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Perspectives on Landscape Identity: A Conceptual Challenge

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ABSTRACT *The concept of landscape identity is often referred to in landscape policy and planning. A clear definition of the concept is lacking however. This is problematic because the term 'landscape identity' can have many different meanings and thus easily lead to confusion. We define landscape identity as 'the perceived uniqueness of a place' and endeavour to describe the content of this definition more concisely. Within this context the paper introduces the framework of the Landscape Identity Circle for the various dimensions of landscape identity based on two axes: differentiation between spatial as opposed to existential identity, and differentiation between personal and cultural landscape identity. This framework is valuable in positioning research approaches and disciplines addressing landscape identity.*

KEY WORDS: Landscape character, landscape perception, landscape theory, place identity

1. Introducing Landscape and Identity

Landscape is currently gaining importance in the public and political debate, particularly within Europe. The European Commission's Rural Development Policy 2007–2013, for example, states as its second strategic guideline: improving the environment and the countryside (European Community, 2006). This is noteworthy considering the fact that landscape has hitherto explicitly been regarded a competence of the member states, even though many EU policies have had seriously detrimental effects upon landscape. Research too has contributed to a sense of loss and grief with regard to the degradation of the beautiful landscapes of the past (Abrahamsson, 1999; Arnesen, 1998; Pedrolí *et al.*, 2006), which is gradually being compensated by research focusing on landscape quality and identity (see e.g. Lévêque *et al.*, 2007; Pedrolí *et al.*, 2007b). The question then arises as to what exactly is understood by landscape. Here we follow the definition of the European Landscape Convention: Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, the character of which is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors (Council of Europe, 2000). This definition is explicitly broader than a merely visual approach (Cosgrove, 1984; Creswell, 2004; Jackson, 1997; Witherick *et al.*, 2001).

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Many studies have been compiled on landscape identity in the course of recent decades (Boerwinkel, 1994; Brace, 1999; Breakwell, 1986; Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Devine-Wright & Lyons, 1997; Haartsen *et al.*, 2000; Jorgensen *et al.*, 2006; Korpela, 1989; Lowenthal, 1994; Raffestin, 2005). Nevertheless, landscape identity is a concept that is rarely well defined. On the one hand, it is useful because the concept is widely used; on the other hand however, the concept lacks clarity, is open to a variety of interpretations, all of which make it difficult to discuss it scientifically. A sense of coherence among the different interpretations is lacking, even though general aspects that outline landscape identity can readily be listed, such as landscape identity related to a region's character, to a historical event or to the perception of a specific group of people. These give an indication of the general concept, but they do not allow for the distinction of different forms of landscape identity.

As a working definition we define landscape identity as *the perceived uniqueness of a place*. At the end of the paper we will return to this definition. It is evident that landscape identity in this sense will never have an absolute nature, since perceptions of people just do not coincide. The attributed identity belongs as much to the observer as to the area.

People attribute landscape identity to an area but this concept is not exclusively limited to the natural or objective features of that area. Landscape identity is a social and personal construction (Haartsen *et al.*, 2000) in which the biophysical features of the area are components. People attribute landscape identity to various scales within the landscape—such as a place, region, county or country—whereby smaller scale features (region) fit into the larger scale (county) (Stobbelaar & Hendriks, 2006). The identity that an individual attributes to a landscape tends to confirm the identity generally attributed by his/her social/cultural environment (Buijs *et al.*, 2006). Landscape identity unites inhabitants to each other or to the area and distinguishes them from inhabitants of another area (Haartsen *et al.*, 2000; Kruit *et al.*, 2004).

Traces from the past and future aspirations influence definitions of the current landscape identity. Thus past and future considerations are used by people or institutions with different interests to attribute different landscape identities to a region. Therefore, *the* landscape identity is always contested (Darby, 2000; Frouws, 1998; Saugeres, 2002) and governance issues related to landscape often fail to satisfactorily address the 'ownership' of landscape (and its identity) (Görg, 2007; Palang *et al.*, 2007).

In general, people highlight the positive aspects of landscape overriding the negative aspects. On the other hand, landscape identity can also be used to exclude people from their claims to the land, which is certainly a negative side of landscape identity (Dixon & Dürrheim, 2000; Ipsen, 1994). Landscape identity changes under the influence of changing contexts: the balance of power among stakeholders may shift, their aims can change, new players step up to the line, and new functions become important (Palang *et al.*, 2007; Saugeres, 2002).

