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Re-thinking the validity of the past. Deconstructing what authenticity and integrity mean to the fruition of cultural heritage

Juan A. García-Esparza¹

¹ Architectonic Constructions Area in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Construction, Universitat Jaume I.

ABSTRACT

There is a lively ongoing debate on Critical Heritage Studies and the Authorised Heritage Discourse, but quite a few authors have viewed the issue from a canonical perspective where the wider Cultural Built Heritage visual experience is assessed and valued in relation with authenticity and integrity. The terms static authenticity and dynamic authenticity appear in this text as dependent on heritage connectivity. Two main arguments are developed in this study. Firstly, a general overview of the context is proposed in order to understand the vernacular internationally. Secondly, the article offers an inside view intended to provide an accurate interpretation of how the vernacular is scrutinised and understood. A fundamental issue discussed in this paper is how cultural heritage is ruled, protected, enhanced, experienced and managed on different scales.

KEYWORDS

critical heritage studies; static authenticity; dynamic authenticity; integrity; abandoned landscapes.

1. INTRODUCTION

A much-discussed aspect is that of the tension between authentic conservation and commodification. However, there are also issues regarding the treatment received by the 'landscape experience'. This paper discusses the difficulty of translating traditional conservation concepts - centred on the concept of authenticity and integrity - to dynamic landscape contexts, as well as the resulting concerns over their management.

Part of this is due to the conflict between the preservationist ethos of the WHS designation and attempts by locals to access or at least secure appropriate economic and social development. In this respect, problems regarding the WHS designation revolve around fixed ideas of conservation value in which dynamic and heterogeneous rural landscapes are the product of layers of development and habitation. So for example "the pressure to present heritage locations to commodify them for tourist consumption raises tensions with notions of cultural authenticity" (Pendlebury et al, 2009).

Each scenario, country, region, landscape and cultural asset needs to find its own path toward preservation and sustainability, but the question is how. Today, in international terms it is widely accepted that the vernacular involves rural streetscapes, field or landscape patterns, traditional uses, memories, senses, economy and culture. Nonetheless, there is a vibrant discourse about heritage resiliency, heterodox approaches to heritage studies (Lixinski 2015), critical heritage studies (Winter 2013) and heritage in transition or heritage by appropriation (Tweed and Sutherland 2007). All these contrast with "the statutory", traditionalist lobbies, canonical texts and the authorised heritage discourse (AHD) (Harvey 2001, Waterton 2010, Pendlebury 2013).

The article will present an inside view, aiming to provide an accurate interpretation, by analysing how the vernacular is scrutinised and understood. In recent literature, Winter (2014) has talked about the power of certain European canonical texts based on the scientific materialism stemming from conservation theories, and quite a few authors have analysed the

issue from the visual experience of these nineteenth- and twentieth- century canonical perceptions. This is referred to as the scenic visualisation of the vernacular (García-Esparza 2015) or what Urry (1990) referred to as the leisure consumption of heritage.

A fundamental issue to be discussed here is that of the management of World Heritage Cultural Landscapes, and whether principles for defining and/or protecting the authenticity and integrity of these spaces should be established given the lack of international consensus on conservation.

2. AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY

Various international declarations (Council of Europe, 1975; UNESCO, 1976; ICOMOS, 1987) have echoed the significance of public opinion and support, and the need for conservation work to be socially progressive. Seeking to conserve an ever-changing environment, the need for sites to evolve and experience socio-cultural change (Assi, 2000) was recognised in 1994 (ICOMOS, 1994). Strategic work within UNESCO is on-going and incorporates elements such as ruralscapes, cultural pathways, morphologies, functionality, authenticity and integrity, *genius loci* and intangible values (Rodwell and van-Oers, 2007). In short, rural landscape management is partly about conserving individual structures and artefacts, but also involves "judgements about the spirit of place as a living entity from the past, in the present, and for the future" (Pendlebury et al, 2009). Thus, there is a need to embrace change (Hoggart et al. 1995), even when it remains unclear how the concepts of integrity and authenticity can assume these dynamics.

