

IDENTIFICATION, CHARACTERISATION AND CRITERIA FOR ACTION IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES

V International Conference: Ciencia y Tecnología en Arqueología y Conservación. Baeza 7-10 - de Julio de 2007. Legado Andalusí Foundation.

Silvia Fernández Cacho

Andalusian Institute of the Historical Heritage

silvia.fernandez.cacho@juntadeandalucia.es

Abstract

In archaeology, artefacts and monumental buildings, understood as basic units of study, were gradually replaced by the notion of site. Sites are conceived as functionally and spatially meaningful areas of human activity, and they are relevant not only (or mainly) because of their monumentality but because of their interest in the understandings of past human life. From the 1970s on, with the expansion of the theoretical and methodological principles of spatial archaeology, archaeological analysis expanded its focus towards smaller cartographic scales, looking at catchment areas and systems of relationships between human groups located in wider regions. The way human groups interact with each other, as well as with their physical milieu, marks the territory around them, shaping landscapes that, in some cases have kept some of their archaic characteristics, but in others have continued evolving, conforming new landscapes. From a practical standpoint, the main challenges of archaeological management are, firstly, deciding what landscapes are of interest (or value), and secondly, what are the criteria for their preservation and management. Integration with other environmental policies is of outstanding importance.

Landscape and Heritage

In recent decades we have witnessed accelerated change in many places in the world, and the need has arisen to identify the most unusual landscapes in order to take measures that mitigate the possible alteration of their essential values.

From the moment it was considered necessary to draft registers of landscapes with differing degrees of singularity, the process of patrimonialisation of the landscape started to be more evident, through one of its most traditional tools: the inventory (Chouquer, 2000: 120). Hence, while the monumental object cannot be understood without its relationship with its (more or less immediate) surroundings, the landscape is treated as an object and becomes monumentalised. Nevertheless, the landscape is ever-changing and for it to be managed, maintenance of the conditions that guarantee the permanence of its most significant values is of prime importance, faced with the objective of integral conservation of the monument (Galey, 2001: 74-75; Briffaud, 2001: 336).

From the point of view of heritage management, landscape itself, in all its complexity, is starting to be considered as an object of study, and in this context archaeology plays a relevant role, given that it can make analysis of past landscapes compatible with the study of landscapes today, contributing criteria for action based on knowledge of their dynamics.

However, not all landscapes have to be converted into extra-temporal objects because they are considered as heritage property, as often happens with many heritage bodies that have lost their original use to now become objects with a new use based on a value attributed to them in the present day (Chouquer, 2000: 122). In any case, it is

fundamental to define their characteristic traits, those which are in need of special protection, and to combine their use as tourist resources and their conservation in a balanced manner (Fernández-Posse & Sánchez-Palencia, 2003).

From a practical point of view, the main objectives for territorial planning of heritage policy in these areas are: knowing which archaeological landscapes are to be considered, where they are, and what intervention criteria are to be used. To this end, we must present the following areas of work:

1. Identification of archaeological landscapes.
2. Criteria for evaluating impacts and landscape adaptation of architectural elements.
3. Integration of archaeological studies in general landscape management projects.

The diachrony of landscape analysis

In the year 2000, the European Landscape Convention was signed in Florence. It defines landscape as follows: “Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.” By including human perception in the definition, the concept of landscape is separated from that of the territory, marked by a sense of political and economic appropriation of physical space by groups of people. There is, however, a dimension that is not sufficiently explicit in this definition: time.

From a landscape management point of view, analysis of current landscapes is the most important, while for historical research, it is past landscapes that provoke most scientific interest. Nevertheless, both views are closely connected. Nowadays, landscapes demonstrate a series of characteristics derived from a long historical evolution, and in order to intervene in them, we require both knowledge of said evolution, as well as recognition of the elements that define and characterise one landscape as opposed to another.

Archaeology can provide analytical tools for the establishment of protection criteria for certain landscapes, or for preservation of the characteristics of especially significant landscape elements. For this, interpretation will always be required – to single out the effects of human intervention, and its causes, over the course of history. This requires us to reconcile knowledge of archaeological landscapes and current needs. Within a territory, balance must be maintained between all the legitimate claims on the area.

