

The Cultural Landscape Concept

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Summary:

This article sets forth the importance of landscape in our society due to an ever growing environmental awareness, being a key concept for the understanding of territories people inhabit. A comprehensive view of landscape is postulated. Likewise, we advocate the need to rescue and update the classical category of cultural landscape in Anthropology.

Key words:

Landscape, the landscape turn, landscape comprehensive analysis, cultural landscapes, social welfare.

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Introduction

Landscape has been defined by different thinkers as a visible territory, as the visible part of the environment or as an individual's perception of the environment through his senses. It is the external environment, natural and/or anthropic, which may be directly perceived or experienced by an individual who observes or senses a portion of a larger physical environment. The landscape is an area or territorial unity, more or less well defined, which varies depending on the watcher and his position within the landscape itself, but, above all, on the representational context he shares with members of his own cultural milieu. The European Landscape Convention would define the concept merely as an area perceived by people. "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" (Council of Europe: 2000).

This new interpretation of landscape is propitiating the creation of a new territorial culture. In fact, territory is starting to be considered and experienced in terms of landscape: as the scenic background within which people's lives evolve. This represents a new way of understanding the socio-physical environment in which people live. Territory and landscape have changed into correlative concepts while a population's territorial culture is measured by how it evaluates its own landscapes. This implies an interpretation of territory which incites conservation and sustainable management measures applied to valuable areas, indicating a much needed change of direction in our lifestyles, and encourages new more prudent and imaginative ways of dealing with our surroundings. It calls for an existential connection with the environment, a new outlook on Nature. This attitude depends on the territory's sustainability as a whole and as the consequence of its inhabitant's wellbeing and quality of life.

From a subjective point of view, a given landscape is not only observed and contemplated. It is felt, absorbed through the senses, penetrating the body and mind, resulting in rich and sundry feelings. Therefore, an "ideal human habitat" shall be the one living space which provides man with balance between activities dedicated to work

which entails effort and fatigue, and those which imply relaxation, energy restoration and personal growth. "Mere communion with Nature, mere contact with the free air, exercise a soothing yet strengthening influence on the wearied spirit, calm the storm of passion, and soften the heart when shaken by sorrow to its most depths. Everywhere, in every region of the globe, in every stage of intellectual culture, the same sources of enjoyment are alike vouchsafed to man" (Humboldt, 1847).

1 The landscape turn

One of the main transformations in our contemporary world has been the emergence of ecological awareness; today's worldwide preoccupation with the environment. In the 70s a new idea emerges, claiming that a delicate balance of nature —essential for our survival— is to be restored and sustained only by a global effort which involves each and every one of us. By reinforcing ecological awareness the learned concept of landscape becomes common among people who indistinctly discuss it in relation to location. People gradually become aware of how landscape impregnates their lives due to having been born and raised in its bosom, not knowing to what extent they are thus conditioned. They assume that throughout history the relationship between humans and their landscape is a constant flux of reciprocal energy, sometimes enriching and others degrading. Landscape thus becomes an essential part of their culture. They start considering it a determinant factor in the configuration of their own society, for they accept that it contains the deepest roots of the structure which defines society itself. "Landscape analysis, understood as the result of social practices, as a social construction, enables us to expose man's action throughout time and recognise aspects of our history within our current landscape. As a testimony of human action and the ways of life which have shaped it, landscape is intrinsic to cultural identity, and as it preserves our civilization's traces and remnants, it is a heritage of great value to be respected" (Amores and Rodríguez-Bobada: 2003, 100; Luginbühl: 2008; Martínez de Pisón: 2009).

