some archaeological exceptions. Although the term biography was not applied Spector (1991) and Tringham (1991) both tried through the use of narrative to relate objects to persons and their changing social meaning. The last phase of use/discard of the object is taken and a fictitious, but not necessarily false, narrative is constructed that takes into consideration what is known of the specific culture under study.

Chapman and Gaydarska (2007) are more explicit about their methods as they analyze the pottery, figurines and Spondylus rings in the prehistory of the Balkan in a biographical manner. They adopt a rigorous re-fitting programme in which the context of the (parts of) objects takes an important place within the biographies they create. These biographies include the transformation of meaning throughout a life-history. The re-fitting has as its purpose to reconstruct phases



of use and deposition instead of making complete objects. Furthermore they try to relate the objects to persons and the meanings they could convey in which idealized biographies are described. As they focus on context they show how objects, people and places can be connected. This avenue of thought could be of importance for archaeological heritage management as it gives insight of how people can be bound to places and objects.

sco Example of transformation of meaning of an object

A clear example of the transformation of values/meanings can be shown by looking at a desk at the Dutch Meertens institute of ethnography.

> Animation

Rooijackers (2005) proposes that by looking at desks a lot can be said about the culture within a company. His narrative begins when he enters into employment at the Meertens Institute.

In the early days of the Institute it had been very important in the hierarchy of who could sit where in what setting. For example, some could sit slightly elevated, emphasizing their status. The director and name giver of the institute had a large desk with drawers and extendable desktops. Due to its size the employees would refer to the desk as the pipeless organ.

When Rooijackers starts working there computers were used by everyone and the large desk of Meertens was seen as unpractical. As nobody wanted it Rooijackers, as a young employee, could easily get the desk.

The last user tried to keep him of using the desk as it kept out the light in the room and was filled with tiny animals. When the institute moves to a new building it was

Figure 1 The desk of Meertens

suggested that the old desk that did not comply with any health and safety regulation should be thrown away. But at that moment Voskuil had just started publishing his novel-cycle (7 books) named 'Het Bureau', based on the Meertens Institute. The books were immediately very popular in the Netherlands and with the appearance of every new part a similar hysterical event would occur as with the Harry Potter releases.

Many photographers and film crews started to come to the institute to take pictures of the desk of Meertens, which was still situated in Rooijackers room. Even the Museum of Literature requested if they could get the desk for their collection.

Within the Meertens Institute it became clear that the desk could no longer be thrown away and should be moved to the new location. But the desk would not return to Rooijackers room. The management made it clear to him that none could be privileged above the others in using the desk.

This is the same desk nobody wanted before the books were published. The desk is now exhibited in the central entrance hall of the new building. Artefacts from the old building are placed upon the desk and the desk has spotlights shining on it. It is forbidden to work at the desk and it has become a true museum piece.

Not only does this example show how the meaning attached to an object can be transformed, but also how an object once it is perceived as cultural heritage is made into a museum piece. In effect the object is taken out of ordinary use as preservation and public accessibility become more important.

→ **LU Cultural biography of landscape: long-term landscape history** by *Marjolijn Kok & Heleen van Londen*

sco The concept of the cultural biography of landscape

The concept of the biography can also be related to the landscape instead of the object. As Roymans writes about the cultural biography of landscape:

> **Animation**

The cultural aspect of such a biography implies an emphasis on the ideological and social dimensions of the landscape within a defined cultural system and on transformations of meaning throughout time. (Roymans 1995, 4)

Roymans proposes that the identity of culture is embedded in its perception and organisation of space. From its beginning the concept was seen as facilitating multi-disciplinary

research, where history, historical geography, and ethnography were seen as the main partners. The study of the biography of the landscape was, however, mainly viewed as an academic enterprise.

In 2001 the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) initiated the stimulation programme 'Protecting and developing the Dutch archaeological-historical landscape', better known as **vbo**. The aim of **vbo** is to make a scientific contribution to the present-day policy issue of embedding archaeological-historical values within the environmental planning process (Bloemers 2001, 1). One of the key concepts of the **vbo** is the cultural biography of landscape. It was seen that the cultural biography of landscape could provide internal integration of different disciplines and at the same time it could be a bridging concept towards external parties, like planners. Within **vbo** it was seen that...

