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Emmanouil Skoufias

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EMMANOUIL SKOUFIAS

**NARRATIVES IN LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY:
THE NARRATIVE POTENTIAL OF TRANSITIONAL
LANDSCAPES**

PhD Thesis

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER
HARROW LEARNING RESOURCES CENTRE
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2006

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Narratives in Landscape Photography: The Narrative Potential of Transitional Landscapes

EMMANOUIL SKOUFIAS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of
Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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May 2006

Narratives in Landscape Photography: The Narrative Potential of Transitional Landscapes

a PhD thesis
by Emmanouil Skoufias

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to use practical and theoretical research to investigate the relationship of *transitional landscapes* with narrative. As *transitional landscapes* I refer to the photographic depiction of unorganised spaces situated between the rural and urban zones.

The research engages in practical fieldwork and theoretical study. It comprises a written thesis and a visual output (photographic project). The theoretical part examines the historical framework focusing in the postmodern re-evaluations of landscape photography. My research investigates if the iconographic austerity of transitional landscapes leads to interpretive austerity or on the contrary enhances their range of interpretations.

The research methodology is influenced by theories that acknowledge the importance of the *reader* and it is qualitative and experimental. The research employs as key method visual questionnaires, which focus on the capacity of single images to prompt narrative interpretation. The groups of people that the questionnaires are distributed to, vary in their approach and regard of landscape and narrative. The results from this survey indicate how we perceive transitional landscapes, the type of narratives they suggest and what prompts them to interpret the images as specific narratives.

The main findings of the study revealed that:

1. The iconographic austerity of transitional landscapes appears as a fertile ground for narratives as indicated by the high percentage of respondents who wrote narratives, the high percentage of narratives compared to descriptions and transformations and the respondents approach more as narrators rather than observers.
2. The respondents seemed to wish to categorise the transitional landscapes more as an urban or rural environment rather than a transitional environment.
3. A darker, closer to black & white landscape image is more responsive to narratives rather than the normal exposure and colour version of the same landscape image. Furthermore, transitional landscapes seem more narratively responsive in their blurred version.
4. Transitional landscapes create more pessimistic than optimistic responses justifying landscape theories based on the psychological approach to landscape.

The findings are employed as a creative tool, creating the form and the content of the photographic project, which also incorporates the actual stories of the respondents for transitional landscapes. The photographic project displays two main narrative strategies in photography: a) Narratives created solely by images and b) Narratives created from combining text and image. It progress from strategy a to b in four steps, gradually shifting from vertical panoramic landscapes to horizontal panoramic 'wordscapes'.

The original contribution to knowledge is in both the artwork and the method of producing it as I am extending the boundaries of what is currently considered as the landscape genre not only in terms of collective authoring but also about the transition of the visual sign to the word sign, thus examining our processes of making sense of signs and the subjective nature of interpretation. In my concerns for transitional landscapes, I am investigating an aspect of a landscape genre, which has been marginalized in both traditional photographic history and subsequent critical debates.

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NOTE FOR READING THE THESIS

Quotes from the questionnaires response are in Times New Roman font and italics with preserved grammar and spelling errors. For example:

John was lying on the floor with his right hand he was holding out some grass, while he painfully scratched the dry earth with the other one. He was feeling hurt and alone. He turned to look at the city nearby in search of something or somebody to save him...

ETHICS OF THE RESEARCH

Due to the collaborative nature of this project, the researcher asked for the approval and permission of the respondents in order to use their actual narratives as part of the photographic project. He contacted with them via email as the respondent included his/her email address in the questionnaire.

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INTRODUCTION

Aims of the research

This thesis uses practical and theoretical research to investigate the relationship of *transitional landscapes* with narrative. As *transitional landscapes* I refer to the photographic depiction of unorganised spaces situated between the rural and urban zones.

My central research question is; does the iconographic austerity of transitional landscapes leads to an interpretive austerity or on the contrary enhances the interpretive range of these landscapes?

The aims of this investigation as approved by the University Research Degrees Committee in October 2003 were:

- To explore the potential of transitional landscapes to stimulate and invite narratives
- To detect what types of narratives these might be
- To examine how the photographic characteristics of the image affect its narrative capacity
- To create a photographic work that questions the boundaries of what is currently considered as the landscape genre

PhD elements

This PhD has been created through theory and practice-based research. It was based on the fine art practice of the researcher carried out throughout the course of the PhD. Thus, the final thesis consists of this written part and the photographic artworks introduced in Chapter Five and in the CD-Rom at the end of this document.

Objectives of the research

The focus of this research is the relationship between transitional landscape and narrative. It will review the historical development of landscape genre focusing in photography and examine the relation of landscape photography and narrative. It will identify the characteristics of transitional landscape and investigate its narrative potential through an experimental methodological approach using visual questionnaires, the findings of which will be incorporated in the researcher's own art practice creating a collaborative piece of artwork.

Background to the research

Although a part of the iconography of wasteland, transitional landscapes have been ignored until recently by academic and aesthetic investigations. The aesthetic disdain of transitional landscape has been demonstrated by sparse references in art history and art criticism. Narrativity, in the context of the visual arts, has been investigated in a diversity of approaches that have included photography in this context (Alvarado: 1980, Halliwell: 1986, Kozloff: 1987, Wollen: 1990, Scott: 1999, Stathatos: 2004), but these investigations have not included landscape photography. This could be explained partly by the extensive use of landscape itself as a background for narratives in painting, photography and cinema – the element that sets the scene rather than that which develops the story.

The notion of transitional landscapes

As *transitional landscapes* I refer to the photographic depiction of unorganised spaces situated between the rural and urban zones. Transitional landscapes were first identified in this research in the investigation of landscape in photography. The notion of *transitional landscapes* was developed after considering the definitions of

Vernacular landscape by J.B.Jackson and of *Non-Places* by Marc Augé as I will explain in Chapter One. The difference between these concepts is conceptual rather than pragmatic as they are not exclusive, but form broad categories with many shades. The research focused in those areas of transitional spaces where their borders seem nonexistent.

Iconographic austerity and the aesthetic disdain by academic and aesthetic investigations were the first characteristics of transitional landscapes detected. The lack of investigation on the narrativity of landscape photography along with the particular characteristics of transitional landscapes drive me to focus my attention on the transitional landscapes and their narrative potential.

My research domain, focus and methodology have been dictated by the context of fine art practice. My aim and intention was to find a methodology that was appropriate for the particular aims of this research. Although uncommon in art practices, visual questionnaires as a research method provided the vital information for this research and formed the basis of the collective authoring nature of the art project.

To the researcher's knowledge, no collective authoring photographic work has been attempted which deals specifically with the narrative potential of transitional landscape. As a practicing artist, the researcher envisaged an opportunity for investigating and developing these issues within this research project.

First of all, I will outline the main contents of the written thesis.

Chapter One introduces the reader to the notion of transitional landscape after an overview of landscape as genre in the history of photography. It begins with the rise of landscape genre looking at the conditions that created the appropriate environment for the establishment of landscape as a genre. Then it progresses with an overview of

landscape in the history of photography and the development of different attitudes to landscape in the twentieth century such as the contemplative and the interpretive. The postmodern re-evaluation of landscape follows next in order to illuminate the question why during this period there is a shifting to less iconographic types of landscape such as transitional landscape and why certain types of landscape remained in Art History's shadow. The related landscape theories such as Jay Appleton's *habitat theory* and *prospect and refuge theory* and Chris Fitter's *matrices of perception* advance psychological factors in order to elucidate our preferences for certain types of landscape. The concepts of *ergon* and *parergon* in landscape are then introduced, together with the idea of the *Argument* in transitional landscape. Finally, the chapter concludes by questioning the capacity of transitional landscape for narratives.

Chapter Two has two distinct parts. The first part summarizes views on narrative focusing on visual narratives and more specifically the relationship of narrative with photography. It examines narratives studies and formalistic approaches such as Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic narrative analysis and concludes with the narrative potential in a single photograph.

The second part of the chapter formulates categories on the narrative strategies that photography uses in landscape photography investigating the narrative potential created solely by one or many photographs such as photographic collage, distinguishing between photo-sequence and photo story. It also makes reference to the photo series and the photo essay. Finally, it examines narratives created by text and photograph and indicates the function of text as destination, as point of departure and the parallel trajectories of text and photograph.

Chapter Three details how the research methodology is influenced by theories that acknowledge the importance of the *reader* such as reader-response theory and it is qualitative and experimental. It distinguishes that the reader is a real entity explaining his role in the research and clarifies also which aspects of paradigmatic and syntagmatic narrative analysis will be used in order to satisfy the aims of the research. The research employs visual questionnaires as key method, which focus on the capacity of single images to prompt narrative interpretation. The survey approach in this research has three phases: a) the researcher as *author* while the respondent functions as *reader* b) the respondent as *author* while the researcher functions as *reader* and c) both researcher and respondents collaborate as *authors* for the creation of the photographic part of the thesis. The aims and the parameters of Questionnaire I followed by the methodological approach along with the aspects of content analysis which will be used in the responses. Questionnaire I contains two groups of questions: a) Questions examining the image & text relation for the construction of narrative potential and b) Questions examining the narrative potential in image through:

- Content and composition of photographic landscape images
- Photographic characteristics

The conclusions of Questionnaire I is followed by a second analytic approach, which aimed to reveal any patterns of behaviour of the target groups.

The chapter continues with the aims, the characteristics and the identity of the respondents of Questionnaire II. The aims and the analysis of questions 1,2,3 conclude this chapter. As questions 4 and 5 had large amounts of information, used a different methodological approach and had a vital role in the findings of the research, they are examined separately in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four focuses exclusively on questions 4 and 5 as they are the most demanding for the respondents, and asks them to provide a narrative choosing between four photographs of transitional landscapes and identify which visual qualities of the chosen image drive them to write their specific narrative. The particularity of these questions drives me to use aspects of syntagmatic and paradigmatic narrative analysis in order to provide the necessary information for the aims of this research. Therefore, the analysis of the respondents' narratives focuses on:

- A) Syntagmatic narrative analysis: a) Characters b) Kinds of events c) Genre of the narratives
- B) Paradigmatic narrative analysis: d) Respondents' approach in terms of: reaction (negative / positive); Classifying data (narratives / descriptions / transformations); Readers' role (observer or narrator)
- e) The visual triggers of the narratives (question 5): subject I, subject II, contrast, specific and image position / space position
- f) The ideas related to transitional landscapes. Transitional landscapes as: transitional space, urban space, and rural space.

The analysis of the above data was realized by the creation of tables attached as appendices. The chapter closes with the conclusions on Questionnaire II, the justification of findings from landscape theories analyzed in Chapter One and the issue of the credibility of the findings and how they have been verified.

Chapter Five contains a reproduction of the photographic project in a small scale in order to provide the reader with an idea of how the project will look in the exhibition space. Furthermore, it will help him to understand how the findings of the analysis of questionnaires are embodied in the photographs. It summarises also the conclusions

of Questionnaire I and Questionnaire II and explains the purpose, the process and the logic behind the structure of the photographic project and its relevance to the questionnaires' analysis. It then discusses the narrative strategies that were employed by the researcher in order to realize the project, the phases in the creation of the photographic project together with the step by step approach to the images and the method of display.

Chapter Five then discusses the profile of the participating groups and demonstrates the tendencies of each group. The chapter ends with the summary of conclusions on both questionnaires indicating the most relevant landscape theories from Chapters One and Two and relating them to the findings. It concludes by reconsidering critical concepts such as the role of the frame in landscape in general and in the photographic project and discusses the role of transitional landscape as the *parergon* in landscape iconography.

Chapter Six reflects on the chronicle of this research by looking at the development of the main concepts, ideas, methodology and the formulation of the central argument of the research that was the iconographic austerity of transitional landscapes is a fertile ground for interpretations. The Syntagmatic narrative analysis revealed a range of characters, events and narrative genres while the Paradigmatic analysis demonstrated the respondents approach in terms of reaction and role, the visual triggers of the narratives, ideas and preconceptions about transitional landscapes.

The image-based questionnaires revealed also the aesthetic preferences of the respondents about transitional landscapes indicating that a darker, blurred, closer to black & white landscape image is more responsive to narratives rather than the normal exposure and colour version of the same landscape image.

Chapter Six discusses also the characteristic of this research which has been that the methodological concerns became intertwined with the content of the practice part of the research. The chapter concludes with the research contribution to knowledge which is in the amalgamation between methodology and the art practice itself as applied by a practitioner. Thus this contribution is neither separately the practical work produced nor the critical concepts developed but their combination in an art practice and its epistemology.

The original contribution to knowledge is in both the artwork and the method of producing it as they extend the boundaries of what is currently considered as the landscape genre not only in terms of collective authoring but also about the transition of the visual sign to the word sign, thus examining our processes of making sense of signs and the subjective nature of interpretation. The research concerns for transitional landscapes, investigated an aspect of a landscape genre, which has been marginalized in both traditional photographic history and subsequent critical debates.

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Chapter One

This chapter introduces the notion of transitional landscape after an overview of landscape as genre in the history of photography and the development of different attitudes to landscape in the twentieth century. The postmodern re-evaluation of landscape follows next in order to illuminate the question why during this period there is a shifting to less iconographic types of landscape such as transitional landscapes and why certain types of landscape remained in Art History's shadow. The concepts of *ergon* and *parergon* in landscape are then introduced, together with the idea of the *Argument* in transitional landscape. Finally, the chapter concludes by questioning the capacity of transitional landscape for narratives.

The rise of Landscape genre

'*Landscape*: a prospect of inland scenery such as can be taken in at a glance from one point of view; a piece of country scenery.'

Shorter Oxford Dictionary

The term *landscape* or *landskip* derives in English, according to Michael Rosenthal, in 1593 from the Dutch importation of the word *landscap* or *landschap*, meaning province and introduced as a technical term for painters. However, the term landscape is widely used both for the actual terrain and its representation and this thesis will use the term landscape when it refers to representation rather than to the material world.

The aim of this chapter is to indicate how the established types of European landscape painting created a specific frame for western landscape imagery which inevitably put in the shade other types of landscape. These other types, such as transitional landscape, were ignored because they failed to perpetuate the ideological strategies of

the established types of landscape. As *transitional landscapes* I refer to the photographic depiction of unorganised spaces situated between the rural and urban zones characterized by ephemerality, mobility and as a residual element of urban architecture and town planning, transitional spaces lack clear boundaries, symbols, monuments and therefore status.

Landscape 'imagery' took many different forms throughout history and its development can be traced in Chinese gardening, Arabic tapestry, Hellenistic poetry, Roman frescoes, medieval manuscripts, and Renaissance music amongst many other cultures and forms.¹ All these different manifestations of landscape 'imagery' demonstrate the gradual process in the rise of landscape as genre around the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

In painting, landscape kept for a long time a secondary role in composition, particularly as a decorative element for mythological, religious, historical and other genres of painting providing a context for their narratives. To see nature as scenery was a long evolving process, which was influenced by Science - in the form of optical devices, by Art - in terms of creating new methods of organising space and perspective, and by ideology - where Humanism measured man to the material world instead of man to God. These developments led to an increasing use of naturalistic realism² in cultural forms.

When landscape became a subject in its own right in western painting early in the 16th century, it fulfilled particular social and spiritual contexts functioning as a celebration of ownership, a record of capacity and class relations in capitalism, a celebration of man's relation to nature in humanism and of nature itself in romanticism.

¹ Mitchell, W.J.T., in his essay *Imperial Landscape* discusses the "Wester-ness" of landscape, on *Landscape and Power*, (ed.) W.J.T. Mitchell, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1994, pp.5-34.

² Atkins, R., *Art Spoke A Guide to Modern Ideas, Movements, and Buzzwords*, Abbelville Press Publishers, New York, 1993, pp. 145

In Renaissance Italy there was a ‘promotion of land as an aesthetic asset’³ documented in pastoral poetry, gardening and landscape painting. The Enlightenment encouraged a re-examination of man’s relation to the natural world and consequently revised the conceptions of what constituted aesthetic pleasure in nature.

Flemish landscape painting produced landscape backgrounds with great attention to detail and painters such as *Joachim Patinir* (figure) created amazing panoramas



which worked as settings for religious scenes. Art studies focused on the paintings of this period argue that there was a tendency for images with more background and less story compared to the paintings of previous periods in other words space / description takes over from time / story.

According to scholar Christopher Wood⁴, around the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, we have the production of the first independent landscape paintings in the history of European art by *Albrecht Altdorfer* (next page figure) breaking the convention of a story in a picture. Malcolm Andrews argues that in Northern European Renaissance paintings ‘the relationship of landscape to narrative is often different from that figured in the work of the Italian masters, and where, indeed, landscape has often a greater licence to dominate the painting, religious or secular.’⁵

³ Andrews, M. *Landscape and Western art*, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 67

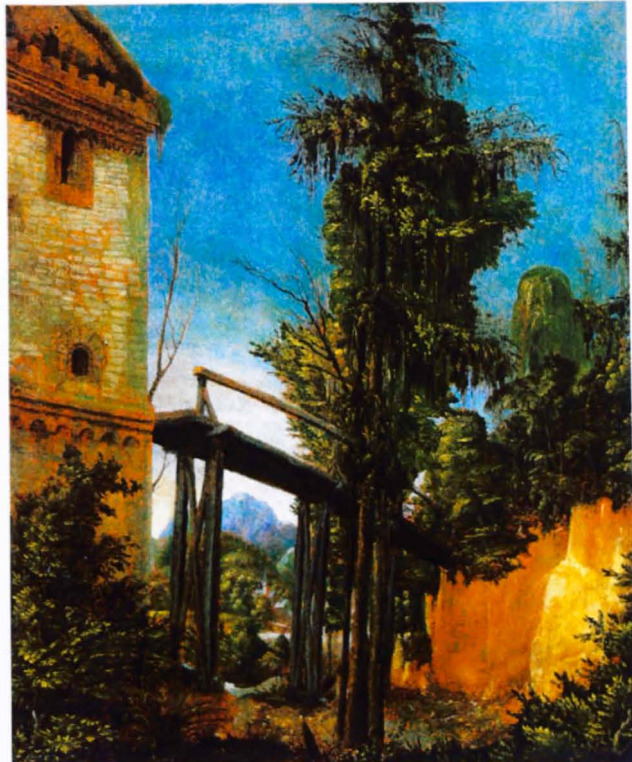
⁴ *ibid*, pp. 41

⁵ *ibid*, pp. 41

It is believed that the development of landscape was encouraged by the onslaught of the Reformation on religious painting which caused Flemish and other northern landscape artists to seek refuge in Italy.

Researchers such as Ernst Gombrich compare the production of landscape paintings of this period in Italy and Netherlands and argue that there was a tendency for heroic and ideal landscapes in Italy whereas the Dutch preferred more realistic landscape images.

It is widely accepted by landscape researchers such as Ann Jensen Adams and W.J.T. Mitchell that the



Dutch landscapists recognized first that a scene in nature could be subject worthy of a great artist's highest powers.

Ann Jensen Adams (1994) in *Competing Communities in the "Great Bog of Europe" Identity and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting* helps us to understand why a seafaring nation such as the Dutch establishes landscape, as a principal subject, for European painting.⁶

Adams suggests that 'the unique conjunction' of three historical elements-political, economic and religious-in seventeenth century Holland was crucial for the development of landscape. The political element was the declaration of independence of the Seven United Provinces from Spain in 1579; the economic element was the

⁶ Adams, A. J, *Competing Communities in the "Great Bog of Europe" Identity and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting* in *Landscape and Power*, (ed.) W.J.T. Mitchell, the University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1994, pp. 41-49

undertaking of the largest land reclamation project ever attempted in the history of the world and the religious element, which was the replacement of Catholicism by Protestantism.

These parallel crucial changes had turned the Netherlands into

“a country more prosperous, more religiously tolerant, and less politically restrictive... [Furthermore] The physical creation of the country meant not only that land was a constant preoccupation but also that the political structure of the country was radically different from that of the rest of Europe.”⁷

Holland just before the seventeenth century was a land constituted by dunes and bogs; this made the feudal lords uninterested in this kind of land possession and consequently this led to a large percentage of peasant landownership. One of the side effects of this was the lack of an individual, a monarch or a queen, which tended to immortalise in front of their land, in which the Dutch could invest symbols of national identity. Perhaps that explains why the Dutch turned to their land and consequently its depiction in landscape paintings as symbol of their communal identity. We have to bear in mind that the Dutch reclaimed their land almost entirely from the waters as it is indicated by maps of Holland of this period and that could explain not only their tangible relationship with the land but also the “collection [of landscape images] by all classes of society in seventeenth-century Holland.”⁸

However, in most European landscape painting of this period, landscape was mainly used as a background symbol of status and power by aristocracy and landowners who tend to be immortalised in front of their estates.

⁷ Adams, A. J, *Competing Communities in the “Great Bog of Europe” Identity and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting* in *Landscape and Power*, (ed.) W.J.T. Mitchell, the University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1994, pp. 41-42

⁸ *ibid*, pp. 49

John Barrell demonstrates in *The Idea of Landscape and the sense of Place 1730-1840* that English pastoral painting created an important tradition that had manifestations in literature, poetry, music and tapestry as well as painting.⁹

The link between class-based images and politics and the use of landscape as a political and ideological instrument is apparent also in eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries English landscape painting. Visual strategies such the Picturesque aesthetic were broadly used in order to present an idyllic view of English countryside where labour and leisure appeared to coexist harmoniously and an historical, economic and political context was excluded as John Barrell reminds us.

Socio-economic phenomena such as “urbanization, industrialization, parliamentary acts of enclosure, government forestry policies, the impact on the rural poor of legislation against vagrancy and poaching”¹⁰ had to be excluded for the aesthetic appreciation of English countryside according to Picturesque principles.

Earlier studies on landscape and the rise of the landscape genre by scholars such as John Ruskin, Kenneth Clark and Ernst Gombrich were based primarily on landscape painting aesthetics. John Ruskin, a principal pioneer of the Victorian intelligentsia, developed a systematic study of landscape painting. From his vast output I focus on his definition of landscape painting as the thoughtful and passionate representation of the physical conditions appointed for human existence (*Land* 12), and his arrangement of the schools of landscape: the heroic, the classical, the pastoral and the contemplative and two other spurious forms which require separate note the picturesque and the hybrid. (*Lectures on Landscape XXII, 1871*) Furthermore, as Raymond Williams demonstrates in *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, Ruskin theorises a relation to beauty within the frame of the industrial revolution.

⁹ Barrell, J. *The Idea of Landscape and the sense of Place 1730-1840*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1974, pp. 62-64

¹⁰ Andrews, M. *Landscape and Western art*, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 167

Kenneth Clark in *Landscape into Art* (1949) illuminates our perception of landscape representation. His essays describe how landscape became an independent art, suggesting four ways of seeing landscape as a means of pictorial expression: The landscape of symbols, the landscape of fact, the landscape of fantasy and the ideal landscape. He also relates these ways to the painting of the 19th century.

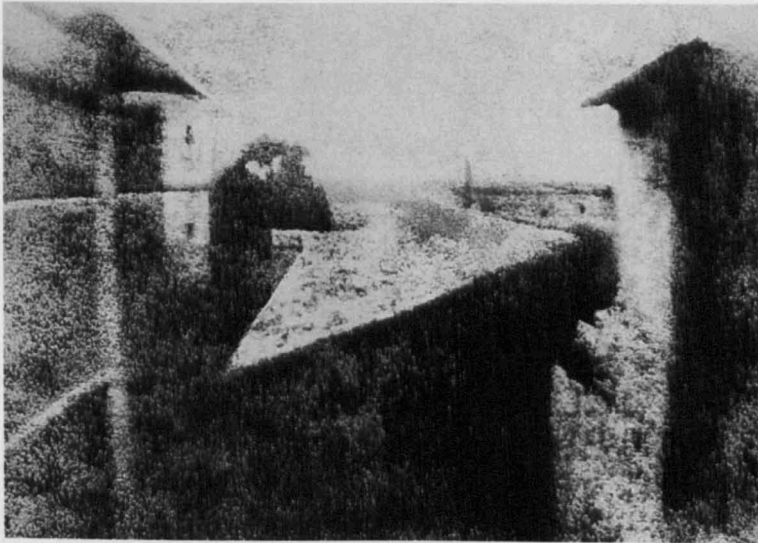
Contemporary researchers have challenged some of the above studies mainly on the grounds that they examine landscape exclusively from an art-historical perspective. W.J.T. Mitchell argues that “recent criticism of landscape aesthetics ... can largely be understood as an articulation of a loss of innocence that transforms all of Clark’s assertions into haunting questions and even more disquieting answers”¹¹. Malcolm Andrews argues also that the explanation about the rise of landscape as a principal subject has to take into account broader cultural changes; such as “the growth of the interest in empirical science and the attendant appetite for pictorial representation of the natural world; early capitalist attitudes towards the land, especially undeveloped land, and the erosion of certain habits of relating to the land under feudal systems of land tenure;”¹²

Furthermore, the political re-readings of landscape painting allow us to examine from another perspective the function of landscape as a device for constructing national identities and a strategic tool for the establishment of European empires. These re-readings allow us to partially explain the lack of interest in other types of landscape such as transitional landscape, which did not easily display the compositional, aesthetic or content qualities that the dominant images of the genre displayed. Ton Lemaire remind us “it is also meaningful that the absolute high point of landscape as a genre should be reached in the 19th century, the century of the triumph of bourgeois

¹¹ Mitchell, W.J.T., *Imperial Landscape*, in *Landscape and Power*, (ed.) W.J.T. Mitchell, the University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1994, pp. 6

¹² Andrews, M. *Landscape and Western art*, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 51

society”.¹³ This point can be argued given that it was the industrial revolution that created the dramatic shift of populations from rural to urban areas. The high point, which Lemaire argues, is also the beginning of a decline in landscape painting and it was photography that then developed as the new medium for representing landscape; it was the modern society, introduced by the bourgeois class that encouraged the exploration of landscape by the new invention of photography.



Joseph Nicéphore Niépce View from His Window at Le Gras circa 1827

Landscape in the History of Photography

The dawn and the establishment of photography coincide with major changes in human history, such as the consolidation of Western Imperialism, the massive exploitation of colonies from European Empires, and the expansive industrialisation of the western world, developments that used and changed dramatically our perceptions about landscape.

Photography like Anthropology and Ethnography has been extensively used in order to satisfy and encourage the Victorian passion for classification. We need to

¹³ Lemaire, T. *Between Wilderness and Wasteland*, Wasteland Landscape from now on, exhibition catalogue, Fotografie Biennale Rotterdam, (ed.) Uitgeverij 010 Publishers, Hague, 1992, pp. 10

remember that behind the camera it was always western eyes recording the “exotic”. Photography, after painting was the new visual device in the ideological strategies of the West. After all photography is a western invention and as such it tends to serve the western philosophical attitudes to empiricism and objectivity, truth, knowledge and power as John Tagg reminds us in his book *The Burden of Representation*.

Although the history of photography is brief, compared to other arts, the historical research on it though is vast due to the spread of the medium in many countries out of Europe and the Americas - areas where in the past received almost exclusive attention at the first accounts of the history of the medium.

The photographic camera was based on the camera obscura, a device known since the 9th century AD, but it was early 19th century experimentations that managed to fix the images it obtained of the world. The first known photograph, which is also the first landscape photograph, is considered to be the heliograph of *Joseph Nicéphore Niépce View from His Window at Le Gras* circa 1827; however, the official announcement of photography came in 1839 after simultaneous experiments in England and France by William Henry Fox Talbot and Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre respectively.