The revolution that wants to be attained by the use of the concept of landscape implies a new way of thinking which under no circumstance separates ecological problems from exploitation and poverty issues affecting many countries. It promotes not only harmony between man and nature but also among the people living on Earth. Currently, over 6,800 million people demand growing quantities of material resources which destroy ecosystems and produce thousands of millions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions. The result currently symbolizes the ideas of "climate change", an uncontrolled process affecting not only nature but people, especially within developing countries. Apart from the discussions that this subject has raised, the truth is that people lose faith in development as an adequate strategy to solve every problem that might threaten us. "Ecological sustainability implies the acknowledgement that natural and social capital cannot be indefinitely substituted by industrial and human capital, and that earth systems have real limitations for the expansion of market economy. Climate change is, probably, the most pressing evidence of such limits" (Bono: 2010, 73; Toussaint: 2010, 171; Naredo: 2010, 17; Flannery: 2007, 9).

In humanity's first stages economic interest would have prevailed and, subsequently, the sense of belonging, but we are starting to notice that we must overcome and appreciate the symbolic dimension in a more aware and reflexive way, that is, territory as landscape, as a natural non-renewable resource of great value in people's lives. In all époques and cultures the enjoyment of natural beauty has been part of human life. Many scientists believe we retain the ubiquitous aesthetic experience of nature in our phyletic memory and that our aesthetic tastes are influenced by it. Man is not a mere receptor and translator of the stimuli he receives from his physical environment. The information provided by our body's sensorial receptors influences our thoughts and our entire being. It is this feature that may serve to conceive the landscape which

surrounds us as a constitutive dimension of being human (Chouquer: 2001, 239; Hirsch: 1995, 5).

We are beginning to overcome the “reification” of nature with the according degradation entailed by it and we start to acknowledge the environment as having a multiplicity of existential meanings which are very valuable for people. But what is new and original is people’s awareness of the right to landscape, of having and being able to enjoy high quality landscapes. “Aspiring to reach beauty is a right. Each society, each social group, each person should be able to express their character, their spirit, their concept of beauty, and especially their landscapes”. (Ambroise: 2002, 44; Bernis: 2005, 654; Malassis: 1998, 15). Studies on the environment and society clearly show that people’s interests are evolving toward greater environmental sensitivity, turning the latter into a factor of growing importance as a symbolic asset to which individuals are entitled. Additionally, there are other grassroots movements demanding beauty within the areas they inhabit. In politicians’ agenda there is concern regarding the promotion of laws designed to create more agreeable, beautiful and healthy environments: pollution reduction, reports on environmental impact, the creation of parks and gardens, etc. Humanity seems to have taken notice of the growing pressures it exercises upon the environment. “In this complex scenario, the individual faces the challenge of reconciling environmental awareness with his conduct while overcoming reticence to sacrifice some of the improvements in the current industrial production model that have bettered our quality of life. Regarding the depth of environmental awareness, the data suggests a breach between the latter and individuals’ ecological behaviour” (UEOP: 2006, 4). Indeed, we must admit that society and its policy makers do not seriously involve themselves in the fulfilment of this goal. Environmental awareness still belongs to the realm of declaratory speech and in no way to widespread responsible behaviour. Individual responsibility is diluted in the community as a whole and we may speak of certain form of alienation between habitual conducts and their environmental impact. “Governments’ cowardice in vigorously applying the necessary legislation is only comparable to citizens’ indifference; people who hardly make an effort to perform certain recycling rituals and other proper civic environmental conducts whose symbolic consequences are far greater than those produced by an unsustainable economic system which is not only limited by nature but also by social factors” (Giner: 2010, 141; Sánchez Yustos: 2009, 35). But there are interesting signs showing how many people measure their own happiness by having access to desired goods which generate serious, constructive and decent experiences, associated neither with the urge to possess material riches nor with alienating consumerism. Today’s growing appreciation for landscape is among the former. Other contributions by truly scientific Ecology offer equally interesting future prospects, as well as environmentalism, which suggests effective strategies and guidelines to better involve the majority of the population in environmental issues. A communication based on cooperation among scientists and social actors will avoid conflict, favouring the creation of physical, social and environmental surroundings, to reach a more healthy and pleasurable life (Luz: 2000, 161; Stenseke: 2008, 215; Hansen-Møller: 2009, 72; Soliva and Hunziker: 2009, 293; Stephenson: 2010). There are grounds for hope due to this growing awareness of landscape and its socio-cultural importance, without rejecting its economic value, as well as in relation to identity and heritage. Social actors are noticing the need to overcome the great contradiction affecting advanced societies: that of having the greatest environmental awareness while polluting the most. The critique which some time ago was set forth within Anthropology is still absolutely valid: “The predominance of the free market logic, based on transactions between individuals and the price of goods, has fostered individualistic and competitive behaviours, encouraging the increase in short term personal profit. Social norms and institutions regulating people’s interactions among themselves and with the environment are weakened. Relations between people are, thus, replaced by an individualist approach that tries to take advantage of the environment without considering long term

