

Landscape conscience: awareness raising, training and education

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Abstract

This essay argues that, as urbanisation and recreational development seem to be the main reasons of the destruction and deterioration of the contemporary Greek landscape, they also contain ways to remedy and rectify the problem. We elaborate on the deeper causes of the Greeks' problematic relationship with their landscapes –namely the lack of a well-developed landscape conscience– its cultural roots, and the cultural means to rectify it. Specifically, on the basis of the landscape's cultural constitution, we argue that, as Greece's landscape problems effectively began with the urbanisation boom and unplanned / illegal recreation development, so Greeks are beginning to re-discover landscape through, mainly: a) the country's urban transformation, which is giving rise to new ways of life and a yearning for a 'return to the countryside'; and b) through domestic tourism. Throughout this analysis and discussion, we point to ways and mechanisms by which the Greek landscape conscience can be re-constituted and developed with the aid of awareness raising, training and education.

Keywords: landscape conscience, Greek landscape, cultural causes, cultural make-up, urbanisation, tourism, awareness raising

Introduction and objectives

One of the most crucial premises on which the European Landscape Convention rests is the value of landscapes (all sorts of landscapes) to all people (the concept of landscape as a common good). On this basis, the foundations and mechanisms of the ways people relate to landscape need to be determined and conceptualised if such a relationship is to be fulfilled, underlining the significance of the development of a lay landscape conscience for all. Our main research question therefore relates to how one relates to landscape; in other words, how does one develop a landscape conscience? Such a landscape conscience is currently underdeveloped in the case of Greece, as attested to by several observers of the Greek landscape over the past half century.

Indeed, the downgrading and, on occasions, destruction of the Greek landscape throughout its history has been addressed by both academics and practitioners (Terkenli, 2004; Louloudis et al., 2005; Hadjimichalis, 2008; Manolidis, 2008; Stathatos, 2008; Trova, 2008; Vlachos and Louloudis, 2008). The impacts of this loss are clearly manifest in and around us, while its causes have also been analysed and agreed upon (Terkenli, 2004; Manolidis, 2008; Stathatos, 2008). By general agreement, the most significant among these have probably been: a) the rampant urbanisation of the 1950s and 1960s, leading to the mass migration of the rural Greek population into the major country's urban centres followed by an abandonment of

rural activities, and b) the boom in the unplanned growth of tourism and second home construction –much of it illegal– in the Greek countryside.

This paper will argue that, as is often the case, the solution lies within the problem. Thus, if urbanisation and tourism are the symptoms of this malady, they also contain ways of remedying it. We shall elaborate on the deeper causes of the landscape problem in Greece –namely the lack of a well-developed *landscape conscience*– as well as on its cultural roots and the cultural means of remedying and rectifying it. Specifically, on the basis of the cultural constitution of the landscape, we will argue that, as Greek landscape problems effectively began with the urbanisation boom and with unplanned / illegal recreation development, so Greeks are beginning to re-discover landscape through, mainly: a) the country's urban transformation, which is giving rise to new ways of life and a yearning for a 'return to the countryside'; and b) through domestic tourism. Throughout this analysis and discussion, we point to ways and mechanisms by which the Greek landscape conscience can be re-constituted and developed with the aid of awareness raising, training and education.

Landscape, Greece and culture

According to Lukermann, landscape is 'the concept of the environment, as modified by man' (Lukermann, 1964). Furthermore, 'Possibly the most important of all concepts re-introduced into modern geography [since ancient Greek times] is the concept of the cultural landscape [...] best described in the French school's terms of *genre de vie* and *milieu* [...] No statement of an area's environment is pertinent unless specified in the historical and cultural terms of its inhabitants [...] [and] therefore, constantly *emerging*'. So central is the place of landscape in geographical inquiry that: 'In fact, to treat the study of an area in any other fashion seems explicitly to deny that geography is an empirical science based wholly on the experience of man' (ibid). Lukermann's position on the significance of landscape for Geography as a discipline and for everyday life highlights not only the human provenance of landscape, but also allows for the possibility of improving it through culturally contingent ways.

