



An assessment of ordinary landscapes by an expert and by its residents: Landscape values in areas of intensive agricultural use

Évelyne Vouligny, Gérald Domon*, Julie Ruiz

School of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Montreal, C.P. 6128, succ. Centre-ville, Montreal, Quebec H3C 3J7, Canada

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 22 October 2007

Received in revised form 29 October 2008

Accepted 31 October 2008

Keywords:

Landscape assessment

Ordinary landscape

Cultural landscape

Expert landscape assessment

Experiential landscape assessment

Agricultural landscape

Quebec

Canada

ABSTRACT

The expert-based approach to landscape assessment developed in North America during the 1970s is still largely used in planning. It has proved its usefulness for the protection and the management of landscapes with remarkable visual attributes. However, facing growing social demands for the quality of surroundings, ordinary landscapes also raise great challenges for planning. But, to what extent is the expert-based approach to landscape assessment able to capture the value of these ordinary landscapes? What might be the more appropriate method for this purpose? This paper addresses these questions through an empirical research project in areas of intensive agricultural use in Quebec (Canada). The aim of this research was to measure and compare the ability of an expert-based approach and of a lay people-based approach, also named experiential approach, to capture the most valued components of ordinary landscapes. These methods were applied to two study areas. The first one has no recognised landscapes in any planning document while the second one has recognised landscapes for regional tourism. Forty-six inhabitants and an expert were invited to evaluate the landscapes of the study areas. The results have allowed comparison of the components valued by the expert and by the inhabitants as well as the criteria used in the assessment. They revealed differences between the expert and the lay people assessment. For inhabitants, the value of ordinary landscapes is based on a set of criteria related to emotion, to everyday experience and to their intimate knowledge of places. Thus, the formal visual criteria used by the expert appear to be clearly less important in the evaluation by lay people. As the expert perspective in landscape assessment is more closely associated to the experience of an individual which cross the territory (ex.: tourist), this paper concludes that to capture the value of ordinary landscapes in a planning perspective, a combination of approaches is necessary.

Crown Copyright © 2008 Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Following the adoption of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the generalization of the environmental evaluation process, a series of methods designed to evaluate landscapes were developed in North America during the 1970s and 1980s (U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, 1974; British Columbia Ministry of Forests, 1981; Gaudreau et al., 1986; Le Groupe VIAU Inc. and le groupe conseil ENTRACO Inc., 1992; British Columbia Ministry of Forests, 1994; USDA Forest Service, 1995; and others). These methods all share at least two common aspects. First, by bearing essentially on the visual aspect of landscapes (Daniel, 2001; Dakin, 2003), they use in their evaluations a series of criteria derived from the arts domain (harmony, diversity, contrast, etc.) (Berleant, 1997; Wherrett and Tan, 2005). Second, they primarily

seek to limit the visual impacts of interventions (forest harvesting, installation of new infrastructures, etc.) and to facilitate their insertion within landscapes that elicit, or that are likely to elicit a collective interest from the population (Gobster et al., 2007). In the protection of exceptional and remarkable landscapes, the value of these methods is widely recognized (Porteous, 1996). However, we must also recognize the fact that remarkable landscapes (emblematic, historic, etc. (Domon et al., 2000)) are no longer the only ones needing attention. In terms of land use planning and management, significant issues are currently being raised for ordinary landscapes, those common “cultural landscapes” that do not hold a shared social consensus as to their quality, their value and the need to protect them (Dewarrat et al., 2003; Bigando, 2004). Although some of these cultural landscapes have been the object of exhaustive studies (Meinig, 1979; Jackson, 1984), considerable work still needs to be done in order to identify the elements of ordinary landscapes that deserve attention for purposes of landscape design, protection and management. The landscapes of areas of intensive agricultural use are particularly good examples of this

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 514 343 6298; fax: +1 514 343 6104.
E-mail address: gerald.domon@umontreal.ca (G. Domon).

new reality. Their main issues are associated with two principal trends.

First, because of the transformations that have occurred in agriculture after the Second World War, the most fertile plains were marked by an increasingly intensive land use for agricultural purposes (Bowler and Ilbery, 1999; Ruiz and Domon, 2005). Everywhere, within the industrialized countries of North America and Europe, major trends toward the loss of diversity and increasing uniformity of these landscapes were recorded (Meeus et al., 1990; Ward et al., 1990; Simpson et al., 1994; Ihse, 1995; Fjellstad and Dramstad, 1999; Pan et al., 1999). Second, and concurrently with the first trend, the process of farm consolidation has led to a spectacular decline in their number, and has turned farmers into a minority within rural populations, even in areas of intensifying agricultural use (Bryant and Joseph, 2001; USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2006). For the wide majority of people the agricultural landscape is therefore no longer essentially devoted to the production of agri-food goods; it has now become an essential lifestyle component. Therefore, at the same time, as increasing requests arise for the management of everyday life landscapes (Pinto-Correia et al., 2006), that residence locations are less frequently a “given” but more frequently a “choice”, and that landscape quality can influence this choice (Paquette and Domon, 2003), the trends toward uniformity in areas of intensive agricultural use are causing concern for their de-vitalization. Within such a context, it is therefore important to identify the elements that are valued by the individuals residing in these areas. What are the features of interest in the landscapes of areas of intensive agricultural use? Which components are the most valued by its residents?