It was reported that when William Henry Fox Talbot was sketching in the Alps he mused how marvellous it would be if Nature could “write itself”. We might see behind this phrase the complete transformation in man’s perception from nature as irrelevant, to nature as background and later as foreground and finally to nature requiring its own ‘voice’. One of the first attempts to see how nature can be recorded by the photographic medium is demonstrated by William Fox Talbot in *The Pencil of Nature* (1844). The twenty-four calotypes and the very title of the book underscore the analogies with painting but indicate how photography was to be considered in much of the nineteenth century. ‘The Pencil of Nature’ was not just a random

collection of pictures, but rather a prospectus by Talbot stating the possibilities he saw for photography, including pictorial, scientific and technical usages. The images had fine detail in particular the architectural studies and city scenes along with some still life images of fruits not quite reaching the levels possible in the daguerreotype but they show that the process was more capable than many suspected.

It is difficult to indicate the very first landscape photograph but probably a daguerreotype titled *New Hampshire Landscape* in 1840 by the Bostonian dentist *Samuel Bemis* (figure) could be one of the first ones as Naomi Rosenblum's *A World History of Photography* indicates¹⁴.

Historically the concept of landscape arrived in photography loaded with visual and intellectual perceptions borrowed from the



history of painting but also from music, poetry, and literature. Landscape photography seems to have remained encoded more with painting because of the type of the subject. Nature was always there ‘still’, waiting to be read as landscape from writers, poets, painters and now photographers. Painting represents the world of nature through visual shape, tone, colour and composition; photography similarly was able to represent it, or to enable it to be ‘read’ through the process. Landscape painting was becoming increasingly realistic and that is why photography substantially displaced it, as it could represent even more precisely, though not as artistically. Despite the

¹⁴ Rosenblum, N., Documentation: Landscape and Architecture in *A World History of Photography*, third edition, Abbeville Press, New York, 1997, pp.96

apparent optical precision there were too many limitations to the process in the early days; however, 'precision' realism became a new aesthetic and satisfied the fascination of the scientific mind, for information, as well as the artistic mind, for form.

In less than two decades after the official recognition of the invention of photography in 1839, local photographers took landscape photographs in many countries and archives have been found in Scandinavia, the Balkans, South Africa, Japan, and New Zealand.

There was and still is a cyclical relationship between concept, technology and form and that behind each shift in the conceptual developments of photography there are analogous technical developments that play a crucial role not only in the history of photography but in a broader field of art practice and criticism by encouraging further conceptual investigations.

Gilles Mora argues that landscape photography 'performed a documentary function before it assumed an aesthetic one'¹⁵ creating a categorization in order to ease the examination of the vast area of landscape photography. I have to clarify here that I will accept the above statement if by the term documentary Mora means a 'describing' function of landscape photography since the term *documentary* in photography is generally considered as a politically motivated movement with a specific attitude to the representation of social reality. By accepting the above, we might say that the documentary function could be divided into topographic and travel functions of landscape photography.

The documentary function of landscape, started with travel photography established in the middle of the 19th century. The strength of the European Empire, the public

¹⁵ Mora, G., Landscape Photography in *Photo SPEAK: a guide to the ideas, movements, and techniques of photography, 1839 to the present*, Abbeville Press, 1998, pp.110

appetite for the 'foreign', and scientific curiosity encouraged many geographical and archaeological expeditions.

Photographs of Egypt
by Francis Frith
(figure) and Maxime
Du Camp, of the Orient
by Felice Beato, and of
Mexico-Australia-
Madagascar by Desire
Charnay had a huge



impact on Europeans. They were the first photographs of these areas and helped to construct them as exotic in the western imagination through the iconic nature of photography. A great deal of topographic photography depicted monuments from other cultures and civilisations (travel photography) and their significance for sciences like Archaeology, Anthropology and Ethnography was immeasurable. Furthermore, other distinct areas of topographic photography were documents of land as raw materials, images that are informed by a scientific attitude (close-ups, forms of terrain, flora and fauna), images for tourists and images that continued the picturesque tradition. These photographic images were the seeds of the development of tourism into a massive industry and certainly “travel photography helped establish the aesthetic and commercial potential of landscape photography.”¹⁶

By the mid nineteenth century there was already a considerable postcard industry encouraging tourism. However, the very medium of photography began to cause a difficulty in terms of tourism as visitors to new sites expected to be presented with

¹⁶ Mora, G. *Photo SPEAK: a guide to the ideas, movements, and techniques of photography, 1839 to the present*, Abbeville Press, New York, 1998, pp.195

what they had previously seen as imagery. This must have happened before, at least to some extent, with drawings but it was the indexical and iconic nature of photography that acted as a guarantee of a certain phenomenon and intensified the above problem. In this way we are introduced to a circular process where an image leads to an expectation and we try to respond to the material world as if we view the world in relation to its correspondence to the image.

The topographical function, both domestic and expeditionary, was to confirm identities at home and explore new ones further a field with expeditionary forces such as US mid-west landscape photography with photographers such as Timothy O'Sullivan.

It seems that this expeditionary documentary photography among other things has a narrative function as it is recording the 'story' of imperialist/colonial enterprises. Nineteenth century travel photography encouraged recognition of topography plus social history, of transformations and narratives, which had already occurred. We might consider how photographs both document things and create ideas in the viewers mind: documentary photography allow us to imagine ourselves elsewhere just like travel photography which allow us also to imagine ourselves elsewhere, but perhaps as part of a movement through space.

All these different types of landscape photographs belong to the documentary function of landscape inspire some kind of fantasy, which will be strongly indicated later on my research.

The domination of Romanticism in art during the first quarter of the 19th century had a significant impact in landscape iconography as its emphasis on emotionalism created landscape paintings characterized by sublime and grandeur. Joseph Mallord William Turner in Great Britain and Caspar David Friedrich in Germany were seminal painters

of Romanticism which “unlike so many other artistic developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Romanticism arose in England and Germany rather than in France.”¹⁷ We may argue that the characteristics of Romantic landscapes still remain powerful in our response to landscape imagery and help us to partly explain the lack of interest in landscapes that do not respond to that kind of reading, such as transitional landscapes.

Social and Art historians such as Raymond Williams and Liz Wells argue that landscape in Romanticism ‘stood as an antidote for the visual and the social consequences of industrialisation, offering a view of nature as therapeutic, a pastoral release from commerce and industry.’¹⁸

Pictorial landscape photography used metaphors and allegories as thematic poles and followed the reification of the rural idyll of romantic painting. Pictorialist investigations on landscape photography created images with painterly mode using procedures such as platinum and gum bichromate printing creating blurry images. Likewise Symbolism in landscape photography refused objective clarity in favour of soft out-of-focus forms, elements that “could confer on their photography an aesthetic character”¹⁹.

One exception was Peter Henry Emerson, whose photographic approach was distinct from his social approach. Emerson “sought a new understanding of the photograph, based on its own terms of reference and its own possibilities as medium”²⁰ many of the early landscape art photographers in Europe perpetuated the idyllic approaches of

¹⁷ Atkins, R., *Romanticism, Artspoke: a guide to Modern Ideas, Movements and Buzzwords, 1848-1944*, Abbeville Press, 1993, pp. 185

¹⁸ Wells, L. *Photography, A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, London, 1997, pp. 237

¹⁹ Mora, G. *Photo SPEAK: a guide to the ideas, movements, and techniques of photography, 1839 to the present*, Abbeville Press, New York, 1998, pp. 193

²⁰ Clark, G., *Photography and the Nineteenth Century*, The Photograph, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 51

landscape painting cultivating the impression that countryside is an arcadia free of labour²¹.

We may argue that landscape imagery ranged from the most precise [scientific, expeditionary etc] to the most impressionistic [different forms of pictorialism] – a referent that appears to have allowed photography the most exploration in terms of its own form and its range of themes.

On the other side of the Atlantic, government survey expeditions were recording and exploring the West. Pioneer photographers like Carleton E. Watkins, Timothy H. O'Sullivan (figure) and William



Henry Jackson created the photographic charting of the American West. The great contribution made by the American photographers was to avoid a conventionally artistic approach to landscape despite the influence of 19th century American painting (Hudson River School), which was part informed by European tradition. Both the topographic photography and the East Coast painting helped Americans and others acquire a sense of their country, but in different ways and with different effects. The photographs were intended to 'map', before they were trying to be impressive or subjective; the paintings were documenting the artist's subjective response before they were concerned with being objective (mapping).

²¹ Williams, R., in *The Country and the City*, notes that "a working country is hardly ever a landscape" Hogarth Press, London, 1973, pp.120

Stevie Bezencenet argues that:

“If we think about the relation of photographic use to how familiar a land it was to the West, then we could argue that when a country is ‘new’ it is important to get a clear/scientific approach of the terrain; this equals topographic photography. When the country is familiar, then we represent it through the filter of our prevailing ideologies (ones that have already appropriated the material world and made it mythic); this leads to pictorialism and experimenting with representational processes; this equals to travel, postcard and finally, art photography? Or, to put it another way, when a terrain has already been worked on socially and therefore culturally, then it is not surprising that representational processes will ‘rework’ them even more?”²²

The above thoughts could offer a clue to thinking about types of landscape that they do not appear to have been worked on in any clear or coherent way, and they do not conform to our aesthetic expectations, then there has not been the stimuli to work on them representationally.

Whilst most of the images had both authors and referents, they had generally different functions and different aesthetic effects; however, they could be similar in their social effects- to reveal an extraordinary series of landscapes, ready for the hand of man to exploit or to lose and find himself just as the Romantics proposed. The vastness and the unspoiled nature of the American continent along with the frontier culture of European settlers required different approaches to landscape compared to European landscape imagery, which tended to focus more on inhabited and cultivated spaces as Gilles Mora reminds us²³.

It could be said that the dynamics of the approach to landscape imagery in the 19th century developed a range of documentary and pictorial approaches that generally confirmed the terrain status as a resource to be exploited, either materially,

²² Bezencenet, S., during a tutorial discussion at Westminster University, London, 2006

²³ Mora, G., *Landscape Photography, Photo SPEAK: a guide to the ideas, movements, and techniques of photography, 1839 to the present*, Abbeville Press, 1998, pp: 110

aesthetically and also in our imaginations, as settings for real or fantastical events or feelings²⁴.

The same dynamics governed landscape imagery in the 20th century and according to Stevie Bezencenet “there is a kind of circular movement between documentary and pictorial approaches that develop at different times in different countries, but feed off each other with only the extremes becoming identifiably different. What we have is essentially a documentary approach with various degrees of realism – some naturalistic / realistic, some impressionistic, some realistic in a Marxist way.”²⁵

The European avant-garde movements in the first three decades of the 20th century helped the exploration of the inherent qualities of photography, which consequently affected landscape aesthetics. Photographers were re-examining not only the technical capacities of the medium but also the significance of their themes, which were concerned with the socio-political evolution of the society. Movements such as *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) and *New Vision* focused on subjects from industry, nature, and contemporary society cultivating the conditions upon which an interrogation on the traditions of landscape will begin.

European landscape photography of this period was orientated towards urban and industrial landscape, which maintained a central role in the visual experimentations of the avant-garde movements. If we try to offer an explanation about why traditional landscape did not offer itself as a suitable subject for these new movements we might say that traditional landscape was linked to conservation and the past and as the new movements were concerned with the modern, the city and industry were the theatres of a new society and of visual experiences in ceaseless motion.

²⁴ Bezencenet, S., during a tutorial discussion at Westminster University, London, 2002

²⁵ Bezencenet, S., during a tutorial discussion at Westminster University, London, 2002

Echoes from the social upheaval in Europe during the 1920's and the avant-garde movements influenced society and culture in the United States, and these found expression in their interpretations of landscape.

Landscape approach by members of Group F/64, such as *Ansel Adams* (figure) and Edward Weston, led to lyrical images in order to give a transcendental presence in landscape. The vastness of the American



West must be considered for the characteristic spiritual dimensions of American landscape. Exploring the aesthetic qualities of landscape photography American modernists created also natural still-life and abstract landscapes where the detailed visual examinations imply also a grand vision, suggesting a broader reading of what constitutes a landscape.

The Great Depression in the United States turned photographers towards humanistic enterprises, like the historical project of the Farm Security Administration (F.S.A) from 1935 to 1943 where landscape imagery was partly used as an evidence of the tragic situation of agriculture. The genre of photojournalism also hosted a substantial site of landscape imagery from early picture magazines such as *Life* and *National Geographic* playing an awakening role in social, politic and environmental issues.

The World War II worked as side effect in landscape photography. The increased use of aerial images for military purposes added to the interrogation of landscape imagery

although Nadar had taken aerial photographs in the mid 19th Century that provided the first examples of terrain seen from a new perspective and offered a new visual iconography.

The influence of mysticism and spiritualism can be traced in formal explorations of landscape in *Subjektive Fotografie* in the 1950's²⁶. The movement affected



European photographers like *Mario Giacomelli* (figure). Metaphor in landscape photography offered a reading of reality that transcends exterior appearances and was used as “a link to mysticism influenced by eastern philosophy and gestalt theory”²⁷ and employed by photographers like Wynn Bullock, Harry Callahan, Minor White, and Aaron Siskind.

Technological achievements in aerial imagery and Conceptual Art's investigations challenged the significance of landscape in the 1970's.

Photographic technological developments such as infrared materials, macro-photography and satellite imagery have enabled new forms of perception and documentation. A new visual vocabulary introduced by the first satellite photographs of planet earth with their radical aesthetics had an impact in our visual field and consequently in landscape photography. The scaleless, abstract landscapes of the

²⁶ Mora, G., *Landscape Photography, Photospeak: a guide to the ideas, movements, and techniques of photography, 1839 to the present*, Abbeville Press, 1998, pp: 119

²⁷ *ibid.*, pp: 119

satellite photographs of the earth were contributing to a shift on the idea of landscape. Space landscape imagery was built on aerial photography but the difference was due to the altitude difference of the satellite images that could record whole continents.

Social, political and environmental questioning came to the surface with Conceptual Art and changed the ways that landscape was perceived and represented. For conceptual artists the supremacy of the idea overshadows the object. Furthermore the extreme commodification of the art world with the increased status and power of galleries and museums

forced the conceptual artists such as Richard Long (figure) to challenge the above and turn some of them to use the earth as stage of their ideas.



Land Art uses landscape photography as evidence of the artist's investigations and interventions on the environment. In these environmental projects, known as earthworks, "art and site were inextricably linked. Landscape was not simply the subject of this art, but also its locus and raw material."²⁸

Conceptual Art and Land Art not only challenged photography's autonomy by using it as one creative tool among many but used also landscape as a stage for their developing strategies.

However, landscape in photography has developed its own language and created its own particularities, which will be discussed at length later in this chapter, which can

²⁸ Beardsley, J. essay titled Earthworks: the landscape after Modernism in *Denatured Visions Landscape and culture in the twentieth century*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, pp.110

be traced to landscape works of this period. Some of the photographic landscapes of the mid 1970's mainly by American photographers such as *Robert Adams* (figure) differentiate from the earlier works on American landscape in taking a scientific, almost topographic approach, which was also informed by social and ecological concerns creating that way its own ideological agenda.



We may argue that it was the combined elements of a new topographic approach and Conceptual Art that lead up to the interrogation of the idea of landscape.

Traditionally the biggest part of landscape approaches deals with either rural or urban spaces. During the 1970's though and under the influence of the above conceptual concerns there was a major shift in less iconographical areas of landscape situated at in between areas of urban and rural environments, spaces not easily identifiable and characterized by the absence of elements associated with conventional types of landscape.

Transitional spaces

The development of cities blurred the once clear borders, defined by walls, of urban space. Under the process of urbanization hybrid spaces, such as transitional spaces, appeared in the borders of cities creating a dystopic periphery which formed the reason for the re-examination not only of the urban scale and the public space but also our perceptions for the notions of city, periphery and landscape.

The term *transitional spaces* is used by several disciplines and is related with the use and depiction of space; in this research I am adopting the above concept for photography referring to the unorganized empty spaces between the urban and rural zone. The word *landscape* also has a range of uses literal and metaphorical and it is necessary to identify that the term transitional landscapes in this research refers to the photographic depiction of transitional spaces.

The notion of *transitional landscapes* was developed after considering the definitions of *Vernacular Landscape* by J.B.Jackson, who presents it as “the landscape in which evidence of a political organization of space is largely or entirely absent”²⁹ and of *Non-Places* by Marc Augé as “a space, which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity”³⁰.

The difference between the three concepts (Transitional, Vernacular and Non-Places) is conceptual rather than pragmatic as they are not exclusive, but form broad categories with many shades. For example J.B.Jacksons’ *Vernacular landscape* may include in some cases even forests, where Marc Augés’ *Non-Places* could be airports, highways, e.t.c. The distinction between transitional spaces and the other existing concepts is that transitional as the actual word implies ‘in the process of change’. That

²⁹ Jackson, J.B. *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, Yale University Press, London, 1984, pp.150

³⁰ Augé, M. *Non-places Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, Verso, London, 1995, pp.75

process refers to the location of the space between other places. My research is focused in areas of transitional spaces where their borders seem nonexistent.

The morphology of transitional spaces varies in terms of their climatic and geophysical parameters and can range from dry flat terrains to dynamic ground formations rich in vegetation, while their existence connects with the particular socio-historic conditions of the specific area.

Their mobility is a determinant element of transitional spaces. Their ephemeral state in relation with the undefined borders affects the identification, study and evaluation of transitional spaces. Their mobility though is as in Vernacular landscape “of an involuntary, reluctant sort; not the expression of restlessness and search for improvement but an unending patient adjustment to circumstances.”³¹ As soon as the socio-historical conditions support the expansion of urban space, transitional space will be transposed again further into the rural surroundings or may disappear altogether if two urban spaces join up. As a residual element of urban architecture and town planning, transitional spaces lack clear boundaries, symbols, monuments and therefore status.

Their functions depend upon the degree of urban expansion and range from working spaces and deprived habitats to extempore playgrounds and an unlawful deposit of detritus of any type or size.

Their function as extempore playground derives not only from the granted lack of free space in urban areas but from the tempting roughness of transitional spaces, lacking from readymade, therefore easily boring, suggestions for play fortunately for children’s imagination. From this perspective transitional spaces transformed into very productive projection platforms for children’s imagination.

³¹ Jackson, J.B. *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, Yale University Press, London, 1984, pp. 151

The proximity of transitional spaces to urban zone makes them in some cases convenient as working spaces such as garages, small factories, and even tiny cultivated fields creating a welcome or farewell zone of the city. This peripheral zone ranges in its size and it can be vast in big cities while its scale is limited in towns. The proximity of transitional spaces to urban zones though has as a side effect the deposit of urban detritus and causes deterioration in the already environmentally polluted suburban space.

As for their habitation we may find this in two forms, either as shantytowns or, more frequently, as sparse or temporary dwellings. Both versions though form substantial cases for study as they demonstrate imaginative exercises of adaptability.

Contemporary societies require the daily commuting during which we come across transitional spaces. The factor of speed determines our impression of transitional spaces as we cross them and they emerge in our mind as blurry images. It is perhaps at this point that the photographic medium could provide us with images of transitional spaces enriching our readings and consequently our perception about transitional spaces. Maybe these spaces have been noticed recently in post-modern art practices exactly because of the culmination of the commuting phenomenon.

Although transitional spaces have duration as phenomenon they leave no tangible marks other than reference in our memory. It is the ephemeral location of transitional spaces that justifies the necessity of transitional landscapes as still images. Transitional landscape images decelerate the ephemerality of transitional spaces allowing us the study of such spaces.

Transitional landscapes

Although landscape is considered to have reached its peak as an art genre in the 19th century, it still holds our interest, not only because our cultural identity and psychology are interwoven with the natural environment that we inhabit together with its depiction as landscape as suggested by Simon Schama in *Landscape and Memory* (1995), but also because national identity is characterized by historical and geographical heritage as has been pointed out by Anthony D. Smith in *National Identity* (1991). Another reason might be that landscape is a paradoxically abstract concept because ‘...landscape is not an object that exists, but is constructed by our culture and our minds’³². As a conceptual construction landscape was and still is used as a point of departure in the rhetoric of socio-politic strategies.

Deborah Bright in her influential essay *Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men* (1985) argues that landscape in western art history, shows three tendencies: first the aristocratic classical tradition, where landscape is principally the field of noble action, second a landscape that celebrated property ownership during the 17th century rise of the merchant *bourgeoisie* in Holland, and in the 18th century the English landscape painting which “enriched the formulaic quality of the earlier genre with scientific accuracy that reflected the increasing prestige and achievements of empirical science and its offspring, technology”³³. This observation indicates why landscapes failing to match with the above tendencies stayed in the shadow of Art history.

W.J.T. Mitchell (1994) in *Landscape and Power* identifies two major shifts in the study of landscape: the “contemplative” (associated with modernism), which aims to

³² Burckhardt, L. *Minimal Intervention* in *The Unpainted Landscape*, Coracle Press, London 1987, pp.99

³³ Bright, D. *Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An inquiry Into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photograph*, Exposure magazine Winter 1985, pp.6

“evacuate the verbal, narrative, or historical elements and the presentation of an image designed for transcendental consciousness”³⁴ and the interpretative shift (associated with postmodernism) which attempts to decode landscape as a body of signs.

Social and ecological concerns informed the ideological agenda of landscape in the last half of the 20th century. The impact of Conceptual Art in the 1970’s, the investigations in Land Art addressed this and finally the narratives of cultural pessimism in western culture that reheated by post-modern discourse, addressed a proportional shift in landscape photography in the mid 1970’s when photographers such as Robert Adams, Lewis Baltz and Frank Gohlke, all of whom belonged to the *New Topographics* group (operating primarily in the United States), started focusing on less privileged types of landscape.

Transitional landscapes were now investigated more systematically since until then they have been displaced due to their integration into the iconography of wasteland. The aesthetic disdain of transitional landscapes has been demonstrated by sparse references in history and criticism of photography before the second half of the 20th century. On the contrary, wasteland had privileged treatment by artists due the narratives of decline that recalls and frequently served as a platform for pessimistic visions. John Taylor (1994) points out “attaching the gaze to wastelands has a long history, beginning with the definition of the picturesque, which always incorporated strange sights, and signs of ageing and decay.”³⁵ Wolfgang Kemp (1990) also argues that even before the invention of photography the images of decay have a preference in picturesque tradition.

³⁴ Mitchell W.J.T. *Landscape and Power*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. 1994, pp.1

³⁵ Taylor, J. *A Dream of England, Landscape, photography and the Tourist's Imagination*, Manchester University Press, 1994, pp.265

It is the low level of picturesque qualities along with the absence of signs the specific distinction of transitional landscapes in the iconography of wasteland that creates their characteristic emptiness. (researchers' figure below)

The signifiers of transitional landscapes differ significantly from the classic landscape images of western culture. The lack of established characteristics of categorisation of landscape iconography such as the ideas of transcendental, awe and vastness in sublime landscape, the variety, curious details and interesting textures in picturesque, the harmony between nature and



man in pastoral and the idyllic in the romantic makes transitional landscapes appear suspended and excluded in front of the established aesthetic attitudes.

One of the questions that rise up is the extent to which transitional landscapes fails to perpetuate conventional perceptions of landscape and the dominant ideologies about landscape. The humbleness of transitional landscapes derive from the lack of historic references and elements with symbolic value such as big trees, emblems of property,

or even a certain visual style. They do not find favour by being examined under the established aesthetic codes, which tend to categorise them in the iconography of banality.



The iconographic austerity is a crucial characteristic of transitional

landscapes (researchers' figure above) and this that gives us the motive to re-examine

the semantic, functional and dynamic values of simplicity in the broader spectrum of iconography.

The research investigates if the iconographic austerity of transitional landscapes leads to their interpretive austerity or on the contrary enhances the range of interpretations.

Other equally plain landscapes such as deserts, seas and arctic regions are depicting elements par excellence in pure form contrasting with the unrefined matter of transitional landscapes. The usual restricted size of transitional spaces, compared with the vastness of the above landscapes also contributes to their low level of spectacular appeal.

Purity, large scale and the exotic are elements that create the spectacular, as at least the West conceives it, apart the enchanting factors in western landscape. The parameter of technology, always loyal to the requisitions of western thought, conserves this charm. Concepts like the *panoramic* find popularised applications in the depiction of nature with the use of horizontal frames at such a variety of proportions with such success that we have the domination of the term *landscape format* for the horizontal frame.

The low level of the spectacular in transitional landscapes is connected with the lack of a panoramic view, thus a lack of control that cultivates unconsciously a sense of insecurity for the spectator due to its precarious relation to the transitional space.

Other psychoanalytic explanations may argue about the notion of sterility that the bareness of transitional landscapes may recall and also that perhaps these spaces makes us feel uncomfortable, as it will be indicated further down in the research, by reminding us of the ephemerality of our own existence. This position is valid if we accept the theories that argue that the aesthetic pleasure of a landscape is connected with the appropriate environmental conditions for our biological survival within it.

Jay Appleton in *The Experience of Landscape* (1975) developed two hypotheses for approaching landscape aesthetics: the *habitat theory* that “seeks to relate pleasurable sensations in the experience of landscape to environmental conditions favourable to biological survival”³⁶ and the *prospect-refuge theory* “which opens the way to the analysis of landscapes in terms of their strategic appraisal as potential habitats”³⁷.

W.J.T. Mitchell in his essay *Imperial Landscape* criticises the above theories and argues, “The only problem is that Appleton believes that the spectator is universal and “natural”. But there are clearly other possibilities: the observer as a woman, gatherer, scientist, poet, interpreter, or tourist.”³⁸

However the criticism, the application of Appleton’s theories to transitional landscapes might be problematic due to the emptiness that characterise them and makes them appear quite inhospitable for refuge. Furthermore, the above hypotheses could suggest that our narrative interpretations might similarly be rich for traditional landscapes and impoverished for transitional landscapes.

The geographer Denis Cosgrove in *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (1984) argues that the notion of landscape is affected by cultural and historical parameters and associates the evolution of landscape with “early modern capitalism and the relinquishing of feudal systems of land tenure.”³⁹

Cosgrove argues that for people whose existence is determined by land, that they do not see that land as landscape. For this man which Cosgrove call as *insider*,

“...there is no clear separation of self from scene, subject from object. There is, rather, a fused, unsophisticated and social meaning embodied in the milieu. The

³⁶ Appleton, J. *The Experience of Landscape*, Wiley, London 1975, pp. 8

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 8

³⁸ Mitchell W.J.T. *Landscape and Power*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. 1994, pp.16

³⁹ Andrews, M. *Landscape and Western art*, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 20

insider does not enjoy the privilege of being able to walk away from the scene as we can walk away from the framed picture or from a tourist viewpoint.”⁴⁰

It would be intriguing, though quite difficult, to see how inhabitants close to transitional spaces see transitional landscapes and if there is a distinct difference between urban and rural population, on reading these landscapes, as this is part of the research. However, it was too problematic to identify an appropriate survey group to make this possible.

Chris Fitter, in *Poetry, space, landscape* (1995) also criticizes Appleton’s *Habitat theory* arguing that it “ignores the historical reformations of nature-sensibility as man modifies and extends his habitat through the developments of pasturage, agriculture, commerce and the metropolis”⁴¹. He argues that landscape-consciousness is generated from multiple bases of awareness and proposes four matrices of perception.

