

## CHAPTER 2

# THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF PERCEPTUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The following sub-problem and hypothesis are of relevance to Chapter 2 and will be addressed in this chapter:

**Sub-problem 1: What are the role and status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society?**

**Hypothesis 1: The perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society and forms part of sustainable environmental management. The role of the perceptual environment is not adequately recognised.**

## 2.1 THE STATUS OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

### 2.1.1 BACKGROUND

In Chapter 1 it has been stated that contemporary man does not tend to see aesthetics and beauty as an important environmental issue. It seems that in true Cartesian tradition the perceptual environment is isolated from the rest of the environment and aesthetics is seen as something that no respectable environmentalist should ever consider seriously. We have come to regard beauty as a luxury to be enjoyed by the rich and important – not a necessity of everyday life fundamental to our communal psychological and economic well-being. Beauty has been banned to the wilderness, the ecotourism experience or the higher-income suburban garden.

The root cause of this problem can be seen as a lack of proper environmental ethics and contemporary society's consumeristic mindset which culminates in a pragmatic and egocentric

approach to environmental management. This approach not only tends to neglect the environment in general but, when it is recognised, tends to focus on more tangible and pragmatic aspects, such as water and air pollution, which have a more direct influence on the physical well-being of man.

This problem can be traced back to the tendency of most environmental world-views to be pragmatic and even egocentric. Even when a definite attempt is made to avoid a pragmatic approach, the centrality of man tends to resurface. The argument that crops up again and again in discussions about sustainable development is that sustainable development is necessary since it will ultimately be man who will benefit by such an approach, and that man's survival depends on a more sustainable and responsible approach to environmental management. The following serve as a good example in this regard:

Miller (1996, p.711) differentiates between two main types of environmental world-views: those that put humans at the centre of things and those that do not. According to Miller, the essence of the **human-centred world-view** can be seen as managing the earth's life-supporting systems for the sole benefit of man, together with the pursuit of unlimited economic growth. In contrast to this world-view the **biocentric and ecocentric environmental world-views** focus on the inherent or intrinsic value of all forms of life (the value that exists regardless of these life forms' potential or actual use to man) and on the value of earth's life-support systems. The biocentric and ecocentric world-views are seen by Miller as a more responsible and sustainable approach. However, Miller contradicts himself to a certain extent since these more responsible views can still be interpreted as having a pragmatic dimension on the grounds of the following statement made by him (1996, p.714): *At this level, our survival and economies are viewed as being totally dependent on Earth's natural processes...* (Emphasis added.) It is therefore clear that Miller's attempt to artificially polarise environmental world-views in two extreme opposites, in order to find a world-view that excludes mankind, was not successful since even his non-human world-view cannot ignore the importance of mankind.

## 2.1.2 THE RECOGNITION OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND LEGISLATION

A more practical and accurate way to determine the current status of the perceptual environment and to test the above impression of contemporary society is to look at the recognition the perceptual environment enjoys in environmental policy and legislation.

The perceptual environment does not enjoy a great deal of prominence in policy and legislation. According to Foote (1999, online), the concept of *beauty* does not form part of the conservation movement's agenda, while the word does not even appear in recent statements on environmental sustainability and community liveability. The words *beauty*, *scenic* and *aesthetics* are entirely absent from recent policy documents and declarations in the United States. This includes the vision statement and goals of the *President's Council on Sustainable Development*, the *Charter of the Congress for New Urbanism* and the *Declaration on Environment and Development* of the *American Society of Landscape Architects*.

Even *Agenda 21* does not recognise the role of the psychosphere and perceptual environment, except for a few casual references to aspects such as the spiritual environment, psychological well-being, environmental quality and noise control as part of environmental health (United Nations, Earth Summit). This document, which forms a blueprint for action for global sustainable development into the 21st century, can be seen as one of the most important international policy documents on environmental management.

Although the perceptual environment is ignored more often than not, current environmental policy and legislation in many countries contain elements that refer implicitly to the perceptual environment and which may provide a basis for a better recognition of aesthetics as an integral part of environmental management. This is especially true of countries, states or provinces where the perceptual environment is of critical value for tourism. The legislation and policies quoted in this regard provide only representative examples, and the intention is not to reflect a comprehensive analysis of such legislation and policy or to draw up a complete inventory thereof.

### 2.1.2.1 Definition of the environment

In defining the term *environment*, environmental policy and legislation often make use of the following interrelated words which refer implicitly to the perceptual environment:

#### (a) Landscape

Human experience, *perception* and appreciation can be seen as the most important element of landscape: *...the notion of man as the “perceiver” is central to the idea of landscape. Without man there would be no landscape, only land* (Kirkbride, 1997, p.24). The word *landscape* can therefore literally be equated to *perceptual environment*. (See 1.4.1.) The following serve as examples of the term *landscape* being used in legislation and policy in defining *environment*:

- *Environment Protection Act, Act V of 1991 of Malta* (Republic of Malta, online), section 51: Landscape *mean[s] both open country, village and town aspect;*
- *The White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p.9) refers to agricultural, rural and physical and cultural landscapes.

#### (b) Place

Used in conjunction with landscape, place has a definite aesthetic and perceptual connotation. According to Motloch (1991, p.279): *“Place” is the mental construct of the temporal-spatial experience that occurs as the individual ascribes meaning to settings, through environmental perception and cognition.* (Emphasis added.) Place refers to perceptual experiences of deeper significance and emotional involvement. According to Rypkema (1996, p.58): *A place is imbued with something beyond its physical characteristics - something intangible, an experience, a sense, a power, a quality of being good.* Gussow (cited in Walter p.209) sees place as *a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feelings.*

- In defining *environment* *The White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p.9) refers to *physical and cultural landscapes and places.* (Emphasis added.)

### (c) Culture

This word is often used in relation to other words and phrases implying a perceptual and aesthetic connotation. The following serve as examples to illustrate this point:

- In defining *environment* *The White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p.9) refers to **places of cultural significance and the qualities that contribute to their value** and **physical and cultural landscapes and places**. (Emphasis added.) Apart from linking the term *culture* to the words *places* and *landscapes*, which have a definite aesthetic connotation, this white paper makes an indisputable connection between *culture* and *aesthetics* by stating that cultural resources include **objects, sites and properties of ... aesthetic ... significance** (RSA, 1998, May, p.72). (Emphasis added.)
- The *National Environmental Management Act* of South Africa (*Act No. 107 of 1998*) (*NEMA*), section 1(1)(xi) refers to *cultural properties* as part of the term *environment* (RSA, 1998, Nov.).
- *The Environment Act*, 1986 of New Zealand, section 2, includes *cultural conditions* in defining environment (New Zealand, 1986).