As the Landscape School of Geography firmly established at an early stage, all landscapes are cultural. This is a basic premise of the discipline of Geography, and central to the analysis and core argument of this study: we must look into the cultural underpinnings of any landscape issue or problem in order to understand, analyse and rectify it. Accordingly, our first tenet is that Greece's problematic relationship with its landscape is essentially a cultural problem, since it can be traced back to the relative lack of a defined and well-developed lay landscape conscience in the country, as compared to other modern nation-states in Europe and beyond. If 'conscience' is defined as the mixture of human perceptions, thoughts and emotions, it presupposes the existence of an external world (Sutherland, 1989). Landscape conscience, then, refers to the distinctive bonds (conscious or subconscious) that characterise a person's or a people's relationships with their landscapes. Conceptually, it may be approached through the nexus of interrelationships developing between landscape perceptions, emotions and behavioural patterns, as affected by all personal and cultural factors impinging on these three categories of variable (i.e. ethics, experiences, biological particularities, etc.). Thus, landscape conscience becomes a useful conceptual tool in understanding and configuring the ways in which humans relate to the landscape. Although any sort of spatial conscience generally attributed to a cultural system tends to find its roots in the history of a modern nation-state, caution must always be exercised in generalising with regard to entire cultures and social systems. On the basis of this principle, let us attempt to trace the root causes of a deficient landscape conscience in Greece.

In search of the necessarily *urban* origins of a landscape conscience, the legal, historical, aesthetic and socio-cultural trajectory of the Greeks' relationship with their landscapes has already been an object of investigation (Terkenli, 2011; Manolidis, 2008; Stathatos, 1996). The unfulfilled cultural geography of the Greek landscape has its origins in a multitude of factors including the country's lack of industrialisation, the prevalence of a 'market-place principle' among its populace (McNeill, 1978), the role of Greek Orthodox ecclesiastical art in landscape representations, and the lack of a sense of commons in relation to environmental resources. These are just a few, albeit critical, pieces of the puzzle. We shall examine them in more depth and at more length below, before turning to ways of addressing and rectifying them.

In post-war Greece, modernisation and development have mostly been defined in economic terms, often to the detriment of environmental, socio-cultural or civic values. Rapid urbanisation led to a disintegration of the traditional environmental conscience of formerly rural populations with regard to outdoor resources, including landscape (Fig. 4.31). In place of this conscience, rampant *laissez-faire* capitalism, land speculation, illegal construction and short-term profit in most entrepreneurial domains took root among the populace. 'As far as the Greek perception of natural space is concerned, the problem is exacerbated by a peculiarly Greek form of parochialism, whereby allegiance is pledged to extremely small territorial subdivisions, down to the level of a neighbourhood or village' (Stathatos, 1996). As a result, the landscape ceased to constitute a collective good for most Greeks, especially city-dwellers. The landscape was no longer considered part of a common home (Terkenli, 1995) as urban populations grew exponentially and extended into what was previously countryside. Landscape became obsolete, transformed into the backdrop to –or object of– aggressive land speculation.



Figures 4.31: Two views of the same landscape, one with and one without detrimental human intervention. Arcadia, Greece, 2010.

Moreover, social scientists point out that long-standing aspects of Greek culture, such as clientelism and patronage, have been responsible for an atrophied Greek civil society (Demertzis, 1997). These characteristics have instigated serious repercussions in community life: 'Despite decades of social and economic change, the state still overwhelms civil society, and personal and family ties remain significant in most areas of life. The domination of civil society by the state is an overwhelming fact of Greek economic, social, and political life' (Legg and Roberts, 1997). Consequently, environmental and landscape matters have been relegated to the jurisdiction of the state, absolving individuals of personal responsibility, even though such attitudes are detrimental to the environment and the landscape. Many of the threats faced by the latter need to be countered by long-term policies that often demand the sacrifice of short-term private interests. This leads us to the first set of reasons underlying a landscape conscience deficiency among the Greeks.

Tracing the deeper causes of a Greek landscape conscience deficiency

Turning to the historical, aesthetic and socio-cultural trajectory of the relationship of Greece with its landscape over the past 150 years in search of the urban origins of a landscape conscience, the following points may be considered critical:

- a. Greece never went through a Renaissance, an urban rebirth, a baroque phase or even a visual revolution. Instead, it adopted aspects of modernity in certain realms of life *a posteriori* by implanting and overlaying them on pre-existing cultural particularities and local ways of life.
- b. The landscape ideal and form of representation most characteristic of this cultural realm remained the two-dimensional, apparently flat but actually inverted, perspective of Greek Orthodox art. Ecclesiastical iconography remains a powerfully evocative and compelling element of Greek cultural identity today (Terkenli, 2011). Modern Greek landscape was re-constructed by 19th-century Western painters in accordance with Romantic ideals as the basis of the then emergent Greek cultural identity: a) archaism and b) orientalism (Terkenli et al., 2001).
- c. Greece also never experienced a fully-fledged industrial revolution.