Bearing in mind the six main criteria for assessing the OUV of cultural landscapes, it is worth noting criterion (5), which examines the interaction between man and environment, including traditional human settlement and specific land use characteristics representative of a culture. In fact, most rural landscapes submitted for WHL recognition are analysed against this criterion (Gullino and Larcher, 2013).

Considering that rural landscape integrity is a "value to have" based on the level of cultural value continuity

and on the level of natural value conservation, previous studies have compiled a list of historical (H) and ecological (E) parameters. In addition, given that integrity is a “value to maintain” some socio-economic (S) and management (M) parameters are also seen as important for maintaining integrity (Gullino and Larcher, 2013).

Studies on the integrity of rural landscapes showed that the interaction between man and natural

Main UNESCO inscription criteria for cultural heritage

1. To represent a masterpiece of human creative genius
2. To exhibit a major exchange of human values, over a specific timespan or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning or landscape design
3. To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared
4. To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history
5. To be a remarkable example of a traditional human settlement, land use, or sea use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change
6. To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria)

▲ Table 1.

Description of the six main UNESCO inscription criteria for cultural heritage

► Table 2.

Name, description, and code of each parameter chosen for comparing UNESCO rural landscapes.

Parameter	Description	Code
Architectural layout	Presence of buildings, monuments and architectures with an important and worldwide recognisable historical value not necessarily related to the rural matrix	H1
Rural layout	Presence of architectures with an important and worldwide recognisable historical value related to the rural activity (terraces, dry-stone wall)	H2
Traditional land uses	Presence of traditional practices and techniques which are not generally part of modern agriculture linked to the level of mechanisation	H3
Traditional crops and products	Presence of traditional crops, or of crop permanence which was generally part of the historical production system	H4
Natural layout	Presence of natural elements (species, habitats, ecosystems) with important and worldwide recognisable conservation value	E1
Agro-mosaic heterogeneity	Presence of land-use variety in contrast with monoculture	E2
Buffer zone influence	Presence of a significant buffer zone (the surrounding area) in relation with the core zone (the protected area)	E3
Cultural value	Presence of a traditional link between the main crop and the local population culture	S1
Social sustainability	Presence of a link between the main crop and the local population employment	S2
Economical sustainability	Presence of a link between the main crop and the local economic resources	S3
Management strategies	Presence of management rules and strategies in or outside a specific management plan	M1

environment was considered to be the unique universal value. Each of these landscapes was recognised as cultural heritage for its distinctive agricultural system, traditional crops, local products and historical land uses, bearing in mind that the most important markers of integrity, as seen by UNESCO,

are reflected in historical features and architectures relating to the agricultural activity of the site. Although integrity is an elusive concept for which UNESCO provides no clear defining protocol, we can state that a close relationship between culture and nature integrated in a so-called buffer zone matters more in

this context than nature or culture alone.

Gilmore and Pine (2007) established five genres of authenticity: natural, original, exceptional, referential and influential. Cohen (1988, p. 374) defined authenticity by stating that in the present day alienated tourists seek authentic natural or primitive experiences, untouched by modernity, and harmoniously matching anthropic transformation and natural beauty.

When further exploring the meaning of authenticity, people do not just perceive as authentic what is done exceptionally well - executed individually and extraordinarily with great human care, not performed unfeelingly or disingenuously (Gilmore & Pine, 2007, p. 49). Authenticity is also perceived as something referring to some other context and drawing inspiration from human history (Gilmore & Pine, 2007, p. 50).