detrimental consequences for ecology and society” (Sánchez Fernández: 1996, 61). In this contradictory context, landscape’s aesthetical value serves, not only as a relevant source of respect toward nature through prudent economic development, but also as the foundation for people’s welfare and quality of life.

2 Territory and landscape

Human beings constantly interact with their environment. This affects their senses, emotions and community relationships. Landscape has been defined as the invisible context of our lives, of which we are not wholly aware. Territory, as a physical entity, refers to the earth’s surface which we consider as our own, and to which humans have assigned different functions throughout time. It alludes to the relationship between members of a given social group and their physical surroundings; the time-space location where members of the group live. Therefore, it is a space defined, produced and ordered, according to human actions which adhere to values projected upon the landscape by individuals themselves. Territory has been assessed in different periods and among different societies in multiple and creative ways: surface of the earth, resource, habitat, frontier, limit, foundation and background for vegetable and animal species, refuge, an area common to a human groups, socio-physical construction, playground, etc. The way in which the human species structures space and acts upon it is conditioned by the way in which he perceives and experiences it. The ability to adapt to a given environment depends on individuals’ creative awareness, which serves as a foundation for their ability to decide and provide meaning for the elements to be found within a given territory. Evolutionary anthropology’s contributions to the importance of territory are certainly valuable for the development of the human species (Finlayson: 2009, 206). But from a synchronic and structural viewpoint the issues raised by mediation processes between the individual, social groups and territory are currently included in the field of landscape studies. “It doesn’t have to do with conceiving territory as suggesting a sense of beauty, but to approach the appliance of means by which humans establish symbolic and emotional links with the world, both regarding their interpretation of territory as well as in the forms of interaction by which these are applied...Underlying every theoretical analysis on the experience of landscape we find ways by which citizens involve themselves, throughout history, in positive interaction with their symbolic and territorial context, and not exclusively in regard to physical spaces in which these experiences have taken place. For this reason the establishment of criteria by which a way of interacting with the context is considered as more or less interesting or positive, is extremely complex” (Diaz: 2009, 5; Antrop: 2005, 21). In this new context the landscape is valued as a fertile concept which expresses the relationships between members of a given social group and their territory. In effect, it clarifies the changing and dynamic complex relations between a society and its environment, and serves as a guide in order to understand the beliefs and values that a society has of its surroundings.

Territory is conceived as a setting within which human life is framed and implies the existence of human subjects who project a given meaning upon it, which is fostered within a specific time and culture. The multiple meanings that men award to territory can be understood as one of the landscape’s category. “The landscape is emerging as a very powerful concept to convey the relations between society and its territory, in two ways: on the one hand, complex, dynamic and changing interactions between a society and its territory, that is, the social and economic processes which shape the territory; on the other, the representations and images that the mentioned society attaches to its territory, that is, the social and cultural assessment of territory” (Tarroja: 2009, 239; Mascari et alii: 2009, 28; López Bermúdez: 2007, 8; Watsuji: 2006, 38). This is the perspective scientists employ to approach territory as a subject matter. In effect, if we review the scientific literature we verify that this category is evolving into a basic concept and the meeting point of different disciplines which intend to carry out a

scientific approach to territory. It has become a guiding principle because it sets the foundation for a design of territory in which three essential functions serve as guidelines complementing and coordinating each other: to fulfil people's new aspirations, to guide possible bio-physical and cultural changes produced by their lifestyle and to prudently regulate the future use people make of territory as the source of manifold resources.