Perhaps the most significant socio-cultural factor at the root of the Greeks' problematic relationship with their landscapes is the lack of a sense of the landscape as a *common good*. A common good is defined as the integrated set of material and non-material dimensions and features at the disposal of a particular social group, where its use by one user diminishes the amount available to all others, but for which the exclusion of additional users is difficult or impossible (Bromley, 1991). According to current social scientific thought, rationally optimal behaviour favours a cooperative, ethically active and vigilant strategy of generous mutuality (community) (Tuan, 1986; Ostrom, 1990). This sense of community has largely been absent in contemporary urban Greek society. Rather, among Greek cultural characteristics, a 'marketplace principle' has persisted in Greek social life since antiquity into the present (McNeill, 1978). The problem can be traced back to the initial phases of Greek post-war urbanisation: upon becoming 'urbanised', Greeks lost their old connection with the land, with nature, and with the landscape – a connection that had traditionally been handed down from one generation to the next (Pettifer, 1993). The few urbanites existent in post-war Greece and the children of the first and subsequent generations of rural migrants into the big cities never developed a sense of landscape. Taken for granted until the late 1970s, the Greek landscape was first acknowledged through interconnections then emerging between agricultural modernisation and the rural landscape (nature vs society) and through tourism.

One common factor that appears to have played a significant role in the development of a landscape conscience in modern Europe is the advent of the Industrial Revolution (Bunce, 1994 ; Cosgrove, 1998). 'It was precisely this urbanisation, and the increasing distancing from nature to which the population of societies in the process of industrialisation were subjected, which almost simultaneously created the need for contact with some substitute, however false' (Stathatos, 1996). Thus, the bourgeoisie reinvented the landscape concept, which was initially closely tied to the English picturesque landscape school. A series of new modes of landscape organisation (*landscape spatialities*) and new corresponding forms of landscape conscience were shaped by the emergent rural/urban contradistinction and through urbanites' nostalgia for the 'lost' countryside (the urban 'return to the landscape'). Greece, enduring cultural stagnation under Ottoman rule from the mid-15th to the early/mid-nineteenth century, never experienced the stages of modern landscape formation and landscape conscience formation experienced by industrial European societies (Olwig, 2001; Cosgrove, 1998). Instead, the country retained its rural character until the mass rural migrations into the large urban centres in the post-war period. Many vestiges of the rural ways of life imported into the Greek cities in the 1950s and 1960s still remain strong in Greek city life (Pettifer, 1993). The sense and conscience of landscape, however, were –for the most part– lost.

Urbanisation as a means to the development of a landscape conscience

We shall now proceed to argue that the solution –namely, the re-development of a Greek landscape conscience –lie in Greek a) urbanisation and b) tourism. The basis of this newly-emergent transformation rests in the changes currently unfolding in the reconfiguration of the country's urban and agrarian identities and the emergence of new notions of urbanity and rurality. Naturally, as is true of all the deeper structures, forms and processes of cultural transformation, such changes are slow in coming and in manifesting themselves in relationships between humans and landscape. They are, of course *emerging* (Lukermann, 1964).

As other chapters in this volume describe in more detail, rampant urbanisation in the 1950s and 1960s both stemmed from and led to a mass migration of the rural population into Greece's major urban centres (Fig. 4.32), and to the abandonment of agriculture and stock raising. This led to the demise of the stewards of the rural landscapes, but also to Greeks losing their old connection with the land, nature, and the landscape, which had traditionally been handed down from one generation to another (Stathatos, 1996; Pettifer, 1993; Karapostolis, 1983). The creation of the need for –and acknowledgment of– the Greek landscape consequently came through the insurmountable pressures of urbanisation. Certainly, the physical loss of landscape (e.g. due to forest fires during the summers of 2007 and 2009) and the directives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) played a role in the rediscovery of the Greek landscape, but it was mostly urban culture that propelled changing attitudes: the need for 'nature', and nostalgia for 'Greece as it used to be' –culturally, physically, ethically, aesthetically, historically and symbolically –in contradistinction to life in the city. This nostalgia of the town dweller for the countryside and the rural landscape so typical of industrialised populations (Aitchison et al., 2000) in search of a 'rural idyll' –in place of the pre-existing 'Arcadian ideal' –is primarily fuelled by the desire to upgrade their quality of life (Lowenthal, 1997; Paquette and Domon, 2003; Lambrianidis and Bella, 2004). At the same time, such a quest also boosts countryside recreation through the demand for alternative and special forms of tourism such as ecotourism, cultural tourism or agro-tourism (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997), whereby landscapes are reconstituted and used as places of nostalgia (Hopkins, 1998; Goss, 1993).