“Ecological’ perception scans nature as the field of potential satisfaction of requirements for subsistence and security; ‘cosmographic’ perception is alert in landscape to the forces and processes of the world-order, as current cosmology conceives it; ‘analogical’ perception gratifies the understanding in apprehending phenomena in terms of analogy, polarity, symbol and type; while ‘technoptic’ perception is pleased and replenished by recognizing among the myriad forms and configurations of nature those it has learned from art.”⁴²

Applying the above, a potential inhabitant of a transitional space is confronted with the above matrices as his ecological perception can not be gratified due to the lack of requirements for subsistence and security; his cosmographic perception feels the vulnerability of transitional space to the forces and processes of change; analogical perception cannot relate transitional space to other types of space in order to apprehend it; and finally, technoptic (Fitters’ term) perception causes discomfort due to the lack of distinct visual examples of transitional landscapes in art.

⁴⁰ Cosgrove, D., *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Croom Helm, 1984, pp.19

⁴¹ Fitter, C. *Poetry, space, landscape* (ed.) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 5

⁴² *ibid*, pp. 11

Transitional landscapes confront the ontological problem of photography pointed out by Walter Benjamin, namely the incapacity of photography to depict without beautifying⁴³. Even the most deprived environment when it is photographed tends to acquire aesthetic beauty derived from photographic characteristics.⁴⁴ As soon as the actual space becomes image, our attention shifts from the environment to the aesthetics. During the history of photography, landscape photography was strung between the parameters of theme, composition and technical characteristics creating mainly landscapes with high levels of spectacular qualities, thus extending the ontological problem of beautification and consequently leading to an undervaluing of photographic approaches that followed alternative routes in landscape depiction.

Transitional landscapes question the relationship between landscape and what used to be termed the *Argument*⁴⁵ of the picture, the narrative element of the picture that is the principal theme. It seems that transitional landscapes lack of Argument is characterised by the absence of a profound narrative element. But is it the absence, the emptiness itself that is the Argument in transitional landscapes?

Furthermore we might ask: Do transitional landscapes embody narrative and if they do how? What aspects of transitional landscapes manage to retain this capacity?



Does the lack of profound narrative elements make transitional landscapes more suggestive as images and open to a greater range of readings, thus increasing their narrative capacity?

Perhaps the lack of a precise and

⁴³ Benjamin, W., *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Fontana, London, 1931, pp. 31-42

⁴⁴ Bate, D. Article on *Wasteland* exhibition, *Portfolio* magazine, February 1992, pp. 14

⁴⁵ Andrews, M., *Land into Landscape, Landscape in Western Art*, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp.5-7

historical sign system within transitional landscapes allows for interpretive play. The lack of profound narrative features in transitional landscapes encourages the viewer to think about what might have happened or what will happen in these empty arenas. (researchers' figure previous page) The long tradition of landscape as a stage of human action puzzles the viewer when he confronts of transitional landscapes. There is no clear evidence of human presence or action that makes these spaces valuable as pictures so what are these images telling us?

The research method I followed (visual questionnaires) tried to answer to some extent the above questions. Additionally I have extracted information about the type of narratives that transitional landscapes may host and pointed differentiations on the respondents narrative approach.

Transitional landscapes are like the *parergon*, if we accept the traditional landscapes as the *ergon* of landscape iconography. Jacques Derrida (1987) in *The Truth in Painting* demonstrates convincingly how porous is the barrier between *ergon* and *parergon*.⁴⁶ We might say that *ergon* (the established [rural&urban] landscape imagery) is partly constituted by the co-presence of the *parergon* (transitional landscapes) which play the role of frame in the notion of [urban and rural] landscape; So the *ergon* is dependent upon, and collaborative with, the *parergon*, which loses its status as independent, dispensable supplement. The presence of the supplement signals 'an internal lack in the system to which it is added'. Furthermore, if we accept the idea that transitional landscapes function as frame in the traditional iconography of landscape, the very role of the frame in the idea of landscape in general is fundamental as the frame 'literally defines the landscape, both in the sense of

⁴⁶ Derrida, J., *The Truth in Painting*, The University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 37-82

determining its outer limits and in the sense that landscape is constituted by its frame: it wouldn't be a landscape without that frame.'⁴⁷

Transitional landscapes belong to the type of imagery that requires investment on the part of the spectator to see 'beyond' what is seen in order to achieve some benefit from the process of looking. Critical approaches to contemporary landscape were facing difficulties due to the fact that both viewers and photographers were conveniently trapped in established ways of interpreting images, expecting a certain range of questions and contents to be addressed through landscape imagery. The problem becomes intensified in unconventional types of landscape where the existing hermeneutic codes seem inadequate. I believe that one of the main contributions of postmodernism to landscape is that it created the preconditions for a re-evaluation of the landscape imagery that has been left out of art history precisely due to the lack of an appropriate theoretical framework. The absence of a genuine visual theory in the analysis of images is demonstrated usually by hybrid analytic approaches by visual researchers. This indicates the immense complexity of images in a way, which in some cases makes semiotics and psychoanalysis function more as platforms for questions rather than devices for answers.

There was a photographic commission, part of a wider national project in France in 1982 called D.A.T.A.R [Delegation a l'Amenagement Du Territoire et a l'Action Regionale], which tried to produce a record of the contemporary French landscape. It was argued that the results from the photographic mission were not successful. However one of the most revealing outcomes from the D.A.T.A.R. project was the indication of French farmers which when they were asked to describe their living environment they described a romanticized landscape closer to the environment of

⁴⁷ Andrews, M., *Landscape and Western Art*, Land into Landscape, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 5

their grandparents. The above indication demonstrates the relation between language and experience and to a certain extent the dominance of culture in the experience of nature.

We may say that the challenge of transitional landscape as image operates at two levels:

- The *aesthetic* with the apparent lack of traditional visual pleasure through the established aesthetic codes
- The *psychological* whereby the transitional landscapes create insecurity for the spectator unable to offer shelter, a vantage point therefore control

Transitional spaces are bounded by the bipolar of urban and rural. Each part of the above bipolar carries an enormous number of narratives, historical, cultural, personal, which have been studied extensively both by Science and Art. Photography, as part of the visual arts, has explored rural and urban landscape since its invention, but it is relatively recently that it has started to focus on the in-between landscapes, part of which are transitional landscapes.

Perhaps the emptiness of transitional landscapes proved favorable to their narrative potential and promoted these barren spaces as particularly productive landscapes. Perhaps the range of narratives that can be hosted by transitional landscapes are greater compared to other types of landscape, which are restricted by their iconic elements in a certain range of narratives. As they depict spaces between urban and rural environment it is possible to host hybrid types of narratives.

CHAPTER TWO

NARRATIVE

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Chapter Two

‘*Narrative*: a recounted tale or story, whether of fictional or non-fictional material.’

Shorter Oxford Dictionary

This chapter has two distinct parts. The first summarizes views on narrative focusing on the relationship of narrative with photography. The second formulates categories on the narrative strategies that photography uses in landscape photography.

My research explores how photographic characteristics affect the narrative potential of a landscape image focusing particularly on transitional landscapes, their narrative capacity along with the perceptions that these landscapes may reveal. Visual questionnaires created by the researcher asked certain population groups to choose between different versions of the same landscape to identify transitional landscape and to write narratives upon them.

Although narratives have been investigated since Aristotle’s *Poetics* in 330 A.D, my argument focuses on the 20th century because during this period we have experienced an unimaginable domination of the visual in every aspect of cultural practice, a fact that encouraged thorough investigations on visual narratives. The power of the image was appreciated from the early days of civilization but during the last century the image developed an advanced vocabulary encouraged by technology and heavily used by all economic models. The arsenal of the visual engulfed the narrative element, the importance of which is indicated by its presence in every civilization, and visual narratives become a highly sophisticated tool in painting, children’s and comic books and in lens-based strategies such as advertisement photography and cinema.

Seminal narrative studies such as Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the folktale* (1928), Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse* (1978) and Mieke Bal's *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of Narrative* (1985) along with influential approaches from disciplines like anthropology (Claude Levi-Strauss), linguistics (Ferdinand de Saussure), and philosophy (Michael Foucault) created analytic platforms for the understanding and the function of narrative.

The formalist approach to the academic analysis of narrative introduced a distinction between 'plot', the simple linear ingredients of a tale, and 'story', its organization as structured narrative. Vladimir Propp (1928) attempted to derive a universal system or grammar of narrative from the repeated basic structures of folk tales. Propp was intrigued by the similarity of tales in different parts of the world and believed that the knowledge from the study of folktales in terms of their historical origins is limited and for this reason he offered a morphological analysis of folktales and fairytales.

By the examination of one hundred Russian folktales Propp suggests that the "functions of the characters are independent of the characters' fulfilling their functions and are the fundamental elements of a story."¹ By the term *functions* he means both the actions of the characters and the consequences of these actions for the story. Furthermore, Propp asserts that the sequence of these functions is always identical and their number is limited. In essence Propp help us understand how stories work, what happens in a story, the roles of characters and the way of structure of plots. This analytic approach can be described as a syntagmatic analysis of narratives. It is argued by Arthur Asa Berger (1997) that with certain adaptations the findings of Propp's study can be applied to contemporary narratives as many of them borrow the structures of fairytales.

¹ Berger, A.A., *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media, and Everyday Life*, Sage Publications, London, 1998, pp. 24

Another set of questions related to narratives deals with how we derive meaning from them and several disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology and semiotics cover this area using structuralist tools of analysis.

Paradigmatic analysis looks for pre-existing sets of signifiers, which underlie the obvious content of texts. This type of structural analysis considers the connotations of signifiers and the use of one signifier rather than another and the existence of underlying themes. The presence or the absence of a certain signifier leads to a particular reading of a text and the underlying presence of a theme guides the reader to certain interpretation of the text. This kind of analysis helps us to define the importance of specific items in a text. In crude terms paradigmatic analysis deals with what the text means to us in contrast with syntagmatic analysis, which reveals what happens in a text. The above two types of narrative analysis were used for the respondents' narratives on transitional landscapes in order to extract the necessary information for this research.

Structuralism proposed that all communication systems could be understood by analogy with the primary system of language. Deriving from this tradition Gerard Genette (1980, 1982) distinguishes 'between *histoire*, or 'story', the chronology of events as they occur; *recit*, the order of events in a narrative; and *narration*, the act of story telling or of *enunciation*'.² Genette also introduced the concept of 'diegesis', the fictional content of a narrative world: all that is given as the reality of a story.

Poststructuralism has suggested a more open and provisional conception of narrative structure and showed greater attention to the role of the reader or spectator and the processes of reading and reception. Reader-response theory emphasizes in the important role of the reader in establishing the 'meaning' of text. Wolfgang Iser

² Brooker, P. *A Concise Glossary of Cultural Theory*, (ed.) Arnold, London, 1999, pp. 147

(1989) in his essay *The Play of the Text* points out that the author, the text, and the reader are involved in an on-going relationship in literature that produces literary meaning. Applying these observations to the photographic medium we could say that a photograph leaves gaps for the spectator who contemplates what the photographer/photograph means or what it can mean to them.

The proposed vocabulary, along with the language of codes, subtexts, and narrative functions is extensively used in visual narratives starting with cave paintings, the still image in painting and photography and reaching its manifestation with moving images in cinema and digital media.

Photography and Narrative

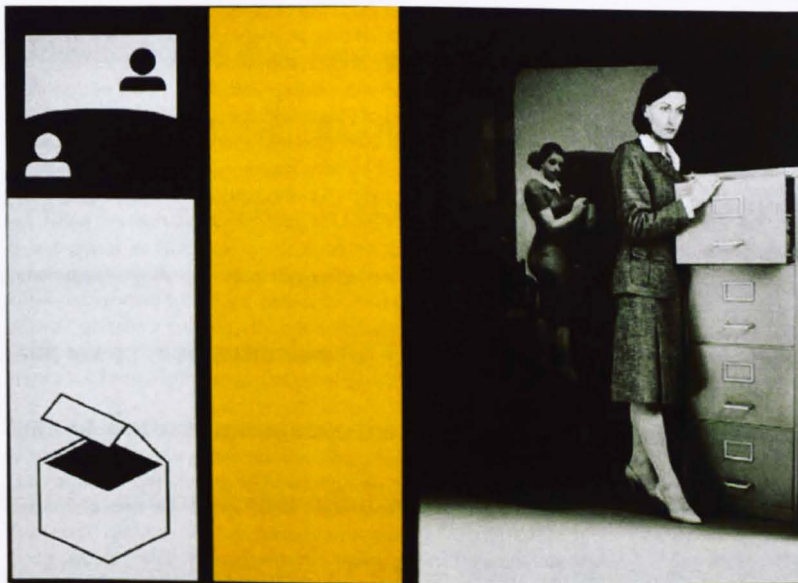
The narrativity of photography has not been much discussed within photography research. This could partly be explained by the absence of sufficient time in a photograph, which is central to narrativity as it allows for the process of 'transformation' according to Christian Metz as I refer to in the next page. The study of a single photograph is understood as being implicated in narrative constructions. John Stathatos (2004) in *Ways of Telling Photography and narrative* argues that: "It should be obvious that the presence of primitive narrative elements in a photograph does not automatically bestow upon it a narrative character, or at least not to any significant degree."³ The main tendency in narrative photography is considered mostly through a staged process where the photographer generates a sense of narrative borrowing styles from other arts dominated by narrative, such as cinema, theatre or painting.

³ Stathatos J. *Ways of Telling Photography and narrative*, Thessaloniki Museum of Photography, Thessaloniki 2004, pp.12-13

Christian Metz (1974) gives enlightened distinctions between description, image, and narrative. According to him “Narrative invents one time scheme in terms of another time scheme- and that distinguishes narrative from simple description [which creates space in time], as well as from the image [which creates one space in another space]”.⁴ Later on the research methodology respondents create narratives for photographs creating one time scheme in terms of another, the time it takes to scan the photograph and imagine a story is different to the time within the story.

Earlier though Metz (1968) claimed that photography “never intended to tell stories. [...] An individual photograph is obviously incapable of narrating anything! And yet by what strange corollary is it the case that two juxtaposed photographs should be forced to create something? To pass from one to two images is to pass from the image to language”.⁵

Although the first part of his statement collapses in the case of staged individual photographs, which can have a very high narrative content such as Victor Burgin’s



⁴ Metz C. *Film Language*, (ed.) Oxford University Press, New York, 1974, pp.123

⁵ Metz, C. “Le cinéma: langue ou langage”, in *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, v.1, Klincksieck, Paris 1968, pp.53

image *Office at Night*, his point about “the passage from image to language is, however, well taken, and does indeed represent the basis of most photographic narratives”⁶ as Stathatos argues.

Peter Wollen in the essay *Fire and Ice* points out: “It is impossible to extract our concept of time completely from the grasp of narrative. This is all the more true when we discuss photography as a form of art rather than as a scientific or instructional instrument.”⁷ Photography emerged as a spatial rather than temporal art and allows the reader/spectator the freedom to choose the duration of reading time rather than imposing a specific reading time as occurs with cinema. This freedom allows the reader/spectator to use the element of time in order to create his/her own interpretations/narratives apart from the intentions of the photographer.

The related research about narrativity and the photographic image demonstrates a clear embracing of photography by semiotics influenced by Roland Barthes’s investigations addressed mainly in *Image-Music-Text* (1978) and *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980). In the essay “Rhetoric of the Image” from the first book Barthes identified three messages that construct the meaning of the visual sign: The linguistic, the literal, and the symbolic. In “The Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative”, he identified the codes that activate meaning in a narrative sequence such as the ‘nuclei’, the pivotal points in the narrative, and the ‘catalysers’, the successive units that fill in the narrative space between nuclei.

In *Camera Lucida* Barthes introduces the terms *punctum*, the accidental creation of a visual detail in a photograph that attracts the eye of the spectator, and the *studium*, which is the cultural connotations of the specific photograph. The analysis of the

⁶ Stathatos, J., *Ways of telling Photography and Narrative*, Thessaloniki Museum of Photography, Thessaloniki, 2004, pp.13

⁷ Wollen, P. *Fire and Ice* Essay, *Other than Itself*, (ed.) Manchester: Cornerhouse Publications in association with Derbyshire College of Higher Education and Camerawork, 1989, pp. 34

narratives created in response to the visual questionnaires, which I will attempt at Chapter Four, will use these notions of *punctum* and *studium*.

Manuel Alvarado (1979) points out that Barthes seems unclear about the status of narrative within the image because the reading is produced “via the connotative level through a recognition of the inherent condensation of the advertising image and through an understanding of metonymic operation.”⁸ Furthermore, Alvarado argues that Barthes fails to clarify the relationship between advertising and non-advertising images. I believe also that we have to clarify that Barthes analysis of narratives is only relevant for imagery that is clearly narrative.

Alvarado sees the significance of narrative when he explores the possibilities of change, difference and progression and two lines of analysis emerge, from the point of view of narrativity. “The first would analyse the order of events implied by the photograph, whether ‘fictional’ or ‘documentary’. The second would question the actual history of the production, circulation and consumption of the photograph within particular institutions and under the regulation of technological, economic, legal and discursive relations and practices.”⁹ The latter is relevant with my research because it is related to the image’s context and thus its interpretative framework and will be discussed in chapter five.

Kevin Halliwell (1980) argues, on a semiotic level, that the sequence is central to narrativity. He points out that the lack of research on the relation of the photograph and narrative is “precisely because the photo-narrative proper is not a common form of expression, consisting, as it does, of a sequence of photographic images. In fact, it is rare to find this sequence not accompanied by a linguistic message.”¹⁰

⁸ Alvarado, M. *Photographs and Narrativity*, Screen Education magazine No 32/33, 1979/1980, pp. 8

⁹ Ibid, pp.8

¹⁰ Halliwell, K *Photographs and Narrativity: A reply*, Screen Education magazine No 37, 1980, pp. 79

He considers that “in terms of semiotics a single photograph cannot signify a narrative, and in terms of epistemology it cannot necessarily present a single or definitive story. The single photograph, as a basic constructed image, can be *used* in a variety of discourses-systems formed from a totality of textual operations functioning as a closed unit.”¹¹

Finally, Clive Scott (1999) argues “the difficulty of ‘entering’ photographs dramatizes our need to use narratives as refuges, as ways of reading/justifying our lives. The photograph excludes us, both as spectator and narrator from the narrative we are constantly trying to inhabit: Given its visual availability and its ‘all-over’ focus, the photograph often takes us on journeys we did not expect to go on”¹². The above idea is clearly demonstrated in the respondents’ narratives on specific landscape images through the visual questionnaires which I use as methodological approach.

It is not surprising that the above investigations about narrativity and photography have not included landscape as narrative analysis has focused on the constructed image, especially in advertising. The narrativity of landscape photography has only generally been investigated due to the extensive use of landscape itself as a background for narratives in painting, photography and cinema.

It is necessary at this point to define that this research explores the narrative potential of transitional landscape in the single image. A single non-staged photograph itself ontologically is unable to contain a narrative due to the lack of sufficient time (excluding the cases of long shutter seeds, double exposures, photo-collage etc). Photographs are fragments of time and narratives require plenty of time in order to develop. It seems then that it is more appropriate to talk about the narrative potential in a single photograph rather than the single narrative photograph. Unlike traditional

¹¹ Halliwell, K *Photographs and Narrativity: A reply*, Screen Education magazine No 37, 1980, pp. 84

¹² Scott, C. *The Spoken Image*, (ed.) Reaktion Books, London, 1999, pp. 317

narrative, the potential narrative in a single still image is one which cannot be resolved; we cannot know, will never know, what events may have happened- only what might have happened and what may yet happen.

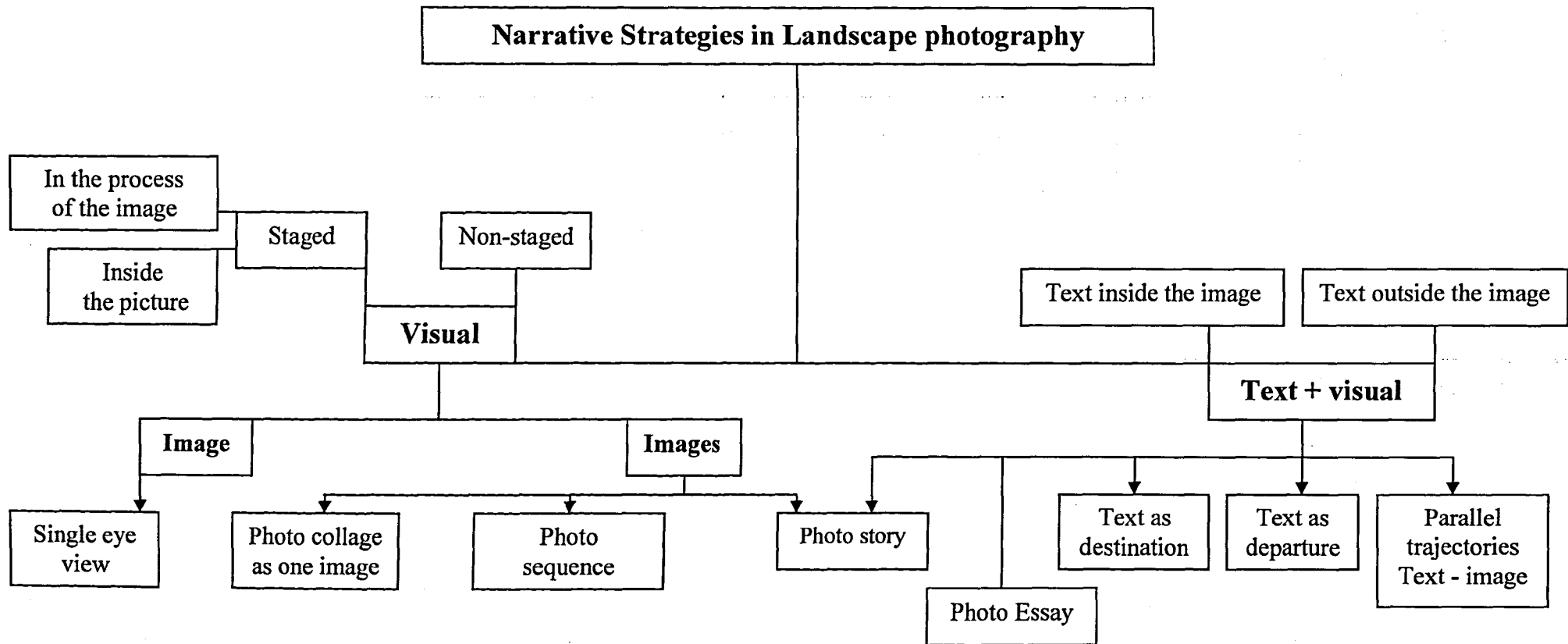
Max Kozloff suggest that “The job of the narrative photographer is to suspend our sense of the irreversible lateness of our arrival at the scenes depicted; and to try to resituate viewers within an apparently emergent process, still unconsummated at the moment of perception”.¹³ Kozloff’s idea that we may have missed something is supported by the respondents’ narratives on transitional landscapes as we see in Chapter Four suggesting the end of something as well as the beginning.

The understanding of photographic narratives lies also with the spectator’s knowledge. Although a photograph may seem to be totally visible, Clive Scott (1999) argues that the spectator’s knowledge can never be equal to this visibility. A photograph suggests to the viewers’ perception continuity, an extension of space and time beyond the photographic frame, a blind field, affecting the identification of the photographed elements and the perception of the contents of the photograph. The respondents’ narratives can be seen as an attempt to fill in the absence of knowledge that Scott identifies here.

Narrative strategies in landscape photography

At this point of the research I observed how landscape photography uses narrative strategies in order to apply two of them at the practice part of the thesis. The chart below came as a result with no intention to study the narrative strategies on landscape photography, as this will be another thesis of its own.

¹³ Kozloff, M., *The Privileged Eye: Essays on Photography*, (ed.) Albuquerque, 1987, p.102



- *Narrative potential created solely by photograph(s)*
1. When a single photograph creates a narrative potential. This may come from a “single-eyed” photograph. By this term I mean the single point of view, which most photographic cameras offer and it is one of the largest categories of photographs. It is self evident that, apart from the viewers’ imaginative ability, the narrative potential in a single non-staged landscape photograph depends on the accumulation of visual elements that can provide the basis for a narrative reading of the image.



Jeff Wall The Flooded Grave 1998-2000

It is perhaps this specific type of photograph that has the greatest difficulty in the creation of a narrative potential as it is only through the visual signs of the photograph that the narrative potential can be formed. On the other hand, staged landscape photographs could have a high narrative potential as the photographer can emphasise on the narrative elements at the moment of production.

I am aware about the argument that there is a minimum amount of staging in every photograph taken, as framing is a process of staging where the photographer chooses what to include and what to exclude from the photograph. Furthermore, as indicated in Chapter One, frame plays a definitive role in what constitutes the notion of landscape and questions such as is there such a thing as a non-staged landscape photograph, or to what extent a landscape photograph could be labelled staged or non-staged create a broad area of discussion on the topic of staging images. I believe that it is the type of “coding” of the depicted elements along with the different level of staging that makes a landscape photograph to be characterised as staged or non-staged.

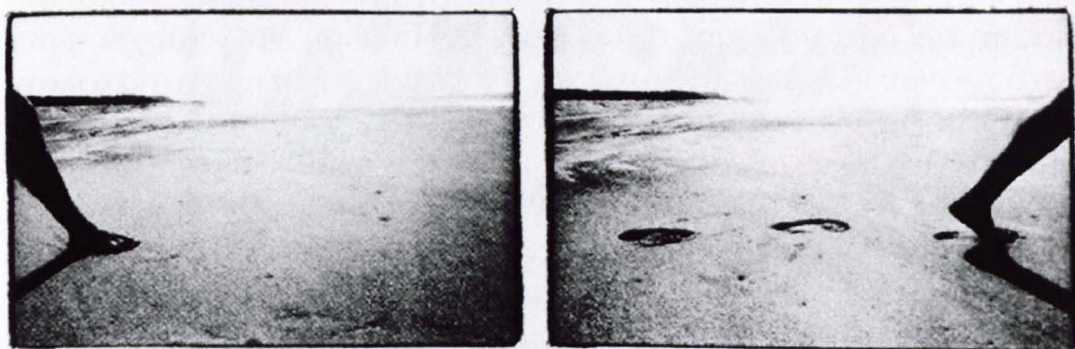
2. When the narrative is created by a number of photographs such as a photo collage, a photo-sequence, a photo-story photo series and photo essay.



David Hockney Pearblossom Highway

- a) A *photographic collage* is made of many photographs and usually many fragments of time and consequently narrative(s) has more chance to develop here. It becomes apparent that in this category the final visual

piece may derive as a result of three types of staged processes. The first staged process is at the arrangement of photographs of the final image, the second is when the staged process happens during the shooting of the photographs and the third staged process is the combined use of the above two.



Michel Szulc Krzyzanowski, Sequences Puerto Escondido, 1981

b) *Photo-sequence*. A photo-sequence image usually has an obligatory coherence of time and space. Early photo-sequences such as the chronophotographic studies of Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey in the 1860s indicated a significant narrative potential to photography as well as the scientific value of these studies. It could be argued that photo-sequence was the prophet of cinematic vision which was developed just few decades after.