Furthermore, Archaeological Heritage is often imperceptible, but it must be considered in landscape studies, both for its visible structures and for other apparently invisible ones, given that they allow for a complete understanding of its diachronic evolution and its current structure (Domanico, 2000: 1057).

Methodologically speaking, archaeological analysis of the territory from a landscape point of view has made important contributions to understanding of territorial dynamics, especially as it includes aspects that have barely been taken into account previously, such as those related with visibility (Wansleben & Verhart, 1997). It can also be applied to understanding of the evolution of the landscape and its articulation in heritage

policy. This avoids it being made banal through analysis of factors that have favoured its conservation historically (Fernández-Posse & Sánchez-Palencia, 2003:65). As J. F. Seguin notes, archaeology allows us to “*think of the territory not as a blank sheet of paper, a “tabula rasa”, where we can take any decision we like as if it were the world’s first dawn, but rather to incorporate our policy into a continuity which, with the collective memory of our societies as support, allows us to build a better future.*” (2003: 35)

Archaeological landscapes

When we make reference to archaeological landscapes, we also adopt a “presentist” perspective. For example, if an archaeological site is not an ancient city but what remains of the city to this day, then an archaeological landscape does not have to be seen as a past landscape, but rather what remains of it now.

Sometimes, these landscapes have remained all but unchanged or, at least, they exhibit the essential, original characteristics of a moment in history especially significant with regards to its current configuration. This is when the “fossil landscape” category is most applicable. It is used by UNESCO to define landscapes whose evolutionary process is has come to an end (Rössler, 1998).

Nevertheless, landscapes are always evolving. Even when they are not receiving relevant anthropic influences (a highly remote possibility nowadays), physical conditions change (climate, natural disasters, biological processes, etc.) as does the social perception of them. Therefore, areas that have been marginal for long periods of time become valuable as a result of the gradual transformation of people’s perceptions of their values. There are also, however, landscapes that owe their uniqueness to the permanence of archaeological structures, whether conserving their original use, with an alternative use, or in disuse.

Traditionally, in many studies of landscape, aesthetic and visual criteria have been prevalent on one side, with ecological criteria on the other: what can be seen, and appears beautiful, harmonious and, furthermore, has an important natural component. Nevertheless, when an analysis of landscape is carried out from the archaeological point of view, we can underline the following basic aspects that make them distinctive:

- a) The value of history against aesthetics: In an analysis of landscape from an archaeological perspective, historical value prevails against aesthetic value, given that it is seen as a reflection of the historical relationship established between society and nature, independent of the aesthetic qualities of the resulting landscape. In the same way that from an ecological point of view, the quality of the environment is vital for an optimal evaluation of a present-day landscape (Seguin, 2003: 35), so for archaeology it will be in as far as it allows for advances in historical understanding of past societies and their relationship with nature. As we are reminded by S. Piccardi, an eventual aesthetic value “is added to historicity, but is autonomous” (Piccardi, 1996: 82).
- b) The value of the invisible: The importance given to what is visible in landscape studies results in a habitual lack of attention to components which are not easily perceptible, such as totally or partially buried architectural elements.

Nevertheless, many elements that make up the landscape and which are, furthermore, clearly identifiable, are produced by the existence of archaeological sites in the subsoil, or by direct action of the human beings that lived in them in the past. In the same way, along with these invisible architectural elements and the causes that determined their presence, there is a broad array of elements that defined past landscapes and which are often still essential components in current landscapes, despite being difficult to detect (Domenico, 1999; 2000).

Similarly to the manner in which an archaeological site exhibits emerging and underlying elements, its also owes its existence to environmental and social factors, and shows signs of how it was used. The landscape has often assimilated a major archaeological site, whose stratigraphy can be analysed using the appropriate methodology, where there is no room for chronological or qualitative limits (Bartolotto, 2002: 352).