Figure 4.32: The historic district of Plaka surrounded by the urban sprawl of Athens, Greece, 2006.

This need, made manifest at the individual as well as at the collective level, mainly fed into internal tourism which was often geared towards the search for personal or collective identity and ancestral roots. Certainly, the country-wide educational system uniformly reflects the Greeks' poor relationship with their landscape –a situation that is now in the initial stages of being overturned at all educational levels (Terkenli, 2004). This –mainly urban– deficiency has, however, begun to be counterbalanced by the rediscovery of landscape through leisure. No other means of addressing the problem has been as successful in this regard to date. Landscape destruction or loss through fire and other natural calamities, as seen on TV, seems too distant from everyday reality in a largely urbanised country. Even in the larger context of environmental degradation and deterioration, the landscape tends to be relegated to levels of very low or minimal priority for governmental bodies and lay people alike. Cultural change may be effected through education and awareness-raising drives (such as official or unofficial landscape training, still in its infancy in Greece) aided by the Media (i.e. geographical or travel documentaries of various sorts). However, in the case of Greece, such a landscape campaign would necessitate a wholesale change in people's mindset, feelings and habits. Inevitably, this would be very slow in coming.

Tourism as a means of developing a landscape conscience

If the landscape is to suffer the detrimental impacts of human activity, it also becomes the ultimate source of pleasure, re-creation and regeneration for those who have destroyed it and are condemned to live without it. Since the early to mid-1990s, the balance of tourism demand between international and domestic tourism in the country has been changing. Whereas international tourism had previously been the most significant and well-developed (over 75% in 1989), the trend has since been partly reversed, although domestic tourism is extremely difficult to measure accurately. In the past ten to fifteen years, Greeks have been rediscovering their landscapes *en masse*. Highly conducive to this trend have been: a) a higher standard of living, coupled with intolerable urban conditions of life; b) the aggressive advertising and promotion of Greek destinations by the state and the tourist industry; and c) the

combination of thriving alternative forms of tourism and new leisure opportunities with the discovery of 'long-weekend' tourism among domestic tourists.

A detailed study of domestic tourism shows that —excluding special motives (such as convention or health tourism)— the 'environment' is generally among the three most significant reasons cited by domestic tourists in Greece. Since there is no explicit 'landscape' category, the 'environment' comes closest to it and third in people's preferences, after 'holidays and entertainment' and 'rest and relaxation' (Tsartas et al., 2001). This should come as no surprise, since the tourism that most Greeks pursue during their established, 'official' vacation period in July and August (Fig. 4.33) is of the '3S' kind.



Figure 4.33: Tourist landscape: Koufonissia, Greece, 2007.

Thus, in place of a fully-fledged industrial revolution, tourism has been the main source driving countryside awareness among contemporary Greeks. Through domestic tourism, Greek urbanites have slowly begun to develop a landscape conscience, to rediscover landscape, and through it to rediscover family roots, local histories, 'authentic' Greece and 'nature'. Concurrently, these —mostly rural— tourism and recreation landscapes have been connected to a series of significant transformations which have impacted to varying degrees not only on conventional agricultural production, but also on the layers of symbolism, forms of representation and patterns of consumption in relation to the Greek landscape. Specifically, these landscapes have been turned into urban, peri-urban or semi-urban consumption spaces hosting widespread recreation activities (water parks, golf courses, shopping malls, etc) and uncontrolled, wide-spread second-home construction. This contemporary inflow of urbanites into rural areas has inevitably led to the construction of new forms of landscape conscience which relate not to a single dominant landscape myth, but rather to multiple contested rural landscape idylls, myths or ideals, corresponding to actual changes in landscape forms, functions and meanings. In these ways, Greek (rural) landscapes —whether coastal, island, mountain or other— have adjusted to new urbanised, aestheticised and commoditised uses. This transformation has generally come about through: a) the preservation of landscape forms alone —rather than former functions and values for purposes of visual appeal, and b) the protection of selected or 'typical' rural and natural landscape features, ranging from local products to beautiful beaches— solely for purposes of tourism consumption (Terkenli, 2001).