Other authors have linked the concept of authenticity to the logic of parasites (Puleo, 2013) and its conflict with highlighting sites with multiple past functions and present meanings. This particular view, which is quite difficult to analyse, is especially relevant in the case of ever-evolving rural landscapes given that many parts of the elements that compose them are probably not in compliance with the criteria set for selecting world heritage (UNESCO, 2012). This difficult task has been criticised as an action which could make it necessary "to analyse (cull) the desirable, paralyse (eliminate) the objectionable, and catalyse (combine) the preferred". An attempt to parasitize the landscape would create a new photogram in the landscape of the "intellectual property" film directed by UNESCO World Heritage, and perhaps result in a new stage in its history. This manipulative method seems to challenge the rules of the passing of time, despite being related to abandonment, depopulation and a sort of wilderness. The stakeholders of each community are faced with the task of finding a suitable setting for the most fitting photogram, one that does not misrepresent the complete historical development of the landscape when representing it as heritage. It is probably they who should decide which photogram may conceptually weaken or strengthen the authenticity and integrity of their surroundings (Fig. 1).

2.1 STATIC AND DYNAMIC AUTHENTICITY

Given that, the term "value" was recognised by the Nara Document to determine authenticity (ICOMOS 1994) in relation to original and subsequent characteristics of the cultural heritage, several authors have linked this term with the social construction of a given time and place. This means that value involves understanding the nature of the valued object -what could be referred to as static authenticity- and the nature of the value expressed for an object, that is to say, dynamic authenticity.

Dynamic authenticity is about perception, action, experience and social practice (May and Thrift 2001), about values of time and place (Gibson and Pendlebury 2009), about bodies not just being part of the space but also making or transforming it (Crang 2001). The dynamic authentic object is directly affected in its materiality and composition by decision-making processes and it is the output of cumulative socio-cultural constructions by specific cultures.



Figure 1.

Abandoned dwelling in Les Useres

The value resides in how the object reflects the circumstances rather than in the importance of the element itself. While from a biological perspective almost every heritage object is dynamic, there are elements that are more likely to be appreciated because of their static authenticity. Regardless of whether it is about cultural background, flows or

transmigrations, static authenticity is present in every heritage object in which embedded values from the past are somehow retained and valued. It fundamentally resides in the materiality of the object. Dynamic and static authenticity interact only to the extent to which each culture understands, allows and regulates these interactions in every landscape, object, form, practice and relationship.

Static authenticity has been at the core of conservation criteria since it became synonymous with historical original materiality. Pendlebury (2013) highlighted the importance of the value-based norms associated with conservation-planning practice while emphasising the dynamism of actions and relationships. Dynamic authenticity was first considered when the Burra Charter (ICOMOS, 1999) introduced two terms into the conservation processes: meanings and interpretation. This reference is noticeable because it referred to public participation allowing another possible conception of heritage, or subaltern heritage already emphasised as diverse by the Nara Document, to be explored.

The author frames the concept of dynamic authenticity as understood within complex and wider processes affecting objects, that is to say, how objects -as in the case of the vernacular- are affected by the dynamism of the landscapes in which they are found. Bortoloto (2015) referred to authenticity as an extrinsic process while Kristensen (2015) emphasised the need to focus on the social value of authenticity. New notions of authenticity are being developed (Holtorf and Kristensen 2015) and in the near future should produce further developments not only in how heritage is critically studied (Winter 2013) challenging the AHD, but how it is understood. Dynamism is about the concept of authentic self (Jones 2010), about how a historical object or landscape responds authentically to the moment and its past.

3. ABANDONED LANDSCAPES

The history of human land use in the Mediterranean Basin Area reflects successive waves of human population growth and decline, with the first traces of human activity dating back to Neolithic human settlements (Gasco and Gutherz, 1983). Clearings for cropping first took place in forests of Downy Oak (*Quercus pubescens* Willd), which grew in deep moist soil and later spread into marl soil. However, the progressive disappearance of the Mediterranean forest is the consequence of an increased demand for firewood.

Throughout the 19th and 20th century, the Spanish Mediterranean highlands have undergone changes in their management system. The need to achieve self-sufficiency under the traditional system led to use of all land resources, and this in turn resulted in a less natural landscape displaying many features of highly humanised space. From the mid-1800s, wine production largely replaced cereal and olive production in the area. In the 1950s, landowners began to abandon work on the land to devote their time to the more lucrative activities that economic development had recently brought about. Property taxes in most Mediterranean countries are low, for both cultural and economic reasons, and because of this, most landowning families tend to hold on to property even if they choose to do nothing with it (Puleo, 2013).