Kostis Antoniadis (1995) in *The Latent Image* suggests that in the photo-sequence:

“We can see a link, morphological or conceptual, that is being created between the photographs which suggests a specific interpretation to the viewer. It is about a form of visual syntax, in which the pictures articulate a whole, extending in this way not only the communicative range of the photograph but also the capability of artistic expression.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Antoniadis, K. *Latent Image*, (ed.) Moresopoulos, Athens, 1995, pp. 125

The temporal coherence of a photographic sequence introduces almost automatically the concept of narration. The sequence gives the viewer the freedom to choose how he/she wants to see the sequence, although it is likely to read it like a book or a comic strip, unlike cinema where the viewer cannot choose the way of seeing a film. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of two or more images might produce a number of interpretations, which are not prompted by either of the photographs separately as the viewer confronts the possibility of story/ies, which he/she tries to rebuild.

Finally Michel Tardy (1964), in the article *Le troisième Signifiant*, studied the correlations between the pictures and claims that there is a kind of instilling of the meaning from each image. The approach of the images will direct the viewer in the selection of some additional signs. This different reading caused by a third signifier is created from the correlation of the two images.¹⁵ The above could be related to Eisenstein's ideas about cinematic montage that use the same concept.

- c) *Photo-story*. A photo-story has the same morphological structure as the photo-sequence with the difference that in a photo-story there is no obligation of coherence of space and time. There are two types of photo-story: the first use solely photographs and the second combines photographs and text. It could be said that both types of photo-story demonstrate more complicated interpretations compare to photo-sequence. This could be partly explained not only by the incoherence of time and space, which characterizes the photo-story but also by the complexity

¹⁵ Tardy M., *Le troisième Signifiant*, Terre d'Images, no3, Paris 1964

introduced by the combined use of two systems of communication (image and text) and their interpretive range.

There are also photographic projects which can be called *photo-series* such as Robert Frank's *The Americans*, and Ralph Gibson's *Days at Sea* where there is a series of photographs – sometimes without captions – that prompt a narrative-like reading through the process of accumulation. I say narrative-like, as it is not a story that is being created but a *mise-en-scène*.

One of the most popular genres of photo-story has been the documentary photo essay, which was encouraged by the rise of picture magazines in pre-war era. Fred Ritchin defines the photo essay as “a grouping of photographs, usually published with text, that, like its written equivalent, attempts to get at the essence of a person, place or event”.¹⁶ The glory days of the photo essay were between the 1930's, when it initially developed, and the 1960's and 1970's many magazines were based on the form; however, hybrids of this genre, more ecologically orientated, can still be found today in magazines such as National Geographic.



From W.Eugene Smith's Photo Essay *Spanish village*

¹⁶ Ritchin, Fred, “Close Witnesses: The Involvement of the Photojournalist”, in Michel Frizot, *A New History of Photography*, Koneman, Cologne, 1998, pp.602.

- *Narrative created by text and photograph*

The combination of image and text is a familiar practice in contemporary art photography. It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate text from image during the process of interpretation as the reading of a text can create image(s) in our imagination and the viewing of image may recall word(s). The close relation between text and image becomes even closer and more complicated with the veracity of photography as a photograph is the visual manifestation of an object without uncertainty but simultaneously the photograph is not capable to generate reliable accounts about the possible meanings or implications of that object.

Michael Titzmann (1988) casts light upon the semiotic systems of images and texts arguing:

“As we know, the basic difference between the semiotic systems of images and texts consists in the lesser degree of coding of the primary signifiers [i.e. the simplest elements, capable of bearing meaning] in the pictorial and the higher degree of coding in the linguistic form. For whereas the linguistic system determines which elements differentiate and bear meaning...this is not true of the primary signifiers in iconic expressions. Every perceptible element- a line, a shape, a colour, every part of such an element and every combination of such elements- can, but need not, serve as a differentiator or a bearer of meaning...”¹⁷

If we follow this argument then we might say that in semiotic terms, the unambiguous meaning of an image can be accomplished only by the obligatory use of text. It is widely accepted that language, although incapable to define unquestionably a real object, can indeed be more precise in the specification of the intellectual content of this object.

The combination of those two different systems (image and text) according to Andreas Hapkemeyer (1996) is capable of operating on two levels. “Images are

¹⁷ Michael Titzmann, “Theoretisch-methodologische Probleme einer Semiotic der Text-Bild-Relation,” in Wolfgang Harms (ed.), *Text und Bild, Bild und Text, DFG-Symposium 1988* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1990), pp.377

semanticized by virtue of the direct allocation of texts; an explicit level of meaning is incorporated into the image. Texts, on the other hand, are unmistakably referentialized through the assignment of images.”¹⁸

In aesthetic terms though, the combination of photograph & text allows more complex information to become possible as certain aesthetic or conceptual decisions of one system can sustain or work against the message(s) of the other. The text also as more precise device can inject a level of meaning not foreseen in the image by introducing a new theme.

Michael Titzmann (1988) reminds us also that in general,

“Where an image is embedded in text or where image and text are co-equal, textual semantics dominate over the semantics of the image and assume the function of structuring meaning: interpretation, focusing establishment of hierarchies with respect to the image are all dependent upon the meaning supplied by the text, to the extent permitted by its particular features... thus a photo title, for instance, has a controlling effect upon the interpretation of the image.”¹⁹

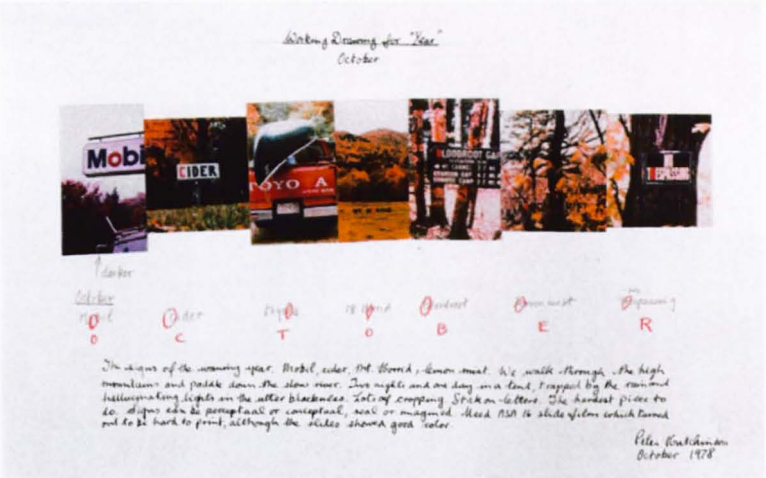
Extensive use of the above textual functions we may find in advertising images where the need for new ways of attraction has to reinvent the role of textual and visual triggers in advertising imagery.

Finally and according to Clive Scott the dominant presence of a text, no matter its amount or its place in a photograph might function:

¹⁸ Andreas Hapkemeyer, *Image and Word, Photo and Text*, from exhibition catalogue photo text text photo, The Synthesis of Photography and Text in Contemporary Art, MUSEION, Edition Stemmler, 1996, pp. 10

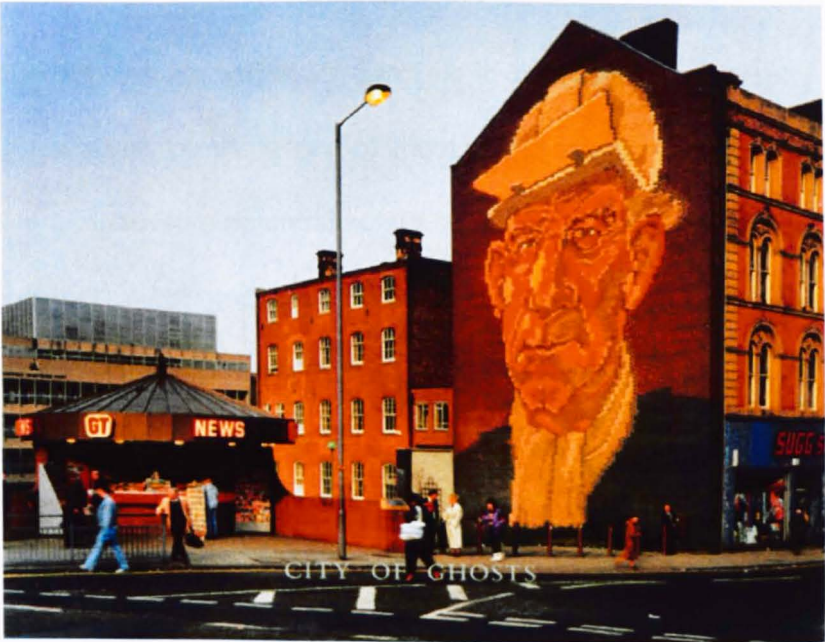
¹⁹ Michael Titzmann, “Theoretisch-methodologische Probleme einer Semiotik der Text-Bild-Relation,” in Wolfgang Harms (ed.), *Text und Bild, Bild und Text, DFG-Symposium 1988* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1990), pp.382

- a) As destination, as that which explains and synthesizes the image, gives it its coherence in other words when it has a complete narrative structure.



Peter Hutchinson *October 1978*

- b) As point of departure, something minimal and non-interfering, which orientates the spectator and then leaves the image to do its work; in this case, the image bears the burden of narrative potential.



John Kippin *City of Ghosts*

- c) As parallel but displaced commentary, set at a distance from the picture, so that the meaning is neither in the picture nor in the title, but in their point of convergence.”²⁰



Willie Doherty *Closed Circuit*

The above investigation on narrative strategies in landscape photography helped me to clarify my intentions on using two of them at the practice part of the thesis. The first stimulates the narrative potential solely by photographs while the second by the combination of text and photograph. The methodological approach for the creation of the photographic part of the thesis unfolds in the next two chapters, which deal with the methodology and the analysis of the findings.

²⁰ Clive Scott, Title and caption: projecting the photographic image, in *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language*, pp.47

CHAPTER THREE

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Chapter Three

Methodology

Studies on the interpretations of visual images recognize three sites in which the meanings of the image are made; the site of production, the site of image itself and the site of the audience acknowledging the author / intention and the matter of context – both at origination and at consumption of the image.

My research focuses on the site of the audience by accepting two main arguments: the first, influenced by Roland Barthes' seminal text *The Death of the Author* (1977), argues that images are always made and seen within a wider visual context which is more significant for the meaning of the image than how the artist intended the images to be seen. The second argument proposes that audiences bring to bear on images their own ways of seeing and interpreting in order to make their own meanings from them.

Stuart Hall (1980) in *Encoding/decoding* suggests that although images and texts were encoded in their production with a *preferred meaning* a specific audience could decode this meaning quite differently. He indicates also three types of reading:

- *'dominant (or 'hegemonic') reading*: the reader fully shares the text's code and accepts and reproduces the *preferred reading* (a reading which may not have been the result of any conscious intention on the part of the author(s)) - in such a stance the code seems 'natural' and 'transparent';
- *negotiated reading*: the reader partly shares the text's code and broadly accepts the preferred reading, but sometimes resists and modifies it in a way which reflects their own position, experiences and interests (local and personal conditions may be seen as exceptions to the general rule) - this position involves contradictions;
- *oppositional ('counter-hegemonic') reading*: the reader, whose social situation places them in a directly oppositional relation to the dominant code, understands the preferred

reading but does not share the text's code and rejects this reading, bringing to bear an alternative frame of reference.'¹

Shaun Moores (1993) in *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption* follows Halls' argument on preferred meaning saying "while recognizing the text's construction of subject positions, [this argument] pointed to readers as the possessors of cultural knowledge and competences that have been acquired in previous social experiences and which are drawn on in the act of interpretation".²

Although semiology has been established as one of the dominant approaches to analyzing images social theorists have criticized it by arguing that it gives more attention to the formal qualities of the image and less to the ways audiences made sense of it. David Morley (1980) in *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding* opposes this formalism by arguing that audiences bring their own experiences and knowledge in their responses to an image's meaning.

Another perspective on the production of meaning came from *Reader-response theory*, which emphasizes the important role of the reader in establishing the 'meaning' of a text. Wolfgang Iser (1989) in his essay *The Play of the Text* points out that the author, the text, and the reader in literature are involved in an on-going relationship in literature that produces literary meaning.

Photography as a polysemic sign offers the possibility of a range of interpretations and if we apply the above observations we could say that a photograph leaves gaps for the spectator who contemplates what the photograph/photographer means. When the spectator comes across these gaps he tries to fill them using his own knowledge and

¹ Hall, Stuart ([1973] 1980): 'Encoding/decoding'. In Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Ed.): *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79* London: Hutchinson, pp. 136

² Shaun Moores, *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption*, Sage Publications, London, 1993, pp. 16

experience. Out of this collaboration between spectator, photograph and photographer meaning emerges.

As I am using aspects of Reader-Response theory in my methodological approach there are some clarifications that have to be made in order to address the research line. In Reader-Response theory and criticism there are distinct approaches regarding the idea of the reader as a hypothetical or a real entity; this research is concerned with the latter. Another issue is the contextualization of the reader and this can be studied in terms of cultural, psychological, gender and historical context. I am aware that readers do not merely exist within a single context but always inhabit several simultaneously, however, my approach focuses mainly on issues of cultural context.

Furthermore, there are different arguments about the whole purpose of the use of the concept of the reader. Peter J. Rabinowitz argues that there are:

“Critics who start with the text and the use of the concept of the reader as an analytic tool to perfect interpretive practices...critics who use the concept of the reader not to engage in the act of interpretation but rather to explain how interpretations come about ...[and] reader-critics who use the notion of the reader in yet a different way, neither to persuade nor to explain but to question interpretations.”³

The role of the reader in my research is twofold: on the one hand the reader creates interpretations (narratives) in response to specific landscape images that will be used to inform and complete the contents of the photographic part of the research (paradigmatic approach) and on the other hand the reader formulates the aesthetic values of the photographic images (syntagmatic approach).

Unlike the social sciences art practices rarely use surveys as a research method. The most well known attempt in the art field comes from Vitaly Komar and Alex Melamid and their project *Painting by Numbers* (1994). They conducted a survey in the U.S.A

³ Rabinowitz, P.J., *Reader-Response Theory and Criticism* article at John Hopkins University website, 1997, www.press.jhu.edu.

aiming to identify the preferences and taste of Americans in response to paintings. After studying the data from the survey the artists introduced their own version of *Painting by Numbers*; they created *America's Most Wanted* painting and *America's Least Wanted* painting. The project was then developed by researching in more than a dozen countries revealing the preferences for each country.

The examples above have influenced my research in its focus on how spectators react to landscape images and my belief that the findings can be used in order to produce a further understanding of transitional landscapes. Furthermore, exploring how different audiences react to the same image can demonstrate the complexity of the decoding process.



Vitaly Komar and Alex Melamid, *Painting by Numbers* (1994) project Denmark's *Most Wanted* and *Least Wanted* painting

Visual questionnaires as research method

The research employs visual questionnaires as a key method, which was developed after research into landscape, photography and narrativity, which have been presented earlier in the thesis, and research into spectatorship, which is addressed in this chapter. More specifically the photograph-based questionnaires were created after:

- Considering landscape as a visual tradition
- Considering photography's development in this area
- Considering how photography and art have prompted narrative readings
- Considering the types of subject that are dominant in the landscape genre
- Identifying the category of transitional landscape
- Questioning this category's capacity to provide narrative potential
- Identifying the spectator's significance and collaborate with the spectator in the practice part of the research

The survey approach was completed in three phases:

- a) Where the researcher has the *author function* by the creation of visual questionnaires while the respondent has the *reader function*.
- b) Where the respondent has the *author function* (their response to questionnaires) while the researcher has the *reader function*. (Analysis of data)
- c) Where both researcher and respondents collaborate in the *author function* for the creation of the photographic part of the thesis. This involved the researchers' analysis of the data concerning narrative and aesthetic preferences by the respondents and the researchers' production of the final photographs based on the actual stories generated by the respondents in response to the questionnaires.

Furthermore, the photograph-based questionnaires inform both the theory and the practice part of the research.

In the written part of the research, the questionnaires provide information about:

- The role of photographic characteristics in the narrative interpretation of landscape
- The relationship between text and image as narrative strategy in landscape
- The narrative characteristics of transitional landscapes
- The preconceptions and ideologies related to transitional spaces
- Narrative variations deriving from the gender of the respondents

The practice part of the research was informed by the questionnaires at two levels: a) Aesthetic (non-narrative data) and b) Content (narrative data)

The use of narratives as a significant source of information in the research justified not only because they are transcultural and transhistorical phenomenon, as Barthes reminds us, but also by their capacity to encapsulate a wide range of ideas and perceptions that makes them an invaluable source of information.

The advantages of questionnaires as a research method are: they provide a constant and unchanging material for the respondents, they enable a wide coverage of participants (three countries, ten target groups), and they are characterised by a low impact of the researcher on the completion of the questionnaire.

The disadvantages are mainly the low response rate, incomplete or poorly completed answers and that they are time consuming for the researcher.

Questionnaire I

The first questionnaire investigates how a range of target groups, having different relationships with landscape such as artists, scientists, farmers and weekenders, respond to questions about landscape images and narrativity. By the term *weekenders* I am referring to an urban population who relates to nature through leisure.

The aim of the first questionnaire is the creation of an information platform, a framework about landscape narrativity and audience response. The indications have partly informed and formulated the photographic part of the research. Furthermore, the results of the first questionnaire have been used in the creation of the second questionnaire, which specifically focused on transitional landscapes and explored their narrative capacity, the type of narratives of transitional landscapes and their potential cultural deviations.

The parameters of the first questionnaire were:

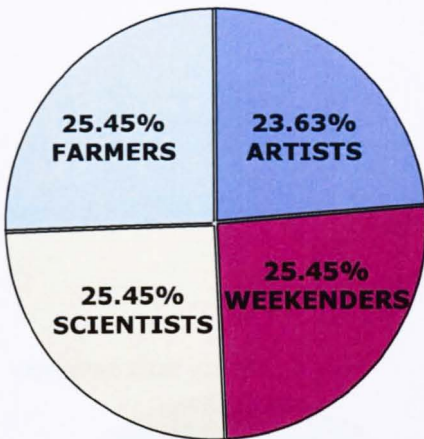
- The population sample: the survey embodies different target groups dealing with the concept of landscape such as farmers, visual artists, scientists (biologists, archaeologists, architects, agronomists, topographers), and *weekenders* (weekend naturalists, mountaineers, climbers, cyclists, etc.). The hypothesis to be tested by working with these groups was to indicate if and to what extent people with different relationships to landscape prefer related interpretations. Data about gender, place of origin, place of living and frequency of country visits of the target groups indicate the profile of target groups. Initially, there was another target group, children in the last two classes of primary school, but it was proved that the testing method (completing the questionnaire in the class) was inappropriate. The

teachers/distributors reported that they couldn't control the class during the testing and the results were affected by the talking of students. This was also suggested by an examination of the answers where there were many similarities in details suggesting plagiarism. After this it was decided that the children's group would be excluded from the survey. A one-to-one approach for children's group was considered for the questionnaire but it was too difficult to be achieved within the time frame of the thesis and additionally the inclusion of this target group is questionable, as it would involve additional theoretical tools, such as child psychology and pedagogy, which are beyond the capacity of this research.

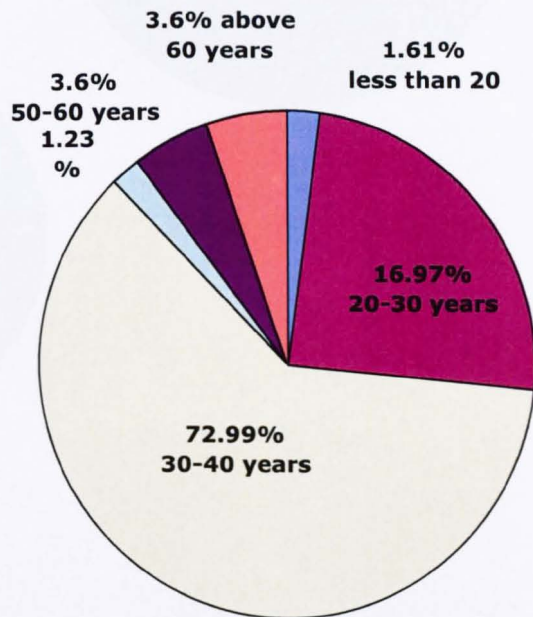
- The origin (urban and rural) of the population, in order to indicate if there is a substantial differentiation in the approach of each group. The survey took place in Greece, where almost all (except two) photographs were taken. The reason for this decision was to minimize the possibility of a tourist gaze in the imagery as the target groups were quite familiar with the type of landscape imagery.
- The construction of a visual questionnaire is complicated in terms of production, distribution, communication and subsequent data analysis. Every image was created by the researcher (except two) and chosen after careful consideration of the specific aim of each question. The use of text in four questions took account of the aims, the age and the educational background of groups in order to be clearly understandable by all groups.

Identity of respondents

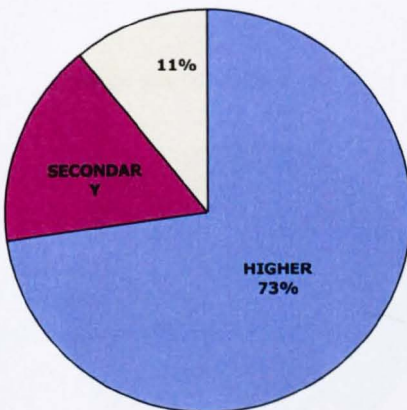
TARGET GROUPS



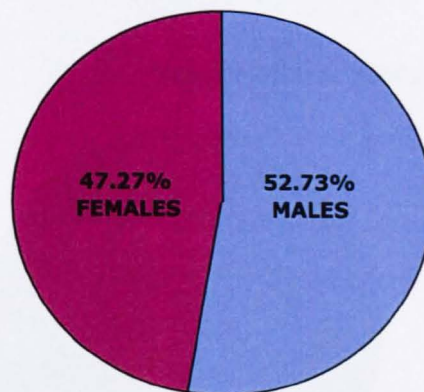
RESPONDENTS' AGE



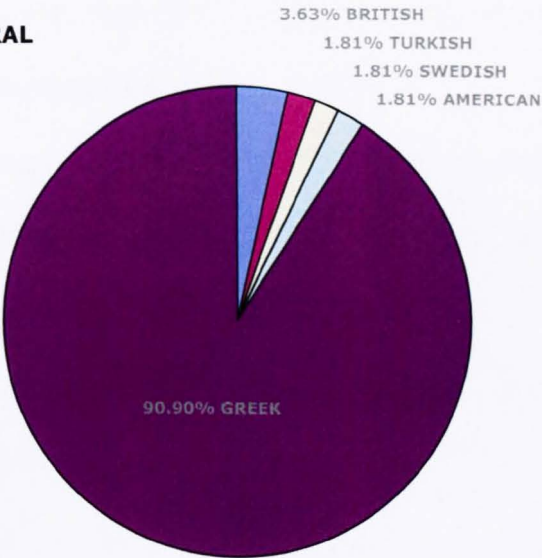
RESPONDENTS' EDUCATION



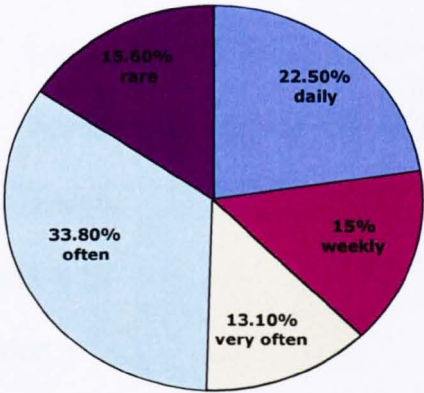
RESPONDENTS' GENDER



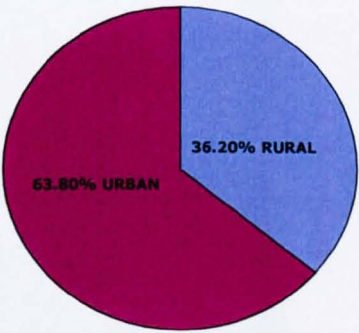
RESPONDENTS' CULTURAL



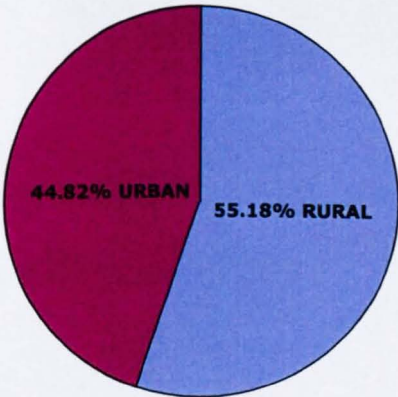
COUNTRYSIDE VISITS



RESPONDENTS' LIVING



RESPONDENTS' ORIGIN



The attendance of the participants was very high 98.21 % (55 out of 56) due to the *snowball* method of distribution of questionnaires to the respondents.

The analysis of the data applies aspects of content analysis (sampling strategies, setting categories, coding of data) and focuses on the use and repetition of specific words or phrases by the audience, thus creating categories based upon:

- Psychoanalytic approaches indicated by projection of desires, feelings, perceptions, recollections and experiences.
- Logical approaches addressed by reasonable explanations.
- Aesthetic approaches developed by the use of composition analysis of the images.

Analysis of QI

Question 1



“A horse is running around the field”

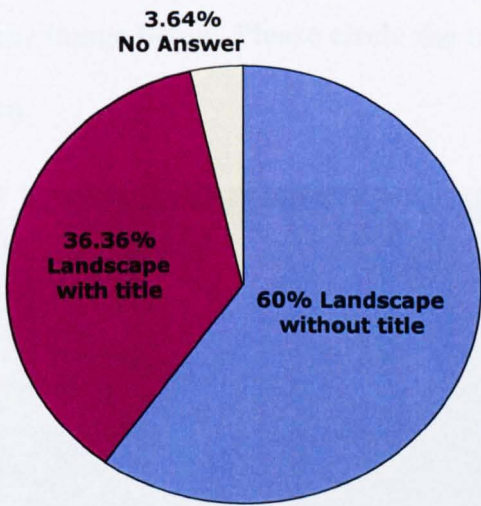
In which image do you think is it easier to imagine a story? Please circle the number under the image of your choice and please state why.

Aim: To indicate if and to what extent text affects the narrative potential of a landscape image.

The response to the first question indicated that the specific landscape image without a caption has more narrative potential compared to the same image with a caption.

The main argument by the respondents is that the caption narrows the *range of stories* that could arise. ‘The image with caption’ justifications argue that the caption works as: guide to a story, entrance into the picture, spark, clue to imagining if not a story, a more complicated image, explanation of the image, which creates a story by itself. One answer states ‘*the juxtaposition of image and caption [text] produces narrative*’, which indeed is one of the most popular narrative strategies in visual media to prompt a ‘preferred reading’.

Figure 1
Landscape caption for the purpose of the narrative of your vision
of what you see outside



Q1 CAPTION AND LANDSCAPE

The clear indication (60%) was that text has a restrictive role in the imagination of the audience even when the landscape has a very basic composition, lacking in signs or symbols. The inclusion of a caption invites you to make a reading that includes it, and that this can lead to a relation of either ‘anchorage’ or ‘relay’- the first restricting possible readings while the second extending it. On the other hand, 36.36% of the

respondents argue that the text can produce narrative only by its juxtaposition with the image, or may work as a spark, entrance or clue to think of a story.

