COLIN PRICE

LANDSCAPE ECONOMICS

Landscape Economics

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Second Edition

palgrave
macmillan

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ISBN 978-3-319-54872-2 ISBN 978-3-319-54873-9 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-54873-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017948300

Cover illustration: Llyn Peris and Llanberis Slate Quarry in Snowdonia National Park. Photo by the author

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To the memory of Herbert Gatliff, and to all who encouraged me in believing that it matters.

Preface to the Second Edition

Landscape Economics was written 40 years ago. Since then, the subject area has gradually acquired recognition, and has almost become part of mainstream environmental economics. Books have been written which fall within its ambit. But still, I have not noticed any systematic study of its scope. Many of the pitfalls that the book outlined have been duly fallen into. Several of the crucial issues it identified have remained unexplored.

In the meantime, I have had the good fortune to become more widely acquainted with the landscape of the United Kingdom and diverse countries abroad. I have been enriched by many conversations with landscape designers, planners, land users, environmental economists—and, as the specialism has become better defined, landscape economists. The first edition drew its references largely from contributing disciplines, and from the work of the small number of eccentrics who had already begun to explore the field: for this second edition, there is a considerable body of work within the field of landscape economics itself, and in wider environmental economics references are so copious that massive selectivity has been necessary. No

comprehensive review is offered, though attention is drawn to some existing reviews. I have referred to items as they bear on my line of arguments—opposing it as well as in support. Many of the original references have been retained, if only to indicate the origins of the subject.

Since the first edition appeared, I have spent a working life lecturing on natural resource and environmental economics, and on landscape design. I have spoken at numerous conferences, and written many papers and book chapters on the subject matter of this book. As predicted, my views have changed somewhat. Still, they do not always reflect the views and preoccupations of mainstream environmental economists.

The first edition was aimed at a British readership, and drew its examples from the United Kingdom. Since then, populations have become more mobile, and academic study has embraced, as a matter of custom, a wider geographical range, not infrequently all the Earth's surface. This change is reflected, in the second edition, in a wider selection of landscapes, and of political economies within which landscape is designed and appraised. An emphasis remains on the United Kingdom, with whose landscape—physical and political—I remain most familiar: I write "from inside" this landscape still. A continuing predilection for my home discipline of forestry may be noted. I have also retained case studies from the first edition's era: these were the real context out of which the subject of landscape economics evolved.

In my travels across the world's surface, I have photographed thousands of landscapes, and hundreds of instances of aesthetic degradation: thus I have the means to meet a criticism made of the first edition of the book, that a work on such a topic should have been abundantly illustrated.

In the years leading up to and following the shift between millennia, the world's political economy has changed greatly. With the decline of Marxism and the spread of capitalist ideology, some issues concerning the landscape, such as industrial and urban expansion, have become more urgent, while the political means to interpret and solve them have altered. The increasing prominence given to creating markets for environmental goods has brought hope that non-regulatory measures might achieve the right balance between landscape and material production:

but not everyone believes that the bland theory can make effective practice.

The first edition was written with an optimistic view that social cost–benefit analysis provided the means of giving due weight to each argument. Time has overtaken the optimism about actual application. I still think, however, that the ideal is worth working towards: that view still conditions what I have to say. There remains, too, the same mix as in the first edition: of formal economics learned and taught; of experience and anecdote; of reflection and common sense; of rigid analysis and whimsical speculation. It was written in a personal style, and I have retained that in the second edition: partly to lighten what has a tendency to be a turgidly thorough account, and partly because landscape values are deeply imbued with subjective preference.

The first edition defined landscape as "the perceived environment which results from the interaction of the earth's resources and humankind's needs". Since then the European Landscape Convention has adopted the broadly similar "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors." Such a definition is not uncontested. For ecologists, a landscape is an extensive, spatially contiguous, patchwork territory occupied by a set of interacting organisms. For political scientists, landscape may express power relations. Etymologically, "land" suggests a bordered area with connotations of ownership, while "scape" refers to shaping or working of land (Jormakka 2012; Thompson et al. 2013). The sensory meaning came only later, with artistic depictions.

The perceptual definition is, however, commonly recognised by public and politicians alike, and the economics of landscape is discussed in such a sense by this book. It is not doubted that ecological, political and historical definitions describe a concept about which an economic study could be made, but this study is not it.

I have retained the first edition's perspective, from the landscape end, in search of economic ways of resolving problems, rather than from the economics end, looking for cases to which techniques can be applied. Statistical analysis is needed to get the best out of data, but that is not my specialism or orientation. When I first began to think about landscape economics, I had a rosy vision, that if one put all the data about

what people did and said about landscape into a computer, it would somehow answer every question about value, and point to each correct decision. I have lived in the real world for nearly 50 years since then.