> **Animation**

... the biography approach depicts the landscape as a cultural and mental phenomena. Landscape is viewed as a carrier and generator of cultural specific meanings and as the complex (intermediate) result of the many ways in which historic societies have mentally and physically ordered their life-world (Hidding, Kolen and Spek 2001, 29 translated by M. Kok).

Although science may require strict definition it was felt that the cultural biography of the landscape could at the same time be a fuzzy concept, in the sense that it lacks a specific definition. The advantage of a fuzzy concept would be that different parties with different interest can successfully communicate without having the same point of view. In this way the biography could be an important communication device or tool in transdisciplinary projects.

sco The method of the cultural biography of the landscape

Although there is no single method to approach the research into the biography of the landscape there are several elements that are hold in common. The most important aspect of a cultural biography is that it studies a landscape through time. In other words a cultural biography has a diachronic perspective. Although there are specific time-slices that are viewed synchronic, these time-slices only gain importance when studied in relation to other time-slices. The diachronic perspective focuses on transformations and traditions. As it is a landscape approach different aspects should be seen in relation to each other. In order to be able to reach this goal the research usually has an interdisciplinary character. For the prehistoric periods a cooperation with geologists, ecologists is

fruitful, for the later periods also physical and/or historic geographers, historians, and ethnologists are often engaged within the research projects.

> **Animation**

Part 1: The methodology or how things are done within a cultural biographical research is often less clear. For example, Pollard and Reynolds (2002, 10-11) in their study of Avebury suggest that the biographical approach not only allows for a study through time, including all periods, but also that the mundane and monumental are seen as part of the same narrative. The period covered in their narrative seems the main difference with other non-biographical studies. This seems to be a general trend in cultural biographies of landscapes. The main issue seems to be that all periods should be represented in the narrative. When the cultural biography of a landscape is connected to environmental planning it is suggested that all different periods should keep visible or readable within the newly developed area. In this way a time depth is created within the present-day landscape (for example Hidding, Kolen and Spek 2001).

Part: 2 The latest studies seem to focus more and more on the non-physical aspects of landscape and revolve around questions of meaning, perception, memory and identity. This emphasis within the biography of landscape studies can lead to a diminishing of the time-depth of the biography. It focuses on the way in which people nowadays see and give meaning to the landscape. This effectively cuts off any period before grandfather's time.

Part 1 representing all periods, using facts-time line, visible landscape, deep time depth, and national or regional perspective. Part 2: representing different perceptions, telling different stories, places of memory, shallow time depth, local perspective.

The lack of methodology is by some seen as essential for the development of the usefulness of the cultural biography of landscapes (Kolen and Witte, 2006, 133), the authors of this module do not agree with this view (van Londen 2006).

We propose that it should be made clear on what basis elements are taken up in or left out of the cultural biography of landscapes, especially when they are used in environmental planning and policy development. This could be achieved by making a metaphor of the subject discussed in the biography. The metaphor of the green heart used in cso 6 is a good example of a metaphor that guides decisions. In that way it becomes clear on what kind of information decisions are

being made and others, academics included, can weigh their judgement in a more balanced manner.

sco An example of the cultural biography of the landscape

Within archaeology one of the first cultural biographies of the landscape was produced by Roymans (1995). Inspired by the way Kolen (1993) combined Kopytoff's notion of the biography of objects with the study of the landscape, Roymans applied the idea to the Maas-Demer-Schelde region situated at the borders of Belgium and the Netherlands.

Roymans chooses the area for two reasons; first, until fairly recent it has been a rural area with a Roman Catholic character with a relative wealth of sagas; secondly, the availability of high-quality archaeological and ethnographic data.

> **Animation**

The narrative begins in the Late Bronze Age and focuses on the urnfields as they are viewed as a core element in the mythical order of the landscape. The urnfields are seen as territorial markers in which the ancestors possess the land. Although not used with the same intensity throughout all periods, the cemeteries are used far into the Roman Period. In the Early Medieval Period the cemeteries are no longer used, but they are left intact. With the Christianization in the Carolian Period churches are built with adjoining cemeteries, the old urnfields are, however still left intact. Probably they were still revered as places of ghosts and demons.

