WHO, WHY AND HOW? THE LANDSCAPE PERSPECTIVE TOOL: A PROPOSAL FOR A SITUATED INTERPRETATION OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE CONSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT
Functionally and aesthetically, urban landscapes have been often characterized as marginal, ubiquitous, generic, banal etc. However, each specific urban landscape responds to a set of local contextual aspects including physical geography, history and culture, to name a few. The unique and differential character of urban landscapes has been recognized in academia already, but how can such theoretical advances be transferred to the practical and pragmatic contexts of landscape and urban planning? By carrying out a theoretical and methodological revision, a proposal for an interpretive tool has been made in an attempt to accommodate additional aspects of landscape formation in territorial analysis and landscape characterization processes. These are embodied in four dimensions that have been pooled, so to speak, from said theoretical revision. The tool has been dubbed “landscape perspective” and it has been developed using urban landscapes as a basis. It has tried to meet the following requirements: firstly, to fit in the practical context defined by tensions between discipline related objective and individual and/or collective subjectivist land understandings, and also by the lack of specific design and planning criteria for the urban landscapes. Secondly, to stress the social construction of landscape by drawing from a historically and culturally specific multi-layered understanding of place. This means that it should consider the various tangible and intangible effects that society has had in landscape construction, and also, the many land understandings that originate in as many actors. Finally, to be compatible with established analysis and projective procedures in the planning praxis and space related decision making by structuring the interpretation of landscape in a systematic way. The theoretical review has taken into account three main fields of scholarship: urban studies, landscape theories, and urban landscape theories. Additionally, other three subfields have been used to build up the tool’s theoretical foundations: landscape and nature, mountain landscape theory and cultural landscape theory. On the other hand, methods that are built on multi-aspect and multi-layered territorial and landscape analysis and interpretation have been reviewed along with theoretical, academic and practice based methods. As a proposal, the concept and design of the Landscape Perspective tool tries to put forward a way to understand the character of urban landscapes, by including both material and discursive, objective and subjective aspects in the analysis. The tool is a compound of the mentioned theories and methods of landscape characterization, and its fundamental structuring aspects are the Idea, Agent, Representation and Element dimensions. In addition, the Landscape Perspective tool is also defined by its instrumental use for interpretation purposes as it has a propositive and practical objective that is reinforced by its systematic structure, that is, by the four lines of inquiry suggested by each of the four dimensions. The interpretation through these might lead to a detection of potentialities and possibilities that are unique to each landscape from a social constructivist point of view.
METHODOLOGY, OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE

The unique and differential character of urban landscapes has been recognized in academia already, but how can such theoretical advances be transferred to the practical and pragmatic contexts of landscape and urban planning? This is the main question of the research explained in this paper. By carrying out a theoretical and methodological revision, a proposal for an interpretive tool has been made in an attempt to accommodate additional aspects of landscape formation in territorial analysis and landscape characterization processes. These are embodied in four dimensions that have been pooled, so to speak, from said theoretical revision. In this paper, a tool is proposed. The main aims and requirements are next:

• Understand the character of urban landscapes and their formation
• Structure the perceptions. There needs to be a consideration towards the physical and conceptual effects that society has on the land, and also, many land understandings that originate in as many actors should be examined. Such perceptions of landscape should be structured in a systematic and normalized way that could hypothetically be compatible with established analysis and projective procedures in the planning praxis.
• Objective qualification of Landscape. In addition, an effort should be made to avoid well known landscape archetypes in order to achieve the most integrative perspective as possible in terms of what is considered valuable and significant. It means that land analysis should be carried out without predefining the vocation or aesthetic quality of a place, and instead, searching for its future situation in its own qualities and potentialities so as to value and qualify its prevailing state.
• Empathic approach to landscape. Moreover, the method for analysis shouldn’t be guided by aesthetic and subjective criteria that define differences between pleasant/proper and unpleasant/unproper built elements, and rather proceed with an empathic approach to landscape (Sieverts, 2003).

