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Perennial values and cultural landscapes resilience

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Abstract

This article represents an analysis on the way in which the perennial values influence the cultural landscapes resilience. First of all, the perennial value is defined, as key element in the cultural landscape sustainability. Secondly, an analogy of cultural landscape dynamics with the territorial systems dynamics is made, in order to show the specificity of the cultural landscape resilience. The article tries to answer also the question linked to the way in which the perennial values might be individualised through a creative destruction of the cultural landscapes.

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1. Introduction

The polysemy of the cultural landscape term makes vulnerable the use of this concept compared to an approached focused on the relation with the perennial values. For this reason, we state that the meaning we assign to the cultural landscape is that of a multidimensional space with a high charge of cultural values. These values are relatively concentrated territorially, hence the dominant cultural characteristics of the space. In this paper, we will refer only to the valuable cultural landscapes, outlined around some perennial values recognised by the society.

In this paper, we underline the interrelation between the cultural perennial values and the cultural landscape; respectively the capacity of the first one increases the resilience of the second. Obviously, the cultural landscape can strengthen a perennial cultural value by protecting it. The temporal projection of such a relation represents an argument for rethinking the concepts and generates reflections on the way in which it could bring an added value in the prospective design of the places.

Literature is extremely rich on cultural landscapes that are the research subject for various scientific domains: architecture, urban planning, cultural geography, cultural sociology, anthropology, urban design, landscape design, culture etc. Scattered ideas were found also on the landscape resilience in general while the references to the perennial cultural values are almost missing. Therefore, the authors of this article suggest that the perennial cultural values might be considered to be the values included in the national and international heritage. This means on one
hand recognizing the uniqueness and the universal significance, and, on the other, ensuring the protection of these values with the related costs. The resilience of the cultural landscape, located in urban or highly anthropogenic rural spaces, can be measured by their capacity to keep their physiognomy and even their functionality besides the aggressions determined by the natural, economic, socio-cultural or political factors. The relationship between the perennial values and the landscape resilience is strongly affected by the globalisation processes, the economic crises and the decisions ‘arbitrary in defining and implementing public policies. For this reason, the article will focus mainly on demonstrating the importance of the perennial values in increasing the resilience of the cultural landscapes in general.

2. The cultural landscape and its resilience

Shaping a cultural landscape is a long process and it rarely depends on one single cultural value. In all the cases, the cultural landscape has a spatial projection that doesn’t include only the actual values, but also the activities and the associated services. Their construction is made through cultural processes (Rishbeth, 2004) that succeed in time and imposes their spatial print through buildings and valuable monuments. To have a correct translation of the cultural landscape, Christopher Salter (2009) in the review over Bret Wallach work, mentioned the fact that the latter “promotes reflection on the tensions between an observed geographic reality and its always-complex genesis” (p.207).

The cultural landscape design has as origins the evolution history of an anthropogenic landscape. This evolution takes into account the fact that the seed of a cultural landscape is the emergence, respectively the recognition of a cultural value (fig.1a). In time, also other values are recognized in the proximity, creating a spatial association of the cultural values, based on certain proximity (fig.1b). The cultural landscape is formed when the interstitial spaces between these cultural values are reduced either by recognizing other values or by other urban or rural forms that perform a connected function (fig.1c).

![Fig. 1 The cultural landscape structure.](image)

a) Individual cultural value; b) Association of cultural values; c) Cultural landscape

Usually the cultural landscape is the outcome of a strong interaction between the society and the nature that encounters changing processes over the time and has as a result valuable forms or real ruins (Agha Ebrahimi Samani, Salehi, Irani Behbahani & Jafari, 2012). The formation of differentiated types of spaces (some of which
include cultural landscapes) is the result of using creative skills of the community during their evolutionary history (Ianoș et al., 2010). Cultural landscapes, thus constituted should be protected by the local/regional, national communities or by the international one, as an accumulation of values obtained over the time.

The protection of cultural landscapes implies many stakeholders and involving them in such a process is conducted in cascade. The first recognition is at a local level, and then an increasing number of actors from higher levels is added. If we discuss the perennial values and cultural landscapes, there is no doubt that in this case many international organizations are involved, such as UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the Council of Europe, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the International Council of Monuments and Sites, the International Association of Landscape Ecology and others (Antrop, 2006). Communities’ behaviour towards valuable cultural landscapes, as part of a sustainable development, is dominated by the respect for space (Ianoș, Peptenatu & Zamfir, 2009).