This perspective is the origin for the idea of landscape as palimpsest, and has been criticised for representing a certain “concealment” of history. In successive stages, new settlers would bury the remains from previous ones and so on and so forth, making these remains disappear. This is the criticism made by G. Choquer when, for example, he points out that remains of Roman centuriations in the Emilia-Romagna and Padova regions of Italy cannot be understood solely as vestiges of something that was and then ceased to exist after the classical era (Chouquer, 2000: 26). In other words, he opposes their analysis as outlines from the past instead of as elements with notable importance in the current appearance of the landscape.

Indeed, even if these landscapes of the past have not been conserved intact to this day, sometimes the characteristics of the archaeological remains and the permanence within the landscape of key aspects of its past, make them valuable areas in the present day for their outstanding hereditary content.

In many cases, the material remains that are most perceptible for their existence in the past are once again put to use, although this may not be the original use. They form part of a contemporary landscape that may have lost many of its original characteristics, but the very presence of the remains themselves gives it a unique value. These landscapes may be well known through archaeological research, and may have benefited from public intervention in some of the diverse aspects related to its tutelage, but not always.

Archaeological landscapes and heritage management

In order to manage landscapes with heritage value, differences in management must be noted as compared with other properties that have traditionally been included in protection policy for cultural properties. The landscape is different in that it is always evolving and the main objective of its management is to achieve the preservation of its basic characteristics, the maintenance of the balanced conditions that have allowed for its conservation – i.e., to guarantee its stability (Salmerón, 2003: 29).

In archaeological landscapes, maintenance of stability should be based on even more emphatic actions. The concepts that have defined these areas (landscapes frozen in time, fossil landscapes, etc.) give the idea of an immobile landscape. Although this is not the case, it is true that they are areas where certain defining characteristics must be set, with

change slowed to a minimum, under a protection concept that defines them as *reserves*, even in urban contexts. The same terms as those applied by J. L. Miralles to the concept of ecological reserve or storeroom could be used for a type of heritage reserve, or another concept that integrated the two ideas (Miralles, 2002: 147).

The stability of many landscapes is being altered, often irreversibly, and those with outstanding heritage value are no exception. This situation makes it essential to draw up criteria and strategies for action. These must sometimes be clear and emphatic because the reality of circumstances demands they be so (Lomba, 2003; Salmerón, 2003: 32).

At the same time, in landscape management in general, and specifically in relation to archaeological landscapes, the concurrence of various administrations is required. As soon as management goes beyond the archaeological site, which can be delimited and protected directly by the cultural administration, other interests and responsibilities come to form part of the decision-making process. Although compartmentalised administrative structures make this a complicated process, it is necessary to have shared objectives and to reach agreements at all levels of responsibility/jurisdiction, including environmental, social and cultural perspectives and methods (Martínez de Pisón, 2002: 12).

If it seems to be the case that official bodies are appropriate to promote “suitable landscapes” (Zoido, 2003: 19) and to control the territorial actions that affect them most directly, landscapes with archaeological values must be identified so that they can be correctly integrated in said documents, whether they have sectorial protection or not. An archaeological landscape does not only need protection from aggressive anthropic uses, but should also benefit from improvements in access infrastructure and adaptation of services to increase their worth. They should be protected from activities that could have a negative impact on the landscape, and should enjoy other measures that can be planned by said bodies, beyond the direct responsibility of the cultural administration.

Measures to be taken should be, first and foremost, preventive and organisational, given that, in the case of archaeological heritage, palliative or restorative measures are not possible. This means that rather than stopping changes, they should be managed, and this management should be understood as a search for the balance between possible loss and the benefits that said changes represent. They are not to be measured solely within economic parameters (Fairclough, 2001: 24).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BARTOLOTTI, S. (2002): "Strumenti dell'Archeologia per la lettura della storia dei paesaggi" *En SCAZZOSI, L. (Ed.): Leggere il Paesaggio. Confronti Internazionali*. Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali. Gangemi Editore. Roma. Pgs.: 351-354

BRIFFAUD, S. (2001): "Réflexions en forme de synthèse" *Patrimoine et Paysages culturels. Actes du colloque international de Saint-Émilion. 30 mai-1er juin 2001*. Éditions Confluences. Bordeaux. Pgs.: 335-340

CHOUQUER, G. (2000): *L'étude des paysages: essais sur leurs formes et leur histoire*. Editions Errance. Paris.

