
Rediscovering valley slopes in urban and peri-urban landscape. Identification and discussion in Liège's agglomeration

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Last century's urbanisation has paid little attention to understanding landscape forms and resources, particularly those of valley slopes. Valley slopes are little explored in the broader set of landform categories, especially in Northern Europe. Representation in planning instruments, generally, reveals inadequate attention to identifying valley slope as a whole distinguished from valley and plateau, investigating the possible multiplicity of occupations and roles beyond geomorphological or hydrological considerations and discussing which variables related to valley slope's forms influence its use. Due to the relief's importance as a condition for the agglomeration's birth, the geological nature of carboniferous soils favouring profound slope alteration in conjunction with the industrial revolution linked to particular local resources' exploitation and the more recent evolutionary trajectories aiming at the integration of 'high-low links' – between valleys and plateaus – as qualitative transversal areas with a high landscape value, Liège represents a privileged laboratory to rediscover what roles valley slopes can play in urban and peri-urban landscape. Combining GIS mapping and statistical analysis, the contribution proposes a multi-scalar approach based on identifying valley slopes' set subdivided into minimum units (géochores), integrated with a land cover's clustering and potential relations between land cover and six explanatory variables' analysis. Confronting with planning instruments reducing declivity to building areas, the contribution advocates for a valley slope's representation, distinguished from valley and plateau, highlighting an environment's variety within which the system interacts, a multiplicity of uses and interrelationships between form and land cover. This singularity and complexity of valley slopes should be integrated into policy as potential cultural, ecological or recreational resources for populations.

Keywords : Valley slopes, Urban and peri-urban landscape, Géochores, Liège, Gis.

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