We experienced this diversity in scientific and societal concepts of landscape identity in the course of interpreting observations of landscape qualities from field surveys (Hendriks & Stobbelaar, 2003; Stobbelaar & Hendriks, 2006). So we conducted an analysis of relevant scientific approaches, focusing on the interpretations of landscape identity itself rather than on its contribution to social or personal identity (as, for example, addressed by Sgard, 2008). This paper provides a review of

the analysis and introduces a framework within which the differing approaches to landscape identity can be positioned. The purpose of this framework is to provide an instrument with which to reflect on the place of various landscape identity studies, projects and ideas and their differing contributions to scientific advance. It also allows for reflection on the different roles of actors involved in the public and political debate on landscape. Based on the various interpretations of landscape identity observed, we propose a classification consisting of four fields. This paper clarifies the relationship between landscape identity and personal identity and discusses the conceptual basis for the framework. It describes the four fields identified and discusses the potential applicability of the framework.

2. Landscape Identity, Bridging the Physical, Social and Cultural Aspects of Landscape

2.1. The Human–Environment Interaction as a First Guiding Principle in the Approach to Landscape Identity

People and landscape are in constant interaction, or as [Turner \(2006, p. 387\)](#) puts it: “today’s landscape is a form of active material culture that has both shaped people and has been shaped by them”. We will not here enter into the debate on cultural landscape (see e.g. [Jones, 1991, 2003](#), stressing its diversity in connotations), but for the purposes of this paper adhere to the assumption that the identity of people is shaped through interaction with many environments, such as social class, religion, ethnicity and gender ([Paasi, 2002](#)), but also in interaction with the physical world. People derive a significant part of their identity from the landscape in which they were raised or live ([Hendriks, 1999](#); [Keulartz, 2000](#); [Korpela, 1989](#); [O’Brien, 2006](#); [Proshansky et al., 1983](#); [Seel, 1991](#); [Van Zoest, 1994](#)).

People can have a sense of belonging to a specific landscape, often in the region where they spent their youth or where they experienced a crucial period in their biography. The identity that people derive from the landscape in that region is called *place identity* ([Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001](#); [Olwig, 2006](#); [Proshansky et al., 1983](#)) or *existential identity* ([Boerwinkel, 1994](#); [Gualtieri, 1983](#); [Van Mansvelt & Pedroli, 2003](#); [Van Zoest, 1994](#)). Thus, when discussing existential identity, not only the objects in and the features of the physical environment are issues but also the associations, memories and symbolic meanings attached to the physical landscape (the social and cultural environment) ([Schama, 1995](#)). In this context existential identity is considered as an inherent quality of the landscape as perceived by people. The study of landscape from this perspective is a relatively new development (see e.g. [Olwig, 2002](#); [Setten, 2004](#)).

A much longer tradition has the second implication of the concept of identity, whereby people ascribe identity to their environment, or in other words: they characterise the landscape. This is called *spatial identity* ([Van Zoest, 1994](#)), *Landscape Character* ([Antrop, 1998](#); [Wascher, 2005](#)) or just *Landscape Identity* ([Antrop, 2000, 2007](#); [Palmer & Roos-Klein Lankhorst, 1998](#)). Spatial in this sense has a broad meaning; far broader than, for example, the visual aspects of landscape it includes orientation, distances, ordination, etc. Spatial identity of landscapes is based on forms, patterns and elements (but also colours and processes, and even

sounds and smells; Stobbelaar & Hendriks, 2006): those features by means of which people recognise landscapes.

Paasi (2002) differentiates between spatial and existential landscape identity—in our view—when speaking of the ‘identity of the region’ and the ‘regional identity of the inhabitants’. The difference lies in the relationship of a person to the landscape. Ingold (2000) in this respect speaks of ‘building’ and ‘dwelling’: A person can perceive a landscape from the outside and in that way build an image of his or her physical surroundings, by attributing features to it. On the other hand, he or she can also merge into the landscape, dwelling in it, and existentially perceiving its inherent qualities.

2.2. Personal–Cultural Identification as a Second Guiding Principle in the Approach to Landscape Identity

In addition to differentiating between spatial and existential landscape identity, several authors indicate that a distinction can also be made between *personal* and *cultural* landscape identity (Bonesio, 2007; Buijs *et al.*, 2006; Dixon & Dürrhein, 2000; Keulartz, 2000; Quayle & Driessen van der Lieck, 1997; Van Zoest, 1994). This latter distinction expresses the difference in meaning or significance that a landscape can have, on the one hand, for an individual with his/her personal perceptions and preferences, related to individual experiences and biographical events (Jacobs, 2006), and on the other hand, for the community valuing generally known landmarks, or stories about certain places in the landscape. Cultural landscape identity thus is not an aggregation of personally perceived landscape qualities, but rather a matter of human consensus. Jorgensen *et al.* (2006) found that cultural landscape identity (or, in their terminology, social place identity) can be formed by positive as well as negative experiences. They also found that taking care of the landscape (as opposed to only tending one’s own back garden) is an important indicator of the cultural landscape identity attributed to that landscape. Thus, cultural landscape identity may be characterised by signs in the landscape, care for the landscape, or a common memory of events, victories and religious features. Toponyms are the classic signs of cultural landscape identity, often because they refer to historical events. The expression of personal landscape identity can also be recognised by signs, such as carvings in trees or on rocks, but these are inevitably casual and often difficult to interpret.