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The concept and design of the Landscape Perspective tool is a compound of the several theories of landscape. However, the main theoretical reference of the tool is the constructivist approach to landscape by Denis Cosgrove (1998). Cosgrove (1998) claimed that landscape denotes more than the visible elements of the land and stresses the notion of landscape as a particular mode of perceiving reality that is developed by certain parts of society in a specific historical moment and that has its own modes and techniques of representation. On the other hand, the Landscape Perspective tool is also defined by its instrumental use for interpretation purposes. These aspects and the aim concerning the analysis of a regional scale landscape have been inspired mainly by two references, although other similar methods have also been consulted.1 On the one hand, the concept of “ecology” and its fourfold formulation use by Rayner Banham to interpret the city of Los Angeles (2001a). On the other hand, the model for landscape perception and its interactive threefold structure proposed by Martin Zube (1982). While the first method is the inspiration for taking into account the specific landscape—ecology in Banham’s terms— and its different aspects—architecture, culture, representation— created by the interaction amongst geographical features and social-cultural practices within an urban region, the latter model offered also an additional take on interaction in the case of the features that form the process of landscape perception and construction. The proposed method of the finalized research considers just one
type of geography or land: the mountain slope, but looks into various ways it has been cultured.

In addition, the Landscape Perception tool can also be paired with and has been influenced by: the three layered construction of the urban space by Henri Lefebvre (2003), the concept of land as palimpsest (Corboz, 1983), and the multiple possibilities for perceiving a land suggested by Meinig (1979) as it has already been noted.

LITERATURE REVIEW
From a constructivist standpoint, landscape is a way to see and relate to land of a part of society (D. E. Cosgrove, 1998); a concept that is both materially and conceptually constructed and transformed (Baker, 1992; Nogué, 2010; Roger, 2007). By joining various landscape perspectives of different social backgrounds and profiles, it is possible to compose a multi-perspective understanding of a land (Meinig, 1979) and it is also possible to identify different ways of understanding the land that affect spatial planning and that depend on different levels of social and political power (Baker, 1992; D. E. Cosgrove, 1998; Denecke, 1992). In addition, as relationship between society and land change over time due to social, political and economic developments, landscape accommodates these variations dynamically (Jackson, 2010) and also has the capacity to be deconstructed (D. E. Cosgrove & Domosh, 1993) due to an interactive relationship amongst people, land and perception (Zube et al., 1982). That is to say, according to a constructivist outlook, landscape is formed by people, in various physical and conceptual ways that change through history and time.

As the current situation, urban fringes are a result of multiple layers of land understanding and perspectives (Roger, 2007). It is fair to say that by digging into their foundations and structures it is possible to understand their formation and find specific features within that can help characterize their landscape.

What follows is a brief account on the references and definition of the four Dimensions that structure the Landscape Perspective. These have been derived from independently elaborated, but conceptually related, theoretical approximations to landscape and to its definition, perception and conceptualization.

- **Idea, 1st Dimension**: the Idea represents the understanding of the mountain/land in connection with a purpose or intention of transformation. This Dimension is derived from the definition of landscape as "a way of seeing the world" (D. E. Cosgrove, 1998) and stresses the aspect of specificity to the construction of landscape by particular social groups (D. E. Cosgrove, 1998) so as to indicate the existence of various Ideas that fundament as many different Landscape Perspectives. The manifold existence of Ideas is simultaneously derived from the argument of the existence of tenfold ways of seeing a single part of land (Meinig, 1979).

- **Representation, 2nd Dimension**: the Representation Dimension is derived from the direct association between a Landscape Perspective and its communication, representation, arteleization (Roger, 2007) in various modes of expressions and techniques depending on the author. To represent the way of experiencing, seeing and relating to the world is also a key process in the construction of landscapes in Cosgrove's (1998) definition. Landscape as a representation or schema of the way to see the world (Corner, 1992, p. 243) denotes a selection of elements from the land to express a plausible reality or design (Corner, 1999).

- **Agency, 3rd Dimension**: This Dimension is inherent to the Landscape Perspective, and to landscape as a constructed concept itself. It also determines the remaining three Dimensions within the Landscape Perspective tool, and therefore is a fundamental part of the interpretation of landscape formation. Agency is mentioned as a European social group or certain classes of people, (D. E. Cosgrove, 1998), as authors of landscape (Samuels, 1979), as various beholding eyes (Meinig, 1979). Cosgrove (1998) differentiates insider and outsider agency—depending on the relationship between people and land—, as well as objectivist and subjectivist ways of seeing the land—depending on the purpose and epistemological standpoint of the observer.
• Elements, 4th Dimension: The elements represent the consequences of the way to see the world. Elements are the constructed landscape, more than the visual part of the land (D. E. Cosgrove, 1998); both parts in the double artealization that builds landscape in-visu and in-situ, on an imagined or conceptual level, and on a physical material level (Roger, 2007), but not necessarily always from an artistic perspective as suggested by Roger (2007). Depending on the elements, the landscape can be characterized as political or inhabited (Jackson, 2010); and thus reflect an ideological way of doing landscape (Baker, 1992).