These questions raise other issues in terms of methods. To which degree do the evaluation methods developed in the wake of the NEPA really allow for the identification of these valued components? If this is indeed possible, which method or methods would allow the achievement of this goal? Because no evaluation method was specifically developed for the ordinary landscapes of areas of intensive agricultural use, we cannot assume that the usual methods can succeed in identifying valued components, and this in spite of the fact that the visual criteria on which they are based refer to aesthetic criteria that are considered universal (Child, 1968; Howett, 1997). Indeed, as opposed to exceptional landscapes, their appreciation may not reside necessarily in their visual characteristics, by definition common, even ordinary (Dewarrat et al., 2003), and could therefore depend on a different manner of appreciating and perceiving landscapes (Hough, 1990).

Therefore, this study seeks to measure the capacity of two evaluation methods, originating from two different approaches, to identify the most valued components within ordinary landscapes of areas of intensive agriculture. The first one is derived from methods developed in the wake of NEPA. This type of methods, based on expert visual approaches, remains the basic reference in practices of land use planning (Daniel, 2001; Dakin, 2003). In order to take into account some of the apparent specificities of ordinary landscapes, as well as to avoid providing a priori value criteria, a second method, based on experiential approaches, was used concurrently. This second type of method focuses on the manner by which individuals, of the lay public, evaluate landscapes. In this study, these two methods were simultaneously applied to two study areas presenting different visual characteristics. The specific objectives of the study were:

- Identify the landscape components that were the most valued by the expert and by the individuals of the lay public.
- Identify and compare the value criteria used by the expert and by the individuals in their evaluations of ordinary landscapes.

We will first describe the two study areas in order to clearly portray their visual differences and we will next detail the way in which the expert and the experiential methods were applied in these study areas. Then, the results obtained using the two methods are presented, first by focusing on the values given by the experts and by the residents to different landscape units of the study areas, and secondly by focusing on the sites and landscapes valued by the residents. Based on these results, we discuss the contribution of the expert and experiential methods in capturing the interest of ordinary landscapes. However, beforehand, using the typologies presented by various authors, we briefly review the approaches and methods used in landscape evaluation, and this in order to better assess those used in this study.

Literature review and positioning of methods

Many disciplines have contributed to the characterization and evaluation of landscapes. This has resulted in numerous methods, which can be differentiated by their sometimes divergent theoretical and philosophical bases. Faced with this diversity of approaches, several authors have sought to position them in relation to each other by developing typologies (Porteous, 1982, 1996; Punter, 1982; Zube et al., 1982; Daniel and Vining, 1983; Dakin, 2003; Domon et al., 2005; Wherrett and Tan, 2005). As mentioned by Zube (1986), and more recently by Dakin (2003), each typology ends up by positioning the different approaches on a continuum on which the notion of landscape and the importance given to the point of view of individuals vary (Table 1). According to the typology of Dakin (2003) three broad families of approaches can be identified: the expert, the experimental and the experiential approaches. Whereas the expert approach considers essentially the judgement of an expert and the visual attributes of the landscape, the experimental approach is based on the evaluation by the public of the physical (i.e. tree density, surface areas covered by water) and cognitive (i.e. coherence, mystery) components of the landscape (Daniel and Vining, 1983; Dakin, 2003; Wherrett and Tan, 2005). These two approaches have in common the evaluation of landscape quality based on information that is essentially, if not exclusively, of a visual nature (Dakin, 2003). In a different manner, the experiential approach, without excluding visual attributes, is based on the emotions and the expectations of individuals with respect to the landscape (Bruns and Green, 2001; Dakin, 2003).

Considering these characteristics and our research objectives, the expert and the experiential methods were selected for this study. The true reference in land use planning, the expert methods are of a more quantitative nature. They are based on the premise that the value of a landscape is intrinsic to its visual attributes (Daniel and Vining, 1983; Dakin, 2003; Paquette et al., 2005; Wherrett and Tan, 2005). An expert could thus translate the physical attributes of a landscape into formal parameters (shapes, lines, colours, etc.) and evaluate those using specific indicators such as, diversity, harmony, contrast, etc. in order to quantify the value of landscapes. In other words “and this is an essential component for this approach, the expert is competent for quantifying the aesthetic value of landscapes because it lies in a certain number of universal parameters (diversity, harmony, contrast, etc.)” (Domon et al., 2004, p. 14; traduction by the authors). In this way, visual expert methods would transcend all types of landscapes as well as the cultural and individual differences of the observers (Daniel and Vining, 1983).

For landscapes whose main interest may not belong to the sole visual dimension, the experiential approach could be pertinent. This approach is based on the idea that the experience of a landscape is multidimensional and exceeds the sole aesthetic expe-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/93623>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/93623>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)