### (d) Aesthetic

This key concept is contained in various definitions of *environment*. The following acts serve as examples in this regard:

- *National Environmental Management Act*, of South Africa (*Act No. 107 of 1998*), section 1(1)(xi) (RSA, 1998, Nov.).
- (xi) *“environment” means the surrounding within which humans exist and that are made up of –*
- (i) *the land, water and atmosphere of the earth;*
  - (ii) *micro-organisms, plant and animal life;*
  - (iii) *any part or combination of (i) and (ii) and the interrelationship among and between them;*
- and*

(iv) *the physical, chemical, aesthetic and cultural properties and conditions of the foregoing that influence human health and well-being*

□ *The Environment Act, 1986 (New Zealand), section 2 (New Zealand, 1986).*

*“Environment” includes –*

(a) *Ecosystems and their constituent parts; and*

(b) *All natural and physical resources; and*

(c) *The social, economic, aesthetic, and cultural conditions which affect the environment or which are affected by changes to the environment*

### 2.1.2.2 Main environmental right

The following examples indicate that the citizen's main environmental right not only includes physical health and well-being, but also psychological health and well-being:

#### (a) Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

According to Section 24(a) of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa *everyone has the right to - (a) an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; ...*

According to the *White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, pp.41; 72) *this includes their cultural interests in the environment.* Furthermore, this white paper sees *objects, sites and properties of ... aesthetic ... significance* as part and parcel of cultural resources. Barnard (1999, p.49) states that although our courts still have to define the precise extent of this main environmental right, the *health or well-being* of people covers a wide field. *Adverse impacts on health and well-being can also be caused by ... light and noise pollution and unreasonable visual degradation* (Barnard, 1999, p.50).

#### (b) Constitution of the State of Montana

Barnard (1999, p.50, footnote) refers to the following case: The Constitution of the American State of Montana grants every citizen the inalienable right to a clean and healthful environment. In *State v Bernhard* 173 Mont. 464, 468, 568 P.2d 136, 138 (1977) the Montana Supreme Court in referring to the Constitution *found that the state now has a valid reason for regulating based on*

*aesthetics*. The court held that no compensation was payable to the owner of an auto-wrecking facility situated in full view of the community where the state law required of the owner to shield junked cars from the public view for aesthetic reasons.

### (c) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 of the United States of America (NEPA)

Section 101(b) of NEPA removes any doubt about the extent of the main environmental right:

*In order to carry out the policy set forth in this Act, it is the continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to use all practicable means, consist with other essential considerations of national policy, to improve and coordinate Federal plans, functions, programs, and resources to the end that the Nation may – 2. assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and **aesthetically** and culturally **pleasing** surroundings;* (USA, online). (Emphasis added.)

### (d) National Environmental Management Act of South Africa

According to section 2(2) of NEMA, *environmental management must place people and their needs at the forefront of its concern, and serve their physical, **psychological**, developmental, **cultural** and social interests equitably* (RSA, 1998, Nov.). (Emphasis added.)

#### 2.1.2.3 Sustainable management of tourism resources

Many policy documents recognise the importance of managing tourism resources in a sustainable manner. Aesthetic or perceptual resources, such as landscapes and townscapes, can be seen as the heart of tourism resources. One of the objectives of the *White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p.33) is *to ensure the sustainable management and respect for the integrity of **landscapes** and other environmental assets* as tourism resources. (Emphasis added.)

The World Travel and Tourism Council and the World Tourism Organisation (WTTC *et al.*, p. 30) also see aesthetic resources as an important part of sustainable tourism:

*It (sustainable tourism) is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and **aesthetic** needs can be fulfilled while*

*maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems.* (Emphasis added.)

#### 2.1.2.4 Visual impact management

Visual impact management is included in the environmental policies of most countries. One of the objectives of the *White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p. 34) is *to ensure that the visual impact of development receives due consideration, particularly in areas of cultural or historic significance or areas of scenic beauty.*

The Environment Protection Act, 1991 of Malta, section 40, requires that an environmental impact assessment shall, among other things, identify, describe and assess the effects of a project on the landscape (Republic of Malta, online).

#### 2.1.2.5 Other principles implicating an aesthetic and perceptual dimension

The following environmental principles contained in policy and legislation also imply the inclusion of an aesthetic and perceptual dimension in environmental management:

##### (a) Anthropocentric approach to environmental management

When the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), popularly known as the Brundtland Commission, was appointed in the early 1980s man was given a central position in environmental management by recognising the interrelationship between sustained economic growth for the benefit of man and the protection of the environment. *Environment and development are not separate challenges; they are inexorably linked* (WCED, 1987, p.37). According to the *White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p.15), this approach is described as *environmentally sustainable people centred development*. Section 2(2) of *NEMA* states that *environmental management must place people and their needs at the forefront of its concern, and serve their physical, psychological, developmental, cultural and social interests equitably* (RSA, 1998, Nov.). (Emphasis added.) An anthropocentric approach is especially important in developing countries with high population densities, high unemployment figures and ever-increasing pressure on natural resources.



An anthropocentric approach to environmental management implies the centrality of man as perceiver of the environment. Seen in this light the importance of the aesthetic and perceptual environment cannot be disputed. Since aesthetic appreciation can be seen as one of the characteristics that distinguish man from other living beings, aesthetics should form an important element of human-centred environmental management. The introduction of an anthropocentric approach to environmental policy and legislation highlights the perceptual environment.

### (b) Holism and the total environment

Holism can be seen as one of the most important principles of environmental management in recent times. This principle is acknowledged by *inter alia* the following policy documents and legislation:

#### □ NEMA section 2(4)(b) (RSA, 1998, Nov.):

*Environmental management must be integrated, acknowledging that **all elements of the environment are linked and interrelated**, and it must take into account the effects of decisions on all aspects of the environment and all people in the environment by pursuing the selection of the best practicable environmental option.*  
(Emphasis added.)

#### □ White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa (RSA, 1998, May, p.18):

*...government policy embodies a bold paradigm shift in its approach to environmental management. It introduces an integrated and coordinated management regime that: - addresses the total environment and all human activities impacting on it, ...*

#### □ The Environment Protection Act, 1991, of Malta, section 51 interprets *environment* as *the whole of the elements and conditions, natural and man-made, existing on earth...* (Republic of Malta, online).

Since holism is seen as such an important principle, perceptual resource management has to be seen as an integral part of environmental management.

## 2.2 THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF PERCEPTUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

### 2.2.1 THE CREATION OF MORE PLEASANT AND HEALTHY HUMAN LIVING ENVIRONMENTS

Man has a basic need for pleasing sights and surroundings. Due to the complexity and pace of modern life, and especially urban life, the psychological role of the aesthetic environment is becoming more and more important. John Muir (cited by Foote, online), the 19<sup>th</sup> century American conservationist, once said: *We need beauty as well as bread*. This simple but true statement is becoming more relevant every day.

In his *Introduction to Landscape Design*, Motloch (1991, pp.) analyses various views on the experience of landscape. Of special interest is the view according to which man experiences landscape as *place*, and where the individual and the environment are inextricably bound in oneness, while the sensing of healthy places is seen as an essential dimension of human health and well-being (Motloch, 1991, p.20). This viewpoint was strongly influenced by the philosopher Heidegger (1977) and the architect Norberg-Schulz (1980). When one looks at the important role of the aesthetic environment in mental health, sufficient evidence is found in support of this viewpoint. According to Theodore Roszak (cited by Foote, online):

*Stress managers will tell you that one of their most successful techniques for reducing stress is visualization. If you ask them what people visualize when they wish to relax, they never say parking lots or freeways or baseball stadiums. What do they mention? Well, we know the answer: forests and mountains and seacoasts.*

Professor Roger Ulrich (Foote, online) of the University of Texas studied the effect of visual pollution on commuters and found a strong correlation between blighted landscapes and buildup of high stress levels by the end of their commute.

Various studies, such as those conducted by Gallagher (1993), Oldenburg (1991) and Kemmis (1990), indicate that place, and by implication the aesthetic environment, has an immense impact on how we think and act as human beings. They also conclude that the built environment is, overall, getting worse instead of better and that a marked shift has been taking place away from the interaction between people and their place. These studies indicate that sense of place and spirit of community are important for aspects such as public safety, the crime rate, cultural development, neighbourliness, mental health, conflict resolution and urban decay; in short, for the creation of more pleasant and healthy living environments.