Today, there are no clear plans for the management of this terraced landscape. There is nobody benefiting from the land or maintaining its dry-stone retaining walls, as the owners have left the overgrown terraces to be surrounded by the encroaching forests (Rapella, 1995). UNESCO's concern regarding the degree of conservation protection afforded to sites by national legislation led to the introduction of the concept of buffer zones, areas outside the main site which provide the key sensitive context for the site. Thus, rural WHS encompass built environments that generally have a heterogeneous character resulting from different interpretations of heritage value.

In this regard, given that UNESCO aims to protect and enhance the historical and cultural traditions that were

and still are associated with Mediterranean terraced landscapes, the inclusion of a broad sampling of terraces following both photograms would contribute to a better perception of the historical and cultural evolution found at the heart of the World Heritage Programme (Fig. 2).

4. LANDSCAPE VISUALISATION

The terms visualisation and authenticity in landscapes, as used by UNESCO, do not just refer to how landscape is evolving and is affected in material terms. It is also about how this past is viewed and experienced by locals and foreigners -a key aspect in many heritage studies (Waitt, 2000)- and about whether it offers a sense of identity and anchors collective memory by providing tangible links between past, present and future (Millar, 1989). In this sense, landscape views and perceptions are often deeply rooted in society and the way a landscape has evolved is a characteristic factor, with a culturally dependent outcome.

Cultural and natural landscapes, such as pilgrimages, are defined as “geographic areas associated with a historic event, activity, or people exhibiting cultural and aesthetic values” (Birnbaum & Peters, 1996, p. 4). According to this definition, these landscapes are experiential cultural spaces involving a complex set of elements. Rapoport (1984) distinguished three types of material elements of the built environment: fixed, which are human-made, (e.g. buildings); semi-fixed (e.g. furniture, utensils); and non-fixed, societal values, activities and uses of a site. These cultural or sacred landscapes are imbued with meanings and beliefs. In such places, the intangible can acquire greater significance than fixed or semi-fixed elements (Lennon and Taylor, 2012). As land abandonment is a widespread trend in several countries (Mazzoleni et al., 2004) in many areas this results in spontaneous afforestation and the dilution or loss of cultural landscape features (Baldock, Beaufoy, Brouwer, & Godeschalk, 1996; Daugstad, Ringdal, Rønningen and Skar 2002; MacDonald et al., 2000). Land abandonment also contributes to the



Figure 2.

Abandoned farmyards in the municipality of Vistabella

disappearance of a fine-grained mosaic landscape structure, which is left simplified, homogenised and lacking many semi-natural habitats, with a subsequent decrease in biodiversity value (Henle et al., 2008; Stoate et al., 2009). In contrast, some authors view the “re-wilding” of landscape as a new opportunity (Navarro & Pereira, 2012).

In order to maintain and restore open habitats and landscape heterogeneity, new policies such as maintaining moderate levels of human activity are needed to offset widespread land abandonment. Rather than solely protecting historical human activities, policies need to take the new social and economic context into account. There is perhaps a need for discussion on management strategies for landscape equilibrium in order to contribute to the development of effective conservation actions for the semi-natural landscapes of the Mediterranean Basin. Despite all the efforts made in recent years, the goals of restoring some landscapes have lacked effective and feasible measures that were environmentally and socially acceptable and economically viable (Choi et al., 2008; Corsair et al., 2009; Hobbs, 2004). And perhaps that is why, in the case of these large abandoned Mediterranean landscapes, the lack of specific objectives has precluded major plans, whether single or collective, from being executed in favour of the promotion of landscape and cultural heritage.