3. The Landscape Identity Circle

When we cross the spatial–existential identity axis with the personal–cultural axis (Figure 1), four quadrants arise. Each of these four quadrants highlights a specific discourse on landscape identity, with its associated ideas, authors and papers. Although papers can address several quadrants and individual scholars can be identified with varying quadrants, the discourses specified in the quadrants are illustrative for the various approaches used. Collaborative landscape studies integrating various approaches specifically aim to cover several quadrants, involving various disciplines and covering action research and participation processes as well (Cassell & Johnson, 2006). The landscape circle illustrates that this is related not only

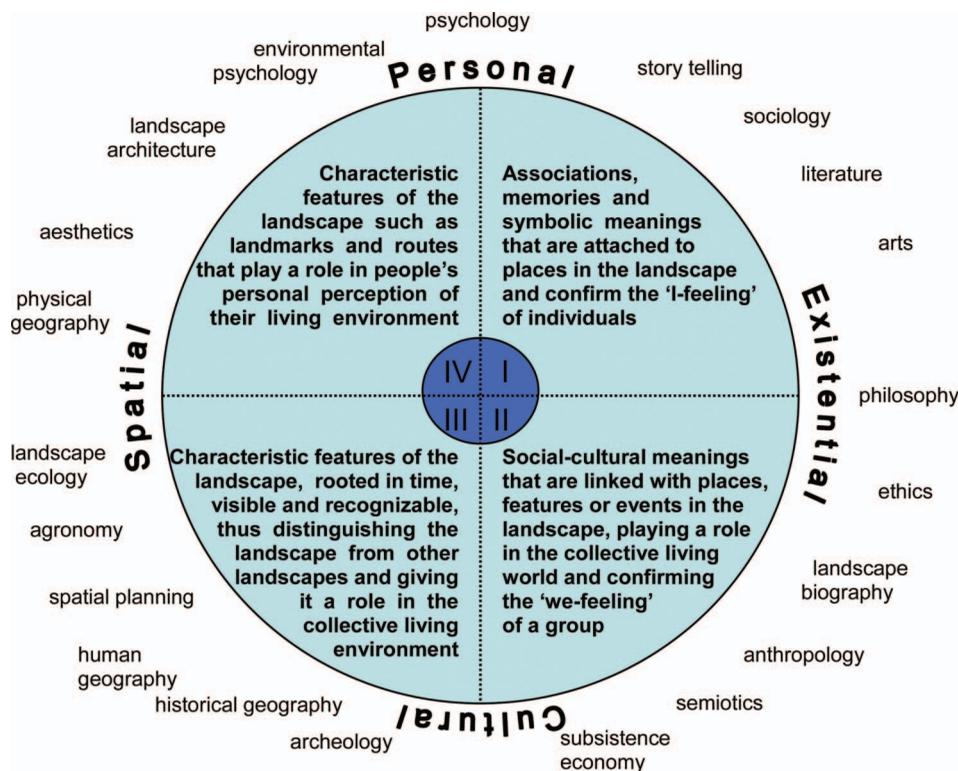


Figure 1. The Landscape Identity Circle: landscape identity laid out on two axes of spatial–existential landscape identity on the one hand and personal–cultural landscape identity on the other (Stobbelaar & Hendriks, 2006). Scientific disciplines involved in landscape studies are placed around (outer sphere).

to the disciplines involved, but also to the way landscape identity is understood and presented.

In the following paragraphs we present with regard to each of the four fields:

- A short description of the concept
- History of and key authors in the concept development
- Some examples of applied research and disciplines involved
- The spatial dimension of the landscape identity considered

With reference to scale classifications we would stress that these are not absolute. The literature studied shows that scale often has a different meaning according to the quadrant, which has implications for comparison of information on the different types of identity.