Bell (1997, p.21), referring to Berleant (1992), recognises the influence of the aesthetic environment on the potential of human lives: *The starting point for an understanding of the aesthetics of the environment in general ... is the recognition that the setting for our lives has a powerful influence on the quality and character of its contents and possibilities.* And in *The Experience of Place* Tony Hiss (cited by Foote, online) writes that:

*We all react, consciously and unconsciously, to the places where we live and work, in ways we scarcely notice ... Places have an impact on our sense of self, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done, the ways we interact with other people, even our ability to function as citizens in a democracy. In short, the places where we spend our time affect the people we are and can become.*

Mumford (1975, p. 344) puts perceptual needs at the same level as basic biological needs: *To starve the eye, the ear, the skin, the nose is just as much to court death as to withhold food from the stomach.*

The American legal system has also recognised the importance of an aesthetic pleasant human living environment.

*Earlier in the 20th century aesthetics was deemed by some courts as a suspect or second-rate basis for the exercise of the police power. But urban living has become increasingly complex and has produced problems of crowding and blight unforeseen in those simpler times. Those changes have brought about an expanded view of the police power, and most courts in this decade recognize aesthetics as a valid part of the general welfare for the preservation of which, the police power may legitimately be exercised. (Judge Sharp in Lamar-Orlando*

*Outdoor Advertising v. City of Ormond Beach, 415 So.2d 1312, 1314 (Fla. 5th DCA 1982) as quoted by Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online,1)*

and

*Pollution is not limited to the air we breath and the water we drink; it can equally offend the eye and the ear (Chief Justice Warren Burger as quoted by Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online, 1).*

Psychological health also relates directly to physiological health. A study undertaken at the University of Delaware showed that surgical hospital patients who looked out of windows at clumps of trees had shorter hospital stays, received fewer negative comments in nursing reports and took fewer potent pain killers than surgical patients who looked at a brick wall. (Ebenreck, 1989, p.54). These findings imply that the aesthetic environment may have significant implications for health costs.

According to Motloch (1991, p31):

*Our world society is today characterised by much homelessness, crime, stress, and a high incidence of what is referred to as “diseases of civilization,” including heart disease, cancer, and strokes. These are all indications of a psychologically unhealthy culture. A large part of this unhealthiness is attributable to the fact that the designed urban environment does not address user psychological needs. This, in turn, speaks for the necessity to design healthy environments as one takes a holistic view of human health.*

Currently environmental management in general does not address psychological needs sufficiently. It tends to concentrate on noise pollution only, while other sensory aspects such as the visual environment go unnoticed.

### 2.2.1.1 Community identity and involvement

The aesthetic environment and the experience of place are essential in creating community identity. Motloch (1991, p.20) describes the importance of this process as follows: *The making of place, as human expression and concentration of meaning, is seen to be one of the major efforts of human existence.* Placeness and community identity tend to reinforce each other. According to Rypkema (1996, p.60) community and place are inseparable.

*“Place” is the vessel within which the “spirit” of community is stored; “community” is the catalyst that imbues a location with a sense of place... The character of our built environment, historic areas<sup>11</sup> and others, is directly related to both the strength of our communities and the quality of place.*

Community and place provide the individual with a sense of belonging, identity and security. In the words of McCloskey (online): *If you don't know where you are, then you don't know what you're doing.*

The aesthetic environment plays a very important role by giving dignity to poorer communities. In their *Guidelines for Human Settlement Planning and Design* the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR, Chapter 2, pp.4-5) describes this role as follows:

*Positively performing environments reflect powerful sensory qualities. They are places which are aesthetically appealing and which add to the quality of peoples' lives.*

*The quality of the public spatial environment plays a critical role as far as the sensory qualities of settlements are concerned... The role of public spaces in the lives of the urban poor is particularly critical. When people are poor, the full range of a household's needs cannot be adequately met by the individual dwelling. Accordingly, a significant part of their lives is played out in public spaces. If properly made, these spaces can give dignity and a sense of permanence to environments.*

Since community and place are inseparable, dignified environments give rise to dignified communities.

Sense of place and community pride encourage strong citizen involvement. *When a sense of place is strong, people have a clear idea of why they like living in a city and what they want to support with their dollars and energy* (Ebenreck, 1989, p.55).

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<sup>11</sup> By reflecting the history of communities the landscape or visual environment *allows us to develop a better understanding of who we are, by giving us an understanding of how we came to be. It reinforces our collective consciousness as a culture by focusing on our shared history* (Motloch, 1991, p.19).

### 2.2.1.2 Environmental awareness and care

Environmental awareness and care are important ingredients of pleasant and healthy living environments.

Since placeness promotes community identity and involvement it might be used as a basic tool for creating environmental awareness and environmental care at a community level. In the first place, placeness can therefore be seen as the driving force behind environmental awareness through community involvement. Secondly, aesthetics and placeness form a perceptual framework within which environmental awareness becomes tangible and manifest itself, and within which the object of awareness can be visualised, loved and respected. In the words of David McCloskey (online):

*We need the poetics of place as much as the ecologies... We don't love "ecosystems" in general, rather we love specific places and regions. An ecosystem remains a concept, not a percept; while outlining a system of exchanges in an abstract space, an ecosystem is no place in particular. An ecosystem remains a bodiless abstraction unless it is incarnated in specific places; otherwise, it floats without "a name or local habitation," thus remaining, as the poet reminds us, "an airy nothing" ... For the place is alive, has a face and name all its own which invokes its special character and calls the people home. The spirit in each land must be recognized and respected.*

Rohe (online) describes the role of aesthetics to create love and respect for places as follows:  
*Only a place worthy of our respect will command respect. If we no longer care how our communities look, then respect will suffer.*

Aesthetics and placeness can be seen as a catalyst for environmental awareness and environmental care, including both the biophysical and the cultural environments.

### 2.2.1.3 Crime and vandalism

Placeness and aesthetics may also discourage crime and vandalism, since it creates a psychological environment that is not conducive to these practices.