Nonetheless, the intended readerships include economists with an interest in land use, as well as landscape architects, planners, geographers and other land specialists with an interest in economics. Students and practitioners have been in mind. Writing for these diverse readerships has posed problems. Mainstream economists will find that I have explained ideas with which they are completely familiar, whereas newcomers may find that I have not explained them enough. I have tried to find the right compromise.

After an introductory chapter, Chaps. 2 and 3 look at costs of landscape. Chapters 4 and 5 explore the kinds of value produced by landscape, and how they might be systematised. Chapters 6 and 10–15 deal with methods used to place a value on landscape, while Chaps. 7–9 discuss the decision frameworks which might combine such values. Chapter 16 considers how passing time might affect values. Chapter 17 presents some valuation case studies. Chapter 18 widens valuation to the national perspective, while Chap. 19 reviews how desired aesthetic land use might be achieved. The final chapter looks at systems of landscapes and landscape protection.

Further Acknowledgements

In addition to those mentioned in the preface to the first edition, I thank the following for various help: Dick Brazee, Geoff Bright, Johanna Choumert Nkolo, Simon Cox, Marian Dragoi, Alison Evans, Guy Garrod, Ulrich Hampicke, Jette Bredahl Jacobsen, Glyn Jones, Dilip Kumar, Eifiona Thomas Lane, Robert Lifran, Marlene Marques, Peter Midmore, Alex Moiseyev, Walid Oueslati, Sanjeeva Pandey, Russ Parsons, Marianne Penker, Bronwen Price, Tom Price, Ann Reisner, Pere Riera, Maggie Roe, Julian Salanié, Tiziano Tempesta, Ian Thompson, Emma Waterton, Ken Willis, the estate of the late Dennis Wood and all the many who responded to requests for information. How I have used their comments and material is my own responsibility.

I am also grateful to those at Palgrave Macmillan who steered the book through publication with patience and diligence: Lynda Cooper, Thomas Coughlan, Gemma Leigh, Anna Reeve, Rachel Sangster.

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Preface to the First Edition

The choice of title – *Landscape Economics,* and not *The Economics of Landscape* – is deliberate. There seems to be no definitive body of knowledge that a book with the latter title might summarise. The field of landscape *evaluation* is developing, or at least proliferating, rapidly, but most researchers seem to have resisted the impulse to give an economic dimension to their assessments. As for economists, the strong subjective component of landscape value has dissuaded them from applying their science in the field.

Therefore, I have done no more than suggest which approaches to the topic might be adopted, and what the relevant variables might be, should it be thought desirable or necessary to develop a discipline. Although I have applied some of the techniques, much of the material is provisional and has not previously been offered for critical comment. My own ideas changed so much while I was writing the book that I should be surprised if I continued to subscribe to every statement. They are ideas to explore, develop, modify or reject, not to accord the sanctity of established fact. Similarly, many statements may need qualification, but I have preferred not to obstruct the flow of thought by being over-meticulous.

This is not, either, a handbook of aesthetics-by-economic-methods: aesthetic principles are not enumerated or explored. I am not proposing a complete substitute for landscape designers; but a tool that can make their work more accountable – in two senses – to the public, whom ultimately they should serve.

The advantages of studying the value of landscape from an economist's perspective became clear to me over a number of years spent peripherally involved in countryside decision-making. I adopted the viewpoint with no sense of delight in the philosophical perverseness of it, but as something which needed to be done. The analytical approach to beauty has not yielded much enjoyment, and sometimes it has depressed immensely. I, like many critics of the outlined approach, would prefer to walk through a world of beauty forever unthreatened, forever intuitively appealing.

But examining the viewpoint of the academic economist has convinced me that economic purism, pressed too far, simply prevents the achievement of any useful result. The customary plea for an interdisciplinary approach does not ask enough; for, if advances are to be made, economists, landscape architects and political scientists must come prepared not only to collaborate, but also to abandon some of their cherished preconditions for analysis. What I have written has assumed that such flexibility is acceptable, and it will no doubt on that account be considered trivial by purists.

While the book is aimed primarily at economists with an interest in land use, it is also relevant to landscape architects, planners and, indeed, anyone who has to do with land management. In order to make the terminology intelligible to the non-specialist without confounding the text too much with irritating parenthesis, I have explained the more technical terms in a glossary.

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What pleasure the analytical approach to landscape does afford me comes through discussion with academic colleagues. I am most of all grateful to Peter Greig of the Forests Commission, Victoria, Australia. Our arguments over two years provided a great deal of material for the book. I also acknowledge with pleasure the contributions of Jim MacGregor and Rodney Helliwell. Thanks are due to Peter Conlon,

Roger Cooper, Pat Denne, Don Harding and Eleanor Price for their comments on parts or the whole of earlier drafts; and to the very many people who have, over the years, done their best to persuade me that I was wasting my time – their arguments have been the most inspiring of all.

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