In research on landscape identity concerning the spatial dimension, a major distinction can be made between place identity and regional identity (Mücher & Wascher, 2007; Roos-Klein Lankhorst *et al.*, 2002). Place identity is related to a smaller area in the landscape and refers particularly to striking, unique or historical objects that make a certain place 'eye-catching'. Church towers, windmills, farms,

rivers, etc., are good examples of elements that can function as such. Regional identity is related to a larger area that has a certain unity in features like geography, natural and cultural heritage.

In research on existential identity various types and strengths of attachment between people and the different spatial dimensions in their environment are found (Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001). The most frequently used spatial dimensions in this type of research are: home, town and region.

Linked to the differing approaches to landscape we also find a variation in terminology. Various studies in the same field use different terms, which makes comparison difficult. An interesting observation in this perspective with regard to the Landscape Identity Circle is that despite such incongruencies it is nevertheless possible to place the various scientific disciplines engaged in landscape studies around the fields of landscape identity. This at least partly explains the variation in landscape approaches between the various disciplines: each discipline has its own narrative about landscape (Jones, 2003). Even a certain division of power in decision-making on landscape development can be illustrated with the Circle: the attitude towards landscape of commercial land developers generally has more in parallel with the spatial-cultural dimension of landscape than with the existential-personal (Görg, 2007; Widgren, 2006). Most stakeholders have either a personal-existential relationship to landscape or a more 'objective' spatial-cultural one, whereas both ethical and aesthetical points of view tend to be neglected.

3.1. The Personal-Existential Landscape Identity

Concept. Places can be special to certain people because their biography is linked to these places (e.g. Korpela & Hartig, 1996; Pretty *et al.*, 2003; Wiborg, 2004). Every human being has his/her own life-world, composed of sites with a personal meaning; this is what we call the *personal-existential* identity of a landscape (quadrant I in Figure 1). The personal significance of a landscape lies in the associations and memories attached to sites within it.

Concept Development. There is general concordance in English literature on the content of what we call personal existential landscape identity and what is often called place identity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Building on the work of Breakwell (1986), Devine-Wright and Lyons (1997), Manzo (2003), Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) and Wester-Herber (2004) all state that self-identity should continuously be confirmed—and is also continuously changing—in interaction with the social and physical environment. This means that people are constantly in contact with the landscape they live in (and with other people) to confirm who they really are. At least four aspects of landscapes are important with respect to this interaction (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996):

- *Distinctiveness.* A place enables a person to distinguish himself/herself from others: I am from Vienna or from the islands of Friesland. In this way a place acts as a social category and thus place identification can be seen as synonymous with social identification. So, this (social) aspect is related to the characteristic properties of the area.

- *Continuity.* The physical environment makes it possible to trace personal history. Two types of continuity can be distinguished: *place-referent* continuity and *place-congruent* continuity. Place-referent continuity refers to specific places that have emotional significance for a person and that form a part of his personal history. Place-congruent continuity refers to the characteristics of places that are generic and transferable from one place to another (think for example of a person who, having grown up in a mountain area in Spain, feels equally at home in a mountain area in the United States). This aspect is related to the history of an area and one's personal history that is attached to it.
- *Self-esteem.* This refers to a positive evaluation of an individual or the group with which one identifies. Self-esteem is related to feelings regarding personal or social values. It means that somebody can say: I am from Amsterdam and I am proud of it. This aspect refers to feelings of attachment with an area.
- *Self-efficacy.* A sense of self-efficacy is upheld if the personal lifestyle is supported by or at least not in conflict with the area. This aspect is related to the function or use of an area.

Examples of Application. First, place identity and its four aspects help to explain why drastic changes in an area can arouse so much resistance (Wester-Herber, 2004). [Buijs and Van der Molen \(2006\)](#) describe a case of landscape change in the Rhine river plain in The Netherlands. An agricultural river landscape was transformed into a nature reserve. While visitors to the area preferred the new landscape, most of the inhabitants did not. Their personal life and history had become disconnected from the landscape. Familiar landscape features related to, and capable of, reflecting and evoking personal memories and feelings were gone.

Second, the concept is useful in explaining people's sense of attachment to a region and in measuring factors, characteristics and elements responsible for this (Devine-Wright & Lyons, 1997; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). It gives, for example, insight into the strong attachment of farmers to their land. A farmer's sense of self-efficacy is strongly determined by the land; he develops self-esteem by working the land. He can literally point out how he has shaped the landscape. One can easily read the continuity of the personal and family history from the land, because a farmer's influence on his environment is so direct. Working on the land, or to be more precise, working on that one spot on earth, distinguishes one farmer from another. This is the place where he belongs, where he lives and works. This personal attachment to the land has not often been studied. In The Netherlands it is even explicitly stated that this factor should not be taken into account in policy-making: "It is not possible to measure the personal history and attachment with a landscape, because it can not be assessed in an objective way" (Wiertz, 2005).

