

THE LANDSCAPE AS BALANCING FACTOR FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL SITES

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Abstract

The objective of this conference is to highlight the relationship between heritage and landscape, in the light of experience gained in the recent years of urban practice, where the value of the territory, its relationship with the city and the city with its immediate environment, have developed a new way to preserve historic sites. We must understand the landscape in all its forms: natural landscape, cultural landscape, historic urban landscape, etc. as new concepts that have evolved in the organizations committed with the protection and conservation of natural and cultural elements, which are an essential part of the values of our civilization.

My experience in this field has been important beginning in those interesting days, thirty years ago, in which I made a fantastic trip to the Philippines to analyse and to recommend the most important places in this country capable to reach the nomination to join the World Heritage List. In that professional trip I could find and understand the importance and the attachment that the landscape represented for the population concerned in its protection. I have rich memories from the leaders of the different rural communities when I made the evaluation of the "Rice Terraces" and its proposal as Cultural Landscape.

Key Words: *Landscape as balancing factor, historical sites*

1. The European Landscape Convention

The European Landscape Convention, was adopted for the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe which adopted the final text of the Convention on 19 July 2000. The European Landscape Convention was opened for signature in Florence, Italy, on 20 October 2000. (European Treaty Series No.176).

This document is also known as the Florence Agreement. It marks a new and powerful presence of the landscape in the laws of European countries that have ratified it, 36 so far. It has not only helped to keep and disseminate awareness of the landscape value but it has also has given a legal recognition of the landscape value as a fundamental element of the human environment. This value is considered as the expression of the diversity of natural and cultural heritage and the basis of its identity.

It is important to emphasize, that this Convention gives in a concise form a set of definitions for the policies in relation to landscapes; the parameters of landscape quality, the actions for protection and management and finally the landscape planning system.

The Convention sets as scope the natural areas, normally rural and also the urban and suburban ones. And as specific application the signatory states undertake to integrate landscape into territorial policies and urban planning.

This explains the changes that in the management of all types of territory have its legislation and therefore the planning practice in Europe. And hence the importance of landscape in the review of any planning document.

2. What means landscape for us?

The concept of landscape has evolved from its romantic sense of suggestive backdrop, passing through the Impressionists painters that show the landscape as something alive and fluctuating. Throughout the centuries and in all cultures, the landscape has been subject and support of accurate literary descriptions, dreams, emotions, and vehicle for musicians and poets.

I try to understand the landscape as something that is not only physically present to be seen, but that we built adding to its image emotions, memories of similar places, and feelings. For me it is important, living near the sea, the presence of that essential Mediterranean light that, sometimes we must defend ourselves from its brightness to capture all the nuances, and also because it makes the landscape different in every moment of the day.

Today the time arrives when we are aware of their ecological value and the irreversible risk to loss our beautiful places.

In order to be practical, to act on the landscape, especially regarding a new socio-economic dynamics, one should try to construct models of landscape interpretation, objectifying identification mechanisms of both natural and cultural values, understanding within these intangible and inner values that often we define as the "genius loci" of a place.

This term is defined in the Quebec Declaration at the end of the ICOMOS General Assembly held in July 2008,(Québec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place, Adopted at Québec, Canada, October 4th 2008) as "the set of material elements (sites, landscapes) and intangible (memories, stories) namely, the physical and spiritual elements that give meaning, value, emotion and mystery to place. The spirit of the place is created by various social stakeholders, especially those who use it, which are the ones that give an active and simultaneous meaning". The spirit of the place provides a broader understanding of the living and permanent nature of the cultural landscapes. It provides a richer, dynamic and inclusive vision of cultural heritage.

I think that this is a real problem, similar to that problem recently created with the objectification of the influence of the high-rises buildings affecting to the historical places. We, architects and planners have to make a long evolution in this field. The term of landscape has taken today an enormous importance. It is present in all studies and declarations regarding into the historic city as fundamental element for the urban analysis.



3. The landscape in the territory. what are the links between territory and its landscape?

Any territory forms a landscape, as every landscape is supported on a territory. The important thing is the essence of this symbiosis between territory and landscape. Both can be considered as heritage not only for the people that live there, but also for those who eventually have the opportunity to enjoy it. But, we have not even spoken of the human substrate in the landscape. It is very important to recognise those territories where an identifiable landscape is shaped into the collective memory of a community.

What really matters to us, it is to make the territory an evocative and useful place in which our memories will tend towards the present keeping at the same time a certain nostalgia for the past. Today the society is more and more urban, and the territory is understood as something alien to ordinary life, almost only valid for leisure. But the territory is always more generous with us than we think. The territory gives us a real sense of life. More or less we are anchored in a specific place of our planet. And we can consider that a part of it belongs to us. And all these matters, feelings, memories constituent its heritage value in the broadest sense. We can always gain a certain power from the land. And we must correspond having respect for the land as it was done by the old civilisations.