In short, the Landscape Perspective tool represents a tool for speculating with landscape’s character based on its built forms by formulating several Landscape Perspective Ideas that have shaped a land—as employed in the First Scene—, and a tool to interpret landscape conceptual constructions through its four dimensions—as used in the Second Scene.

![FIGURE 1. The four dimensional structure of the Landscape Perspective tool.](image)

Namely, the present research proposes an interpretation of the various land layers by implementing the Landscape Perspective tool and method; this is accomplished in two Scenes: the Field Work First Scene and the Archival Second Scene. Within the First Scene, the tool is used to formulate, interpret and understand each of the layers that have shaped discursively and physically the land into landscape. It is followed by the Second Scene where the Landscape Perspective’s four structuring dimensions establish the lines of inquiry that guide the interpretation: land understanding or Idea (1st D), Representation (2nd D), promoter or Agency (3rd D), and the effected transformation (conceptual and/or material) or Elements (4th D). These are further analysed and interpreted in each of the formulated Landscape Perspectives using the theoretical presumptions and looking for trends and structures that can serve to meet the purpose of understanding the urban landscape.

METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW

A constructionist approach was chosen as the best possible standpoint to meet the research objectives of understanding the character and formation of urban landscapes since it fits with the definition of landscape as social construction, and the notion that knowledge about landscape is ‘actively constructed rather than found or discovered’ (Deming & Swaffield, 2011, p. 9). That has lead the work to adopt a method of analysis that is defined by two aspects: validation of the researcher’s views and constructions of the case study reality (Swaffield, 2006), and the acknowledgment of both objective and subjective considerations of landscape knowledge construction (Deming & Swaffield, 2011; Swaffield, 2006).

The chapter includes a comparison chart amongst various established praxis and research related landscape analysis methods: a process for land perception by G. And P. Picnhemel and E. Turri (cited in Busquets, 2009), the process of building a project for landscape management (Busquets & Cortina, 2009), the Landscape Character Assessment technique (Swanwick & Land Use Consultants, 2002), the method used to analyse landscape in a Master course (Energielandschaft Allgäu, 2013) and the Regional Plan of Bilbao 2006 (País Vasco & Bizkaia, 2008) The comparison aims to frame with precision the purpose and functionality of the proposed method, its techniques and data gathering process by mirroring it with already existing and used ones.

It is followed by a review on several methods of land interpretation and models that have been of reference to shape the Landscape Perspective tool and the formulation of several Landscape Perspectives to understand the land. These include (1998) definition of landscape as the main foundation of the Landscape Perspective tool and Martin Zube et al.’s (1982) model of landscape

Finally, examples of field work (Careri, 2002; B. Sieverts, 2006, 2008; Sinclair, 2003; Smithson, 2006) and archival work (Bowring, 2002; Daniels, 1988; Larsen & Swanbrow, 2006; Lewis, 1988; Osborne, 1988; Qviström, 2013; Robertson & Hull, 2001) techniques are explained as references to clarify the techniques and steps that are proposed in the finalized research. These methods and research techniques have been used as references for the process of landscape character understanding that is proposed, as well as for the different steps that take place in that process.

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**TABLE 1.** Comparative amongst various landscape analysis methods and proposed method.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Method</th>
<th>Land Perception Process (G &amp; P Pinchel, and E Turri)[1]</th>
<th>Project for Landscape Management (Busquets, 2009)</th>
<th>Landscape Character Assessment (Country-Side Agency ETA Scottish Natural Heritage)</th>
<th>Gestalitete Energiland-Schaft Allgäu (LAREG, TUM)</th>
<th>LPP Bilbao Metropolitana 2006 (Regional Plan of Metropolitian Bilbao)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Conceptualization of Urban Fringe Landscape Through a Literature Revision; The Use of the Landscape Perspective Tool</td>
<td>World-View Rough Image</td>
<td>Territorial Bounding</td>
<td>Establish the Limits of the Area of Study</td>
<td>The Setting of the Area and the Issues</td>
<td>Limits of the Area of Study (1.1 Map), Precedents of the Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Scenario: Data Collection, Landa-Lana Esploratzailea</td>
<td>Chosen World-View, Perception and Identification</td>
<td>Selected Image Data Collection</td>
<td>Desktop Analysis</td>
<td>Analysis of Generic Elements</td>
<td>Documents: Legal Context; Territorial Planning Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas, Judgement-Mental Values, Perceived Values According to Life Experience and Values</td>
<td>Valued Image Valuing</td>
<td>Classification and Description</td>
<td>Landscape Structuration</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Scenario: Data Collection, Working in the Archives</td>
<td>Attitudes and Behaviour</td>
<td>Projected Image</td>
<td>Projecting</td>
<td>Choice of Criteria to be Used to Make Value Judgements</td>
<td>Experimental Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible Structure; Tendencies, Alternative Landscape Views</td>
<td>Decisions and Actions (Political)</td>
<td>Prospective Image Planning</td>
<td>Judgements and Propose Criteria</td>
<td>New Representations</td>
<td>Regional Planning and Criteria; Territorial Model: G.1-D.4.5 Blueprints; Memoir’s Chapters 2-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Delimitation</td>
<td>Documentation Recomposition Based on Documents</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Valuation and Direction Establishment</td>
<td>Design / Planning</td>
<td>Field Work Planning; Operational Strategies and Structural Actions 0.5 and 0.6 Blueprints; Memoirs’ Chapters 3-6; Norms; Action Program and Economic and Financial Chapter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design / Planning</td>
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POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE PERSPECTIVE TOOL

