



The Relevance of Geomorphology in interdisciplinary Assessment of Scenic Resource Value

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In a comprehensive scientific appraisal of scenery geomorphological mapping is one of several basic techniques. It is essential to distinguish between the real objective landscape, whose biophysical attributes are relatively easy to measure (eg. geomorphological mapping), and the landscape as perceived by the observer (other methods). Assessment of scenic quality should ideally be based on both real and perceived landscapes, but scientific measurement of the latter must be based on questionnaire or participant observation techniques and logistically it is more difficult to organise and expensive. The goal of the present research is to present a contribution to landscape evaluation that starts from measured landscape forms and has its roots in concepts and approaches common in information sciences.

The study area is in the central Austrian Alps. Three cirques were selected for detailed study. It is postulated that people's preferences are related to the real landscape in terms of the quantity and variety of information that it provides (*complexity*) plus the *legibility* of that information, which includes its degree of spatial order (*coherence*) and the degree of *harmony* among its elements. The research programme identifies various landscape elements and investigates their ordering. The chief components of the landscape are geomorphological, though some vegetation and man-made features are also present. Mapping of the cirques, based on air photos and ground surveys, was undertaken at the 1:10 000 scale. Analysis of the maps enabled the cirques to be ranked in terms of their complexity and legibility. In an independent study a questionnaire survey of approximately 340 hikers in the same area was the basis for characterizing the perceived landscape. The perceptions reported from the questionnaire showed good agreement with the result of the present study.

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