The growing awareness is progressive and has to do with the emergence of new values in post-industrial societies, such as quality of life and environmentalism, and with data obtained with the aid of science as well as people's experience when confronted with ecological issues. The new environmentalist culture is changing the materialistic view of nature and human beings. The average citizen is becoming aware of the dangers attached to the idea of an unlimited domination and transformation of nature through techno-science. This ideal is being progressively replaced by a positive view of nature as an aesthetic and ethic value of great importance. In fact, most of the population associates nature with beauty, purity, harmony and fragility. The source of this change is the European Landscape Convention's formal text on the subject, which considers nature a decisive element in order to guarantee people's quality of life. According to this founding text, landscape is an essential ingredient in individual and social welfare and reflects the public's desire to enjoy high quality landscapes, and may play an active role in its transformation. The text promotes the sustainable management of landscapes as a more appropriate way to approach a rational use of any territory's resources.

The landscape concept has gone through a period of swift and deep transformation until it has acquired high praise. Two factors have been essential for the emergence of this new identification of territory and landscape. On the one hand, radical changes that are taking place on a world scale and their consequences may endanger humanity's future. Environmental awareness is making us notice that the unprecedented worldwide changes that are taking place may jeopardize life on Earth. This threat is inducing reflection on the validity of our current territory models due to the environmental crisis our lifestyles have generated, founded on beliefs and values whose risks and undesirable consequences for humans are unforeseeable. It is true that within this controversial issue, myth and reality coexist, that we have scarce knowledge of the planet, that we do not possess a reliable and complete scientific model and that apocalyptic fear is well embraced in our consumer society. But it is also true that we notice visible signs conveying a bad impression: climate change, species' extinction, exhaustion of non-renewable natural resources, global warming, contamination of rivers, seas and oceans, poverty, hunger, increase in material inequality on a local and global level, etc. Humanity has to augment resource consumption in order to eradicate poverty throughout the world, while simultaneously limiting the growth of an opulent society to reduce human ecological erosion that may lead to environmental collapse. To face this dilemma the main problem is not that we seem incapable of foreseeing our activities' consequences, but that we feel impelled to direct our activity toward undesirable consequences: we are not being able to abandon the path of growth which may lead to calamity. In opulent societies there is steady growth because it is considered essential to maintain ever greater employment, social mobility and welfare. Unconsciously, societies believe in unlimited resource availability. In poor countries growth is absolutely necessary to escape misery, poverty and hunger. The challenge is to combine environment and development without creating unbearable burdens in developing countries. This challenge forces us to take decisive and bold measures for which it is necessary to change our lifestyles and, above all, the values shaping them. The latter have generated a production and consumption model whose environmental effects threaten the preservation of life on Earth. It is urgent to change our Eurocentric lifestyles to which, paradoxically, every country on Earth aspires. We need to renounce the rules of the capitalist system, encouraging the accumulation of monetary goods in the hands of few, to progressively reach a

sustainable use of territory as a service to every country on the planet (Stiglitz: 2010, 236; Calvo and Gutiérrez: 2007, 47; Diamond: 2006, 643). On the other hand the mentioned lifestyle has begun to create and value a new form of heritage: landscape as an essential element for individual and social welfare. Each level in a peoples' social life has its own forms of luxury which is ultimately transformed into necessity. To conceive territory as landscape is based on urban culture —within modern metropolises— as a product of a completely emancipated humanity, liberated from serfdom from the natural condition by modern division of labour and nature-controlling technologies. Additionally, it is a value and a need which starts to spread throughout every echelon of society, both in rural and urban settings. The maintenance of a territory's quality as landscape is currently beginning to be contemplated as a priority in all its dimensions and functions. Thus, by discovering and enjoying a beautiful space, the soul is filled with delight and fulfilment. Its enjoyment produces rich and varied feelings and emotions of every kind. It contributes, therefore, to induce a mood which provides greater quality of life. Thus, the pleasure associated with landscape is starting to be viewed as a need for symbol, and, consequently, as a right to which everyone is entitled.