The most important characteristic of the LP tool is that it includes the various social and cultural aspects to the transformation of the territory, as well as the role that these play in the construction of ideas about landscape. The tool is designed with the aim of understanding how these landscapes have been formed, as well as a means to understand and identify its potential values from a standpoint that considers their social construction. Many accepted notions and assessments and their fixed truthfulness can be destabilized in the light of such a consideration.

For instance, in the case of the notion of nature equated to landscape, it is possible to see the constructions that define different kinds of nature, and how nature is continuously transformed and defined depending on human needs and economic interest by studying how species of fauna and flora (Clément, 2007; D. E. Cosgrove, 1998), as well as inorganic elements (Gissen, 2009) have been used and transformed to meet various economic purposes. Also, with regards to the idea of landscape as an image/photograph, by connecting the image to its author or promoting agency, purposes other than the obvious ones might also arise such as promoting a certain product, idea or region by using landscape as a symbol (Baker, 1992; Denecke, 1992; Mitchell, 2002). By studying the political and economic grounds as to how a landscape image is used to represent place (Muñoz, 2005), it is possible to discover the limits and deficiencies of the way a landscape’s cultural meaning is used to naturalize an identity associated to a place. Also, to demonstrate how powerful a part of society is in creating proper and tasteful aesthetic imaginaries of landscape and the so-called landscape archetypes (Nogué, 2010). In addition, the Landscape Perspective tool serves to claim the lack of documentation and representation of landscape constructions elaborated by communities and groups of people with less power to communicate their views. Finally, in the case of urban landscapes, the relationship between their marginal character and negative representations caused by cultural, mass media representations and interests can be unveiled using the Landscape Perspective tool.

Indeed, such capacities are not exclusive to the LP tool; there has been much research regarding constructivist views of landscape. For instance, by working on landscape and power (Mitchell, 2002), landscape and ideology, landscape and authorship (Samuels, 1979), landscape and seeing (D. E. Cosgrove, 1998, 2008), landscape and representation (Corner, 1999; D. Cosgrove & Daniels, 1988; D. E. Cosgrove, 2008). Researches dealing with cultural landscapes and their elements (Banham, 2001a; Berque, 2011; Jackson, 2010; Zarza, 2008) have also considered the social and cultural aspect, needless to say. However, these works usually focus on isolated dimensions, that is to say, by analysing just one aspect of landscape, or connecting the main dimension to another one, which remains as a secondary implication to the study. While constructivist theoretical approaches to landscape have helped to establish the dimensions of Idea, Agency, Representation, and Elements included in the proposal for the Landscape Perspective tool, it can be said that this interpretive tool includes the four of them in a single interpretive technique or device for interpretation. These four dimensions are differentiated within the Landscape. (Figure 2)

ANALYSED CASE: MOUNTAINOUS URBAN LANDSCAPES OF BILBAO

The perspective tool and this structure is aimed to enable a systematic interpretation of landscape. The proposition of a tool is justified by the intention to find a way that can serve to apply it in more than one case study, and so that it can also be integrated in a planning or design procedure. Aiming for such integration into the analysis phases included in any projective process, the finished research proposes an application method for the LP tool by carrying out a test in the case of the Mountainous Urban Landscapes of Bilbao. This search for a general method also enables the main purpose of the research, which is the understanding of the landscape character of urban fringe landscapes. However, the research deals with an approximation to a method that still needs some adjustment and fine tuning as it will be mentioned—rather than on a description and definition of an urban landscape type.
FIRST SCENE
Briefly stated, the First Scene has been a creative and, perhaps, inventive procedure to understand the landscape, by forming a plausible interpretation of the cultural land transformation from a constructivist standpoint—reflected on the consideration of a land transformation generated by several ways of seeing and doing—and using an abductive/reflexive strategy—since it has implemented inductive classification and deductive evaluative-formulative methods as well as a proposal of alternative landscape analysis categories—Landscape Perspectives. It is followed by the Second Scene, which completes the first interpretation with documented information; that is, the First Scene’s speculative interpretation acquires additional information on the Agency and their objectives that have shaped and transformed Bilbao’s mountainside.