More than half (twenty nine) of the responses provided a minimal justification '*Because of the title*' and '*The title restricts my imagination*' were the usual short answers. The responses can be categorized in justifications based upon:

- The aesthetic approach of the image (compositional analysis)- six cases
- Text & image relation –forty six cases
- Personal experiences- three cases
- Recollections from childhood- one case.

There were two unanswered cases both by weekenders.

Question 2

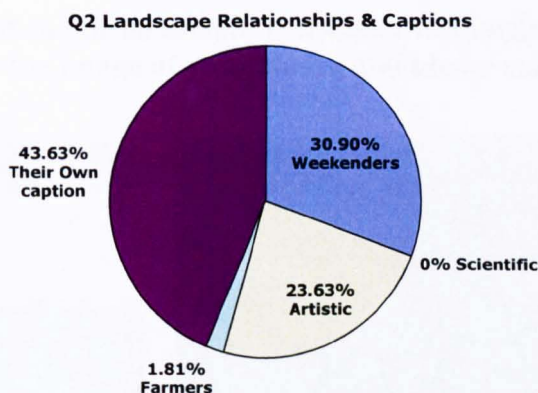
Choose one caption for the image below. Please circle the number of your choice or write your own caption.



1. It was a sunny weekend in the countryside
2. This species of tree is one of the most ancient in European Continent
3. The shadows of the trees are changing the colour of the grass
4. It is quite early to collect chestnuts
5. Write your own caption

Aim: to indicate if and to what extent people from different relationships to landscape prefer related interpretations. The researcher's expectation prior to receiving the answers was to find some confirmation of the aim. The questionnaire was distributed to four target groups: weekenders, scientists, artists and farmers.

The response shows that the audience preferred to create their own caption for the image rather than to choose one of the available four indicating the active role of the viewer. The sense of creativity and the notion of *game*, provided by this option, intrigued the respondents.



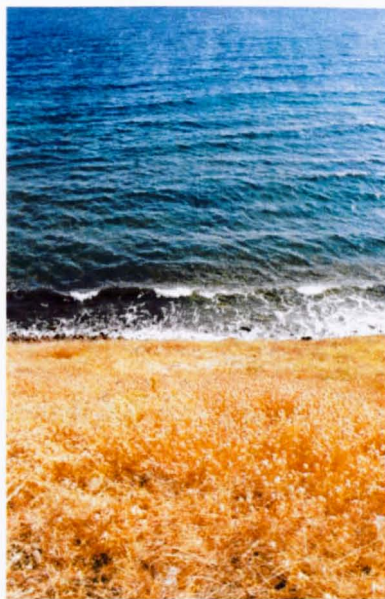
Examining the type of captions created by the audience we notice that most of them are versions of the *weekenders* caption, which refers to a short holiday. Combining it with the values of the image we see that the caption offers the easiest compatibility of image and text compared with the other three captions. The caption is a statement, though not obvious because it does not literally describes the image. Unlike all the other captions, which demand a certain kind of knowledge, the *weekenders* caption looks simple. It can be explained by recalling weekends in the countryside and it embodies the lightness of leisure. A confirmation of this result comes by closer examination of the caption created by the respondents. In three of them we notice the

repetition of the word *picnic* and also the words *paradise*, *escape*, *life*, *optimism*, *beautiful*, *light*.

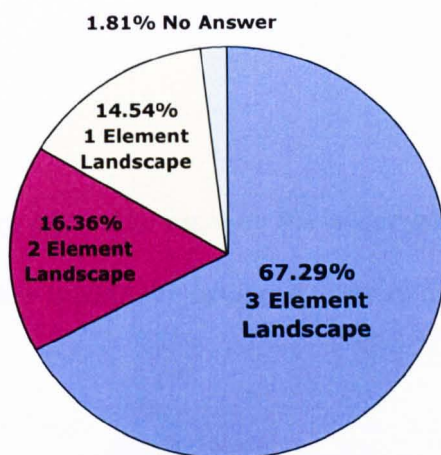
In two cases, in 'their own caption' category, we see a clear projection of feelings. The sentences *lonely trees* and *the quite boring Sunday morning* are quite revealing. 'Their own caption' category is the most popular choice in the group of weekenders. Scientific and agricultural captions were almost totally ignored by all groups indicating the complexity of the interpretive process especially when it involves both text and image.

Question 3

In which one of the three images is it easier to imagine a story? Please circle the number under the image of your choice and please state why below.



Aim: To investigate if the number of compositional elements is significant in the construction of narratives.



Q3 Landscape composition & Narrative

The results indicate a clear preference for the image with depth of field and a horizon. All groups gave their first choice in this image, which compositionally is the most classic of the three. The ‘depth of the field’ and the element of ‘horizon’ came up five and twelve times respectively, while the notion of breadth of space was in twenty one of the justifications for the three element landscape. The notion of wider space in the image came up in a total of thirty-eight cases. The justifications vary from aesthetic observations (*the composition is less formally balanced*), projection of desires (*I want to go to the sea*) and personal experiences (*snake story in farmers*).

A closer look at the number and justifications for the “one element landscape” reveals that: three artists select this landscape justifying their choices by the use of iconographical codes and examining the amount of *inherent narrative*, as one response mentions, in each landscape. The weekenders group chose the three element landscape, one scientist mentions the signs of activity in this landscape which helps him to begin a story and finally four farmers choose this landscape and justify their choices mainly by the use of personal experiences. The suggestive quality of the specific abstract landscape was argued by a respondent as *the image with the least amount of inherent narrative*.

Question 4

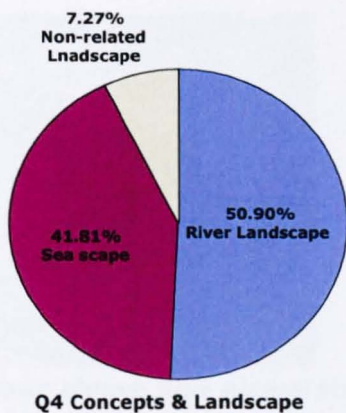
Match the phrase *They agreed to meet by the water* with one of the three images.

Please circle the number beside the image of your choice and please state why.



Aim: To examine how we perceive and value concepts in images.

The two major approaches were split between those which considered both text&image (thirty seven cases) and the second which gave more consideration to the image (seventeen cases).



The responses were shared between the river image, which was the first choice and the sea image. The deliberate ambiguity of the text was reflected in the response of the audience. The increased number of assumptions, compared with previous

questions underlines the subjective nature of answers. The justifications for the suitability of the text and chosen image vary from: recollections ranging from literature and film to childhood, to interpretations of the phrase and an analytic approach to both images and text. The audience focused on one of the main elements of each image giving their own interpretations. The respondents who prefer the non-related image used the phrase as destination and the image as passage. Answers such as *After the sand, I feel the water comes* indicates the above.

Question 5

Choose one of the three images for the above phrase. Please circle the number

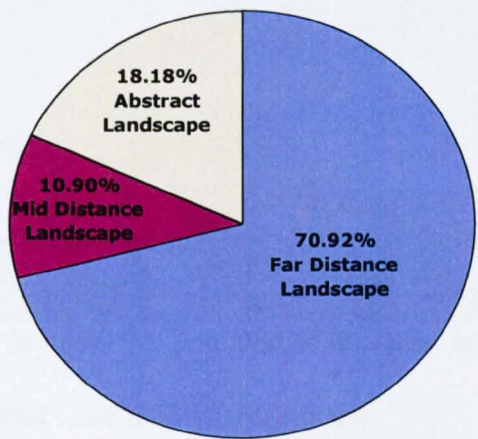


beside the image of your choice and please state why. The phrase is *she had to walk for many hours*.

Aim: To check the narrative potential of text on different representations of distance.

The classic landscape, compositionally, was a clear choice in response to the question. The results demonstrate, for the second time in the questionnaire [first in Q3], the importance of depth of field inside the image and its relation to narrative potential (nine cases). There are four analytic approaches to the justifications giving their perception for every image. The sign of *footprints* as a key word came up seven times

Q5 Landscape composition & Narrative



in the most abstract of the three landscapes. In the mid distance landscape the image was interpreted twice as passage and once as destination. Two answers were based on personal experience to justify their choice of the abstract landscape image.

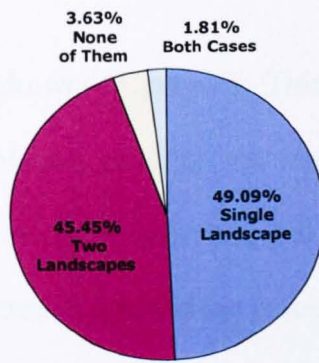
Question 6

In which case [i] or [ii] is it easier to imagine a story? Please circle your choice and please state why.



Aim: To examine the narrative potential of the same landscape in two versions: Case i as a single frame, and Case ii with two frames.

Case i, was the main preference. The fragmentation of one image in two frames, Case ii, was considered to be more complicated. The artists and scientists groups preferred Case ii and justified this by referring to cinematic and comic storytelling, the two frames as a narrative tool, the sense of continuity and the more obvious presence of the photographer. It's worth mentioning two answers: *None* of the two cases suggests any kind of narration and *Both* of them, suggest different narrations. It is also the third time in the questionnaire, [first in Q3 and second in Q5], that we have a preference for images with more depth of the field in terms of narrative potential.



Q6 Landscape fragmentation & Narrative

Question 7

In which of the four images is it easier to imagine a story? Please circle the number under the image of your choice and please state why.



Aim: To examine if and to what extent human presence in landscape affects the narrative potential.

The indication is that the audience preferred the image with non-direct human presence. The first image (TM) has too much human presence consisting of strong but

ambiguous signs (lying/drowned? people). This image was characterised by the respondents as *bizarre, blatant, peculiar, exciting, strange*, providing directions for the story and creating a series of questions; but it was the second choice, perhaps because it provided information that was too precise.

The second image (ONE) is simpler but with a strong human presence. The readings talk about ambiguity, personal projections or identification of the viewer with the figure, and different narrative frame compared to the first image.

The third image (ND) has indirect human evidence. Justifications mention travel as a tool for daydreaming and narration, connotations of endless roads, recollections of (road) movies, the road as symbol, and as a means to adventure. Between the four images, this particular image seems to keep a delicate balance in terms of signs, which partly may explain the highest preference by the audience.

The fourth image (A) is the most abstract of the four with no evidence of human presence and it could be argued that it is the most suggestive of all and invites personal projections. The results indicate that three of the groups preferred the forth image to the second and that overall it also scored higher than the second. The abstract image comes third after the ND and TM image.

The groups separately gave the following results:

Artists: 3TM, 5 ONE, 4 ND, 1 A

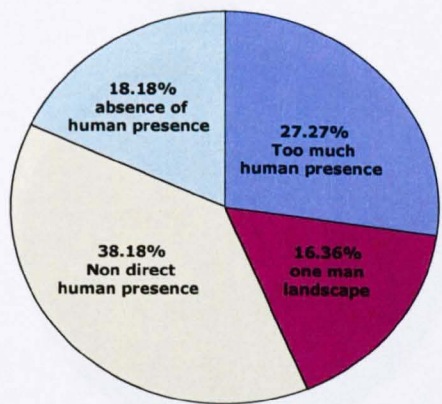
Weekenders: 5TM, 1 ONE, 5 ND, 3 A

Scientists: 2TM, 1 ONE, 8 ND, 3 A

Farmers: 5TM, 2 ONE, 4 ND, 3 A

From the above we notice that the art group prefers the image with a *single human presence*, the weekenders group is equally shared between the *too much human presence* image and the *non-direct human presence* image. The scientists group clearly prefers the *non-direct human presence* and finally, the farmers group chose the *too much human presence* image.

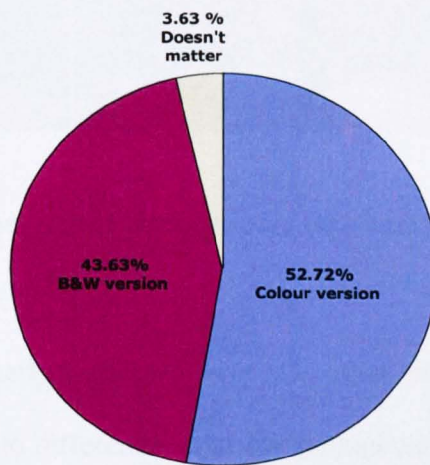
Q7 Human Presence & Landscape Narrative



The questions from the eighth to the eleventh explore to what extent photographic characteristics can be used as narrative tools.

Question 8

In which of the two images is it easier to imagine a story? Choose one image and please state why.



Q8 Colour and narrative

Aim: To explore to what extent the photographic characteristic of colour may advance narrative.

The overall result shows a preference for colour with black & white version is 9.09 % behind. Examining separately the results of each group we see that artists are the only group that gave a clear preference for the black & white version while weekenders are divided between the two choices. Scientists and farmers gave a clear preference for colour.

The proximity to human vision and the familiarity of colour images are given as justifications for choosing the colour version. The black & white version is justified

as abstract, suggestive, ambiguous, mysterious, dreamlike, recalling memories from comics, film noir movies, and childhood.

Question 9

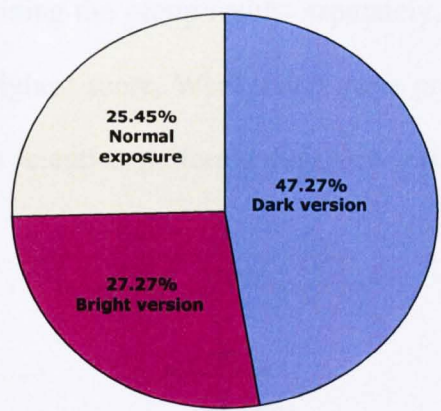
In which of the three images is it easier to imagine a story? Choose one image and please state why.



Aim: To explore to what extent photographic characteristic of exposure may be used as a narrative tool.

The dark image is clearly preferred over the other two. Second comes the bright image with just one vote difference from the normal image. In summary, 74.54 % of the audience suggested that technically *incorrect* landscape images have a greater narrative potential than the technically *correct*. The answers for the dark image mention the notion of mystery, darkness and its connotations as a narrative tool, while the ones for the bright image mention the dreamy quality caused by the exposure.

Q9 Exposure and Narrative



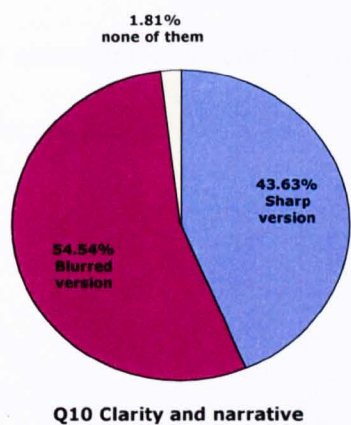
Question 10

In which of the two images is it easier to imagine a story? Choose one image and please state why.



Aim: To explore to what extent the photographic characteristic of blurriness advances narrative.

The overall results suggest that the blurred version encourages a narrative interpretation. Examining the group results separately, we notice that artists gave the blurred version its highest score. Weekenders gave preference to the blurred version and both farmers and scientists preferred the sharp version.



The justifications for the clear version mention its capacity to place the viewer inside the depicted space, and therefore its similarity to human vision.

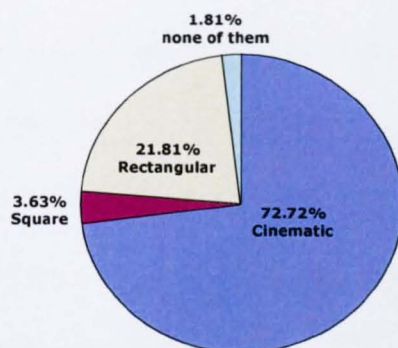
On the other hand justifications for the preference for the blurred version state that this image tells a story in itself: *the veil as a spark of imagining a story, recollection of a theatre curtain, science fiction movies and a spiders web*, its intriguing distance from reality, its dreamy atmosphere, the complex materiality of the image itself as narrative tool. More than half (54.54 %) of the audience response to this in this question also showed preference for a technically incorrect, in terms of clarity, image.

Question 11

In which of the three images is it easier to imagine a story? Choose one image and please state why.



Aim: To explore to what extent the characteristic of format may affect the narrative potential of the same landscape image.



Q11 Format and narrative

The cinematic format is the clear preference in every group with a high percentage (72.72 %) followed by the rectangular format (21.81%). Third comes the square frame (3.63%).

The justifications for the cinematic format focus on the width of the image as a more advanced format to introduce you to the possibility of space-time-action and consequently to a story, the inherent dynamic of the cinematic format and the

reference to cinema screen. It is worth mentioning one answer, which states '*We perceive time in linear terms, so an extremely elongated image, by visualizing time, carries a story more easily.*'

The rectangular format explanations speak about the popularity of this frame in photography.

The square format explanations focus on the slimness of the trees caused by the slight distortion of the image and its size.

There are also two answers that prefer neither of them, the first without giving a satisfactory explanation and the second saying that '*I could imagine a story in all images simply it would be different in each image*'.

Conclusions on Questionnaire I

This questionnaire consisted of two groups of questions

- a) Questions examining the image & text relation for the construction of narrative potential Q1, Q2, Q4, Q5
- b) Questions examining the narrative potential in image through:
 - Content and composition of photographic landscape images Q3, Q6, Q7
 - Photographic characteristics Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11

In this questionnaire the use of text ignores the common practice of captions which is to tell us, in words, exactly how the landscape *ought to be read* (Hall 1981). Instead they describe actions, which are not depicted and that could provide a clue for a story, in order to examine the audience response.

The active role of the audience was clearly indicated by their response to create their own caption (43.63%), although they had the option to choose between four captions, each related to a target group. (Q2)

The clear indication (60%) was that text has a restrictive role in the imagination of the audience even when the landscape has a very basic composition and is substantially lacking in precise signs or symbols. Although they were not obliged to consider textual information, respondents suggest that its presence limits them to start thinking of embodying some of the text's information in the story. On the other hand, 36.36% of the respondents argue that the text can produce narrative only by its juxtaposition with the image, or may work as a spark, entrance or clue to think of a story (Q1).

As the ambiguity of the text increases, it affects the amount of assumptions in the perception, evaluation and interpretation of text & image as indicated in question 4.

When the text describes an action, it was clearly indicated (70.90%) that the landscape with the wider space was the best host for the text (Q5)

The greater narrative capacity of landscapes embodying wider space is indicated in the responses to four questions (Q3, Q5, Q6, Q11) and underlines the importance of space and narrative. A single non-staged landscape photograph usually lacks the sense of time and narrative needs time in order to develop. It seems that landscape photographs with depth of space are more likely to have narrative potential than landscapes with no depth of field. It is as if space works as a substitute for time in such a landscape.

The familiarity of the classic composition of elements, by the term *classic* I refer to compositional rules concerning the amount of sky, earth and other elements of a landscape image, suggested it was the one with the greatest narrative capacity. The

chosen landscape, which was preferred by 49.09% of the respondents had the biggest depth of field between a mid distant and an abstract landscape. (Q3)

The fragmentation of the same landscape in two images is a little more complicated from the single image version (Q6). The single version [case i] was preferred by 49.09% and the fragmented version [case ii] was preferred by 45.45% of the respondents. It was argued that fragmentation creates a sense of time and therefore a greater narrative capacity. It could be said that we are more familiar, in terms of comprehension, with single images rather than with more complicated image constructions.

The respondents indicated that human presence is more effective, in terms of narrative potential, when it is non-direct rather than a dominant presence in a landscape image (Q7). The results showed that 38.18% preferred the non-direct human presence, and 18.18% chose the image with a total absence of man, 16.36% the image with a man and 27.27% preferred the image with strong evidence of human presence.

Technically *incorrect* images, accepting the normal exposure/clarity as *correct*, increase the narrative potential as indicated through questions 9 and 10.

In question 9, the percentages are 47.27% for the dark version, 27.27% for the bright version (a summary of 74.54% for the *incorrect* versions) and only a 25.45% preferred the normal exposure version of the image. Under and over exposed versions of the same landscape were preferred to the normal exposure version.

In question 10 the blurred version of the same landscape was considered to have a greater narrative capacity than the sharp version, with 54.54% of the respondents choose the blurred version and 43.63% preferred the normal (in terms of clarity) version of the same image.

The colour version was preferred to the black & white version of the same landscape, with 52.72% and 43.63% accordingly. The proximity to natural vision, the greater familiarity of colour images compared to black & white images are the explanations for preferring the colour version from the respondents, who also argue that black & white images are more abstract and recall specific areas of imagery.

The massive preference (72.72%) for the cinematic format version among the rectangular (21.81%) and the square (3.63%) format versions of the same landscape brings up for the fourth time in this questionnaire the issue of the wider image. The inherent dynamic of the cinematic format, which not only recalls the cinema screen but also other forms which have been used to tell stories such as history painting, and tapestries may explain the result. It could be argued that a wide format might encourage interpellation, the process by which we are *called* by a sign.

Concluding with the results according to the respondents of the first questionnaire, it could be said that in order for a landscape image to have narrative potential it must exhibit particular qualities. An analysis of the answers suggest that these are:

- A wide image, both in terms of depth and breadth of field
- A single image rather than multiple image compositions
- Classic compositional rules
- Non-direct human presence
- Absence of textual information
- Technically incorrect image

In the second questionnaire, the results of this analysis will be tested again. Furthermore, the second questionnaire will focus on a particular type of landscape, the transitional landscape, which is the main focus of the research on landscape in this thesis, which is concerned with identifying the kind of narratives that invite.

In order to confirm the results the first questionnaire was completed for a second time by 20 of the initial 55 respondents one year after the original results revealing a differentiation from the previous answers primarily in questions involving text and image. The solely visual questions had almost the same response (94%) while the percentage in the text and image questions drops to 66%; this suggests that there is an increased complexity by the combined use of two communicating systems.

A second analytic approach was attempted aiming to detect if patterns emerged from the *same-choice* groups. While the first analytic approach focused mainly on the analysis of qualitative data, this approach examines exclusively what the quantitative data might reveal. The groups were different each time however the analysis explored the profile of each group hoping to reveal patterns in preference. The profile of each group was created by the acceptance that some choices in the questions are considered more complicated than others. The thorough examination of the *behaviour* of the group to all the other questions seeks to indicate if there are any patterns concerning the reaction to landscape images and texts. The data display the number of people from four target groups, the number of male and female in each group and the choices that were given to all the other questions by this group. The second analytic approach did not reveal any patterns but it gave me the chance to re-examine the quantitative data from another perspective.

Questionnaire II

The second questionnaire aims to formulate the photographic part of the research by:

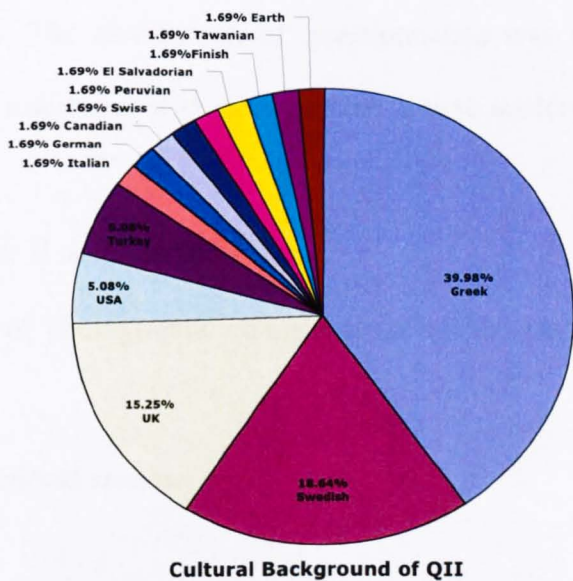
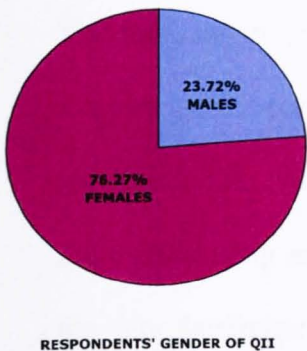
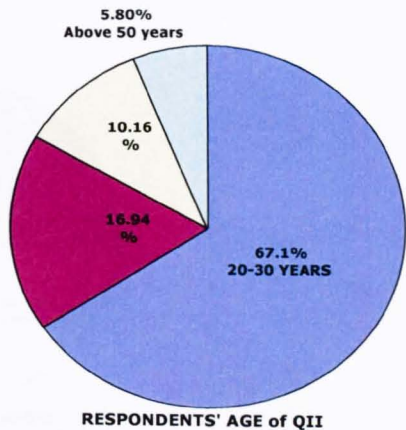
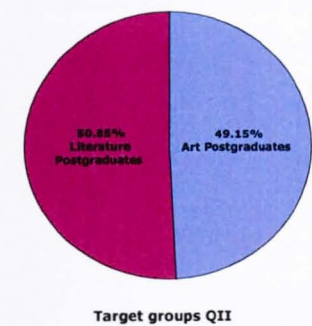
- Cross-examining the findings of the first questionnaire.
- Indicating the range of narratives in four different types of landscape, in terms of aesthetics.
- Detecting the range of preconceptions and ideologies related to transitional spaces.
- Identifying which part(s) or value(s) of the chosen transitional landscapes trigger the written narrative.

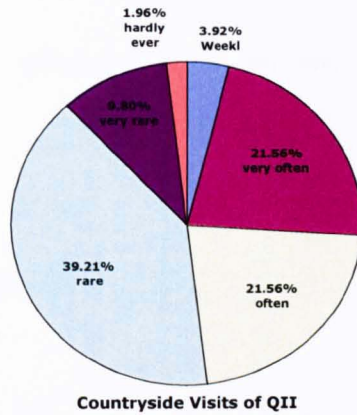
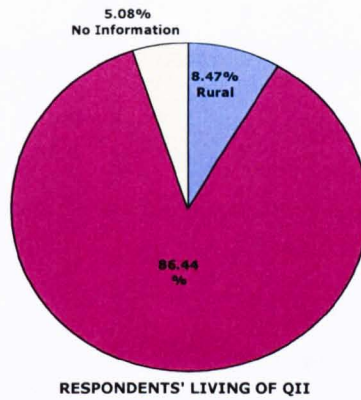
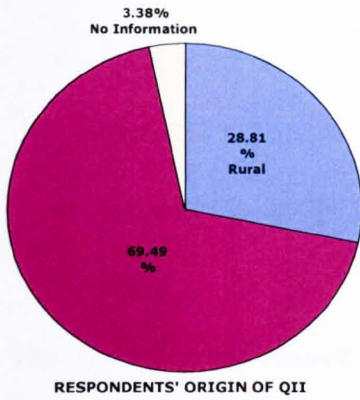
The characteristics of the second questionnaire are:

- *The population sample.* The questionnaire II was distributed in three different countries, Greece, United Kingdom and Sweden and in two target groups in each country. The first target group included postgraduate art students, who theoretically are more familiar with the notion of landscape imagery, and the second target group included postgraduate literature students, who supposedly are more familiar with the notion of narrative text. The three countries have been selected for their role in landscape photography. As the research focuses on western landscape, the selected countries create an abstract frame of the Western world creating geographically a European triangle having Sweden in the northern corner, United Kingdom in the western corner and Greece in the southern corner of Europe. Furthermore, Sweden and Greece play satellite roles in the history of Western landscape iconography while the United Kingdom holds a dominant role in the history of landscape imagery.
- *The origin of target groups.* UK is considered as one of the largest educational centres worldwide with numerous universities, which have students with

multicultural backgrounds providing a more pluralistic target group compared to Sweden and Greece as is indicated by the identity of the respondents below.