Thus defined, the cultural landscape is one of the least vulnerable territorial systems, even if it is constantly assaulted by activities that generate other types of landscapes specific for residential and economic areas. The resilience of these landscapes is driven from the fact that in most cases cultural landscapes are protected by law. Unlike resilient cities, characterized by flexibility (Godschalk, 2003), cultural landscapes have a resilience that makes them stronger and less brittle. In other words, if a high resilience is possessed, also the resistance to change is increased, the resilience subsuming it (Longstaff et al., 2010). To understand the complexity of the resilience concerning cultural landscape, an approach is needed to stand as a multidisciplinary research framework, similar to urban resilience (Jabareen, 2012).

3. Perennial cultural values

Valuable cultural landscapes are defined by a set of values that have withstood time. Conscious of their importance, the society, with the passage of time, increased their value. The genesis of perennial values takes time, including several successive stages of recognition and selection, projected on a time scale (Fig. 2). Initially there should be a discussion on the existence of diffuse values, usually holding a function: religious, economic, cultural, sports etc. Later on, a first self-selection occurs where the hazard and the limited possibilities of society lead to a change of a significant number of these pseudo-cultural values that are maintained and integrated into the daily life of the community.

![Fig. 2 From diffuse values to perennial values](image)

The more or less formal crystallization of the values, usually by the recognition of visible aesthetic characteristics of cultural objects is a phase transition to their real confirmation. So it gets to a real selection process in relation to the significance of cultural objects for the place’s identity, for the communities and the people. But only some of these creations imposed in the landscape possess a perennial value. Perennial values are on one hand the confirmation of the role that such cultural landscape components have had over the time, and, on the other hand, they are being considered as a symbol for future development.

Contemporary societies face the real processes of modernization and globalization. Valuable cultural objectives can be considered as either obstacles or incentives in achieving economic performance in the modernization
processes. The cultural value is nothing more than a symbol, and when it is validated by the community and time, it goes into the perennial values category (Dorobanțu, 2010). Globalization processes have contradictory trends: either they reconfirm perennial values, generating, for example, flows of tourists or they diminish their significance by reducing local and regional identities in favour of a pseudo-global culture.

4. The relationship between the perennial values and the cultural landscapes

Under the impact of new contemporary development trends, cultural landscapes meet strong pressures from the immediate environment, global climate change or economic and cultural globalization (Fig. 3) (T1). These pressures (disturbances), usually combined, might have repercussions on cultural landscapes. In a first phase, if pressures are low (in terms of the intensity and duration of the event) they can be absorbed by cultural landscape, without changing its characteristics. However, if the pressure continues, after a break point (a discontinuity) (T2), it begins to produce changes in some of the values and in the internal environment. Thus, the consequences are marked either by an enrichment of the cultural landscape or by its alteration (T3).

![Fig. 3 The evolution of cultural landscapes under the impact of various pressures](image)

The enrichment of the cultural landscapes processes involves the addition of new values that have acquired perennial status, eliminating discontinuities in the landscape by an aesthetic and / or functional integration of new targets or extending that cultural landscape by incorporating new adjacent spaces with the same functions. Usually, these types of processes dominate compared to the opposite alteration of cultural landscapes. This last process, in different parts of the world, is characterized by the destruction of symbol values, the cultural landscape degradation due to lack of financial resources for rehabilitation and maintenance, and due to the brutal interventions (such as heavy demolition, for example, a part of the old city centre of Bucharest).

The cultural landscape dynamics are generated by the relationship between the economic and the cultural, the first one being very aggressive and determined by the immediate profit, the second one being assaulted, indirect generator by development and performance in society. The cultural landscape is built around perennial values, and if their density is large enough we can speak about a cultural-landscape heritage. Being the sustainable footprint of society in nature, this type of cultural landscape has the advantage of being protected by law and, accordingly, its resilience is provided mostly by a legal system.

Managing a cultural landscape is difficult, given that there are many components and various interests of different actors (Antrop, 2005). Most conflicts lie in the fact that private ownership on cultural objectives gives certain rights to owners, who sometimes enter in conflicts with the interests of communities to protect landscape
values. Landscape has long been regarded as a barometer of cultural heritage at different scales (Aplin, 2007). Today it can be considered as an asset for future development, bringing added value in the competition for attracting necessary resources in regeneration and diffusion of prestige communities.

5. Conclusions

The relationship between the perennial and valuable cultural landscapes is one of inclusion and interaction, with direct effects in increasing their resilience. The protection of a cultural landscape increases as it includes several perennial values that are universal or part of national heritage. Despite protection by national laws or international ones, some cultural landscapes face some degradation processes due to both the lack of financial resources and poor policies related to conservation values.

The cultural landscape dynamics are continuous, being influenced by external and internal factors. At the same time, they can become attractors of economic resources to communities. The complexity of their insertion in geographical landscapes demands an integrated approach in connection with their particularities. The increase of compatibility between the characteristics of cultural landscapes and sustainability values involves multidisciplinary research to reduce the risk of symmetry breaks, with direct repercussions in managing these complicated territorial entities.

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