3 Cultural landscape

Environmental awareness has become one of the major motors of contemporary thought and social action. To its development has contributed the anthropological perspective which has always questioned the limits between humanity and nature, to expose the deep imbrications existing between culture and ecosystems. In order to explain human conduct, the Social Sciences have used three strictly intertwined categories or levels of analysis: person, society and culture. But we must acknowledge that the physical environment is also essential. Territory as cultural environment is an element on which human nature is based, as complexity science has shown. The latter has proven that a system isolated from its environmental conditions is unconceivable, and, consequently, human beings can not be understood as isolated from an ecosystem's interactions also shaping his nature. We can not understand people's individual and social life if we disregard the environment in which they are immersed, that is, socially and culturally constructed spaces inhabited by them. Thus, a genuinely anthropological approach must analyze human intention and action in the context of permanent and mutually conditioning interaction between people and their socio-physical environment (Ingold: 2005, 53; Álvarez Munárriz: 2005, 413; Abeland Stepp: 2003; Hirsch and O'Hanlon: 2003; Lehmann: 2007, 152; Velasco Mahillo: 2008, 319; Iranzo: 2008, 34; Antrop: 2009, 173).

However, in current research on landscape one of its main aspects is being overlooked: its cultural roots. Nevertheless, anthropologists have reminded us that respect for and protection of natural systems is a key element in traditional structures. Their ethnographic work has also proven that the environment's meaning has gradually changed throughout time, with civilization's advances, education among people, with cultural traditions, etc. As a prestigious anthropologist once said, that which is considered meaningful in nature as territory can be seen in different ways depending on cultural contexts and also differently in separate *époques* (Caro Baroja: 1982). So, from a cultural viewpoint, all the rich and sundry activities of constant territorial configuration and recreation carried out by the human species —peacefully or through conflict— may be condensed in three types: economic, social and symbolic (Álvarez Munárriz: 2010, 203). These three functions are integrated within the cultural landscape category. "Wherever they live, human beings take possession of nature in cultural terms, that is, they shape landscapes while they develop their own culture. There are no landscapes without people and, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as "natural landscapes", for even the world's most remote corner has been somehow shaped —directly or otherwise— by human intervention; for example, through climatic

influences induced by human action. Landscapes are always to be understood as cultural structures exposed to economic dynamics and socio-cultural activity, shaping prime matter which serves as the foundation for any landscape, each with its particular design and, therefore, its unique value” (Seeland: 2008, 424).

Landscape’s plural meanings, its different scales and the diversity of goals established by landscaping projects, explain the very open character of landscape methodology analysis and the variety of instruments, explicitly or implicitly related to landscape, destined to the defence of certain values and the order of their dynamics and transformations. The richness of possibilities any given landscape offers, either subjective or objective, are to be found in different treatments and methods identified with each professional collective, which has propitiated specified definitions and varied indicators to establish the essence of a given landscape. Based on these several viewpoints, landscape acquires particular values and self contained meanings. Thus, we may remember the meanings provided by art, philosophy, science, myth, the anthropologist’s cultural references and interpretations, the identification and uses social actors make of it, etc. (Busquets, and Cortina: 2009, 31 ss.; Delgado and Ojeda: 2009, 122; Guzmán Álvarez: 2007, 17). So, to organize these multiple and varied ways of approaching the study of landscape we can base our interpretation on a unity of landscape: minimum structures into which landscape may be decomposed. These have been defined as isolated units within the corresponding individuality of the landscape in question (Simmel: 1909, 50; Martínez de Pisón: 2007, 331). The ordered and coherent attachment of these elementary parts serves to compose a landscape. The establishment of such unities on the corresponding scale is what enables us to reach a holistic understanding of the concept. But maybe more important is the fact that the scale itself is the specific perspective with which it is viewed. For landscapes to exist, a series of objective elements must serve as basis, but above all it is necessary for someone to perceive them, experience them and provide them with meaning. From this perspective the aforementioned units are based on factors which are considered as defining in regard to landscapes, that is, they depend on points of view and interpretations. Spatial divisions within a territory depend on the perspective employed. In this process “the eye, man’s fundamental perception organ, just as happens in any other superior animal, is made up of varied notes, according to the person’s social context and according to the culture to which he belongs. The eye opens and shuts horizons and skies of action and is not only a physical and individual organ, but also, or rather, an organ involving social and collective meaning” (Caro Baroja: 1987, 7). Any element within the landscape contains multiple values but the meaning that observers attach to landscape is essential. According to this idea we may reduce the complexity and variety of studies on landscape merging them within four categories:

- a) Aesthetic approach: visual unity of the landscape.
- b) Environmentalist approach: environmental unity of the landscape.
- c) Interventionist: projective unity of the landscape.
- d) Anthropological approach: cultural unity of the landscape.

However, whatever the approach, it always has to be based on interdisciplinary practice. We are forced to develop a comprehensive treatment around which revolve viewpoints coming from diverse disciplines, perspectives and methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, that is, the integration of natural and cultural perspectives regarding landscape. We must therefore overcome the current lack of communication between disciplines —which, not only do not share points of view, but mutually confront each other’s principles and perspectives—, for they close down communication channels, while favouring confusion:

In current landscape theory, there is considerable consensus about conceiving landscapes holistically. That is to say, understanding the landscape as a whole can not

be done merely by analyzing its elements. The interaction of the elements must be considered, especially the interaction of natural and cultural ones. It follows that landscape history must also take a holistic view of a landscape, integrating natural and human activity as parts of a single evolving system (Marcucci: 2000, 71; Español: 2006, 34).

In this comprehensive way of perceiving the territory, anthropologists are aware of the need to clearly define the historical man-environment relationship —eliminating the ethnocentrism and colonialism which traditionally characterized cultural ecology— toward a multidisciplinary cooperation. In this collaborative work, key questions to be asked are very simple: what type of environment should be preserved, by whom and for whom. And in order to answer them we must clearly establish “which paradigms, which assumptions, which research programmes, must be shared to ease the necessary communication to promote and enable future research” (Fisher and Feinman: 2005, 62-63; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: 2005, 98; Plumwood: 2006, 120; Aparici: 2006, 317). Well, it is difficult to find the necessary anthropological categories to understand and solve the universality and gravity of environmental problems we currently face. Social anthropology has treated this issue from many different approaches: cultural ecology, systems ecology, landscape ecology, etc. In order to avoid this fragmentation and unify theories that may serve to model, prove and offer alternative future proposals, our discipline has recovered a category which is fertile when interpreting the meaning territory should have for society’s members: “Cultural Landscape”. It is a category which serves as a benchmark to keep the holistic tension in assessment and characterization tasks, and lead toward a comprehensive view of territory as knowledge nowadays demands. “The works of man express themselves in the cultural landscape. There may be a succession of these landscapes with a succession of cultures. They are derived in each case from the natural landscape, man expressing his place in nature as a distinct agent of modification. Of especial significance is that climax of culture which we call civilization. The cultural landscape then is subject to change either by development of a culture or by replacement of cultures” (Sauer: 1925, 20).