During the High Middle Ages there was an agricultural and demographic expansion, which led to re-ordering of the landscape. Christianization is present at all levels in society and the urnfields are destroyed in many instances. According to Roymans saga's recorded in the 19th century indicate that the urnfields are demonized, probably from the Middle Ages onward. This can also be shown by the practice of placing gallows on the mounds in the urnfields. The major transformation in landscape ordering is that in the christian image there is a civilised, cultural inner circle concentrating around the church and the surrounding village. The outer circle consists of nature and evil spirits and should be avoided. Roymans suggests that this dividing up of the landscape in good and bad parts was not present in the pre-Christian period. Although spirits and perhaps ancestors were situated in the natural world, they were valued in a more positive manner. It can be said that christianization as a new ideology has led to a reordering of the landscape.

> **Exercise**

sco Communication bridging concept: biography as fuzzy or bridging concept

It is often in the context of a bridging (or fuzzy) concept that the demand for a strong methodology for the cultural biography of landscapes is absent or even unwanted. It is thought that communication between different participants in a community of practice will be better. As everybody can interpret the idea within their own field of expertise and/or experience. The advantage is that conflicts will be fewer, as communication is easier. The disadvantage is that during the initial phases everybody seems to agree, but in the final stages cannot find themselves in the results. This is a consequence of the discrepancy between personal or participants-group mental images and the mental images of those who make the end-product. At this stage adaptations are usually no longer possible.

Fuzzy or bridging concepts can only work when all participants are actively involved with the creation of the end-product. In heterogeneous communities of practice (see module 2) fuzzy concepts can help at the beginning to bring groups together. In most communities of practice nothing needs to be solved and the concepts can remain vague. This is different when a community tries to solve a complex problem such as the development of an area. In the latter case concepts have to be defined Tress et al. (2005, 248) acknowledge that this can be a challenging part of inter- and transdisciplinary projects, but are essential for its success. (See also module 10, methods of strategic research). To reach agreement often epistemological problems (what is knowledge and what is justifiable) have to be solved. As we saw in module 2 Jacobs (2006) defined three types of knowledge in relation to landscapes: matterscapes, powerscapes and mindscapes. In communities of practice these different views have to be discussed and reworked into a common solution to a common problem.

sco Relation between knowledge and policy-making

In module 10 on sustainable development we will go into the different types of relation that can exist between academics and policy makers. These relations depend on who has the most power or whether power is shared. In a democratic society the public is always implicitly present as they choose the policy makers. Projects involved with the development of specific areas, however, often consult or inform the local communities.

> **Animation**

The biography of a landscape can appeal to all involved, but the time-depth envisaged can vary enormously. Archaeologists easily talk about thousands of years back and mostly feel no direct family relation with the people

they try to understand. The general public mainly has an interest in the near past, going back about their grandfather's time. It is the time period still associated with named people and events to which they still feel related in one way or another.

This is a very important aspect when people experience and value their surroundings.

The European Landscape Convention is an important treaty in this respect (see module 4). As it is stated that experts, policymakers and the public are all responsible for the maintenance and development of (local) landscapes. When experts write a cultural biography of the landscape which is used in environmental planning they have already made a selection of all possible biographies. The main question in a democratic society is who should make the decisions on what to include and therefore at the same time exclude. It is obvious that people should have enough information to make valid decisions, but how this information is presented can be crucial in the decision making process (see also module 10, method of sustainable development). In this respect there seems to be a less easy but maybe more favourable alternative for the cultural biography of the landscape, namely the historic landscape characterisation to which we will now turn.

→ **LU Alternative: Historic Landscape Characterization (HLC)** by Marjolijn Kok & Heleen van Londen

sco Introduction to Historic Landscape Characterization

The biography approach can be very appealing in its narrative quality, but when used in archaeological heritage management it may not be the best tool available. Especially the selective character of the biography approach can have negative aspects, as this could lead to exclusion. A good alternative approach could be the Historic Landscape Characterisation as developed by English Heritage. It is seen as an important tool for achieving the goals of the European Landscape convention, as it has a more holistic and integrated approach to management and understanding.

> **Animation**

HLC in particular is concerned with questions of how to protect and manage dynamic rural landscapes. ... More than any other part of the historic environment, the landscape is characterised and enriched by centuries of change and modification. If we celebrate the result of past changes, we must logically accept further change, especially as so many aspect of HLC depend on living, shifting,

ever-changing semi-natural patterns. It is not simply that it is impossible to fossilise the landscape – more than that it is undesirable. ... We want landscape to change so that it continues to be cultural, as well as being a dynamic inheritance for our successors. (Clark et al. 2004, 2-3).