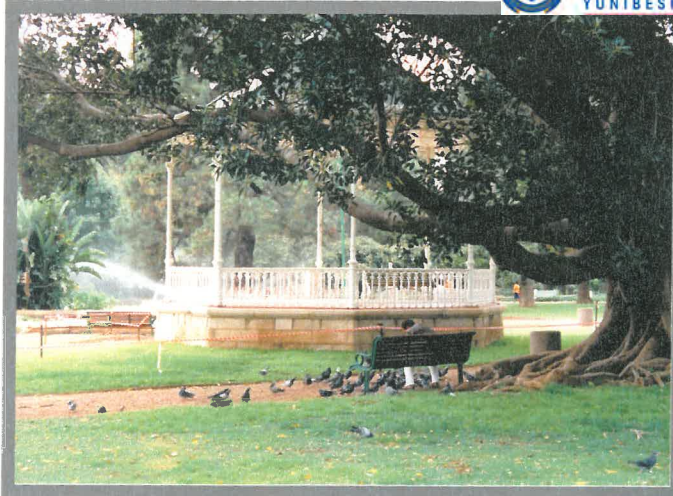


Photo dates: 1997

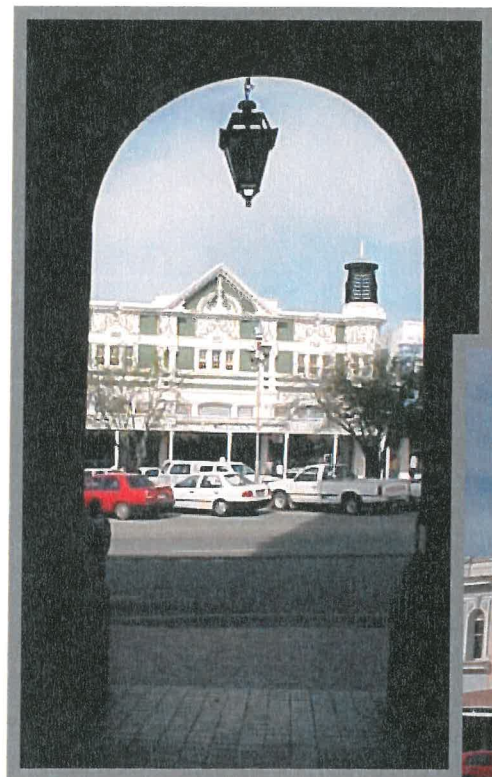
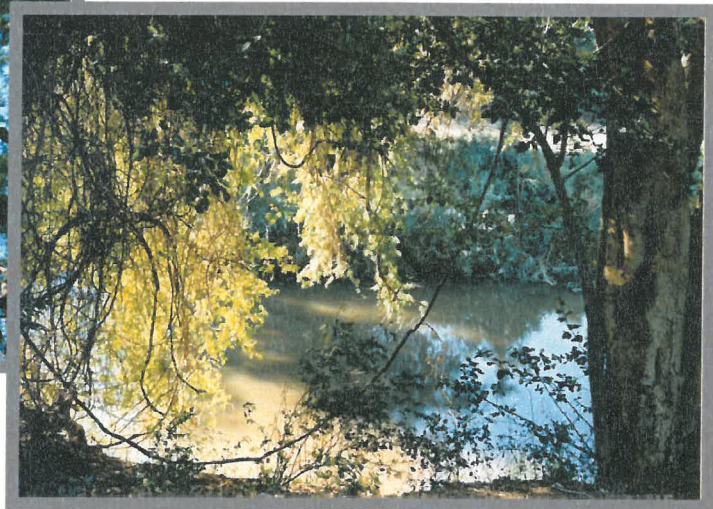
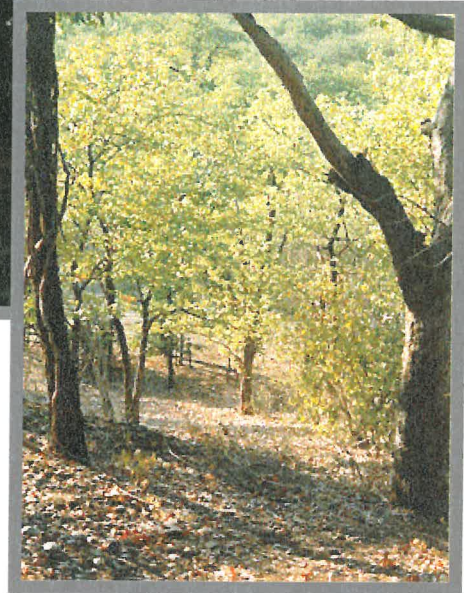


Photo dates: May 2001



The perceptual environment makes an important contribution to the creation of more healthy and pleasant human living environments. It is important for aspects such as the potential of human lives, discouragement of crime and vandalism, cultural development, community identity and involvement, environmental awareness and care, mental and physical health, conflict resolution and urban decay. Moreleta Spruit, Pretoria (top right); Burgers Park, Pretoria (top left); High Street, Grahamstown (bottom).

**Figure 2.1**  
**Aesthetics and human living environments**



Sense of place - Images from the Pafuri-area, Kruger National Park: Aesthetics and placeness form a perceptual framework within which environmental awareness becomes tangible and manifests itself, and the object of awareness can be visualised, loved and respected. Placeness becomes a framework for visualising and giving a face to abstract concepts such as ecosystems.

**Figure 2.2**  
**Placeness and environmental awareness**



Not only crime, but also crime-related problems such as the fear of crime play an important role in the quality of the psychological environment and therefore the quality of the human living environment. In some instances fear of crime might even be a more important factor to deal with than actual crime itself. In the words of Jane Jacobs (1972, pp.39-40):

*...if a city's streets are safe from barbarism and fear, the city is thereby tolerably safe from barbarism and fear. When people say that a city, or part of it, is dangerous or is a jungle, what they mean primarily is that they do not feel safe on the sidewalks... The bedrock attribute of a successful city district is that a person must feel personally safe and secure on the street among all these strangers.... It does not take many incidents of violence on a city street, or in a city district, to make people fear the streets. And as they fear them, they use them less, which makes the streets still more unsafe.*

The physical and aesthetic deterioration of living environments is conducive to placelessness, crime and crime-related problems (such as fear of crime). According to Taylor and Harrell (1996, online):

*Neighborhood- and block-level [research] results ... indicate connections between physical deterioration, features presumably related to deterioration, or perceptions of deterioration and crime-related problems, crime or changes in crime*

(cf. Schurman & Kobrin, 1986; Perkins, Meeks & Taylor, 1992).

According to the *Broken Windows Theory*:

*...at the community level, disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence. Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken. This is true in nice neighborhoods as in rundown ones. Window-breaking does not necessarily occur on a large scale because some areas are inhabited by determined window-breakers whereas others are populated by window-lovers; rather, one unrepaired broken window is a signal no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing. (It has always been fun) (Wilson & Kelling, 1982, online).*

*Broken windows* symbolise not only physical and aesthetic disorder, but also public disorder in the form of disreputable or obstreperous and unpredictable people such as beggars, drunks, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes and loiterers. Just as placeness and community identity are inextricably linked, so also aesthetic disorder and public disorder. In other words, aesthetic order enhances public order and *vice versa*.

Order reflects community spirit and involvement. It indicates that the community cares, and when people feel safer owing to an aesthetically pleasant and *orderly* environment, this contributes to the development of community identity and community involvement. The first *broken window* that is not addressed in time, signals to the disorderly element that nobody cares. Consequently more *windows* are broken which leaves a more significant mark of aesthetic and public disorder. In this manner the beginning of a breakdown in community control and involvement is ushered in. A perception is created that crime is on the rise, which leads to fear. This leads to further modification of residents' behaviour and further breakdown of community involvement and control, both in terms of aesthetic order and crime prevention. And so disorder and disorderliness, the breakdown of community control and rising crime are caught in a downwards and destructive spiral. Crime escalates and such areas become vulnerable to a serious criminal invasion (Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

In the words of former New York mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani (online):

*If a climate of disorder and lack of mutual respect is allowed to take root, incidence of other, more serious antisocial behavior will increase. There's a continuum of disorder. Obviously, murder and graffiti are two vastly different crimes. But they are part of the same continuum, and a climate that tolerates one is more likely to tolerate the other.*

The *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Movement* also recognises the role of aesthetics in crime prevention. According to one of the design principles propagated by this movement aesthetics and visual elements play an important role in expressing territoriality. Placeness should be seen as an important factor in establishing territoriality and promoting community involvement in crime prevention. *People protect territory that they feel is their own and have a certain respect for the territory of others* (NCPC, online).

The reduction or prevention of crime and crime-related problems such as the fear of crime contributes not only to the quality of life and more pleasant and healthy living environments, but also to tourism development and economic growth.