Identity of respondents





The response to Questionnaire II was 73.75% (59 out of 80 questionnaires were returned with complete answers), which compared to the Questionnaire I attendance rate (98.21%) was lower. However, the second questionnaire was far more demanding as each respondent was asked to write a story based on one of the four landscape photographs. The distribution of questionnaires was made through personal contact of the researcher with postgraduate course leaders and postgraduate students.

The data collected from Questionnaire II is concerned with:

- Indications about the affect of photographic characteristics on the narrative potential of landscape.
- Narratives in relation to transitional spaces

- Data about the contained part(s)-value(s) of the transitional landscapes that triggered the above narratives.
- Information about the kind of narratives that different types of landscape imply.

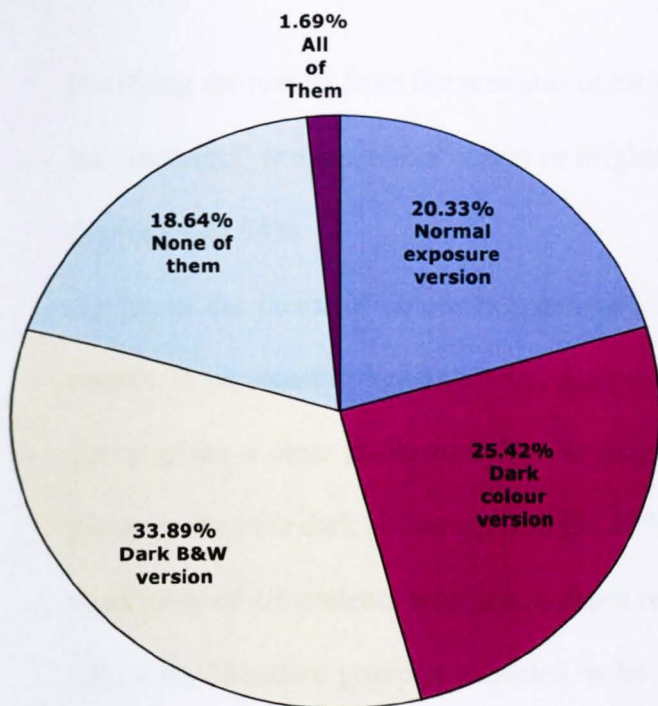
The second questionnaire contains five questions. The first two questions aim to confirm the findings of the first questionnaire in terms of photographic characteristics while the other three questions focus on the narrative potential of transitional landscapes

Analysis of Questionnaire II

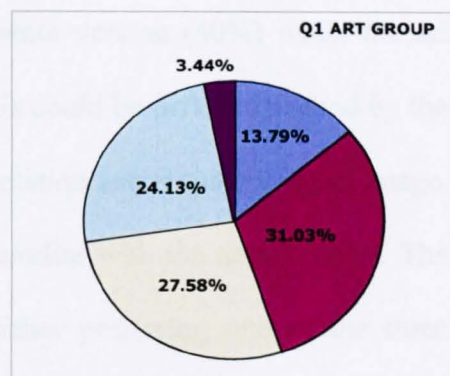
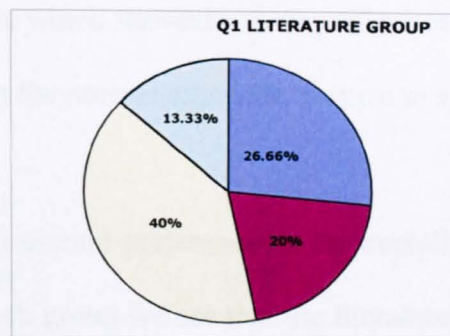
Question 1

Do any of the above versions of the same landscape image prompt you to imagine a story? If so, with which one is it easier and please state why. What kind of story could it be? If not, what do you think is missing in order to prompt a potential narrative?





Colour & Exposure and Narrative Overall



The first question aims to indicate the affect of colour and exposure on the narrative potential of a landscape image in three versions - normal exposure, underexposed, therefore darker and the third version underexposed and black & white- of a colour landscape photograph. The question functions as a cross-examination of the findings of the first questionnaire those were ambiguous concerning the role of colour and exposure of a landscape photograph.

According to the quantitative data of the overall results the dark black & white version prompts a narrative reading in 33.89% of the respondents, rather than the dark colour version which comes second with 25.42% while the *normal exposure* version comes third with 20.33%. Furthermore, 18.64% answer that none of the three versions prompts them to write a story contrary to 1.69%, which argue that all of the versions prompts them to write a story. It is quite suggestive that more than half, 59.31%, of the respondents showed a preference for the darker versions of the same landscape photograph concerning narrative potential compared with the normal exposure,

justifying the results from the previous questionnaire which showed a clear preference for 'incorrect' images, either darker or brighter than the normal exposure, images to a degree of 74.54%.

As far as the factor of colour is concerned, this is second preference in the overall results. If we examine separately the answers of each group we see that the literature group gives a clear preference for the black & white version (40%) while the art group prefers the dark colour version (31.03%). This could be partly explained by the familiarity of art students with issues about representation and the decoding of image, whilst the literature group is expected to be less familiar with the above issues. The literature group gives four choices of answers either preferring one of the three versions or choosing the *None of them* answer. On the contrary the art group gives one more choice (five in total) with the choice of *All of them*.

Furthermore, the literature group prefers as second choice the normal exposure version indicating as less important the parameter of exposure whereas the factor of colour, or the absence of colour to be more precise, appears more crucial for the narrative potential of the landscape photograph. The art group on the other hand prefers the dark colour version as the first choice (31.03%) and second comes the dark B&W version (27.58%). Third choice is the *None of them* answer with 24.13% and forth comes the normal exposure version with 13.79%. The *All of them* choice comes as the last preference with 3.44%.

The very close result between the choices of *Normal* exposure version and *None of them* at the overall results seems to indicate, how the familiarity of correct colour images restrains their narrative potential.

The answers to the second part of the question are the justifications of the respondents' choice. The examination of answers demonstrates tendencies which reveal preconceptions about landscape image and narratives.

Those who choose the black & white version seem to be encouraged by the lack of colour, which helps them to think of stories taking place in the past. The black & white quality of the image creates a necessary distance from the present, which is considered by some respondents as hostile for narratives. Judging from the twenty-two justifications we may say that the respondents regard the past as narratively fertile, and that this is better presented by the black & white version of the landscape photograph. Furthermore, the type of stories proposed for the black & white version are pessimistic regarding war, post-war, apocalyptic and nuclear scenarios – these were suggested five times.

Another tendency has to do with the characteristic of darkness (overexposed image) in the used landscape image. There were many justifications that mention that darkness suggests by a story as referring to an existing stereotypic use of darkness in literature and movies. There are eleven answers concerning the type of stories which mention mystery, dramatic, thriller, and sinister stories due to the darkness of the landscape.

Finally, the lack of human presence, the lack of a protagonist and more generally the lack of signs of action appears ten times as justification for the *None of them* choice and along with the choice of *All of them* reveal the importance of the imaginative capacity of the respondents.

Question 2

Do any of the four landscape images prompt you to imagine a story? If so, in which one is it easier and please state why. What kind of story could it be?

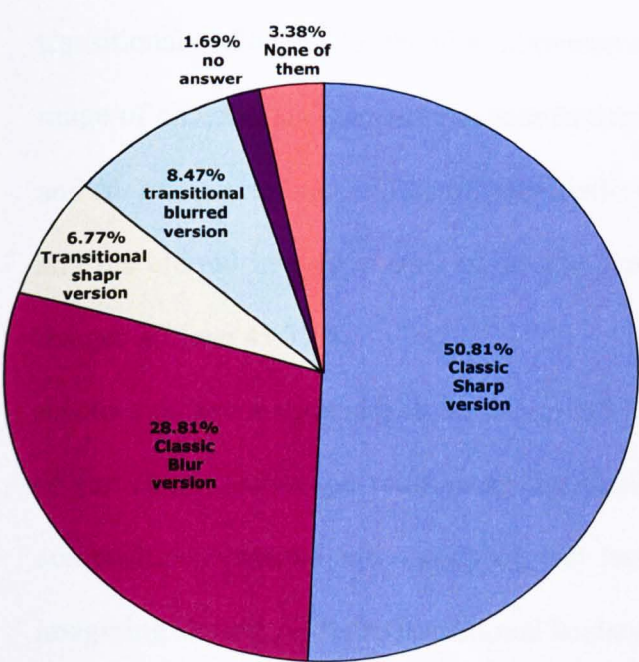


The aim of this question is threefold: first to indicate how the photographic characteristic of sharpness of a landscape image affects its narrative potential; secondly to introduce the respondents to transitional landscapes and finally to point towards which type of landscape is more likely to invite narratives.

The overall results demonstrate that the sharp classic landscape has the greatest potential for narratives (50.84%) with second the blurred version of the classic landscape (28.81%). Third comes the blurred version of the transitional landscape (8.47%) followed by the sharp version with 6.77%. Finally there are two more responses (3.38%) for the choice *None of them* and 1.69% for *No answer*.

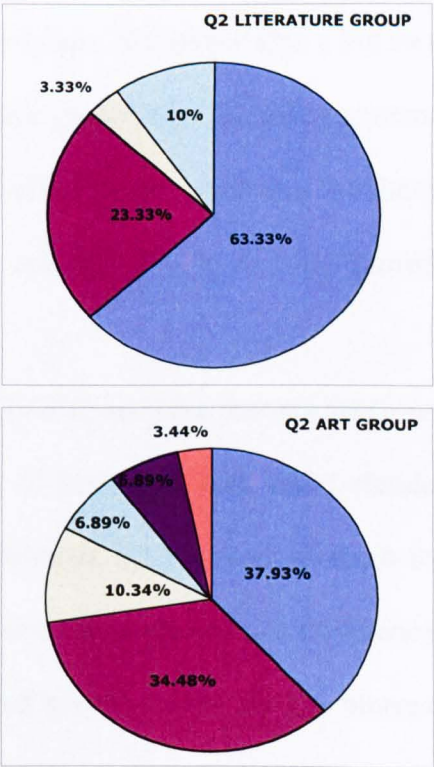
The sharp versions of the landscapes images were preferred by 57.61% while the blurred ones gather 37.28% indicating that sharp images encourage narratives more than blurred ones; this was justified by the role of details as a departure point for a story as indicated by the respondents. The preference for the blurry landscapes is explained by the dreamy quality of the images, where the lack of description gives more free space to imagine stories.

The clear preference for the classic landscape both in sharp and blurred versions (79.65%) demonstrates the need of the respondents to use the most familiar landscape image as a narrative platform while the transitional landscape versions were chosen by only 15.24%. It is also interesting that more people chose the blurred transitional



Clarity-Bluriness and Narrative overall

landscape over the sharp one indicating possibly that the more naturalistic the transitional image is, the more hostile it is to narratives than its blurred version.



The individual examination of each target group shows that the literature group keeps the order of overall results with a 63.33% preference for sharp classic landscape while the blurred version of the same image comes second with 23.33% which means that they show a massive preference for the classic landscape (86.66%) compared to 13.33% for the versions of transitional landscape. Separately the transitional landscape versions are 10% for the blurred and the 3.33% for the sharp version indicating that the details of the transitional landscape are hostile to imagining a story. On the contrary the other target group indicates a preference for the sharp transitional landscape with 10.34% and giving 6.89% for the blurred version.

The artists target group differentiates from the order of the overall result and the literature group results in the third and forth position. They give 37.93% for the sharp classic landscape, 34.48% for the blurred version of classic, 10.34% for the sharp transitional and 6.89% for the blurred transitional landscape. We notice also a broader range of choices (six compared to four in the literature group) with the *None of them* and *No answer* replies. Another differentiation is the close distance between the sharp and the blurred images overall as the sharp images achieve 48.27% and the blurred images achieve 41.37%.

Another differentiation also is the close difference (3.45%) between the two versions of the classic landscape reinforcing the familiarity of landscape with more classic composition elements and signifying that lack of detail is not a severe obstacle to imagining stories. As far as transitional landscape is concerned we notice a preference for the sharp transitional landscape with 10.34% and giving 6.89% for the blurred version.

The examination of qualitative data reveals that the classic sharp landscape has been preferred due to the clarity of the image, which works as a departure point for stories.

Furthermore, the compositional elements such as the light, the long distance view, the house on the river bench and the mountains encourage imagination to travel through the image and project ideal scenes such as father and son fishing on the river bench and Mark Twainian adventure journeys. The tranquillity and the simplicity of the landscape functions as an antidote for the everyday stress as mentioned by one respondent reminding us of Elizabeth Wells's comment on the role of landscape as antidote in an industrial era. The types of stories referred to here concern travelling, adventures and holidays.

The justifications for choosing the blurred 'classic' landscape mention the dreamy quality of the image, which creates a transcendental dimension recalling memories from the past and childhood stories. The blur seems appealing to the imagination as many respondents mentioned it, but the lack of a human element discourages narratives. Photographic characteristics such as the size, the frame and the colour balance help the viewers to imagine fairytales and adventure stories at the blurred 'classic' landscape.

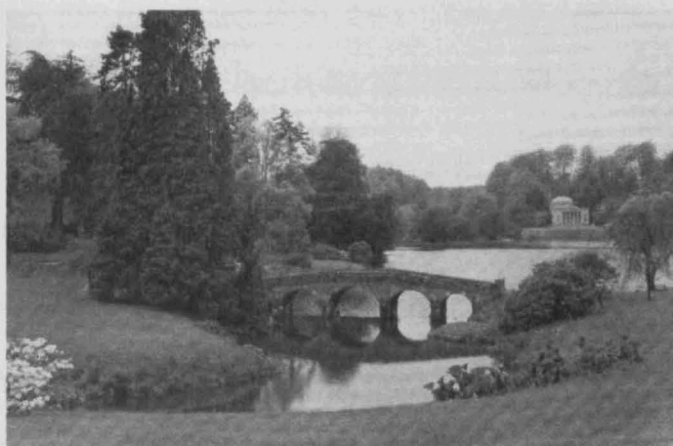
As far as the sharp transitional landscape is concerned we notice that the building works as a departure point either for childhood stories or stories about tourist vacations. The lack of a human element discourages narratives as indicated previously. However, one respondent suggests that this landscape could host a story about someone who either leaves or arrives in a town; this is quite indicative of the transitional landscapes, as they are located geographically at the fringes of cities and function as a welcome or farewell zone of the city.

Although the blurred version of the transitional landscape lacks iconographic clichés associated with violence, respondents strangely enough recall violent stories. They mention that the image recalls crime scenes, sinister events and terror stories of

abundance and desolation, dramas with a psychopath as protagonist and one romantic story with an unhappy end. Another respondent mentions that there is a realistic ugliness in the image that has a voyeuristic nature. It is quite difficult to explain these kinds of responses to the specific image, as its sharp version does not show any sign of violence or any sign that could be associated with violence in the image. In addition there are no similar types of stories in the sharp version which could explain the reaction of respondents to the blurred version. Perhaps the above comments reflect the ideas and prejudice that people have for these kinds of spaces, as we will see also at the findings of the fourth question, where the influence of literature and movies is a factor. It could also be that we associate uncertainty/ambiguity – even at the level of reading an image – with negative experiences; it is dangerous not to know, not to see.

Question 3

If we assume that a landscape photograph may have narrative implications what kind of narrative does each of the above type of landscape imply?



The examination of answers for the above picturesque landscape B&W photograph reveals that many (18) responses talk about romance/love stories, Jane Austin's name

appears three times, in response to the above landscape. All the romantic stories suggested by the respondents are located in the past starting from the Middle Ages to 17th, 18th, 19th centuries. There are two stories with no indication of time and another one that takes place in the present (war story in Kosovo). All of the stories are situated in Europe and more precisely in England (8 times) and France (2) along with the contemporary war-story in Kosovo. One comment mentions that the image reminds him Hiroshima before the bomb fell.

The answers have several kinds of approaches:

1) The analytic approaches (3) evaluate the visual information of the image trying to situate it in time and in terms of function, rather than responding to the type of narrative the landscape implies.

2) The critical approaches (4) comment on ownership and the relations of power that the image entails such as: the *aristocratic family* who owns the place and the *over-worked and under-paid staff* or the *invisible labourers who keep the gardens pristine*.

Another comment focuses on British films based on historical novels where happy stories develop with *no reality check in them whatsoever*. The last critical approach talks about people who live in this place with *rather more money than sense* and that the place works as a *haven from the reality of war, poverty and conflict of the outside world*.

3) There are also two observations talking about the relation of man and nature. The characters of the stories are couples in love or aristocratic families having parties.

It seems that the B&W quality of the image and the type of building are the departure points for the time and the place of the narratives situated in the past and in Europe.

Furthermore the B&W quality creates comments such as *movie set* and *early days of cinema*.



The narratives about the above romantic landscape colour painting are located in rural England, United States during the civil war and in the Tuscan Hills in Italy according to the replies. The time frame is between the 18th and 19th century and in one case in the 1950s or 1960s. The types of narratives are mainly pastoral/bucolic (22 times) apparently because of the human presence in the painting. There are also (5) suggestions for romantic/love stories along with religious, historical narratives. There are two reports suggesting tragic events but with no further explanations.

The characters of the narratives are farmers, travellers and shepherds. Another interpretation is the recalling of Colonialism and Feudalism mentioned by two respondents with no other information apart from the naming of the terms, which indicates the awareness of some viewers about the broader frame of landscape imagery and history.

There are also aesthetic approaches naming either painters like Gainsborough and Constable, landscape terms such as the sublime or observations on painting and museums. Two critical approaches address issues like the culture of the people of urban areas at 19th century and their taste in paintings like these. The second critical approach points out that it *needs a lots of hard labour to maintain the land* and the term *art-historical-man*. Finally we have four *No answer* choices compared to 3 in the previous landscape.



The sublime type of landscape (figure above), which is a black & white photograph, recalls a range of narratives from adventure, documentary and mystery narratives to romantic, family and holiday journeys. Furthermore, the responses talk about exploration, detective, geological, western and Icelandic sagas to mythological dragons, brave knights and princesses. One respondent admits that the black & white *quality gives me reality drama associations* and another associates this picture with Berghof, Hitlers' residence in the Bavarian Alps.

The location was addressed through the depiction of a rich forest and there are several countries such as Canada, USA, British Colombia, Scandinavia, Germany, Scotland, Greece mentioned by the respondents.

The time frame according to the responses is either before the invention of photography, or in 19th century and 20th century.

As far as the characters of the narratives are concerned, we have mountaineers, holidaymakers, fugitives, explorers, gold diggers, miners weirdos and even a *mad woman (heartbroken)*.

Two analytic approaches make photographic observations such as *the static quality of photography is confronted with the extremity of the experience that has been happened earlier* and also that *it is the parallel precision of the objects in the*

photograph, rather than the dark colour, that make it uninviting-almost like forbidden forest. There is also a comment about *ownership* and *the ousting of the natives* with no further criticism about the above notions.

A noticeable difference from the previous landscapes is the ecological concern, which arises in 7 cases talking about the effects on the environment by the civilization and reminding us about the use of landscape photography for ecological awareness during the last decades of the 20th century.



The transitional landscape (figure above) responses focus on ecological concerns (19 times) and discuss intervention in nature, poverty, urban development and the ruin of the countryside. The types of narratives are documentary, agriculture (4 times), police and social stories, historic urban and dark tales. The departure points for the narratives are the tyre track prints on the dry ground and the openness of the space. Someone connects the landscape image with Jack Kerouac's beatnik novel *On the Road* indicating associations between transitional landscapes and wasteland.

All of the stories are situated in the present and the locations are Greece, USA, Cyprus and Sweden.

The characters of the narratives are children (5 times), young gangs, lorry drivers, young lovers, farmers and a wealthy American couple appearing as landowners.

It is remarkable to examine the broad range of functions of transitional space: work related, lorry park space, children's playground, lovers and young gangs haven at night, new drivers test drive space, farmers field, urban developers and landowners property.

Finally, we can acknowledge the difficulty of some respondents to think of a narrative for this space, as we have one case where the respondent answered in all the other landscape types except the transitional. Two others argue that they can't think of a narrative for this type of landscape. Apart from the above there are also three *No answers*.

Question 4 and Question 5 play a key role in the research, as the response to these questions will formulate in two ways the photographic part of the research. The analysis of the narratives will inform the photographic part of the research plus the actual narratives themselves will be a part of the photographic project as it is explained in chapter 5. Therefore, Question 4 and Question 5 will be presented separately in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE II

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Chapter Four

The contents of this chapter focus exclusively on Question 4 and Question 5, which play a key role in the research due to the narrative form of the responses. The responses to these questions formulate in two ways the photographic part of the research. The analysis of the narratives informs the photographic part of the research and also the actual narratives themselves are part of the photographic project in the form of wordscapes.

The analysis of narratives of this question was realized by the combined use of Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic narrative analysis as I am interested in both what happens in the respondents' narratives as much in what those narratives mean to the readers. The above analytic path informed me of the narrative potential of transitional landscapes and it also shaped the visual part of the research in two ways: by demonstrating visually the findings of questionnaires and forming part of the content of the photographs by the presence of the actual narratives.

In order to realize the narrative analysis I made Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic tables, demonstrating in detail the exact information, appendix IIIc (pages 351-363) and appendix IIId (pages 364-376) accordingly. For the convenience of the reader I begin with an overall discussion of each aspect of Syntagmatic & Paradigmatic narrative analysis utilized by the research followed by the summary of the results and the conclusions of the survey.

The substantial discussion of the findings of question 4 is included in appendix IIIe (pages 377-411) if the reader wishes to investigate the findings of each transitional landscape image of this question. The original data of Questionnaire II can be found in appendix IIIb (pages 282-350).

Question 4: Please choose one of the four landscapes and write a brief story based upon it.

1



2



3

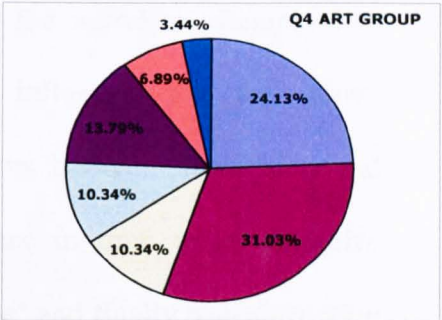
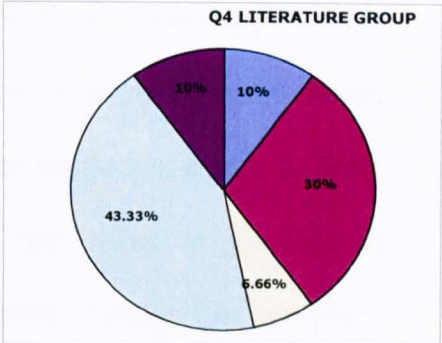
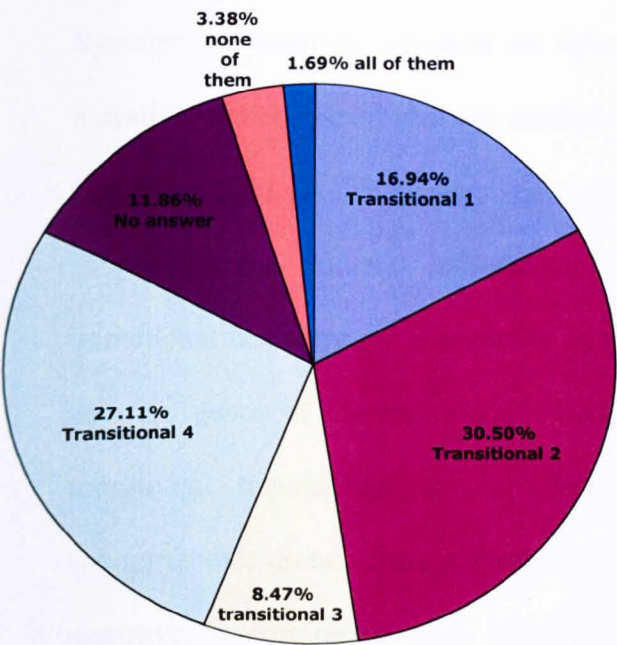


4

The **overall results** demonstrate that landscapes 2 and 4 hold the first and second preference with 30.5% and 27.11% respectively and landscapes 1 and 3 come third and fifth with 16.94% and 8.47% respectively. Fourth comes the *No answer* choice with 11.86%, whereas 3.38% respond *None of them* and 1.69% say *All of them*.

Separately none of the groups keep the above order. The **literature group** shows a massive interest in landscape 4 with 43.33%, second comes landscape 2 with 30% equally third are landscape 1 with *No answer* and last comes landscape 3 with 6.66%.

The **art group** shows a clear preference to landscape 2 with 31.03% second is landscape 1 with 24.13% third comes the *No answer* choice and equally fourth are landscapes 3 & 4 with 10.34%. Furthermore, 6.89% say *None of them* along with



Transitional landscapes narrative potential

3.44% which argues *All of them*. Once again as in all previous questions the art group demonstrates a broader range of responses compared to the Literature group. The answers *None of them* and *All of them* were added to the list of answers and were indicated only by art students signifying a bigger pluralism in their range of potential answers for this question.

The intentionally different transitional landscapes of this question affect to a certain extent the perception of each image. Landscape 1 has a point of view directed from transitional to urban space and seems closer to an urban zone, whereas in landscape 2 the view is from transitional to rural space. In landscape 3 the view is again from transitional to urban space but the emptiness of the foreground dominates the space,

and finally landscape 4 seems closer to a rural zone as it is filled with vegetation and the point of view is directed across transitional space.

Syntagmatic analysis

Syntagmatic analysis considers on how the narratives work, what happens in a narrative, the characters that are created and the structure of the narratives. In crude terms we might say that syntagmatic analysis reveals what happens in a text. In order to provide the essential information for this thesis (the narrative potential of transitional landscapes) I concentrate on characters, the kind of events that take place and the genre of the narratives. Finally I categorise the narrative attempts into narratives, transformations and descriptions. The influence for the above categorization comes from Christian Metz's distinctions between description and narrative. According to Metz '*description* creates space in time while *narrative* invents one time scheme in terms of another time scheme' and finally *transformation* deals with changes in the actual space.¹

The aspects of Syntagmatic analysis that the analysis will investigate are:

- a) Characters
- b) Kind of events
- c) Genre of the narrative attempts

Paradigmatic analysis

Paradigmatic analysis considers pre-existing sets of signifiers, which underlie the obvious content of texts, and helps us to define the importance of specific items in a

¹ Metz, C., *Film Language*, (ed.) Oxford University Press, New York, 1974, pp.123

text. It could be said that paradigmatic analysis deals with what the text means to the reader. My analysis concentrates on the respondents approach examining: a) the reaction (positive/negative) as indicated through the narratives and b) the role of the respondent either as observer or as narrator. By the term 'negative' I mean a pessimistic reaction by the respondents as indicated in their narratives, whereas the term 'positive' means an optimistic reaction. Additionally by the term observer I mean those respondents whose narrative attempts are observations about the image/space whereas narrators attempts contain a story.

Another point of this analysis is the (visual) trigger that made the respondents to think of specific narratives and finally the preconceptions and ideas that the narrative attempts reveal about transitional landscapes/spaces. These topics provide information related to how the images are perceived and interpreted by the respondents and there are two types of data: pragmatic (visual triggers) and conceptual (projections, ideas).