There are high costs and complications involved in maintaining a restoration action over time when aiming to retrieve a past condition which is no longer naturally related with the socio-economic reality of each place. In other words, an effective and reliable management strategy for abandoned landscapes should allow for a dynamic equilibrium between land use, planning patterns of conservation costs and landscape capacity to provide goods and services. This adaptive management should be maintained over time.

5. STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVES

An analysis of different approaches to the study of the authenticity of heritage reveals that most studies focus on two main poles. Authenticity, as defined by Wang (1999, p. 351), refers to whether heritage objects are historically accurate or not. From the perspective of the individual approaching heritage, authenticity has been seen as an existential experience derived from consumption or the interaction between the individual and heritage resources (Moscardo, 2001, p.5; Wang, 1999).

Freeman (1984) defined a stakeholder as any individual or group who can affect or is affected by the attainment of an organisation's objectives. Gunn (1994) notes that the success of stakeholder involvement process is not dependent on the final outcome of the process, but rather on the interests, perspectives and values of stakeholders being represented in decisions. Three key stakeholder groups are identified in the context of historic landscape assessment: (1) Local Community Residents; (2) Government/Public Sector; and (3) Visitors. In addition, the fact that the locals are more or less involved in their own community is paramount in the process of promoting the place and its surroundings.

In light of previous research, two major trends appear in Europe in terms of abandoned landscape perceptions. The first reflects a reaction of rejection, while the second highlights the poetic connotations and feelings of freedom associated with these spaces (Hunziker, 1995).

The social impact resulting from the enclosure of landscape by forests and the loss of scenic qualities, together with depopulation and the loss of sense of a well-managed landscape, can give rise to feelings of desolation, isolation, oppression and loss of contact (Bell et al., 2009; Benjamin, Bouchard, & Domon, 2007). The negative perception of abandoned landscapes is partly due to their lack of proper status. In economic terms, society deems them useless. Some believe that the closure of mountain landscapes (Barrué-Pastor and Fournié, 1996), the disappearance of contours, and the loss of spatial hierarchies deface the landscape (Liou, 1991; Perez, 1990). These visual

effects can prompt negative feelings of apathy and disaffection.

Others see in these abandoned landscapes a poignancy and beauty that is noticeably absent in the maintained anthropic elements. Stonewalls that snake through dense hillside stands of larch and pine, “the thick courses of stones conspicuous for their lack of utility and seemingly out of place, tell others a ghostly and enthralling story, being their presence at one time sensible and useful” (Puleo, 2013). The abandoned landscapes represent a period in history that is as valid and rational as those still in use. The same logical minds that formed the landscape under specific social, economic, political, and cultural conditions also decided on their abandonment once those conditions changed (Torriceili, 1995). Both have an important and interesting tale to tell depending on the socio-economic and cultural evolution of the place (Fig. 3).

Previous studies addressing stakeholders’ perceptions of abandoned landscapes state that these are perceived negatively by a large majority. On the one hand, those with apathetic and anthropocentric values are mainly influenced by the low economic return provided by these environments. On the other hand, it is possible to find positive perceptions associated with people with ecocentric values, as these respondents do not necessarily perceive these spaces in terms of profitability but instead appreciate them for reasons that could be associated with landscape quality (Arriaza et al., 2004; Nassauer, 1995; Nijnik & Mather, 2008; Rogge et al., 2007). In short, there is a wide range of landscape values defined by stakeholders, all of which could be taken into consideration in some way when managing cultural landscape.



Figure 3.

Abandoned country houses in the municipality of Ludiente

6. A FUTURE FOR ABANDONED CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Previous studies show how locals and experts agree on the renewal of land use where possible, on planting forests through artificial reforestation of tree species of commercial value, or on mass selective logging as the best options for maintaining landscape use and limiting the tendency towards natural reforestation of the landscape. Active farming and cultivating nature is said to contribute to desirable landscapes available for a kind of "consumption" in which nature and culture are appreciated for their experiential qualities, increasing the landscape's appeal.