Historic Landscape Characterisation clearly starts from the present-day landscape. It is a shift from protecting specific sites to managing change in the landscape. When managing these changes in the landscape the demands of different groups should be taken into consideration. Furthermore, beauty is not so much a criteria as all aspects of the landscape can have significance for specific groups of users. Therefore some guiding principles have been put forward.

> **Animation**

- > Present not past: it is the present-day landscape that is the main object of study. Landscape as history not geography: the most important characteristic of landscape is its time-depth; change and earlier landscapes exist in the present landscape.
- > Landscape not sites: HLC-based research and understanding are concerned with area not point data.
- > All aspects of the landscape, no matter how modern, are treated as part of landscape character, not just 'special' areas.
- > Semi-natural and living features (woodland, land cover, hedges etc.) are as much a part of landscape character as archaeological features; human landscape – bio-diversity is a cultural phenomenon.
- > Characterisation of landscape is a matter of interpretation not record, perception not facts; understand 'landscape' as an idea, not purely as an objective thing.
- > People's views: it is important to consider collective and public perceptions of landscape alongside more expert views.
- > Landscape is and always has been dynamic: management of change, not preservation is the aim.
- > The process of characterisation should be transparent, with clearly articulated records of data sources and methods used.
- > HLC maps and text should be easy to understand, jargon free and easily accessible to users.
- > HLC results should be integrated into other environmental and heritage management records (e.g. SMRS or HERS).

sco Method of Historic Landscape Characterization

As Historic Landscape Characterization wants to be transparent (see guidelines), it is very clear about the goals and

methods that should be applied. Its goal is to provide information on instead of judgement of the landscape. HLC has an inherent idea that if all information is available the best decisions will be made.

It is also one of the few ways of looking at landscapes that has had a thorough study of the methods used. 29 projects involved with HLC were reviewed and from this some general recommendations are made. As a starting point for the methods to be used the different aspects that have to be considered are put forward.

> **Animation**

HLC should:

- > Define historic character first and foremost in the present-day landscape.
- > Identify interactions and change in the landscape through time.
- > Characterise the whole of the landscape, not designate selected parts – i.e. no part of the landscape is to be regarded as intrinsically more important than any other.
- > Use an archaeologist's approach to 'read' landscape as material culture.
- > Use the present day landscape itself as the main source, through the desk-based medium of maps and air photos, using GIS.
- > Understand 'landscape' through interpretation and perception rather than purely as an objective thing i.e. 'landscape as perceived by people'.
- > Remember that landscape is and always has been dynamic, both in terms of physical material components and shifting attitudes to it; thus management and change not preservation is the aim.
- > Ensure that its conclusions and interpretations are transparent, checkable and updateable
- > Be fully integrated into other environmental and heritage management databases, particularly (in England) the SMR (or in future the HERC) (Aldred and Fairclough 2002, 40-41).

Also some practical advice is given in that areas of subjectivity in the HLC should be made transparent. To generalize, in order to identify dominant characters of the historic landscape, one should use present-day 1:25:000 (Ordnance Survey) maps as a primary base. Use a pre-defined classification. And use common easily understandable language. And a template for a project design can be downloaded from the website of English Heritage: www.english-heritage.org.uk

As the method of HLC is map-based with additional text it can be used in the planning process more easily than a narrative with illustrative pictures. HLC does not want to give



a value judgement, therefore, the political decision-making process lies outside its scope.

sco Example of landscape characterization

Here an example will be given of how HLC can influence further changes to the landscape.

Countryside Stewardship, Wigmore, Herefordshire

In 2002 an application was made for a Countryside Stewardship Scheme near Wigmore, Herefordshire, for an area of large fields that had been created over the past few decades as farming techniques had intensified and necessitated the removal of boundaries. The HLC showed that this area had a character quite distinct from the surrounding landscape, which comprised either the enclosure of former common arable fields associated with medieval settlement at Wigmore, or the later redefinition of the landscape by the drainage and enclosure of the moor. Recognising that the more recent modification of the landscape was an historical process in its own right it was advised that, rather than reconstructing lost boundaries, the large fields should be subdivided in a way that reflected current farming practice (such as cropping regimes, or the addressing of concerns about soil movement), thus accepting Countryside Stewardship schemes as a recognisable cause of change in the modern landscape.

> Exercise

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