Stathatos describes how post-war Greek governments were quick to realise the vast profits that could be made out of a modern tourism industry; the result was an intensive promotional campaign at home and abroad, a campaign still active today through publicity photographs, posters, postcards and other representations of Greek space. These representations, which have perhaps already replaced every other image of Greece for many, promote an imaginary country in which the sun always shines brightly, where the sea is always blue and calm, the houses –of a uniform Cycladic style– are invariably freshly whitewashed, and the inhabitants are permanently cheerful, welcoming and colourful (Minca, 1998; Stathatos, 1996). The problem is that Greece has been exporting, but also consuming, this distorted image of itself for four consecutive decades, and there is reason to believe that it may be becoming innate. When the country has lived long enough with falsehood ingrained in its psychic self image, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish truth from fiction (Stathatos, 2006) and develop a genuine relationship with landscapes, and thus a true landscape conscience. Even more so because, in the face of current forces of globalising transformation, all tourist landscapes begin to resemble one another: utopian paradises with tropical characteristics globally and uniformly (re)produced and standardised.

Concluding thoughts

This loss of spatial specificity, an inevitable consequence of the changes imposed by capitalism and tourism on social and spatial structures, seems to have been exacerbated through new processes of spatial transformation: *processes of a new global cultural economy of space*. The new global cultural economy of space is defined as a re-negotiation of spatial forms and units (place, landscape, region) on the basis of contemporary trends in socio-economic organisation (Terkenli and d’Hauteserre, 2006). Its processes are highly interwoven: the globalisation and standardisation of landscapes (landscape elements and landscape dimensions), landscape deconstruction and often redefinition (‘Disneyfication’), and a loss of pre-existing place and landscape identity (i.e. Las Vegas). All landscapes –whether urban, rural, suburban, etc.– may be considered products of the interaction between the human communities that inhabit them and local ecosystems, which makes them subject to the same broadly cultural processes of spatial transformation (Vogiatzakis et al., 2008; Terkenli, 2001). All are increasingly affected by the same global issues and in similar ways, and subject to the same dynamic forces of globalisation. The outcomes of such processes, and their associated trends, have been: a) the formation of new types of landscapes, which are often disconnected from local geographies and histories; and b) the commoditisation of landscape in any or all of its dimensions: visual/aesthetic, functional/experiential and symbolic/spiritual. As tourists, vacationers and place consumers of every sort tire of and exhaust their options among the landscape products of this new global cultural economy of space, a reverse trend demands more ‘authentic’, ‘traditional’ or unmodified landscapes. This regeneration of landscape conscience may, potentially, spread to Greece.

As already mentioned, solutions tend to lie within problems. Thus, if the core issue here is lack of a well-formed landscape conscience among a country’s citizens, then the solution must necessarily lie in training, education and raising their landscape awareness. In light of the above realisations and contemporary trends, however, such a task as the development of a genuine landscape conscience in Greece becomes especially daunting. Greece needs not only to tend to its current landscape problems, but also to protect its landscapes from the spread of landscape re-organisation and re-configuration processes. Perhaps the latter, acting upon an already highly urbanised, sophisticated and consumption-oriented populace, may prove to be the catalyst towards the desired goal.

In conclusion, the goal should be the re-definition and development of the landscape conscience of ordinary Greeks: a profound and wholesale cultural reversal with regard to the landscape and the environment, is required. Such a task needs to rest on *knowledge / education*, the active *participation* of the stakeholders in decision-making and, most of all, immediate *action* in re-configuring and properly managing our Greek landscape geographies. This remains a long-overdue task in which landscape specialists of every sort and provenance (practitioners, academics, activists, NGOs, politicians) inevitably represent the front line and the first task force in its fulfilment. Towards this goal, the European Landscape Convention serves as the most useful tool and instrument for its realisation (Pedroli et al., 2007; Wascher, 2001). Specifically, all actions supporting the implementation of the ELC are conducive to awareness raising and education, although, in the case of Greece, more rudimentary steps need to be taken towards these goals through, for instance, the creation of cooperative governmental agencies, administrative bodies, academic and professional networks, etc. responsible for landscape matters and the formulation of a unified landscape policy. These steps must be complemented by public education and training in perceptual and behavioural issues regarding the multidimensional concept and meaning of 'landscape' –perhaps through the existing School Environmental Education Programs; by recording and publicising landscape problems / threats along with best landscape practices, and by coordinating actions and initiatives undertaken by the educational system, local authorities and NGOs under the guidance of landscape experts. The latter actions should be aimed at developing landscape perception and good landscape practices, as well as the organisation of a centrally directed campaign for sensitising and mobilising the public in landscape matters and for promoting the goals of the ELC.

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