Normally every landscape has historical elements and therefore the symbiosis of the nature and culture values, constitute the uniqueness of each specific territory. I try to express the importance of the territory as support of all our decisions concerning it. That's why we must have not only an ecological vision of the territory, but a heritage conception of it that will allow us to take care of its sensitive values.



4. Heritage and landscape. How to benefit from the synergies created by this particular link between the two, which in fact both constitute an indestructible unit?

The problem is how to make that the values that can be attributed to the landscape could help to find solutions to the challenges in relation to its territory. The problem lies on the fact of not to speculate about definitions or agreements and relations, but on the contrary to center ourselves on questions of method: how to make these heritage values to be considered as motor of the landscape solutions, facing the challenges that the society has today in relation to its territory. It seems to me that if we appreciated and valued the landscape around us, which is present not only in the territory that surrounds our cities, but also in the immediate territory that makes up our regions and in our cities, what we call "historic urban landscape ", considering it as a treasure that we must protect or preserve, we could contribute to understand the landscape as an added value to the simple territorial consideration.

In every landscape that is not yet degraded, we see that human intervention has harmonised with the field that receives it. There won't be anything out of scale, since the proportion also features nature. We will never see a foreign function that the land will be forced to produce.

I reaffirm that this symbiosis between landscape and heritage is always an enhance opportunity, able to highlight from these landscapes all that they contain: aesthetic enjoyment, vital breath, astonishment facing the mystery of nature, and also appreciation for what previous generations have done in them.

The search and definition of the "spirit of a place" provides a broader understanding of the living and permanent nature rather than the more limited approach of "cultural landscape". It provides a richer, dynamic and inclusive vision of cultural heritage.

I have participated in many evaluations about the outstanding universal value of cities and sites in order to be included in the World Heritage List. I must admit that the educational factor recognized in the population candidacy, was really impressive because it had been maintained over time.

We call cultural landscape all landscape that has been altered by the man, strengthening it, working on it, and in a word making it his own. In fact in these cases, architecture or human intervention works are adapted to landscape, or the landscape is the frame to enhance the architecture.



5. The tourism as risk for the landscape and the heritage. How to deal respectfully and firmly?

Speaking of risks to the landscape, regardless of the result of the dangerous forces of nature, we must admit that the biggest risks are the uncontrolled actions of man. Especially are those coming from the urban development that we have unfortunately experienced in our countries. Another risk would be in the opposite direction, the loss of human presence in this light productive structure that melted in a subtle way nature and society.

The tourism makes a double game: It serves as economic and social instrument to maintain the human presence in some territories but, considering the land from the point of view of the outsider, it can act without control and spread out buildings and equipments covering and distorting places and landscapes.

Heritage is also a cultural value that depends on the acceptance and respect of the level of knowledge, awareness and appreciation that have the different individuals forming the population. This is the main problem for the tourism. It is very difficult for many people passing by and not belonging to the place to understand the essence and the flavour of it. The massive and global tourism can't appreciate the heritage values of the landscape in such a quick space of time. We must protect our sites of this kind of tourism.

It is very important to develop new tourism products that link territorial resources, creating specific routes, and high differentiated local crafts and products to attract the interest of the tourist

people. In addition, to add value to the city center tourism, it should be created tourist routes linking the different values of the historic center: architectural heritage, crafts and quality trade, cultural and artistic offer, local gastronomy etc. These routes can be also based in the memories and places where the famous people lived.

Due to the importance of the tourism in the economy of any tourist place or city, it is decisive to integrate in a general vision or plan all the strategies, all the studies all the analysis as well as the specific proposals. These proposals and measures should be coordinated through the means of an integral project that must be incorporated to the master plan of the city or in the territorial plan. Mechanisms should be established to know all strategies and plans that are being done in the city from different sectors and their influence on tourism. It is very important to know the interferences among different strategies, in order to assess the most effective interrelation and optimize the tourist effects in the city and its territory.



6. Finally, the landscape as a balancing factor and main subject for the protection of the territory and historical sites

It seems to me that if we could appreciate and value the landscape around us, if we did consider it as a treasure that we can not lose, but on the contrary that we must protect, preserve and enjoy, we would contribute to the understanding of the landscape as an added value to the simple land structure, easily planned without control and consequently easily destroyed. We can find trough this process the opportunity to apprehend nature in its spiritual dimension considering its heritage values, and its humanizing experience. Trough that appreciation we would have a deeper understanding of the “Genius Loci” and we would select the best plans and objectives to deal with it.