The origins of the term “Cultural Landscape” may be tracked to the late 19th century German and French historians and geographers. Historically we should start out by referring to the German comparative geography school, developed by Alexander von Humboldt and Carl Ritter, thinkers who tried to integrate geographic, natural and human reality, in two dimensions: spatial and methodological. We may recollect Friedrich Ratzel’s deterministic claims; Otto Schlütter’s focus on the concept of *Landschaft* as an area defined by a harmonious and uniform interrelation of physical elements. We must also refer to the so-called Landscape Science which appears in Russia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the first reflections on the geographical method for environmental study appeared. Russian scientists, developing the geographical research logic proposed by A. Humboldt, still reflect on landscape as a specific subject of geographical studies whose function is to approach the universal relationship between the environments diverse elements and their subordination within space (Frolova: 2007). However, it became a classic category when a collaborative interdisciplinary work was carried out by professionals belonging to Social Anthropology, Cultural Geography and Urban Ecology. All of these disciplines based their approach on an axiom which served as foundation: the relationships between cultural patterns and physical conditions are essential to understand human existence, both on an individual and collective level (Ratzel: 1923, 14; Boas: 1891, 647; Kroeber: 1939, 23; Sauer: 1925, 34; Watsuji: 1928, 34; McKenzie: 1931, 314; Bateson: 1972, 92; Jackson: 1980, 12). Out of this convergence of disciplines emerged an interpretative category that is currently being recovered, but also updated. This valuable concept has been handed down by a generation of classic thinkers who up till now had attracted little attention among anthropologists. This category has currently

turned into a fundamental interpretation tool. Having said that, being a concept which is not to be mechanically transferred to solve current problems, it has been broadened and renewed in order to embrace new forms of knowledge and problems, and thus face challenges currently associated with the environment. Today it is recaptured to include natural area characteristics as well as the forms enforced on physical space due to human activities, both a territory's physical structure and cultural order, both physical and regarding its beauty. It is a new way of approaching the study of territory based on the comprehension and explanation of people's thoughts, desires, interests and needs, to sum up, the meaning they attach to territory. This symbolic appropriation of territory transforms the physical environment into cultural landscape. A given landscape is by definition a cultural construction out of a certain territory. They are transformed areas in cultural landscapes that have been developed for centuries by human communities successively or simultaneously (Álvarez Munárriz: 2007, 65).

"Cultural Landscape" may be described as the transformation of a part of nature carried out by man to shape, use, manage and enjoy it, according to the patterns emanated by his own culture. It is a configuration of human and natural resources. "Cultural landscape" is the appearance of a cultural area, which assumes a specific character as a result of many decisions made when deciding on a precise selection model...they are the physical expression of images and outlines involved in many decisions, choices or preferences, belonging to human behaviour" (Rapoport: 1978, 300). Anthropological research focuses on the symbolic value people attach to the place they inhabit, seen as the mental map they use in their everyday lives. The reason is simple: we perceive, understand and create landscape through our culture's filter. This is a strong argument to turn this concept into the core of a model guiding anthropologists when approaching the complex ways in which our ancestors and we ourselves relate to the territory we inhabit. Anyway, it is convenient to remember that the recapturing of this category has a solid theoretical foundation which is commonly disregarded: intellectual progress is based on perfecting categories. The cultural landscape concept, therefore, is not new. Nevertheless, it had been diluted within the different interpretations on territory held by anthropologists. It has also been used within the Unesco's outdated three cultural landscape taxonomy: intentionally designed, organically evolved (relict or continuing) and associative. But if we recapture this concept it is to extract every theoretical and heuristic potential out of the classic approach, with the aim of perfecting it in its content and meaning. Therefore, the challenge consists in the recreation of the concept in order to apply to today's reality. This must be done because landscapes are cultural areas created by members of a given culture, which serves as the setting that shapes thought, behaviour and orientation. A standard paradigm that consciously and unconsciously influences people's lives.

The term "Cultural Landscape" is already officially recognized, being subject to growing scientific interest, while there is talk about the demand for landscape. But even today the Cultural Landscape category is an uncommon term and is even perceived as an opaque concept by most people. Many identify cultural landscape with a given historical setting, a geographical area, to sum up, an historical landscape whose fundamental components are aesthetic and cultural. They view cultural landscape as a trace of human activity within a territory, but reduced to a mere fossil of great value that should be preserved and protected. However, cultural landscape is a much richer concept than is commonly suggested. It contains and symbolizes a huge amount of meanings and values, and thus is used as the fertile basis on which to develop theoretical digression. This is due to the fact that it serves as a tool to look into ordinary landscapes, those within which people dwell.