Personal-existential landscape identity is studied mainly by sociology, in which elements of story telling, literature and arts, hence philosophy and psychology, can certainly play a role.

Spatial Dimensions. The role of spatial dimension with regard to personal-existential landscape identity lies mainly in the fact that people feel more attached to a specific place that has a certain meaning to them than to the surrounding landscape. Consequently, in theory, people's attachment to a landscape will decrease

the further they are removed from the favourite spot ([Ng et al., 2005](#)). However, [Cuba and Hummon \(1993\)](#) and later [Hidalgo and Hernández \(2001\)](#) observed a different relationship. They conducted research into three different spatial dimensions—house, community/neighbourhood and region—and found that most of the respondents identified with their environment on all three levels, but most significantly with the region, followed by the house and lastly by the community.

In this respect we could also discuss the influence of the features of the region in which one has grown up and that create part of the identity of people (see 2.1). For example, people raised in an open area will always tend to experience certain feelings (and memories) if they encounter similar areas elsewhere ([Schama, 1995](#)). In such cases, the person's attachment to the landscape is not dependent on a specific place but on specific types of features, that can be found in certain types of landscape elsewhere on the globe.

3.2. *The Cultural–Existential Landscape Identity*

Concept. Social processes may cause a location to acquire special significance for a group of people. A place can help individuals to sense the 'we' that mutually connects them by means of envisaged images of a collective future ([Stewart et al., 2004](#); [Yorgason, 2002](#)). This is called the *cultural–existential* identity of a landscape (quadrant II in Figure 1). For example, significant events linked to a certain place invest the embracing landscape with certain perceptible undertones that are felt by many and regarded as important to their group identity ([Jorgensen et al., 2006](#); [Kačerauskas, 2008](#); [Kim & Kaplan, 2004](#); [Quayle & Driessen van der Lieck, 1997](#); [Stewart et al., 2004](#); [Widgren, 2004](#)). Places used by the local population for celebratory, commemorative or, recreational activities and events, as well as landmarks and places of significance with which the region can be associated may be part of the cultural–existential landscape identity.

Part of the concept is the religious aspect of landscape ([Eck, 1998](#)). [Eliade \(1965\)](#) states that for the religious man landscapes are not homogeneous but divided into sacred space and other amorphous spaces. This also has an effect on orientation within the landscape (cultural spatial identity): “the break effected in space allows the world to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed points, the central axis for all future orientation” ([Eliade, 1957, p. 21](#)).

Concept Development. The origin of the cultural–existential concept is not completely clear, but that has not hampered its implementation. [Wilkinson and Sigsworth \(1972\)](#) argue that the sharing of local living spaces and history of cooperation among local groups provide a socially created sense of purpose. Although created through informal socialisation processes, community identities are linked to tangible environments, events and/or material history.

For residents, certain environments and events function to link the past with the present, resulting in a felt sense of coherence. As residents make such connection, these environments and events become emblematic of stories residents tell about themselves to explain their values and life contexts. To varying degrees, the environment and events of community life have the potential to create and reaffirm community identities ([Stewart et al., 2004](#)).

Dixon and Dürrheim (2000) augment the concept development with the twofold idea of the collective ideological structure of place identity which is 'produced and modified through human dialogue': some groups of people claim that they belong somewhere and others do not. They illustrate this with an example from post-apartheid South Africa, where white visitors to a certain beach have created the common idea that they, with their way of life, are 'suited' to that landscape while the black community is not.

In Europe an important impulse to the cultural–existential concept has been given by the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000), from which the following statement is derived: "The landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures. . . [it] is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity" (Déjeant-Pons, 2006, p. 363). The LEADER projects of the European Commission have also enhanced the cultural–existential awareness of landscape identity among local people (Observatory of Rural Areas, 2008).

Examples of Application. In her research into places used for the social life of inhabitants of the isle of Terschelling in The Netherlands, Van Marwijk (2002) found that certain festive activities were deeply rooted in the places in which they were held. A consequence of this was the fierce opposition of local inhabitants to a nature conservation policy that seemed likely to affect their social practices, which—they argued—could not take place elsewhere. This kind of information is of importance to planning procedures because, amongst other things, it helps to explain resistance to landscape change.