Aesthetic pleasant living environments and a strong sense of place should not be seen as a magic formula to solve all crime problems. Although such environments may play an important role in this regard, various other factors should also be taken into consideration in preventing crime. Creating aesthetic pleasant environments is especially a problem in the crime-ridden developing urban communities of South Africa. Any available open space is normally occupied illegally by squatters and home gardens and public streets are often the only space that can be used for creating aesthetic pleasant environments.

### 2.2.2 PROMOTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY

Contemporary society often experiences difficulty in dealing with the environment in a holistic manner, with the result that environmental management is often approached in a fragmented way. Motloch (1991, p.31) describes the basis of this problem as follows:

*Cartesian philosophy and newtonian (sic) science have caused a schism between art and science. They have placed in opposition intuitive and rational thinking. They have pitted logic against feeling. This rift has contributed in no small way to the psychological ills of contemporary society.*

A schism between art and science is reached when the perceptual experience is limited to a mere visual experience in the sense of interpreting visual forms on the basis of some language of art, for example, as form, colour, texture, proportion, balance, symmetry, unity, variety, and so on. The perceptual experience should also be seen as the ability to read and understand the landscape in terms of ecological processes<sup>12</sup> as well as cultural forces<sup>13</sup>. In the words of Motloch

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<sup>12</sup> *Ecological forces operating over time create regional landscapes, that is, regionally differing sets of expressions... Each landscape is an integrated set of expressions, which holistically responds to a multiplicity of influences. As systems, they function differently, one from another; as visual resource they express themselves quite differently; but each has its unique spirit of place, or "Genius Loci" (Motloch, p.53).*

<sup>13</sup> *The neat hedgerow-bordered fields and cosy villages which epitomize England in the minds of many people arose as a response to economic forces operating in a particular time, place and cultural context very different from those operating in the USA which have produced the high-rise, large-scale urban landscapes which epitomize that country. The landscapes of western, Christian cultures are varied but related to each other by certain sets of values and differ*

(1991, p.45): *A given landscape is read both as form and as pattern... "Pattern recognition" is the ability ... to read the landscape and understand its elements and forces.* In other words, the ability to understand process and change. Aesthetics cannot be separated from natural, ecological and cultural processes in the landscape. It cannot be separated from the forces of which it is a product.<sup>14</sup> This facet of the perceptual experience therefore promotes environmental integrity and a holistic approach to environmental management by providing a mechanism for interpreting the functioning of and interrelationships between environmental systems.

The perceptual experience is indispensable for and inseparable from sound environmental management.

*Ours is a society in which we are attempting to plan and to manage the physical environment, but in the process we are either punishing or neglecting man's senses. It is almost as though we are ignorant of the fact that it is through the senses that our physical environment can be apprehended, appreciated - and criticized* (Barr 1970, p.1).

The aesthetic should not only be seen as an environmental component to be managed, but should also form part of the management process.

Today direct contact between the environmental manager and the physical environment tends to become less and less important. In this modern information age planner and designer have become detached from *reality* through a lack of personal perceptual involvement in the landscape and environment. Contemporary man is becoming more and more isolated in an electronic world and is increasingly losing contact with and a feeling for the physical environment. Owing to the immensity of the task of environmental management and the lack of manpower and funds, the manager has to rely very heavily on technological tools and rational deterministic procedures. Bell (1996, p.8) refers to *a tendency to rely on map-based assessments where the logic of the analytical process is paramount*.<sup>15</sup> However, no matter how sophisticated and timesaving,

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*very markedly from those of Moslem, Hindu or Buddhist societies which each have their own deeply rooted cultural attitudes to the land* (Bell, 1996, p.3).

<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to note that the visual environment forms an inseparable part of the rest of the environment since certain basic principles are relevant to both the ecological and the visual environments. For instance, order exists in any ecosystem (interrelationship between elements) and any ecosystem needs diversity (biodiversity). Visual environment also needs diversity within unity.

<sup>15</sup> In architecture this rational and analytical tendency crystallised into the Modern Movement where form follows function and where appearance is therefore considered less important than function, but according to Bell (1996, p.6)

technology will never be able to replace on-site perceptual experience, which will still be needed to make a meaningful decision with regard to many an impact assessment. There is a definite relationship between aesthetic perception of landscape and *understanding* the functioning of its ecological processes and the environmental sensitivity and the potential of the setting. Onsite perception creates a framework for a holistic approach in the mind of the decision-maker. Aesthetics can be seen as a binding factor that cements all environmental elements together in the mind of the perceiver in order to be able to approach environmental management in a true synergistic manner. Through this process aesthetic perception acquires a deeper dimension and meaning.

### 2.2.3 CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF TOURISM RESOURCES

In the words of Foote (online): *Beauty is not only a feel-good matter, it's good business.* The economies of many areas rely heavily on tourism where visitors come to admire the natural scenery or urban streetscapes. However, the importance of visual resources should not be limited to major tourist attractions such as scenic landscapes and cultural streetscapes or highly designed landscapes or buildings. It is not only the highly designed elements or scenic settings in the landscape that are of value to the tourist but the ordinary elements of the landscape as well, the folk culture and vernacular tradition. The largest portion of the landscape consists of such common elements - areas dominated by vernacular expressions. The landscape of a specific culture or area can be seen as that culture's autobiography. The vernacular elements in the landscape communicate as much concerning the culture as the grand tradition (architectural monuments and highly designed elements). The vernacular tradition tells *us more about the actual culture and common life; the grand tradition more about the culture's grand aspirations, as viewed through the eyes of the design intelligentsia* (Motloch, 1991, p.9). The South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEA&T, 1998, p.v) makes the following statement with regard to tourism and the ordinary landscape:

*The visual environment also forms a backdrop to most other tourist activities such as game watching, touring, entertainment, shopping and sport. The visual*

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this movement *with its honesty of trying to express form out of function has not found a great deal of support among the users of many of the buildings it has produced. This may in part be due to the desire to be able to understand a building or urban landscape in terms of visual as well as functional patterns at a human scale, or it might be that many people consider them "ugly."*

*environment can be seen as the fabric that gives meaning and substance to any tourism experience.*

Tourist experience cannot be measured only against major attractions and the highlights of a visit, but should be measured against the total experience and diversity in experience during a visit to a country or region. The highlights of a visit can very easily be neutralised by the negative impact of visually polluted or degraded areas. A holistic approach to aesthetic resources is therefore needed.

Placeness forms the basis of such a holistic approach since it focuses on the phenomena of place from a broader perspective and not on individual elements. It also focuses on uniqueness. The tourism experience based on placeness includes a variety of landscape characters and places and can be described as follows:

*The immense variety, uniqueness, and individuality of places ...(to) move beyond the generalized understanding of an area, and seek to discover the uniqueness of the place... all places have their own special sense, and resultant value. [Placeness can stimulate] great numbers of people to travel around the world to experience a special city like Venice, or a region like the Alps (Motloch, 1991, p.19).*

Placeness or sense of place can therefore be seen as the most important ingredient of aesthetic resources, and a key ingredient for any tourism experience, whether it be impressive or ordinary resources.

#### 2.2.4 STIMULATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

According to Rypkema (1996, p.61), *a sense of place and the spirit of community will be crucial for successful economic development well into the next century.* Since sense of place, placeness or place can be equated to the aesthetic environment this statement implies that the aesthetic environment plays a crucial role regarding economic growth. Rypkema (1996, p.62) gives the following description of the synonymy between aesthetic environment and place: *The **physical characteristics of a community**, natural and manmade, new and old, are corporeal manifestations of place, and by extension, community.* (Emphasis added.)