SECOND SCENE
Starting off from the speculative interpretation of the First Scene, several aspects have been revealed during the Second Scene which serves to characterize the mountainous urban landscape development and construction: the trends within the Dimensions and the correlations amongst the four Dimensions. Using the documented information and interpreting with the Landscape Perspective tool and its four Dimensions, it has been possible to unpack the features of the ideological and conceptual basis that have shaped the mountainous urban fringe landscapes of Bilbao. Each of the Landscape Perspective formulation has been completed with data regarding its four dimensions: Idea, Representation, Agency and Elements. The results have shown that there are connections amongst the different landscape dimensions noting the various implications that each has had in urban landscape construction especially in terms of Agency and decision making. Therefore, the Second Scene represents the understanding of the intangible aspects that have constructed the landscape.
Firstly, the trends within the dimensions structure a typical construction of urban landscapes that is almost invariable amongst the Six Landscape Perspectives. The Idea of the mountain—or place—that is not significant for the development of a purpose, the standard language of Representation, the Outsider and Objectivist Agency and the Double construction—in-visu and in-situ—of landscape are trends that can be otherwise pictured as standard procedure or business as usual in what comes to regional and spatial planning of any territory.

On the other hand, the specific overlapping that takes place amongst Dimensions—Idea and Representation, Agency and Representation—and amongst specific forms of Dimensions—Objectivist Agency and Standard Representation, in-situ landscape Elements and lack of Representation, etc.—reflect two ideas: a confirmation of the Zube (1982) model of landscape interaction and on the other hand, a variation from one Landscape Perspective to another in terms of the material and immaterial landscape constructed by each. The first idea stems from noticing how the four Dimensions interact—through correlations and overlapping—to form landscape, while the latter is evidenced by the specific forms of dimensions interactions that take place only in several cases of Landscape Perspectives.

Finally, as a last idea that contributes to the understanding of urban landscape formation; there hasn’t been found any stance of will or intention to build this type of landscape, and therefore, the idea of urban landscape as accidents and the product of many independent decision-making re-emerges confirmed by this research and its interpretation of UL through various Landscape Perspectives.

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH LINES
The literature review and the methodological framework have analysed different approaches to the topic and the analysis and interpretation of landscape therefore establishing the ground rules for
The empirical part of the finalized research. These are reflected and crystallized in the proposal for an interpretation tool called the Landscape Perspective tool and its 4 dimensions. The Landscape Perspective tool interprets landscape in two ways: first speculating with its character by formulating different approaches, and also by structuring an inquiry on its character through interpretive dimensions. To that end a case study has been used where physical geography plays a main role in the definition of its character and elements, Bilbao's mountainous urban fringe landscape. The two ways in which the case study has been interpreted with the Landscape Perspective tool are to be identified with the two Scenes presented above: the Field Work's First Scene and the Archival Work's Second Scene. While the former Scene speculates and formulates a landscape character formed by Six Landscape Perspectives represented in maps, the latter Second Scene further enquires the character of landscape using the 4 Dimensions and theoretical premises.

The results of the Second Scene have revealed an overall trend of landscape formation indicated by the repeated types of dimensions through various documents and Landscape Perspectives, and also variations in the construction of landscape shown by different combinations of dimension types. This means that although there is a typical way of constructing urban landscapes, indifferent to the land, independent to the way the land—in this case the mountain—is understood, involving standard representations of land, objectivist agents, and both tangible and tangible constructions, there are also variations dependent on the Idea of land, and also on combinations of specific Agency, Representation and Element types. In addition, two other types of findings indicate on the one hand a combination of landscape perspective ideas showing that there is some sort of inadvertent collaboration between apparently isolated land understandings that contribute to the construction of urban landscapes, and on the other a set of alternative constructions of mountains that are included within the documents and that have also played a role in the construction of the studied landscape.

ENDNOTES

1. As it has been stated in subsection 2.1.2 Methodological Framework, other well-known regional landscape and urban landscape analysis methods have also been consulted for reference purposes.

REFERENCES