Summarising the aspects of the paradigmatic analysis applied are:

d) The respondents approach in terms of:

- Reaction (negative/positive)
- Role (observer or narrator)

e) The visual triggers of the narratives

f) The ideas related to transitional landscapes/ spaces

I am aware of the subjective nature of the above categorization process. My research methodology does not strive for sociological claims as it is directed to identify the specific type of landscape, indicate the narrative potential of transitional landscapes through visual questionnaires and demonstrate how this methodological approach can function as a creative tool in an art project.

Overview of Question 4

Syntagmatic narrative analysis

Overview of characters

There is a wide variety of 'characters' in the narrative attempts ranging from objects (cars), animals (insects) and eventually certain groups of people from gypsies, old people, young children and teenagers to outlaws, kidnappers, detectives, cops, waitresses, snipers, illegal couples, photojournalists, ragmen and deprived families in a protagonist role. All of the above characters reveal social stereotypes about the kind of population that could be involved with transitional spaces and reflect certain preconceptions and ideas related to transitional spaces studied in the paradigmatic narrative analysis.

The responses that were generally lacking characters were either descriptions or transformations. More precisely out of the 7 *No characters* responses 5 are transformations and 2 are descriptions. Transformations dealt with changes in the actual space whereas descriptions included characters during the account of transitional spaces.

Overview of events

An overview in this category demonstrates lack of events in the descriptions and the transformations provided by the respondents. On the contrary the narratives host certain types of events such as violent crimes, illegal transactions, political demonstrations, urban development and events from the everyday routines of families or single people living close to transitional spaces. Once again the range of the above

events reflect certain ideas about transitional spaces influenced by literature and cinema.

Overview of narrative genres

As the triggers of the narratives are visual images the narratives were heavily influenced mainly by cinema while the genres range from road movies and crime films to social and childhood dramas. Many of the narratives are difficult to place in just one genre therefore I mention the most related genres for the specific narrative.

The list below shows the range of genres of the provided narratives.

Sixteen (29.62%) narratives can be categorized in what we might call *social drama* genre presenting complex social phenomena and their implications such as urban expansion, unemployment, violence, children exploitation and racism.

Eleven (20.37%) narratives can be categorized as *portraits* of characters, families and children.

Seven narratives (12.96%) can be categorized as *(auto)biographies* as they deal with memories, personal experiences using as departure point the depicted transitional spaces.

Seven narratives (12.96%) can be categorized as *childhood dramas* presenting adventures of childhood where transitional spaces function as the theatre of childhood playgrounds.

Five narratives (9.25%) can be categorized as *dramas* mentioning certain violent actions such as kidnapping, actions of revenge and wild crimes involving an illegal couple and a woman's body, demonstrating that transitional spaces are perceived as sites for illegal actions.

Three narratives (5.55%) can be categorized under the narrative genres of *mystery*, *science fiction* as they involve astonishing findings and strange cargos wisely not revealed to the reader.

Three narratives (5.55%) can be categorized as *documentaries* dealing with ecological and social issues such as deforestation and child employment located in developing countries. Two narratives (3.70%) can be categorized as *everyday dramas* including family affairs. Some of the narratives demonstrate not only the imaginative capacity of the respondent but also their narrative skills as they mix competently certain characteristics such as drama, humour, mystery and suspense.

Paradigmatic narrative analysis of Question 4

Overview of the respondents approach in terms of:

- *Reaction (negative/positive)*

Out of fifty-nine respondents forty-six (77.96%) tried to write narratives indicating that transitional landscapes may have a narrative potential even though some efforts were actually descriptions or transformations of transitional landscapes.

Target group	Negative responses	Positive responses	Narratives	Descriptions	Transformations
Art	15	5	10	6	5
Literature	11	15	19	4	2
Summary	26	20	29	10	7

Each attempt has been categorized as:

Negative in cases where there was generally a pessimistic reaction to the chosen transitional landscape as it was indicated by the narrative attempt.

Positive in cases where there was generally an optimistic reaction to the chosen transitional landscape as indicated by the narrative.

Narrative in cases where the respondent is prompted to tell a story or imply a story





Transformation when the text is concerned with how elements of the image have/will change.

Description when the text is concerned with describing the image.

According to the above categorization the overall results show that the negative responses are more than the positive, 26 and 20 accordingly. Moreover, the responses provide 29 narratives, 7 transformations and 10 descriptions signifying a dependable narrative potential for these specific types of landscapes. Additionally, the art group had clearly a negative response to transitional landscapes (15 to 5 positive) and responded with 10 narratives 6 descriptions and 5 transformations. The literature group had more positive responses than negative (15 to 11 accordingly) and created 19 narratives 4 descriptions and 2 transformations.

It could be argued that the art group, theoretically more aware about the notion of landscape, had negative connotations about transitional landscapes and provided almost equal amount, in summary, of descriptions & transformations to narratives. On the other hand the literature group, hypothetically more aware about the notion of narrative, had more positive than negative connotations about transitional landscapes. They clearly provided more narratives (19) than descriptions (4) and transformations (2). I have to remind the reader that the decision of choosing these two population groups was made under the consideration that these target groups were the most willing population that could provide information for the aims of this research.

Looking separately the responses for each of the four landscape images we notice that they vary considerably from one image to another as the table below shows.

Transitional landscape	Negative response %		Positive response %	
	Art	Lit	Art	Lit
	85.7	50	14.3	50
	77.8		22.2	
	77.7	66.6	22.3	33.3
	72.2		27.8	
	50	50	50	50
	50		50	
	50	23	50	77
	26.6		73.4	

The first two landscapes have a high negative overall response compare to the other two. Furthermore, the overall positive responses are only in landscape 4 as landscape 3 has equal responses.





Examining each group response for every transitional landscape we notice that for **Landscape 1** the art group gives a clear negative preference whether the literature group is equal between negative and positive response.

Landscape 2 is the most popular landscape image of this question and both groups have similar behaviour giving clearly a negative response as first preference and positive as second.

Landscape 3 has the poorest response of all landscapes and the most neutral treatment from both groups along with the same amount of responses by every group It appears as the least attractive, in terms of narrative, landscape image of all.

Landscape 4 demonstrates its popularity (second overall preference) and especially its positive response in literature group whether the art group has equal positive and negative response to this image.

Overview on respondents approach in terms of role

Transitional landscape	Observers approach	Narrators approach
	5	4
	4	14
	1	3
	1	15
Summary	11	36

There are two kinds of approach taken by the respondents in their narrative attempts on the specific landscape images. The first is the *observers* approach demonstrated by brief thoughts; suggestions or statements about transitional spaces/landscapes and eleven respondents select it. Out of these 11 observations only 1 is positive and 10 are negative responses and there are 6 descriptions and 5 transformations.

The level of involvement of the *observers* in the rest of the questions is more than adequate as they answer all the other questions providing certain amount of textual information for each question.

In the *narrators* approach, which is preferred by 36 respondents we notice that landscapes 2 & 4 have massive and almost equal preference by the respondents with

14 and 15 responses correspondingly. The 36 narrators also give equally negative and positive responses 18 in each category

The quality of the written narratives depends to a certain extent on parameters such as the capacity of imagination of the respondent, the amount of involvement while he/she was answering the questionnaire, and his/her approach to images/narratives.

It is quite intriguing to study the formation of tendencies in the provided narratives in order to reveal ideas about transitional landscapes.

The two tendencies are *identifications* and *projections*. By the term 'identification' I mean the tendency where the respondent identify himself as a character in his written narrative. Also by the term 'projection' I mean the tendency where the respondent projects a character other than himself in his written narrative. The eleven-identification roles range from a photojournalist, a cop, a sniper and a traveller. Child identification came five times and two respondents identified themselves as an old man and an old woman.

As far as the projections are concerned, six female respondents projected deprived families living in these landscapes, five cases where female respondents project male characters living in transitional landscapes and four cases (1male-3females) where respondents project children playing in transitional landscapes.

One male from the art group and one female from the literature group created dialogues between the characters. Both of these cases were influenced by landscape 2. The same landscape also holds 4 out of 5 cases of projecting deprived families by female respondents and 3 out of 4 were females project single male characters living in these spaces.

Another point is the location of the narratives signifying the respondents' beliefs about the location of transitional spaces. Only twelve of the responses mention

location, without explanation though, however it is worth reporting them as they indicate that transitional spaces are identified with many parts of the world. These locations are: Greece (3 times), Spain (2), England, Italy, and Europe resulting to eight times in European location. The rest of the reported locations were Africa, USA, Turkey, and Mexico.

Overview of ideas on transitional landscapes/spaces

One of the most interesting parts of the research is how certain ideas and conceptions about transitional spaces are revealed through the narrative attempts of the respondents. The frequency of some ideas are indicated by the responses below:

There are 13 responses, nine of them in landscape 2, where transitional spaces are considered as deprived habitat consisting of slums and shoddy houses with poor people suffering under the pressure of social problems such as unemployment, alcoholism, lack of social security. (2L1, 9L2, 1L3, 0L4, 1 no answer)





Four other responses are relative as they mention ecological concerns (3L1, 1L2, 0L3, 0L4) such as the vanishing grassland, deforestation and pollution along with 7 cases mentioning rapid expansion of urban zone and the high potential of transitional spaces for urban development. There are also 3 responses considering transitional spaces as working land for farming in developing countries:

There are 9 responses that consider transitional spaces as childrens playground indicating not only the lack of free space in urban zone but also the fertility of transitional spaces for childrens imagination. (0L1, 2L2, 1L3, 6L4)

Another perception is that transitional spaces could be theaters of violence or places for mysterious and illegal actions as indicated in 7 responses narrating criminal acts such as kidnapping, murders or the aftermaths of fights or transactions of strange

cargos or astonishing findings. (1L1, 2L2, 2L3, 3L4) On the other hand there are seven (all in Landscape 4) responses mentioning picnics, holidays and teenage parties as if transitional spaces were countryside or rural space. There are also three cases addressing aesthetic issues indicating the ugliness of transitional spaces as the lack of urban planning creates a chaotic expansion of cities. (3L1)

Another revealing finding is how the respondents perceive and interpret transitional landscapes as in most cases transitional spaces were considered either as urban or rural environments in order to unfold their narratives. The detailed table below demonstrates this point and strengthens the argument.

Transitionallandscape	As Transitional space	As Urban space	As Rural space
	3	3	4
	9	5	3
	2	2	0
	2	1	14
Comments on <i>No story</i> responses	1	1	1
Summary	17	12	22
	17transitionalresponses	34urban&ruralresponses	





The numbers of the above table show that most of the respondents (34 out of 50) considered transitional landscapes either as urban (12) but mostly as rural (22) spaces and only 17 responses treated transitional landscapes as the depiction of transitional spaces. This identification was indicated by the provided information of each

narrative. A separate examination of every image shows that landscape 1 and 4 follow the above observation whether in landscape 2(9 to 8) and 3(2 to 2) the result is almost equal or equal. Even if we ignore the results of landscape 4 (2-1-14 for transitional-urban-rural spaces accordingly) which arguably may be confused as a rural space the overall result is still the same.

Question 5

Which part(s) or value(s)of the chosen landscape image in Question 4 triggered your imagination in writing the story? (Composition, content, light, e.t.c)

The visual triggers for the narrative attempts were categorized in the table below:

Landscape	Subject I	Subject II	Contrast	Specific
	4	3	4	1
	8	7	1	3
	2	1	0	1
	7	7	1	2
Summary	21	18	6	7

Subject I where the response focuses on a general aspect of the scene

Subject II where the response centres on the whole scene

Contrast where the response concentrates between two aspects of the scene

Specific where the response focuses on a detail of the scene

The use of the four categories above aims to cover the range of visual interests that might trigger the respondent to write a narrative based on visual stimulation. Therefore *Subject I* includes those responses that were directed on a general aspect of

the scene such as the line of buildings in Landscape 1. *Subject II* contains the responses which centred on the whole scene. The *Contrast* category concentrates between two aspects of the scene such as the barren space and the city on Landscape 3 while the *Specific* category focus on a detail of the scene (the *punctum* according to R.Barthes) such as the poppies of landscape 4 or the red car in Landscape 2.²

Nine of the respondents did not answer question 4 and consequently did not provide information about the visual trigger of this question apart from two cases where the respondents without writing a narrative indicated the trigger that could guide them to write one, *the lighting* and *the darkness & the exotic [nature]* of the scene.





The above table demonstrates that what had triggered the narrative responses mostly fell into the first two categories (74.99%) as most respondents mentioned several aspects of the image (40.38% for subject I) or the whole scene (34.61% for subject II). Furthermore, 13.46% responses indicated that a specific element of the image prompted the narrative and 11.54% of the responses mention the contrast between two aspects of the depicted scene.

Another argument that occurs from an analysis of the answers is the perception of respondents to images as we see two kinds of positions. One focuses on the image itself using as visual triggers the representational qualities of the picture (composition, light, colour, etc) while the other concentrates on the space qualities that the image depicts.

The two positions are quite close but the space position comes first as 25 responses examined the actual space and image position comes second as 22 responses concentrated on the image.

² The categories were decided after a tutorial discussion with my supervisor Stevie Bezencenet in order to cover the demands of this research.





Image position table

Transitional landscape	Summary of both groups	Art group	Literature group
	1	0	1
	9	3	6
	1	0	1
	11	2	9
Summary	22	5	17

The *image position* focuses on representational qualities of the image such as composition, lighting, focus, depth of field and other pictorial elements. First preference for the *image position* is landscape 4 second comes landscape 2 and equal third are landscapes 1 and 3.

From the 22 responses, 17 are from the literature group and 5 are from the art group. Although it would take a much larger and more detailed study the above numbers are indicative about the appeal of images to a theoretically less visually educated group of people. The above indication is strengthened by the table below, which demonstrates the majority of respondents inclined towards *space position* are from the art group.

Space position table

Transitional landscape	Summary	Art group	Literature group
	8	7	1
	8	6	2
	3	3	0
	6	1	5
Summary	25	17	8

The *space position* concentrates on the elements of the material world depicted in landscapes such as buildings, cars, empty spaces and vegetation. Equal first choice in the *space position* table are landscapes 1 and 2 while landscape 4 comes second and landscape 3 is third. It seems that landscapes 1, 2 and 4 have more spatially interesting elements than landscape 3 which have been ignored in both positions.

Out of 25 responses, 17 are from the art group and 8 are from the literature group signifying the tendency mentioned above that the literature group focused more on the image rather the actual space, whilst the art group concentrated on the actual space rather than the image.

Conclusions on Questionnaire II

The aims of the second questionnaire were to:

- Cross-examine the findings of the first questionnaire, especially those concerning the effect of photographic characteristics on the narrative potential in a landscape image. *Questions 1&2*
- Indicate the range of narratives in four different types of landscape, in terms of aesthetics. *Question 3*
- Detect the narrative potential of transitional landscapes, the kind of narratives and their characteristics, the audience response to these landscapes and the range of ideas related to transitional spaces. *Question 4*
- Identify which part(s) or value(s) of transitional landscapes trigger the ideas for written narratives. *Question 5*

The respondents of the second questionnaire were two target groups consisting of postgraduate students of art and literature. The above decision was made in order to have groups likely to be familiar with landscape iconography (art group) and notions



of narrative (literature group). The survey was carried out in five universities in three countries

where students from diverse cultural backgrounds offered their preferences about the narrative potential of landscape images.

The findings from question 1 suggested that the same landscape image has higher narrative potential in its

darker version which arguably may be increased in the black & white version. This preference confirms the results from the previous questionnaire which indicated a

clear preference for non-conventional exposure (either darker or brighter versions of the same landscape image) rather than the 'normal' exposure version.

The literature group preferred the black & white version while the art group preferred the dark colour version of the same landscape. This could be partly explained by the familiarity of art students with issues about representation and the decoding of images, whereas the literature group is more familiar with classic landscape imagery as generally in photography black & white landscapes are considered more classic than colour landscapes. Additionally the absence of colour reminds us of the image rather than the space and the literature students demonstrated a preference for the *image position* whereas the art group showed a preference for the *space position*.

Furthermore, the literature group indicated as less important the parameter of exposure whereas the factor of colour, the absence of colour to be more precise, comes as more crucial for the narrative potential of the landscape photograph. The art group on the other hand preferred the dark landscape in both versions.

The close difference between the choices of *Normal* exposure version and *None of them* in the overall results suggests how the familiarity of colour photographs may restrain their narrative potential.

The answers also demonstrate tendencies, which reveal preconceptions about landscape images and narratives.

Those who choose the black & white version seem to be encouraged by the lack of colour, which helped them to think of stories taking place in the past. The black & white quality of the image creates a false distance from the present, which seemed necessary for some respondents. Judging from the twenty-two justifications we may argue that the respondents regarded the past as narratively fertile and better presented by the black & white version of the landscape photograph. Though why the type of

stories for the black & white version landscape are pessimistic, with issues regarding war, post-war, apocalyptic and nuclear types of narratives is another matter.

Another tendency is concerned with the characteristic of darkness in the specific landscape image. There are many justifications that mention that darkness more easily prompts a story as it refers to the stereotypic use of darkness from literature and cinema. There are eleven answers concerning the type of stories which mention mystery, drama, thriller, and sinister stories due to the darkness of the landscape. Finally, the absence of human presence, the lack of a protagonist and more generally the lack of signs of action were the main justification for those who answered the *None of them* and *All of them* choices revealing the importance of the imaginative capacity of the respondents.

The cross-examination of findings from the first questionnaire continues in the second question of Questionnaire II. This question concerns how the photographic characteristic of clarity affects the narrative potential of a landscape image. Additionally this question introduces the respondents to transitional landscapes and records their first reactions.



The responses suggest that sharp versions of landscapes encourage narratives slightly more than blurred ones justified by the factor of detail as a departure point for a story. On the other hand, justifications for the blurred versions point out the dream quality of the images and the argument that the lack of clarity gives more free space to imagine stories.

As far as the response to the types of landscapes is concerned (classic and transitional landscapes) there was a clear preference for the classic landscape both in sharp and blurred versions which demonstrated the need of the respondents to use the most

familiar landscape image as a narrative platform. We have to bear in mind also the activity of the respondent in terms of both looking at the image and having ideas about it. The simplicity of composition in the classic landscape encourages imagination to travel through the image and project idyllic scenes such as father and son fishing on the river bench and Mark Twain like adventure journeys. The tranquillity of classic landscape functions as an antidote to the everyday stress, as mentioned by one respondent, reminding us of Elizabeth Well's comment on the role of landscape as antidote in an industrial era.³



The justifications for the blurred classic landscape (figure left) mention the dreamy quality that the image has which creates a transcendental dimension recalling memories from the past and childhood stories. The

blurred quality of the image seems appealing to the imagination as many respondents referred to it.

The transitional landscape was preferred in the blurred version by the literature students while the art students preferred its sharp version.



As far as the sharp transitional landscape (figure left) is concerned we notice that the building works as a departure point either for childhood stories or stories about tourist vacations. The lack of human element

discourages narratives as has already been mentioned and another point is the suggestion by one respondent that this landscape could host a story about someone who either leaves or arrives in a town, which is quite indicative for the transitional

³ Wells, L., *Photography, A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, London, 1997, pp. 237

landscapes as they are located geographically at the fringes of cities and work as a welcome or farewell zone for the city.



Although the blurred version of transitional landscape (figure left) lacks iconographic clichés associated with violence, strangely enough it recalled violent stories.

The respondents mention that the image suggests crime scenes, sinister events and stories of terror, abundance and desolation, dramas with a psychopath as protagonist and one romantic story with an unhappy ending. Another respondent mentions that there is a *realistic ugliness* in the image that has a voyeuristic nature. The absence of precise detail in the blurred version allows a more liberal reading / response to the image. However, it is difficult to explain why and how the blurred version indicates violence, as its' sharp version doesn't show any sign of violence or associations of violence. In addition there are no similar type of stories in the sharp version that could indicate the reaction of respondents to the blurred version. The comments above reflect ideas for transitional spaces, as we will see also in the findings of question 4 that have been mainly influenced by literature and cinema.



The range of indications for *transitional landscape* (figure left) expands in question 3 as the responses focus on ecological concerns and talk about intervention to nature, poverty, urban development and

the ruin of the countryside. The types of narratives are documentary, social dramas, historic and pessimistic urban stories connected with beat literature indicating associations between transitional landscapes and wasteland.

It is worth mentioning the range of functions identified with these transitional spaces: work related (lorry parking space, drivers test drive space, agricultural field),

children's playground, lovers and a young gang's haven at night, urban developers and landowners' property.



The rest of the data for question 3 informs us about the type of narratives that specific types of landscapes may trigger and provides indications about respondents' ideas about landscape. The narratives for the black & white *picturesque landscape* photograph (figure left) would be romantic stories located mainly in Europe (England, France) in the 17th, 18th, 19th centuries. There are two stories that take place in contemporary times (war story in Kosovo and Hiroshima before the bomb fell). The answers demonstrate; analytic approaches which evaluate the visual information of the image trying to situate it in time and in terms of function but without answering about the type of narrative the landscape implies. Critical approaches offer comments on ownership and the relations of power that the image entails.



The narratives on *romantic landscape* (figure left) colour painting are located in rural England, United States and Italy between the 18th and 19th century. The narratives are pastoral/bucolic, romantic, religious and historical. Two respondents indicating an awareness of the broader historical frame of landscape imagery mention the notions of Colonialism and Feudalism. There are also aesthetic approaches naming either painters like



Gainsborough and Constable, landscape terms, such as the 'sublime' or observations on painting and museums.

The black & white *sublime landscape* photograph

(figure) triggers adventure, documentary, romantic and mystery narratives. The responses range from exploration, detective, geological, western and Icelandic sagas to mythological dragons, brave knights and princesses. The location ranges across several countries such as Canada, USA, British Colombia, Scandinavia, Germany, Scotland and Greece in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Two analytic approaches focus on photographic observations such as *the static quality of photography is confronted with the extremity of the experience that has happened earlier* and also that *it is the parallel precision of the objects in the photograph, rather than the dark colour, that make it uninviting-almost like forbidden forest*. There is also a comment about *ownership* and *the ousting of the natives* with no further criticism about the above notions.

A noticeable difference between the sublime, picturesque and romantic landscapes of question 3 is the ecological concerns about the effects on the environment by the civilization reminding us the use of landscape photography for ecological awareness during the last decades of the 20th century.

The fourth question of Questionnaire II investigates the narrative potential and the range of narratives of four transitional landscapes differing in terms of composition, direction and the amount of human presence.

The analytic approach used aspects of Syntagmatic narrative analysis in order to extract information related to the categorization of responses, the characters in the narrative attempts, the kind of events and the genre of the narrative attempts. Additionally, the use of Paradigmatic narrative analysis was concerned with the respondents' approach that has been indicated in the narrative attempts, the visual triggers that helped the creation of the narratives and the ideas related to transitional landscapes.



It could be argued that transitional landscapes in general create more **negative/pessimistic** responses (56.52%) than **positive/optimistic** responses (43.48%). It could also be said that transitional landscapes have a clear degree of narrative **potential** as the respondents created clearly more narratives (83.33%) than **descriptions** (11.11%) and **transformations** (5.55%). The narratives demonstrate a **broad range** of characters including objects such as bulldozers and cars, animals such as insects and eventually groups of people from gypsies, old people, young children and teenagers to outlaws, kidnappers, detectives or cops, waitresses, snipers, illegal couples, photojournalist, ragmen and deprived families. The above characters appeared in narrative attempts of events such as violent crimes, illegal transactions, political demonstrations and urban development and events from the everyday routines of families.

The narrative genres of transitional landscapes indicated in the responses are:

- *Social dramas* presenting complex problems such as urban expansion, unemployment, violence, children exploitation, and racism.
- *Portraits* of characters, families and children.
- *(Auto)biographies* dealing with memories, and personal experiences using as a departure point the depicted transitional spaces.
- *Childhood dramas* presenting adventures and events of childhood with transitional spaces functioning as the theatre of childhood playgrounds.

- *Violent dramas* mentioning actions such as kidnapping, actions of revenge and wild crimes involving an illegal couple and a woman's body. It seems that transitional spaces could be potential sites for illegal actions as indicated through this genre.
- *Mystery, science fiction narratives* as they involve astonishing findings and strange cargos not revealed to the reader.
- *Documentaries* dealing with ecological and social issues such as deforestation and child employment located in developing countries.
- *Everyday dramas* including family affairs.

Some of the narratives demonstrate not only the imaginative capacity of the respondent but also their narrative skills as they competently mix certain characteristics such drama, humour, mystery and suspense.

Paradigmatic narrative analysis demonstrated the respondents' approach to images, the visual triggers that helped the creation of the narratives and the ideas related to transitional landscapes & spaces.

The types of approach were either as *observers* (23.40%) or as *narrators* (76.59%) which was clearly the most preferable. I define as *observers* those who provided brief thoughts, suggestions or statements on transitional landscapes/spaces. Most of the observations were negative and they were almost equally balanced between descriptions and transformations.

As *narrators* I define those who created narratives about transitional landscapes. It was the most preferred type of approach indicating the narrative potential of transitional landscapes and demonstrated equally with positive and negative responses. Additionally the narratives displayed two tendencies: *identifications* and *projections*

By the term *identification* I mean the tendency that some respondents have to identify themselves inside the narratives keeping a certain role. The most frequent identification was the participant as child indicating the function of transitional spaces as playgrounds while other identification roles range from photojournalist, detective or cop, a sniper and a traveller.

Also by the term *projection* I mean the tendency of some respondents to develop certain types of people in their narratives.

The occurring tendencies in the *projections* were:

- Female respondents projecting deprived families
- Female respondents projecting male characters
- Female respondents projecting children playing
- Male respondents projecting violent actions

Twelve of the participants indicated the location where the narrative is placed; however the location of the narratives varied and indicated the respondents' belief that the location of transitional spaces can be identified with many parts of the world. The most frequent locations were: Greece, Spain, England, Italy, Africa, USA, Turkey, and Mexico.

The visual triggers (Question 5), which helped the creation of the narratives, follow the order below in terms of preference:





1. The general aspect of the scene
2. The whole scene
3. The specific focus on a detail of the scene
4. The contrast between two aspects of the scene

Additionally the respondents' perception of transitional landscapes demonstrates two kinds of positions: one focuses on the image itself and the other concentrates on the actual space that the image depicts.

My investigation on the narrative potential of transitional spaces via photographic landscape images aims to use all the extracted information by both positions. The use of deliberate technically familiar images was made in order to avoid as far as possible any guidance on the respondents approach and give them liberty to reveal information for the transitional landscape image and perhaps for the transitional space itself.

A certain amount of information was extracted from transitional landscapes as many respondents focused on the actual space. My research utilizes both types of information: the *image* information, focuses on representational qualities of the image such as composition, focus, and other pictorial elements and is more concerned with the aesthetic aspect of the photographic project while the *space* information which concentrates on the elements of the material world depicted in landscapes such as buildings, empty spaces and vegetation articulates more the contents of the photographs.

The two positions are quite close in the overall results but the space position comes first and the image position comes second. It could be argued that the *literature group, a theoretically less visually educated group of people, preferred the image position*. The argument strengthens as the majority of respondents for *space position* came from the art group a supposedly more visually literate group compared with the literature group.