Rypkema (1966, pp.61-62) explains the important contribution of place to economic growth as follows: Localisation plays an important role in the process of economic globalisation. The vital role of cities, towns and even neighbourhoods in the globalisation process should not be ignored. In other words, the environmental slogan *Think globally, act locally* can also be applied to economic development, or the term *global localisation* can be used. Quality of life can be seen as a very important variable in economic development decisions, while quality of life can be best expressed in terms of sense of place and spirit of community. There is currently a shift in economic development decisions from cities being location dependent to cities being place dependent, in other words, to cities which reflect a strong sense of place or placeness. It all boils down to a matter of community or city differentiation.

*In the free market, it is the differentiated product that commands a monetary premium. If in the long run we want to attract capital, to attract investment to our cities, we must differentiate them from anywhere else. It is our built environment that expresses, perhaps better than anything else, our diversity, our identity, our individuality, or differentiation* (Rypkema, 1996, p.62).

In the words of Kemmis, (1990, p.88):

*Any serious move by a local economic development organization goes hand in hand with an effort to identify and describe the characteristics of that locality which set it apart and give it a distinct identity.*

A five-year study of 35 cities by the Mississippi Research and Development Centre concluded:

*The way a community looks affects how both residents and visitors feel about it. An attractive community has a better chance at industry, including tourism* (Scenic America, online, 1).

The aesthetic environment also has a direct influence on the value of real estate.

*It is also worth recognizing that scenic or aesthetic values are a legitimate product of the landscape: it is well known that people will pay more for a house with an attractive view than for one without, and that the economies of many areas rely heavily on tourism where visitors come to admire the scenery, or use a beautiful landscape as a setting for other forms of recreation* (Bell, 1996, p.6).

More and more communities and organisations are starting to realise the positive relation between economic development and aesthetics. In the words of Karl Kruse, Executive Director of Scenic Missouri:

*Scenic Missouri believes that while growth might be inevitable, ugliness is not. If we are to protect and enhance our cultural and economic potential, we must reverse the “uglification” of Missouri. Scenic Missouri is dedicated to leading this effort* (Scenic Missouri, online).

## 2.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE NEGLECT OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

It has been shown that while the perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society it enjoys a relatively low status and is not adequately recognised. This is clearly illustrated by current environmental legislation and policy as has been shown in section 2.1.2.

The neglect of the perceptual environment is creating a problem in contemporary society. We can no longer escape from the pressures of city life by merely taking a vacation. The urban psychosphere is becoming worse each day, while the decay of the perceptual environment is spilling over from city to countryside. Breakaways take place at ever-shortening intervals, merely transplanting city stress and degradation into the vacation landscape. A stage will soon be reached where no amount of sunny beaches, blue skies or wilderness retreats will be able to erase the stress and pressures embedded into the lives of urban dwellers. One solution remaining is to start solving the problem at its source by improving the urban psychosphere.

The effective management of perceptual resources in both the urban and natural environments is becoming a crucial issue seen in the light of the increasing tempo of the deterioration of such resources. While the lack of environmental ethics in contemporary society can be seen as the basis of the problem of neglecting the perceptual environment, various other phenomena contribute to this situation. The following issues give an indication in this regard and need to be addressed in order to improve the state and recognition of the perceptual environment amongst the public, the tourism industry and other interest groups.



### 2.3.1 LACK OF INTEREST IN AND SUBJECTIVITY OF AESTHETICS

Contemporary man does not tend to see beauty and aesthetics as an important environmental resource and tends to exclude it from the rest of environmental management. It is often dismissed as an unimportant issue by assuming that disadvantaged communities are not interested in beauty since all they care about is the bare necessities for survival such as shelter, food and water. The question to be asked is how can that which is basic nourishment to the soul be reserved for a certain part of the community? It is to make oneself guilty of environmental discrimination. The aesthetic environment plays an important role in providing dignity and a sense of belonging to poorer communities. There is no need for aesthetic appreciation to be limited to highly designed elements in the landscape to be enjoyed by the *cultural elite* only. The interrelationship between ordinary people and the ordinary landscape or the vernacular elements of the landscape should also be considered.

*...the appreciation and enjoyment of townscape as such is not in the least limited to places where good architecture exists, nor to those who have expert eyes to see it. It is a pleasure to be got in any town that has some interest of form: and it can be enjoyed by anyone who cares to enjoy it* (Sharp, 1968, p.67).

A responsibility for sustainable aesthetic resource management should become part of the larger environmental stewardship by removing beauty from its isolated position of exclusivity and making it part of the public domain.

The lack of interest in the aesthetic environment can be ascribed partly to aesthetic illiteracy and the difficulty among the general public to grasp the basic visual principles needed to appreciate environmental aesthetics. According to Sharp (1968, p.6):

*The principles of good town-building, an understanding of the nature of town character, an informed appreciation of even the mere looks of a town have perhaps never been very highly developed among the general run of citizens - certainly they have not been so far the last hundred years and more.*

Subjectivity of aesthetics can be seen as another important reason why the perceptual environment is not often included in environmental management. Even in environmental education and awareness-raising the emphasis is placed on measurable environmental issues detrimental to the physical health of communities, such as water and air pollution. Apart from

noise pollution, which can be measured, the rest of the perceptual environment is not treated as an important issue, in all probability due to subjectivity and difficulty in measuring impacts related to such environments.

The low priority of the perceptual environment can also be seen as the result of a materialistic lifestyle aimed at ever-increasing consumption.

The problems of subjectivity and aesthetic illiteracy can be solved by developing a common language of aesthetics, and explaining basic aesthetic principles which can be understood by the general public and professionals alike. (cf. Bell, 1996, pp.7-8.) Together with ecology and the natural sciences, aesthetics should also become an integrated part of environmental education. In developing an aesthetic appreciation of the visual environment, local communities and the public in general will be motivated to take the responsibility for the management of their own local environments. Aesthetics need not be limited to the artistic minded and *eccentric*. In the words of Bell (1997, p.23):

*We need a better awareness of the link between nature, healthy ecosystems and aesthetics, and of the wider meaning and value of aesthetics beyond the superficial level which the subject frequently receives.*

### 2.3.2 SEPARATION OF SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL PLACE

Placeness and sense of place form a crucial part of the perceptual environment.

According to Jackson (online):

*Many of us have lost our sense of place. Lost our intimacy with nature, with our own neighbors and communities, with the other peoples and cultures of the world. We have lost our interconnectedness with both our private and shared places.*

And in the words of Deborah Tall (online):

*Few would dispute the fact that we exist in a culture which keenly feels a lack of community, of connectedness. There is no sense of place for some of us who dwell herein.*

The loss of placeness and sense of community can be ascribed to a variety of factors such as modern society's impersonal lifestyle, the lack of social space on community level, the pace of life, the private motor car and advanced telecommunication technologies. As a result of these factors the stage is set for more and more people to try and escape reality by creating place in cyberspace and building virtual communities as a substitute for real sense of place and community (cf. Tall, online). This is nothing more than an illusion of community, belonging, identity and placeness - virtual communities without place and an attempt to experience sense of place in the *placeless* realm of cyberspace. The computer and other electronic media such as television and the cellular phone are contributing to this loss by undermining the relationship between social and physical place (cf. Meyrowitz, 1985). With increasing use of *cyberplace* the public is likely to forget what it means to experience real sense of place and be part of a true community.