A further application is the debate on the influence that the landscape can have on the identity of its inhabitants. [Lowenthal \(1994, p. 21\)](#) writes that the English landscape has four characteristics: insularity (the island feeling), artifice (the created landscape), stability (in time) and order (of the landscape). These four characteristics together define the conviction that the English landscape is unique, and therefore plays a special role in English identity building: "freedom was a feeling for the English landscape" (from a First World War poem by Spencer, cited by Lowenthal, 1994). In extension, [Lowenthal \(1994, p. 18\)](#) describes the relation between the Americans and their landscape: "Americans never tire of pointing out the moral lessons—freedom, exuberance, optimism—they derive from the [unity and imensity of] their landscape".

[Kim and Kaplan \(2004\)](#) observe that remarkably few studies pay attention to the relation between the physical environment and what they call sense of community. One of their points of inquiry is whether the physical environment has influence on this sense of community, which consists of attachment to the community, identification with the community and social interaction. For all these components the spatial lay-out, the architecture and the green structure are important.

Cultural–existential landscape identity is the area of anthropology, landscape biography and semiotics, but ethics and philosophy are also involved, and economy too in as far as subsistence is concerned.

Spatial Dimensions. Much attention has to date been paid to cultural–existential landscape identity research on a national scale ([Brace, 1999](#)). The interaction

between region and nation has not yet been fully covered. [Lowenthal \(1994\)](#) explains the long-lasting suppression of regional identity by national identity as an attempt to maintain unity. Nowadays in Europe the nation-states are losing importance to the benefit of the European Union and because of this we see a search for a European identity and—counteracting this—also a search for regional identity. In times when the world is getting smaller, and Europe does not yet feel like a safe haven, people are keen to identify with their local environment, in which they feel the basis of their regional identity. Thus globalisation increases the need for the regional identity ([Paasi, 2003](#)).

3.3. *The Cultural–Spatial Landscape Identity*

Concept. Cultural–spatial landscape identity (quadrant III in Figure 1) can be characterised by those features that distinguish one region from another (Antrop, 2000; Ministry of Agriculture, 1992). The focus is on features that can principally be perceived in the landscape by everyone, such as spatial composition, land use, wildlife, vegetation and minerals, the colours, forms and patterns, and the use of building materials, etc. Basic landscape classifications in many countries serve this purpose (Wascher, 2005).

Concept Development. The concept of cultural–spatial landscape identity has been markedly developed in the Netherlands, with major roles being played by the 1992 Nota Landscape and the 2002 Nota Green Space. The term ‘identity’ is used in the Nota Landscape to implement the notion of landscape quality. It describes landscape identity as: “... the ecological and historical features of an area that distinguish the area from other areas. These features determine the appreciation of the region by its inhabitants and users”. The discussion on landscape character assessments (Wascher, 2005) is also strongly referring to the cultural–spatial landscape identity.

Examples of Application. Application of this concept is strongly focused on regional spatial identity. Implementation of the concept has led to classifications of areas on the basis of a limited range of features such as geomorphology, archaeology, genesis, historical architecture and scale features. Examples of these studies in The Netherlands are: [Farjon et al. \(2002\)](#); [Geertsema et al. \(2003\)](#); [Schaminée et al. \(2004\)](#) and in Germany: [Krause \(2001\)](#).

An excellent British example of a method to assess cultural–spatial identity is the Landscape Character Assessment of the Countryside Agency and the Scottish Natural Heritage (Swanwick, 2002). This method is not based on ranking landscapes on the basis of qualities, but simply describes the differences between the areas in order to distinguish them from each other. This has led to countrywide coverage.

Cultural–spatial identity is the area of spatial planning, human geography and agronomy, with such disciplines as landscape ecology and historical geography/archaeology providing additional substantiation.

Spatial Dimensions. In principle, this type of research can cover spatial dimensions, but strikingly much policy support research has been conducted on regional or larger scales. National policy requires methods that use expert knowledge to describe and

monitor differences between regions. As most of this research is conducted using GIS and (computer) models, it appears to be difficult to distinguish smaller scale landscape identity sufficiently on the basis of information provided by existing databases, without the addition of region-specific information from other sources (see e.g. Mücher & Wascher, 2007). One good example of a local-regional application is the landscape atlas of l'Entre-Vesdre-et-Meuse (Cremasco *et al.*, 2009), an integrated approach to describing the landscape in its spatial configuration, including various functions of the landscape.

3.4. Personal–Spatial Landscape Identity

Concept. The personal–spatial identity of landscape (quadrant IV in Figure 1) refers to the features and parts of the landscape that are important for an individual concerning the recognisability of an area and his means of orientation within it. This type of identity is related to features that can be perceived by everyone, but which are not of equal importance to everybody.