Landscape	Image position	Image position narratives	Space position	Space Position narratives
	1	1	8	2
	9	5	8	7
	1	1	3	2
	11	8	6	4
Summary	22	15	25	15

The above table tries to indicate if the *image position* enhances the narrative potential of a transitional landscape and whether the *space position* reduces it. It seems that the narrative potential depends on how we see the landscape - either as an image or as space - as the percentage of narratives in the *image position* is slightly higher (68.18%) from the percentage of narratives in *space position* (60%). The above indicates our tendency to associate narrative with representation rather than direct experience – or to put it another way, narrative may be associated with a sign rather than with an experience of the material world that does not appear to be constructed to the same degree.

Certain ideas related to transitional landscapes were revealed through the narrative attempts. I am aware that a space (in the world) is not the same as a landscape (representation) as one is framed and constructed as a sign and the other may not be – especially if it is a transitional landscape, but it could be argued to some extent that

some of the ideas about transitional landscapes reflect ideas about transitional spaces too. The frequency of these indicates that transitional landscapes/spaces are considered as deprived habitat hosting a range of complex social problems such as unemployment, lack of social security, racism, violent behaviour and alcoholism. A related issue is the ecological concerns mentioned by some respondents, as transitional spaces are the first stage of rapid and mostly unplanned urban expansion. Transitional spaces considered also as a childrens' playground indicating not only the lack of free space in urban zones but also the fertility of transitional spaces for childrens' imagination.

Another perception is that transitional spaces could be theatres of violence or places for mysterious and illegal actions as indicated on narratives hosting criminal acts (kidnapping, murders), aftermaths of fights or transactions involving strange cargos. The detailed presentation of the responses of each group examines if there is a relationship between landscape theories and these responses.

Findings and Landscape theories

Landscape theories such as Jay Appleton's *Habitat theory* and Chris Fitter's *Matrices of perception* tend to relate the aesthetic pleasure of a landscape with the appropriate environmental conditions for our biological survival in it. If we accept also that the viewer tends to project unconsciously itself into the landscape then it is easier to justify the above negative and positive responses.

Both transitional landscapes 1&2 put the viewer in a vulnerable position; in *Landscape 1* the viewer is placed at the lowest level of the space therefore the limited level of inspection generates insecurity. The feeling is strengthened by the zone of

bushes in the middle of the image, which could hide potential danger and functions as a barrier between transitional and urban space in the background. Furthermore, it is difficult to access this urban space as a considerable amount of rubble piled just before it acts as a barrier for any invader. Chris Fitter's *technoptic* mattress of perception, (...pleasured and replenished by recognizing among the myriad forms and configurations of nature those it has learned from art⁴), might explain the negative response by the art group.

Landscape 2 has depth of field but both sides of the image are filled with bushes and other obstacles obscuring the side view of the field and could potentially hide dangers from the safety of the projected viewer inside the depicted space.

Landscape 3 provides a clear depth of field but the bareness of the foreground cannot protect the viewer. On the contrary *Landscape 4*, is the only transitional landscape with a positive response, although it only has a shallow depth of field to provide refuge. The above indicates that there seems to be a connection between the sense of danger and the negative response in the tested transitional landscapes of the survey. As transitional landscape gets more hostile for the unconsciously projected viewer the higher the negative response it gets.

Another possible explanation relies on us accepting Liz Well's argument about the antidote function of landscape in the industrial era, which can be extended to contemporary times. By accepting this we might say that the specific landscape imagery can be regarded as aesthetically unpleasant for the viewer as transitional landscapes are characterised by the lack of established aesthetic values found in traditional landscape iconography as it discussed in Chapter One. A demonstration of the above could be the indication that the most positive responses were for the

⁴ Fitter, C. *Poetry, space, landscape* (ed.) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 5

landscape, which was closest to rural imagery of the four transitional landscapes. The other three landscapes were more clearly addressing issues related to transitional landscapes such as the rapid and often unplanned urbanization and ecological concerns of the respondents.

Summarising the indications of questionnaire II we might say that:

- A darker, closer to black & white landscape image is more responsive to narratives rather than the normal exposure and colour version of the same landscape image. Furthermore, the sharpness of thematically classic landscape images seems more responsive for narratives whereas transitional landscapes seem to attract a narrative response in their blurred version.
- Transitional landscapes demonstrate a certain amount of narrative response as three findings verified: the high percentage of respondents (77.96%) who wrote narratives on transitional landscapes, the high percentage of narratives (83.33%) compared to descriptions (11.11%) and transformations (5.55%), finally by the respondents approach as narrators (76.59%) rather than as observers (23.40%).

Additionally the narrators demonstrated two tendencies: *identifications* and *projections*.

- The narratives on transitional landscapes reveal also that 68.51% respondents considered these spaces either as urban or rural spaces and 31.48% regarded them as transitional spaces.
- Transitional landscapes create more negative (56.52%) than positive (43.48%) responses as indicated by the narrative attempts which display a range of: *Characters* including objects, animals and certain kinds of social groups.

Events such as violent crimes, illegal transactions, political demonstrations, urban development and events from the everyday routines of families.

Locations such as: Greece, Spain, England, Italy, Africa, USA, Turkey, and Mexico.

Narrative genres such as: (Auto)Biographies, Childhood dramas, Portraits, Violent dramas, Documentaries, Mystery and science fiction, Everyday and Social dramas presenting issues such as urban expansion, unemployment, violence, children exploitation, racism.

Visual triggers such as: the general aspect of the scene, the whole scene, a specific detail of the depicted scene and the contrast between two aspects of the scene.

Ideas and preconceptions such as the consideration of transitional landscapes/spaces as: *Deprived habitat*, *Children's playground* and *Theatres of violence*

Credibility of findings

As I have done in Questionnaire I and in order to strengthen the credibility of findings of Questionnaire II, I decided to use ten more new respondents, five from each group and examine if their responses follow the findings of the major respondents group. The results demonstrated, with a slight difference in the percentage, the same order of the landscape preference as in the overall results of the major group along with the preference of each separate group (literature/artist groups). Furthermore, the analysis of the narratives substantiates the tendencies of female respondents to project deprived families, lonely males living near transitional spaces and strengthens male

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT

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Chapter five

The photographic project

Chapter five explains the purpose, the process and the logic behind the structure of the photographic project and its relevance with the questionnaires analysis. It reconsiders also key critical concepts and the most relevant landscape theories from Chapters One and Two relating them to the findings and the photographic project.

It should be noted that it is not always possible for the artist/researcher to articulate and rationalise every aspect of the photographic project during the description and analysis of it. Although the photographic project via the methodological approach limited the intuitive decision-making of the creative process, however I believe that intuition is an ontological part of the creative process. Ben Shahn who identifies it as a process of 'inexact knowing' has outlined this.¹ The complexity of transposing ideas into language has been recognised by Foucault, who argues that "It is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say."²

The purpose of the photographic project is to inform the discourses of visual narratives and landscape photography. While a part of the iconography of 'wasteland', transitional landscapes have been ignored until recently by academic and aesthetic investigations as I have discussed in Chapter One. This project adds to the discourse of landscape photography by the identification of transitional landscape and its narrative potential.

¹ Shahn, Ben, *The Shape of Content*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1957, pp. 24

² Foucault, M., quoted in Shlain, Leonard, *Art and Physics: Parallel Visions In Space, Time and Light*, Quill Morrow, New York, 1993, pp.236

Narrativity, in the context of the visual arts, has been investigated in a diversity of approaches that have included photography, but these investigations have excluded landscape photography for the reasons I have analysed in Chapter Two. The research contributes to the discourse of visual narratives by the detection some of the photographic qualities that stimulate certain types of readings in a landscape image.

The process of the photographic project demonstrates how surveys may function as creative tool informing the project at two levels: aesthetic (non-narrative data) and content (narrative data). The research methodologically was influenced by reader-response theory and by accepting the importance of the *reader* using the survey approach. The research employed as a key method visual questionnaires, which are based on the capacity of single images to prompt narrative interpretation.

The logic behind the structure of the photographic project was the creation of a collaborative piece of work where both researcher and respondents shared the role of the *author*. This involved the researcher's analysis of the questionnaires concerning narrative and aesthetic preferences by the respondents and the production of the final photographs based on the above references along with the embodiment of the actual stories generated by the respondents.

The photographic project displays two main narrative strategies in photography: Narratives created solely by images and Narratives created from combining text and image. It progressed from one strategy to the other in four steps, gradually shifting from vertical panoramic landscapes to horizontal panoramic 'wordscapes'.

The first phase of the project was the creation of the initial photographs, which worked as a platform for the final pieces, which embodied the questionnaire findings. I decided to keep a balance between factors that could potentially beautify or depreciate the unpleasant, according to the established aesthetic codes, transitional

landscapes. The first phase was realized during the distribution, recollection and the analysis of the second questionnaire.

The shooting of the photographs took place in weather conditions, which minimized the factors that could create iconographic drama in a landscape image (heavy clouded skies, severe weather conditions, high contrast, strong shadows etc).

The location of the shooting was the transitional spaces of my hometown where I used to play as a child some of them became urban spaces now. The importance of transitional spaces for me as a child and their capacity to stimulate fantasies was the reason that created my interest in these types of spaces and caused me to make them the basis of my research. Being quite familiar to these spaces it was easier to focus on my subject without distractions from iconographically new transitional spaces.

A medium format camera and a medium grain colour slide film were chosen and along with the large prints provided the slightly blurred image quality that was indicated by the respondents. The above does not mean that the images lack of clarity but they do not have the sharpness that medium format slide films can provide.

The second phase of the project was the elaboration of images according to questionnaire findings. The initial photographs were scanned and enriched by the findings of the analysis. This enrichment was twofold: on the one hand the respondents created narratives in response to specific transitional landscapes that informed and completed the contents of the photographs and on the other hand the respondents formulated the aesthetic values of the photographic images.

The aesthetic values of the photographic project were formulated by the findings of both questionnaires, which demonstrated that:

- A darker, closer to black & white landscape image is more responsive to narratives rather its full colour version (questions Q8, Q9 of Questionnaire I and cross examined question Q1 of Questionnaire II). Thus, a gradual shifting from black & white to colour and slightly darker than normal images progresses throughout the project satisfying the above preferences.
- Transitional landscapes indicated as more narratively responsive in their slightly blurred version (Q 10 and cross examined Q 2 in Questionnaire II) while panoramic format advances better narrative compared to rectangular and square format as Q11 clearly demonstrated. Therefore, the final images are slightly blurred while another gradual shifting from vertical panoramic landscapes to horizontal panoramic wordscapes takes place.
- The idea of wordscapes occurred by Q1, Q 2, Q 4 of Questionnaire I, which indicated that the presence of a text could function as a departure point for a narrative. The number of images with text is according to the percentage of the respondents of Q1 (60% images without text and 40% with text).
- Q7 indicated that the narrative potential in a landscape is encouraged more by a non-direct or absence of human presence rather an intense or evident human presence consequently indirect human presence is evident in the form of buildings, tyre marks and human shadows.

My concern was to incorporate the findings in order to create images visually powerful as well as conceptually coherent. The respondents influenced the content of the images by addition, by suggesting material (visual signs) that were added to the images and by substitution, the process of replacing the indexical image (visual) with

the symbolic (word). The conclusions from both questionnaires drive me to the step approach of the photographic project as each step allowed me to include certain amount of information by the findings. According to this tactic:

The first step contains three vertical panoramic transitional landscapes which introduce the viewer to the characteristics of transitional spaces: Morphological characteristics such as emptiness and lack of clear boundaries, symbols, monuments and therefore of status. Geographic characteristics such as mobility and geographic ephemerality as transitional spaces are located between urban and rural environments and can shifted due to the expansion or urban space. The images shift gradually from black & white to colour according to the findings.



Step One



Step Two

At the second step transitional landscapes demonstrate the main tendencies on the projections, events and functions as the respondents' ideas revealed via narratives. The main projection and event tendencies (transitional landscapes as children's extempore playground, deprived habitat for underprivileged families and lonely people) presented as semitransparent ghostly white figures (images 4,5,6) while the tendency that indicated transitional landscapes as theatres of violence demonstrated with the outline of human figure, referring to the police white line on murder sites (image7). As the 3/4 of the respondents were women a woman's shadow, reminiscent of the real entity of the respondent, spans on the first three images while a man's shadow covers the fourth image of step two.

The images format shifts gradually from vertical rectangular to the square format and from black & white to colour.

Step three



At step three the images continue to shift from the almost square format to the horizontal rectangular frame and from black & white to colour. Text starts to appear and its content in this step addresses issues related to landscape discourse and the relationship of transitional landscapes with other types of landscape. Due to the intentional large size of the prints texts are readable only from a close distance allowing a second reading to the transitional landscape images.

Step Four



At step four the domination of text over the image addressed by the gradual disappearance of the latter and *wordscapes* replace landscapes using the actual stories by the respondents. At the first two images of this step the text is placed upon the landscapes reminding us the notion of palimpsest which foregrounds the fact that all writing takes place in the presence of other writings, visual in this case, and gradually text absorbs completely the image.

Ideally the actual narratives will be heard via an audio system at the gallery space during the exhibition of the project.

Groups profile

Both questionnaires were tested in specific groups: Questionnaire I embodied different population groups dealing with the concept of landscape such as farmers, visual artists, scientists and *weekenders* (urban population who relates to nature through leisure). The purpose of working with these groups was the creation of an information platform about landscape images and the hypothesis to be tested was to indicate if and to what extent people with different relationships to landscape prefer related interpretations.

Questionnaire II was tested in two target groups, art and literature postgraduate students. Hypothetically the above groups were the most willing population that could provide me with the specific information for this research, the narrativity of transitional landscapes. Theoretically the art group were more familiar with the notion of landscape imagery while the second target group were supposedly more familiar with the notion of narrative.

Although genders participation at Questionnaire I was almost equal that was not the case at Questionnaire II which was dominated by female gender (76.27%) in both art and literature postgraduate groups indicating perhaps a predisposition in further education.

Furthermore, detectable tendencies such as identifications and projections on the respondents' narratives approach were also revealed.

At the first tendency the respondents identified mostly with children, as old man or woman and as photojournalist, cop, sniper and traveller.

Projections revealed that: female respondents tend to project deprived families, lonely males, and children while male respondents demonstrated violent narratives involving adult male and female protagonists.

The two groups the art and the literature postgraduates shaped a different profile due to their preferences. The art students were more critical on images preferring less conventional images, in terms of composition and theme, and a clearly negative response was revealed via their narratives, which were the 34.48% of the total amount of narratives. The literature students were more predictable choosing more classic, in terms of composition and theme, versions of the images; they were more positive and created 65.51% of the total amount of narratives. The different responses given by the art and literature groups could be explained by their study background area as the art group focuses on issues about visual representation, landscape discourse while the literature group concentrated on the discourse of narratives. As far as concern the negative/pessimistic and positive/optimistic responses these have to do also with the references from areas dealing with visual narratives such as cinema.

Another noticeable difference between the two groups was the position that transitional landscapes were perceived by the art group, which saw the landscape as the depiction of space compared to the literature group which considered mainly the landscape as image the above indicated through the departure points of the narratives as art group narratives were triggered mainly from the space while the literature group narratives triggered mostly by the image qualities of the transitional landscapes. Furthermore, the narratives of both groups were quite apocalyptic in terms of how transitional landscapes considered more as urban and rural environments rather than transitional.

The above tendency in both groups indicated a difficulty on identifying transitional landscapes as such, due to their visual and contextual characteristics and write narratives based on them. On the contrary when transitional landscapes were considered as urban or rural environments the narratives flourish. Furthermore, the above findings demonstrate that transitional landscapes borrow narratives both from urban and rural environments, as these are there physical but not clearly defined borders.

Related landscape theories

The findings are justified to a certain extent by landscape theories by writers who have sought to provide generalized psychological explanations that tend to relate the aesthetic pleasure of a landscape with the appropriate environmental conditions for our survival into it.

Jay Appleton developed two hypotheses for approaching landscape aesthetics: the *habitat theory* that “seeks to relate pleasurable sensations in the experience of landscape to environmental conditions favourable to biological survival”³ and the *prospect-refuge theory* “which opens the way to the analysis of landscapes in terms of their strategic appraisal as potential habitats”⁴. Although the above theories have been criticized by landscape researchers such as W.J.T. Mitchell and Chris Fitter as I have showed on Chapter One their application to the questionnaire findings might partly justify the higher percentage of pessimistic responses, as transitional landscapes are deficient in the environmental conditions for surviving and appeared inhospitable for refuge due to their characteristic emptiness. Several respondents mentioned that

³ Appleton, J. *The Experience of Landscape*, Wiley, London 1975, pp. 8

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 8

transitional landscapes create an uncomfortable feeling and a sense of danger as they are depicting spaces without comfortable references and thus leading to imaginings of uncomfortable kinds.

The most relevant landscape theory that explains the respondents response on transitional landscapes was Chris Fitter's proposal that landscape-consciousness is generated from multiple bases of awareness and proposes four matrices of perception.

"Ecological' perception scans nature as the field of potential satisfaction of requirements for subsistence and security; 'cosmographic' perception is alert in landscape to the forces and processes of the world-order, as current cosmology conceives it; 'analogical' perception gratifies the understanding in apprehending phenomena in terms of analogy, polarity, symbol and type; while 'technoptic' perception is pleased and replenished by recognizing among the myriad forms and configurations of nature those it has learned from art."⁵

If we accept that viewers tend to project themselves unconsciously on landscapes images then we might argue that the respondents of questionnaires were confronted with the above matrices as their ecological perception was not gratified due to the lack of requirements of transitional landscapes for subsistence and security; their cosmographic perception felt the vulnerability of transitional space to the forces and processes of change hence their negative response to the landscapes; their analogical perception did not relate transitional space to other types of space in order to apprehend them; and finally, their *technoptic* perception caused discomfort due to the lack of distinct visual examples of transitional landscapes in art; several respondents mentioned that transitional landscapes are aesthetically unpleasant. There were reports in the questionnaires revealing a sense of discomfort and desolation about transitional spaces addressing aesthetic issues of beauty and the quality of 'real' (*realistic ugliness*) as they contradict conventional postcard landscape aesthetics.

⁵ Fitter, C. *Poetry, space, landscape* (ed.) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 11

The findings on transitional landscapes interrogate the relationship between landscape and what is used to be termed the *Argument*, the narrative element of the picture that is the principal theme or subject. Transitional landscapes seem to lack of *Argument* as they are characterised by the absence of a profound narrative element. I believe that the *Argument* in transitional landscapes is the absence of it.

Transitional landscapes embody a certain amount of narrative through the visual aspects and the references that these aspects may recall. The minute visual details may indicate human presence (traces of tyres, garbage or shanty buildings) and a certain type of flora (bushes, or small trees). The lack of a profound narrative element makes transitional landscapes more suggestive as images and open to a greater range of readings increasing their narrativity as findings demonstrated.

On Chapter One I mentioned about transitional landscapes as the *parergon*, if we accept the traditional landscapes as the *ergon* of landscape iconography. We might say that *ergon* (the established [rural&urban] landscape imagery) is partly constituted by the co-presence of the *parergon* (transitional landscapes), which play the role of frame in the notion of [urban and rural] landscape; the traditional landscape iconography (the *ergon*) is framed by its relationship to the transitional landscape iconography (the *parergon*). In a way each informs the other: the iconic and visual richness of traditional landscape seems to enhance the emptiness of transitional landscape. Furthermore, the very role of the frame in the idea of landscape in general is fundamental as the frame “literary defines the landscape, both in the sense of determining its outer limits and in the sense that landscape is constituted by its frame: it wouldn’t be a landscape without that frame.”⁶ If we want to continue the above we

⁶Andrews, M., *Landscape and Western Art*, Land into Landscape, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 5

might ask that not only would the landscape would be a landscape without the frame but also would the transitional space be transitional without the frame?

The frame as a form of 'definition' is giving us the boundaries of the sign. Perhaps this (artificial) boundary may cause the difficulty in some of the respondents as in real life, we see beyond the boundaries, we are aware of the way that transitional space becomes the urban and becomes the rural. I have to acknowledge here that I have removed this broader context and have done so as a constructed part of this research method in order to focus on precisely this kind of space.

Frames and boundaries have been used to set the scene for story-telling for millennia: the theatre (both before and obviously after the proscenium arch), the book, painting, the cinema and television – all these (traditionally) have presented us with a framework for our stories. Consequently, I am aware that the research deals more with the narrative potential of the framed transitional landscape, rather than of transitional space.

The above thoughts drive me to intensify the presence of frame in the photographic project as each landscape image has a different frame from the other but there is a relation between each frame, as the whole project should be seen as one piece of work. Additionally, as the photographic project extended in the gallery space, the established frames format in landscape and text (horizontal rectangular frame for landscape and vertical rectangular frame for text) are intentionally reversed in order to question the perceptions in western culture on the ways of seeing texts and images. Consequently there is a gradual shifting from vertical panoramic landscapes to horizontal panoramic wordscapes.

The next and final chapter of the research reflects on the chronicle of this research by looking at the development of the main concepts, ideas, methodology and the

formulation of the central argument of the research that was the iconographic austerity of transitional landscapes offers a diverse range of interpretations.

Chapter Six discusses also the characteristic of this research, which has been that the methodological concerns became intertwined with the content of the practice part of the research. The chapter concludes with the research contribution to knowledge, which is in the amalgamation between methodology and the art practice itself as applied by a practitioner.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

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Chapter Six

Conclusion

The chronicle of the research

Although my research began by focusing on issues of narrativity in landscape photography, I 'discovered' through my investigation the notion of *transitional landscape*. Although a part of the iconography of wasteland, transitional landscapes have been ignored until recently by academic and aesthetic investigations. The aesthetic disdain of transitional landscape has been demonstrated by sparse references in history and criticism of photography before the second half of the 20th century. On the contrary, wasteland had privileged treatment by artists due to the narratives of decline that recalled and frequently served as a platform for pessimistic visions.¹

The significance that transitional landscape had attained in my own practice led to a detailed examination of its narrative response. The elements of transitional landscapes (their suspension in front of the established aesthetic attitudes on landscape, the absence of historic references and elements of symbolic value and their iconographic austerity) along with my childhood memories of transitional spaces' capacity to stimulate fantasies as an extempore playground drive me to investigate the transitional landscapes.

Through the process of creating visual questionnaires I explored which iconographic characteristics affect their narrative potential, analysed the findings and then translated these into an original artwork. My practice was investigated and contextualised within its contemporary artistic and theoretical context to determine the narrative potential of transitional landscape.

¹ The privileged treatment of wasteland has been developed in Chapter One pp. 34

My main argument

The main argument of this research is that the iconographic austerity of transitional landscapes is a fertile interpretive ground. It was indicated through the questionnaires responses that the emptiness of transitional landscapes proved a narratively fertile ground working as a projection platform for the respondents' narratives.

Transitional spaces are situated in-between rural and urban environments a fact, which was demonstrated in the narratives about them as: transitional landscapes were considered mainly as the depiction of urban and rural spaces and less as the depiction of transitional spaces. Respondents' difficulty to identify transitional spaces comes from the ephemeral state of transitional spaces, which in relation to their undefined borders affects their identification. Furthermore, the lack of distinct visual examples of transitional landscapes in art intensifies the problem of identification.

The above finding justifies to a certain extent the diverse range of narratives of transitional landscapes as they borrow narratives both from urban and rural environments. I had defined the term *transitional landscapes* in the visual questionnaires so the respondents were aware of its meaning.

The range of 'characters' revealed in the narratives on transitional landscapes (children and teenagers, lonely old people, deprived families and lawless people) are mostly people on the fringes of society (socially, economically or in terms of age) and could suggest a connection between the location of transitional spaces (on the fringes of urban environments) and explain also the negative responses.

The ideas and preconceptions about transitional landscapes (deprived habitat, children's extempore playground and theatres of violence) raised issues like urban expansion, unemployment, violence, exploitation of children and racism.

The aesthetic preferences of the respondents to transitional landscapes (darker than the normal exposure, slightly blurred and closer to black & white rather than colour images) reveals visual stereotypes on how the issues raised by transitional landscapes (urban expansion, unemployment, violence, exploitation of children and racism) are depicted in literature and cinema iconography.

Contribution to knowledge

The research contribution to knowledge starts in Chapter One with the introduction of *Transitional spaces* which are the unorganised 'in the process of change' spaces situated between rural and urban zones. Their characteristics are ephemerality, mobility and lack of clear boundaries, symbols, monuments and therefore of status.

The research continues with the interrogation of the idea of *Transitional landscapes* in photography. As transitional landscapes I refer to the photographic depiction of transitional spaces. The characteristics of transitional landscapes are their suspension in front of the established aesthetic attitudes on landscape, absence of historic references and elements of symbolic value and iconographic austerity.

Chapter Two contributes to knowledge by the formulation of categories on the narrative strategies that photography uses in Landscape photography. The investigation deals with the narrative potential created solely by one or many photographs along with the use of text and photograph.

The contribution to knowledge on Chapters Three and Four has to do with the experimental methodological approach starting with the process of creating the visual questionnaires and the analysing of findings.

A characteristic of this research has been that the methodological concerns became intertwined with the content of the practice part of the research. For example findings from the methodological tool developed into an element of my art practice. In the end findings were not perceived only as documents but as practice with the written document being a part of this practice. Narratives as part of the concerns of this research became a part of the practice as much as a way of exploring them. The main research contribution has been in the amalgamation between methodology and the art practice itself as applied by a practitioner. Thus this contribution is neither separately the practical work produced nor the critical concepts developed but their combination in an art practice and its epistemology.

The analysis of the findings revealed that:

- The iconographic austerity of transitional landscapes appears as a fertile ground for narratives as indicated by the high percentage of respondents who wrote narratives, the high percentage of narratives compared to descriptions and transformations and the respondents approach more as narrators rather than observers.
- The narratives demonstrated a detectable range of characters, events, preconceptions and narrative genres about transitional landscapes.
- The narratives on transitional landscapes reveal also that the respondents seemed to wish to categorise the images more as an urban or rural environment rather than a transitional environment.
- A darker, closer to black & white landscape image is more responsive to narratives rather than the normal exposure and colour version of the same landscape image. Furthermore, transitional landscapes seem more narratively responsive in their blurred version.

- Transitional landscapes create more pessimistic than optimistic responses justifying landscape theories based on the psychological approach to landscape.

Finally, the original contribution to knowledge in the artwork extends the boundaries of what is currently considered as the landscape genre in terms of collective authoring whereby the imagery acknowledges the process of interpretation and incorporates this into the work itself in both implied and explicit ways.

The artwork introduces a new aesthetic and a new concept in terms of what is currently considered as the landscape genre and in terms of the implications for reader-response theory in art practices. The artwork enriches transitional landscapes with the viewers' responses, and thus encourage us to think of how much of our perception is subjective, and how much the process of looking is also a process of imagining.

The innovative nature of the practice of this research could be characterized as developmental, collaborative and transformative. The questionnaires lead to an artwork which introduces us to a new relation between representation, perception- where the visual sign (transitional landscape) becomes the prompt for a subjective, fictional, temporal and linguistic response, which is then recorded, informs and transforms the visual signs, to the extent that the responses become the sign- becomes a landscape of responses that collectively/visually replace the image.

Photography's interrogation of wasteland imagery such as the *New Topographics* group has opened up the possibility of focusing on disdained landscape areas such as transitional landscape, so that this visual type can become included within photography landscape studies in the future. In my concerns for transitional

landscapes, I am investigating an aspect of a landscape genre, which has been marginalized in both traditional photographic history and subsequent critical debates. Bearing these in mind, through future research and practice I hope to contribute further to the development of landscape discourse building on my use of the concept of transitional landscape as articulated in this thesis.

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