The high values associated with managed landscape are also featured in several studies evaluating the quality of some environments (Kaur et al., 2004; Rogge, Nevens, and Gulinck, 2007; Zheng et al., 2011). Nassauer (2011) suggests that visible evidence of care and attention in the landscape evokes an aesthetic response that makes the viewer feel good. Land management no longer has the sole purpose of producing economic benefits –it serves the multifunctional needs of society, including non-market benefits such as recreation and Quality of Life Capital, as well as securing biodiversity and ecosystem services. As Domon (2011) notes, if before it was the ability to produce goods which constituted the basis for landscape appreciation, now it is the aesthetic, environmental and heritage qualities which are decisive factors of appreciation in rural society.

History tells of permanent anthropological interactions between housing, settlements and landscapes (Augé 1998, p. 21). In fact, cultural anthropology has analysed the significance of specific schools of thought on society and location. Rapoport (1972, p. 102) believed that human nature contains elements of constancy and change in relation to biological nature, and perception and behaviour, which are culturally linked and therefore, changeable, innate and constant. In this regard, anthropology has played a part in the evaluation of vernacular architecture, both in terms of the intrinsic value of the architecture itself and the factors linking the constructed artefact with the social field, its identity and history (Augé 1998, p. 19).

Modern experience made people perceive the landscape as an environment in which they could experience new and interesting sensations, or what Porteous termed *sensescapes* (1990:7). Aware of this idealised vision, Benjamin (1996, pp. 177-178) pondered the strange obsession of some writers and researchers in using the landscape to "satisfy desires" through the distant mist that is so characteristic of leisure travellers. Recently, it was pointed out that interaction between "the host" and "the guest" is crucial (Daugstad et al., 2006). Therefore, landscape views and perceptions (aesthetic and physical) need to be negotiated by "the mutual gaze" (Maoz 2005).

The future of rural areas is a core issue discussed mostly in relation to landscape change. "Taste the cultural landscape", launched by the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) in 2004, draws attention to the link between food as a cultural landscape product and the need for continuing food production in order to maintain attention on cultural landscape qualities. A parallel to this initiative can be found in the English Countryside Agency's "Eat the view" campaign which aimed to highlight the close relationship between food and countryside maintenance (Garrod et al. 2005).

CONCLUSION

The hypothesis outlined at the beginning is difficult to apply to the contemporary cultural landscapes analysed. Conservation policies are thought to be related to the way each society values and views its roots and traditions. If these policies to educate society are relatively recent developments, these areas risk gradually losing their values to contemporary and external transformations.

WHS values and orientations should be used to establish clear ways to confront all aspects which currently affect the dynamics of specific cultural landscapes with potential Outstanding Universal Values (OUV). This cannot be achieved by applying standard targets. A new paradigm must be applied to each region or geographic zone. In fact, researchers and institutions should increase awareness of each

cultural, educational and socio-economic situation using dialogue and publications to improve the way in which different cultural landscapes are conceived and assessed. There ought to be an explicit focus on living rural communities - the Quality of Life Capital - contributing to local economic development by preserving farming, agricultural landscape and heritage.

In agreement with Kolb, this study uses shifting discourse and contexts to discourage absolute claims. This should not be seen as conflict. Dialogue is essential and therefore open discussion and participation from the community must be embraced. Self-examination and reflection on our own weaknesses and limitations should also be encouraged. Nevertheless, rational agreement is only one of the many suitable forms of evaluation, and being argued into changing our beliefs is only one way of altering the language we speak.

Negotiating rural landscape is a natural and necessary dialectic among different stakeholders, in which it is dangerous to define rights and wrongs. Institutions need to tackle this and consequently support well-informed decisions or actions affecting rural landscape. Therefore, the 'objective or subjective facticity' of cultural landscapes depends on the social context in which it is born, operates and is configured as a dialectic process. Thus, the survival of cultural elements - indigenous and sincere, free of whitewashing - will reflect its suitability in terms of the social and historical space it occupies in each society and time.

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