Sense of place can only be real when experiencing natural and cultural elements by having direct contact and involving all the human senses. Although cyberspace may play an important role in rallying support for aesthetic resource management, it may also have a negative influence in this regard by undermining real placeness and physical contact between community members. If this tendency persists, communities' involvement in perceptual resource management and the creation of placeness will become an ever-increasing problem in the future.

### 2.3.3 CARTESIAN AND COSMOPOLITAN DESIGN APPROACHES

Placeness is undermined even further by these two approaches.

Motloch (1991, p.278) describes the influence of the Cartesian design approach as follows:

*Contemporary cities are often characterized by well-designed physical elements (buildings and sites) that aggregate into chaotic, psychologically unhealthy wholes. This is because most decision-makers are designing the city by using a Cartesian design-the-piece paradigm. Many are also capriciously pursuing new styles, rather than focusing on the management of environmental quality and richness of human experience... They design buildings and sites rather than landscapes, and sometimes they mistakenly define design as form-generation, not experience making ... they concentrate on the design of settings or the elements they contain,*

*rather than the place that occurs in the mind as the individual experiences and imparts meaning to the settings they designed.*

The cosmopolitan design approach can be described as follows:

*As universal mass culture continues to spread into every corner of the earth, few significant regional landscapes are being built, particularly in North America – despite our great regional diversity. We seem, instead, to be caught in Rouseification, Disneyfication, museumification and every other form of mass kitsch and excessive self-consciousness. Global media and international trade agreements have created this universal culture expressed at the most mediocre level – a culture that results in endless placelessness (Landscape Architecture, 1994, p.70).*

It is important to give character back to the region, the landscape and the streetscape.

#### **2.3.4 ISLAND SYNDROME AND GLOBALISM**

The Cartesian and cosmopolitan design approaches are also reflected by Quammen's view on the *island syndrome and globalism*. According to Quammen (1997, p.58) there are two main factors that threaten biological and cultural diversity, namely ecological fragmentation and cultural unification.

*As we humans have spread across earth's surface, asserting ourselves as the most devastatingly successful species in the history of life, we have transformed the great continental landscapes ... by shrinking them overall and by dividing the remnants into pieces. Those pieces constitute ecological islands in an ocean of human dominion... The island syndrome challenges one of the most basic assumptions behind humanity's halfhearted efforts at nature conservation: that we can save the rain forest, the dry forest, the panda, the elephant, the multifarious richness of species and ecosystems, by setting aside a few tracts of expendable landscape and calling them parks, nature reserves, refuges. Truth is we can't. It won't work. It's not enough. Nature is too interconnected.*

According to Quammen (1997, p.58) the global village is also becoming a reality,

*...as advances in communication and travel carry Web sites, rap music, Marlboro ads, American TV and English speaking tourists to every corner of the planet, pushing local cultures and languages to extinction. [This] connectivity, with its*

*homogenizing effect, turns out to be just as destructive, in its own way, as the island syndrome... The dismal irony of our age is that these two seemingly opposite trends, cultural unification and ecological fragmentation, yield a common result: loss of diversity. The global archipelago will be a world that's starker, uglier, duller and lonelier for us humans as a species, and we'll all experience that loneliness together.*

Quammen's approach of fragmentation and unification is also relevant to perceptual resource management. In modern society perceptual resources are also treated as isolated areas of high scenic quality. These visual islands and islands of placeness are seen as the only visual resources that are worthwhile to be managed and conserved; they serve as areas to which the urban dweller can escape if the pressures of every-day life get too high or as isolated tourist attractions. Just as animal and plant species cannot survive and are vulnerable in isolated areas, so man cannot survive psychologically and is psychologically vulnerable in isolated areas of high scenic quality to which he has to escape from time to time. The isolation of areas of scenic value and the globalisation of the visual environment through cultural unification will also lead to a loss of diversity of visual resources.

### 2.3.5 FUNCTIONALISM

This approach of focusing on functionality while ignoring aesthetics has a negative impact on the psychosphere and the quality of the human living environment.

In the words of Sharp (1968, p.6): *How a town looks is no less important than how it works; and if in making a town work we destroy its looks we destroy a large part of its intrinsic value to our civilization.*

Towns are living organisms and should serve contemporary needs.

*...their buildings must certainly have a basis in utility. But they cannot, in a civilised society, be judged wholly according to whether or not they are in a state of perfect usefulness. They are also objects: objects of character, personality, and a physical appearance which, according to the kind of society they serve, may be as important, with a different kind of importance, as their mere usefulness may be.*

*Their associations, as well as their appearance, may also be regarded as important - important as part of the history of the society that built them and has used them* (Sharp, 1968, p.18).

Sharp (1968, p.19) speaks of towns in terms of *...the visual qualities, the architectural and social history and the sheer physical pleasantness that they nearly always display* - which may be very easily replaced by *... a modern neutrality where once there was grace and individual character.*

There is no need to have functionality at the cost of aesthetic appearance. This principle can be summed up as follows: *If functionality is necessary, ugliness is not.*

### 2.3.6 A NEED FOR MANAGING PLACENESS

The perceptual environment, with placeness at its centre, is under severe threat today.

According to McCloskey (online) *the homogenizing onslaught of [a] hyper-industrial global monoculture* leads to a decline in the diversity of species and cultures and of ecological legacies and cultural traditions:

*[It] invades and pervades ecosystems, economies and cultures everywhere in the world in the name of universal "progress." ... Mindful of how far things have gone already, of how little social and ecological fabric remains intact, and the depth of the mindlessness of day-to-day, we experience an unprecedented culture shock in our own society, future shock of the soul.*

It has become necessary to reject the onslaught of a global monoculture and to conserve, create and enhance placeness through public awareness and involvement.

*More than ever today we need to develop an ethic of place. No amount of governmental rules and regulations will ever suffice if people do not know the land, love and care for it in their hearts as their home... In rejecting the standardizing and centralizing thrusts of global monoculture, we opt for diversity and decentralization, a more appropriate scale for human affairs* (McCloskey, online).

The effective and sustainable management of visual resources is important in order to create placeness wherever possible. The urgency of such a step should be seen against the background of the dynamic character of modern society. Due to unlimited options provided by modern technology, the making and unmaking of regional identity and placeness has become much more complex, diffuse and unstable, with accelerating cycles of change (Landscape Architecture, 1994, pp.70.74).

*In previous slowly changing low-technology cultures, the landscapes that emerged usually had an integrated, strongly systemic sense, because of the limited choices available. With our rapidly changing heterogeneous culture and powerful technology, however, achieving a coherent sense now requires a strong landscape-as-place emphasis and aggressive management of placeness (Motloch, 1991, p.20).*

Such an approach should be seen in the light of the fact that *genius loci* is abstract and intangible, it tends to be more commonly understood on an emotional and subconscious level and the factors contributing to it may be very difficult to identify. It is therefore very sensitive, fragile and vulnerable. *One of the difficult aspects of genius loci is that we may instantly sense its presence but be unable to identify what has created it* (Bell, 1996, p.107). It may be difficult to create. In the words of Bell (1996, p.108), *...genius loci is an elusive quality which tends to be easier to conserve than create.*

In the process of conserving, creating and enhancing placeness it is important to follow a holistic approach, namely to consider the interrelationship between placeness, aesthetics, community, culture and ecology.

## 2.4 SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

In Chapter 1 it was pointed out that sustainable development and sustainable management are holistic in nature and that, if the principle of holism is applied consistently, it will have to include environmental aesthetics.