The moment is ripe, for the way in which people perceive cultural landscapes is being shaped by the European Landscape Convention's decisive contributions. This is an innovative measure in contrast to other documents on the natural and cultural heritage because it refers both to landscapes that might be regarded relevant from an historical

viewpoint —singular elements of exceptional character—, and everyday cases, associated with quality or deterioration. “This new concept expresses, on the contrary, the wish to face, in a global and frontal way, the matter of quality in places where people live, recognized as an essential condition for individual and social wellbeing (in the physical, physiological, psychological and intellectual sense), for a sustainable development and as a resource which favours economic activity” (Council of Europe: 2008, 6; Rodewald: 2009, 2). This perspective includes a field of applications on people’s interactions, the realm of ideas and values, and humanized spaces created by people to live. They cover most of what we call landscape, and currently are becoming a matter of universal interest and relevance.

In this global and multicultural world a new catchphrase is incessantly repeated: “Think local, act global”. But in order to enable dialogue between different cultures it should be completed by saying: “Think global, act local”. It encourages respect for inherited cultural diversity, and for the growth of global sustainable development, which may become a solid guideline to serve as the foundation for our roles within societies as humans. We believe local settings are essential to apply this principle and that for its realization we may use the cultural landscape category. It is a fertile conceptual tool because it serves to extract and suggest realistic and effective ideas that may be accepted by local populations. It is a way of connecting with people’s local culture. It encourages a new trend: to care less about the planet’s issues while dealing with more local interests (Rubin: 2010, 283; Díezn Hochleitner: 2009, 81; Nazarea: 2006, 316; Pérsico: 2005, 5; Birks: et alii: 2004). This social space is the anchor and territorial ascription system where people are linked; unitary identification spaces in which differences disappear, to become social references for a group of individuals. “Civil society is where we establish fraternal and affectionate bonds, create culture and contribute to the social capital of the community. It is there where we interact and enjoy with others for the mere pleasure of company and the desire to transform other people’s lives, as well as the community’s welfare. We offer our time in a voluntary and enthusiastic way; the reward reaches us through reinforcing the affiliation and participation in sports clubs, artistic activities, help for people in need, the conservation of the natural environment, the education of the youngest, the care given to elderly people and the promotion of public action projects and initiatives. All of them are ways in which we take part in the community’s cultural and civic life” (Riffkin: 2010, 540).

The cultural landscape category may be a solid foundation on which to build a model of progress that current society needs. It links us to the people’s real economy and not to financial-speculative fictions generated by successive crises —stimulated by the capitalist system itself. This key concept provides ideas and principles upon which to rationally and intelligently deal with local development, basis for economic and social progress. It is an essential concept to guide our environmental perception and land-use planning, as well as for the protection and management of cultural and natural heritage. In building land, planning based on cultural landscape criteria will help guide urban growth, for the formal and functional integration of new landscapes. In undeveloped land it serves to properly intervene, strengthening or creatively transforming existing landscape units. We believe local land planning to be a duty for us as well as a moral obligation in regard to our descendants. Territory must still be a source of income and employment among its inhabitants but responsibly managed to provide a worthy legacy for future generations. Cultural landscapes are a testimony and legacy that our forefathers bequeathed us and that we ourselves are obliged to respect and recreate. Their conservation is a matter of self-respect as well as a form of embracing the culture they represent. Landscape is a society’s cultural projection upon a given space. It is therefore one of the most exceptional elements of identity we possess and, in consequence, a form of cultural heritage. Hence, the convenience in strengthening and developing a territorial awareness, not just as a source of material gain, but as a way of awakening people’s desire to know and enjoy their surroundings. “This raising awareness makes the individual go from being a passive object subdued by external

processes and structures, to become an *agent* of change, an active agent of resistance, in the defence of the planet and of life, a possible change" (Toledo: 2010, 366; Dobson: 2010, 18-19).

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