Concept Development. One of the most important scholars in the branch of science that is involved in spatial orientation of individuals is Kevin Lynch (1960). He wanted to know how people use their surroundings to orienteer their way across an urban landscape. He found that paths, boundaries, districts, nodes and landmarks are the five elements that contribute to people's orientation. Other basic elements can be found in Kaplan and Kaplan (1989), who researched landscape preferences including those of 'legibility' and 'coherence'. According to their use of the terms a legible landscape is one that can be explored extensively without getting lost; a coherent landscape consists of patterns resulting from several similar and repeating parts thus facilitating human comprehension.

Examples of Application. Insight into the way in which people orientate themselves can be gained by having them draw maps of their surroundings (mental maps; Gould & White, 1986; Lynch, 1960). The underlying idea is that the map is an expression of mental images that are stored in the brain (i.e. in the consciousness). Important clues to personal–spatial landscape identity that researchers can find in the drawings are: the type of elements that are drawn, the sequence in which elements are drawn and the relative size of the elements (Soini, 2001). This research demonstrates that what people attribute to the landscape as personal–spatial identity, differs from the cultural–spatial identity—which is often based on expert knowledge—because it lays emphasis on other elements and structures. If the personal bond of people with a landscape is seen as important—see the European Landscape Convention—then this aspect should be better taken into account in planning.

The work of Blajenkova *et al.* (2005) seems to suggest that people use two different ways to orientate: using landmarks (distinctive elements) and landscape structures. In other words, both place identity and regional landscape identity are used for orientation.

Personal–spatial landscape identity is typically the area of the scientific discipline (as differentiated from the metier of landscape design) of landscape architecture, with its associated disciplines of aesthetics and environmental psychology.

Spatial Dimensions. It is remarkable that basically this branch of science makes no distinctions regarding the spatial dimension covered. For example, Kevin Lynch's five elements paths, boundaries, districts, nodes and landmarks, know no hierarchy, except for distinguishing 'district', which appears to be related to a larger spatial dimension than the other elements. This would seem to be logical as those elements involved are predominantly situated within the immediate surroundings and as such of relatively small scale. At the same time experience shows that people often orientate themselves within a landscape by keeping large elements in sight (mountains, water or—in town—towers or squares) and using smaller elements for way-finding (Coeterier, 1996).

4. Discussion

4.1. Clarifying the Concept of Landscape Identity

The subdivision of the broad range of meanings encompassed by landscape identity into four fields of connotation as introduced in this paper serves to augment more superficial descriptions of landscape identity. Research approaches generally describe the 'rules of the game' and outline 'the playing field', yet a description of the playing field itself is often lacking. The Landscape Identity Circle makes it possible to pinpoint and identify links between studies carried out in the different quadrants. In this way the various types of studies can mutually complement each other. Hendriks and Stobbelaar (2006), for example, use results from cultural–spatial research as a platform from which to conduct an examination of the personal–spatial identity of a region. They took images of the area, which show (part of the) cultural–spatial landscape identity. These images were used as a basis for interviewing inhabitants with regard to their perception of the personal–spatial landscape identity. Comparable procedures can be observed in many landscape studies (see e.g. Lévêque *et al.*, 2007; Pedroli *et al.*, 2007a). The Landscape Identity Circle thus can contribute to a structured exchange of knowledge between the various fields of the circle.

4.2. The Development of the Concept of Landscape Identity

The development of the concept of landscape identity—as we have seen in the previous sections—is ongoing in many different arenas. Within these arenas or discourses, the debate can be seen to progress in various ways. Reviewing the literature on landscape identity, it is, for instance, remarkable that the concept of existential identity is continuously a subject of discussion, whereas the concept of spatial identity is often taken for granted. Spatial landscape identity is often simply regarded as the sum of those factors that makes one region dissimilar to another region. Most studies are oriented toward implementing this idea, not discussing it. An explanation for such discrepancies between the implementation of the concepts 'existential identity' and 'spatial identity' may lie in traditional differences between the various disciplines. Spatial landscape identity is commonly studied by geographers, planners and natural scientists, while existential landscape identity is commonly studied by philosophers, etc. (Figure 1, outer sphere). In order to give impetus to both types of research, it could be wise to let the geographers focus on

discussing the concepts and the philosophers on applications of their research findings. The Landscape Identity Circle could in this perspective help in dividing tasks between the various disciplines engaged in landscape research.