Landscape character and placeness, including both biophysical and cultural dimensions, can therefore be seen as an environmental asset that should be managed sustainably like all other

environmental assets (Beatley & Manning, 1997, p.32).<sup>16</sup> Something of this approach is reflected by the following statement made by John Ruskin (1981, pp. 176-177) almost 150 years ago:

*When we build let us think that we build for ever. Let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say as they look upon the labor and wrought substances of them. "See! This our fathers did for us."*

We are to conserve, contribute to and create placeness – a legacy we can leave to forthcoming generations. With the accelerating tempo of life today, the dynamic character of the visual scene and the uniformity of mass-produced building materials and building units it becomes more and more difficult to conserve, contribute to and create something timeless. It is important to see placeness as a continuing process which is passed on from generation to generation, a golden thread stretching through time, to be picked up by each new generation, and which once lost may be very difficult to find again.

The *Guidelines for Human Settlement Planning and Design* (CSIR, 2000, p.5) recognise the degree to which settlements reflect *timeless qualities* as a dimension of sustainability. As the phrase indicates, timeless qualities remain over time and are enriched by processes of chance.

The Countryside Agency in England is another institution that recognises visual resource management as part and parcel of sustainable resource management. The agency's *Countryside Character Initiative* treats sustainability in terms of the maintenance and enhancement of the diversity and the distinctiveness of landscape character (Swanwick, 1999).

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<sup>16</sup>In South Africa the eradication of alien invasive plant species through the *Work for Water Programme* should not only be praised for its contribution to biodiversity and water conservation but the value of its aesthetic dimension should also be recognised. Exotic species such as bluegum (*Eucalyptus spp.*), rooikrans (*Acacia cyclops*) and black wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) have a huge impact on placeness by neutralising distinctive regional characteristics and creating a *monoplace*. No visitor to South can be blamed if he/she should see the bluegum as South Africa's national tree. *Eucalyptus* species from Australia have been planted almost everywhere in South Africa, especially in areas with few or no indigenous tree species of significant proportions, with the result that the Highveld areas of the North West Province may become almost indistinguishable from certain Fynbos areas in the Overberg district of the Western Cape.



## 2.5 CONCLUSIONS

Sub-problem 1 covers the role and status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society, while Hypothesis 1 states that the perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society and that it forms part of sustainable environmental management. This hypothesis assumes, furthermore, that the role of the perceptual environment is not adequately recognised.

The following conclusions can be drawn from Chapter 2 with regard to Sub-problem 1 and Hypothesis 1:

### 2.5.1 THE STATUS OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

It is evident that the perceptual environment does not receive adequate recognition in contemporary society.

The root cause of this problem can be seen as a lack of proper environmental ethics, contemporary society's consumeristic mindset and a pragmatic and egocentric approach to environmental management. This approach not only tends to neglect the environment in general, but when it is recognised, tends to focus attention on more tangible and pragmatic aspects, such as water and air pollution, which have a more direct influence on the physical well-being of man. In order to solve this problem less pragmatic and more balanced environmental ethics, that would also recognise the importance of the psychosphere and the perceptual environment, is needed.

Environmental policy and legislation and the implementation thereof was used as an important indicator of the status of the perceptual environment. It has been shown that the perceptual environment occupies a relatively low status compared to other environmental issues and that even *Agenda 21* (United Nations, Earth Summit), which is the blueprint for global sustainable development into the 21st century, does not give recognition to the role of the psychosphere and the perceptual environment. However, current environmental legislation and policy contain certain key elements that provide a nucleus for the effective management of perceptual resources in future. It can almost be seen as an unrealised declaration of intent for recognising the important role of the perceptual environment. The only thing still needed to actualise this *legislative potential*

is a more acute awareness of the importance of aesthetics among the public as well as in government. The following can be mentioned regarding this *intention* of legislation and policy as analysed in 2.1.2:

- The inclusion of certain perceptually related words and concepts in defining the term *environment* points to a strong intention of such legislation and policy to recognise the perceptual environment as an integral part of environmental management.
- It has been shown that the citizen's main environmental right includes not only physical health and well-being, but also psychological health and well-being, which also encompass environmental aesthetics.
- Another indicator of the intention to recognise the perceptual environment is the inclusion of visual impact management in environmental impact assessments, and references to the importance of tourism resources in policy documents, which include aesthetic resources.

Certain environmental management principles contained in legislation and policy also provide a strong case for a stronger recognition of the importance of the perceptual environment. An anthropocentric approach advocated by environmental policy and legislation obligates the recognition of the importance of man as perceiver of the environment and therefore the importance of the perceptual environment. Likewise the holistic approach to environmental management followed by policy and legislation obligates the inclusion of the perceptual environment as part of the total environment.

Legal systems have already started to give recognition to the importance of an aesthetically pleasing human living environment, as a contributing factor to the general welfare of the public. Various court decisions have already been made on such grounds (Barnard, 1999, p.50, footnote; *Lamar-Orlando Outdoor Advertising v. City of Ormond Beach*, 415 So.2d 1312, 1314 (Fla. 5th DCA 1982) as cited in Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online,1).

## 2.5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Although this is not recognised adequately, it has become clear that perceptual resource management has an important role to fulfil in contemporary society.

Various meaningful conclusions can be drawn in this regard, which can be summarised as follows:

- Placeness and sense of place can be seen as the essence, the sum and substance of the perceptual environment. It forms the key to the sound management of the perceptual environment.
- The perceptual environment makes an important contribution to the creation of more healthy and pleasant human living environments. It is important for aspects such as the potential of human lives, discouragement of crime and vandalism, cultural development, community identity and involvement, environmental awareness and care, mental and physical health, conflict resolution and combating urban decay.
- Placeness and aesthetics have a high economic value. They form the fabric on which any tourism industry is based and promote economic development in general by attracting investments.
- The perceptual environment is not only a luxury to be enjoyed by the higher income groups, but it also plays an important role in the uplifting of disadvantaged communities through community identity and awareness and as a catalyst for economic development.
- Aesthetics and placeness not only have psychological and economic value and form an integral part of environmental resources to be managed sustainably, but also play a direct role in environmental management by providing an essential instrument for this purpose. They provide a perceptual framework within which environmental awareness and environmental management becomes tangible and manifests itself, and within which the objects of management can be visualised. The perceptual process also promotes

environmental integrity by creating a framework for a holistic approach in the mind of the environmental manager. Aesthetics can be seen as a binding factor that cements all environmental elements together in the mind of the perceiver in order to be able to approach environmental management in a true synergistic manner.

### 2.5.3 THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT AS PART OF SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

It may be concluded that the perceptual environment forms part of sustainable environmental management. This conclusion is supported by the fact that a mechanism can be provided for expressing aesthetic sustainability. The conservation, enhancement and management of placeness as a continuous process serve as an adequate mechanism for this purpose.

The most convincing argument for including the perceptual environment remains the concept of holism. If a holistic approach to environmental management is followed perceptual resource management should be seen as part and parcel of sustainable management. If the principle of holism is applied consistently we have no other choice but to include perceptual resource management.

This argument is supported by the fact that institutions such as the *Countryside Agency* in England and South Africa's *Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)* have already started to recognise the perceptual environment as an integral part of sustainable environmental management.

### 2.5.4 VERIFICATION OF HYPOTHESIS 1

From the above conclusions it is evident that the perceptual environment plays an important role in modern society and forms part of sustainable environmental management. It has also been shown that the role of the perceptual environment is not adequately recognised.

Hypothesis 1 can therefore be accepted.