The same applies to the different approaches adopted by various countries. In Britain much coverage has been given to existential landscape identity concepts (see e.g. Bender & Winer, 2001; Creswell, 2004; Dixon & Dürrheim, 2000; Ingold, 2000; Stephenson, 2008). In the Netherlands the focus was and is rather on spatial identity (Van der Knaap & Van der Valk, 2006). On the other hand, regional development—in which the unique features of a region come to expression—is, for example, very much in the spotlight in the Netherlands (De Boer & Mol, 2005). In France, much attention is paid to spatial (regional) landscape identity through regional products (Michelin *et al.*, 2007). Perhaps the Dutch scientific culture is more action orientated while the English approach focuses more on reflection and the French on cultural identity? These differences deserve a more detailed analysis, which would however most certainly result in the enhancement of mutual understanding among scientists within the landscape research community.

In cultural–spatial and cultural–existential research the focus is mainly on a regional and national scale. In personal–spatial and personal–existential research the focus is mainly on the smaller scale. Parallel to the earlier section, in order to develop and deepen research in both fields it could be advisable to shift focus and, for example, to study orientation (spatial) and attachment (existential) in areas further from home. This could be done by examining the way colonists attempt to recreate their own landscapes (e.g. Bender & Winer, 2001; Mazumdar *et al.*, 2000), but also by surveying tourist preferences (see e.g. Hall & Müller, 2004).

This touches on another issue that needs to be addressed: where—for example, walking a road—does a particular landscape identity change in the landscape (Hornsby & Egenhofer, 2000: identity is enduring). Or as Antrop (1998) puts it—without defining the border line: to express this, there is a need to define measurable holistic and structural aspects of a landscape. Literature on participative appraisal would certainly be inspiring in this respect (e.g. Carver *et al.*, 2009).

4.3. Implementation in Policy and Practice

Although we are aware of the disadvantages of any classification, the generalisation embedded in the Landscape Identity Circle allows for useful interpretations.

1. The framework of the Landscape Identity Circle emphasises that social and natural sciences should be integral to studies of landscape identity. Focusing on one without the other only describes half of the case and leads to a situation wherein the relation between people and landscape is not fully understood. Decisions on land management and landscape planning made on such a basis are inevitably of an unsustainable nature.
2. The framework provides an opportunity to unite or at least to find a nexus between different traditions and disciplines from several countries. There still is an intriguing amount of work to do in comparing the research traditions of different countries in the world. Much literature on landscape identity is available only in vernacular form, and thus beyond the range of this article.

3. In line with this, the Landscape Identity Circle provides an opportunity to find similarities and connections among the terminology used in the various debates on landscape identity. Much of the confusion with regard to landscape identity stems from the use of many partly overlapping terms.
4. The Landscape Identity Circle provides an opportunity to identify blind spots in projects on landscape identity. Researchers and practitioners can use the presented framework to determine which types of landscape identity will be addressed in their projects. As shown, identity is a multifaceted concept, which has implications for the way different stakeholders are taken into account: individual inhabitants, pressure groups, experts and/or policy-makers, all place emphasis on different parts of the Landscape Identity Circle. Policy-makers and geographers mostly place emphasis on the spatial side of the circle, inhabitants on the personal–existential or personal–spatial part and pressure groups on the cultural–existential part. In practice the identification of the position of different stakeholders in the Landscape Identity Circle, associate them with the relevant scientific discipline, and avoid polarisation of arguments by stressing the legitimacy of differing points of view.

5. Conclusions

Our working definition was that landscape identity is the perceived uniqueness of a place. We can now add the notion that ‘perceiving’ is both a personal and social matter and that ‘uniqueness’ is based on the interaction between spatial factors and social factors. The Landscape Identity Circle described in this article, represents a model for these factors and related disciplines and terminology. Therefore a more comprehensive description is: landscape identity is the unique psycho-sociological perception of a place defined in a spatial–cultural space. This description is an augmentation of the much simpler definition given above, and can be applied when completeness is necessary, for instance, in European policy on landscape.

One of the most important aspects of the notion of landscape identity is that it gives insight into the subtle balance between aggregation and segregation. It can unite people in a feeling of attachment to their region. This can lead to concern for and involvement in the preservation and further development of both the spatial and existential characteristics of the landscape. It can also divide people with different views on a particular landscape’s identity (Dixon & Dürrheim, 2000). A holistic or transdisciplinary understanding of these processes could help to create a common ‘flag’ (e.g. Elerie, 2002; Görg, 2007; Herngreen, 2002; Raagmaa, 2002) and to pursue common goals. At the very least it would clarify the possibilities and impossibilities of such a goal.

At the end of the day, European policy-makers in Brussels also have a sense of attachment, of belonging to the landscapes they live in or enjoy, just as scientists and environmentalists do. This sense however has a different temporal and spatial scale than the bureaucratic policy implementation schemes we all are dependent on. The challenge is for science and policy to bridge these differences in scale and foster a dialogue on the future of the European landscapes.

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