DOMANICO, L. (2000): "'The living past": for a new definition of the cultural heritage" *2nd International Congress on "Science and Technology for the safeguard of cultural heritage in the mediterranean basin" Paris, 5-9 July 1999*. CNRS-CNR. Paris. Pgs.: 1057-1061

FAIRCLOUGH, G. (2001): "Cultural Landscape, Sustainability, and Living with Change?" *Managing Change: Sustainable Approaches to the Conservation of the Built Environment. Proceedings*. The Getty Conservation Institute. Los Angeles. Pgs.: 23-46

FERNÁNDEZ-POSSE M.D. y SÁNCHEZ-PALENCIA, F.J. (2003): "Puesta en valor social y económico del Patrimonio Cultural y Natural" En MOURE ROMANILLO, A. (Ed.): *Patrimonio Cultural y Patrimonio Natural. Una reserva de futuro*. Universidad de Cantabria y Parlamento de Cantabria. Santander. Pgs.: 63-84

GALEY, B. (2001): "Monument et paysage dans l'évolution du Patrimoine et de sa mise en valeur" *Patrimoine et Paysages Culturels. Actes du Colloque International de Saint-Émilien. 30 mai-1er juin 2001*. Éditions Confluences. Bordeaux. Pgs.: 73-75

LOMBA, C. (2003): "Intervención en los conjuntos patrimoniales" En MOURE ROMANILLO, A.(Ed.): *Patrimonio Cultural y Patrimonio Natural. Una reserva de futuro*. Universidad de Cantabria y Parlamento de Cantabria . Santander. Pgs.: 85-100

MARTÍNEZ DE PISÓN, E. (2002): "Reflexión sobre el concepto de paisaje" *Awareness of the Landscape: from perception to protection. Proceedings. La Granja (Segovia, Spain), 6-7 April 2000*. Consejo de Europa. Strasburg. Pgs.:11-18

MIRALLES I GARCÍA, J.L. (2002): "El camino de la sostenibilidad: de la planificación territorial y urbanística a la construcción del paisaje" *Actas del I Congreso de Ingeniería Civil, Territorio y Medio Ambiente. Madrid 13, 14 y 15 de Febrero de 2002*. Colegio Oficial de Ingenieros de Caminos, Canales y Puertos y Comisión de Medio Ambiente. Madrid. Pgs.: 145-151

PICCARDI, S. (1986): *Il paesaggio culturale*. Patron Editore. Bologna

RÖSSLER, M. (1998): "Los paisajes culturales y la Convención del Patrimonio Mundial Cultural y Natural: resultados de reuniones temáticas previas" En MÚJICA BARREDA, E. (Ed.): *Paisajes Culturales en los Andes. Memoria Narrativa, Casos de Estudio, Conclusiones y Recomendaciones de la Reunión de Expertos. Arequipa y Chivay, Perú 17 - 22 de mayo, 1998*. UNESCO. <http://www.condesan.org/unesco/Cap%2006%20metchild%20rossler.pdf> [Consultado 19-03-2005]

SALMERÓN ESCOBAR, P. (2003): "Paisaje y Patrimonio cultural" *Territorio y Patrimonio. Los Paisajes Andaluces. Cuadernos, XV*. Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico. Junta de Andalucía. Granada. Pgs.: 28-45

SEGUIN, J.F. (2003): "Les différents approches du paysage" *Landascape Heritage, Spatial Planning and Sustainable Developpment. Proceedings. Lisbon 26-27 November,*

2001. Consejo de Europa. Strasburg. Pgs.: 33-36

WANSLEEBEN, M. y VERHART, L. (1997): "Geographical Information Systems. Methodological progress and Theoretical decline? *Archaeological Dialogues*, 4. Pgs.: 53-64

ZOIDO NARANJO, F. (2003): "Hacia una estrategia general para la valoración de los paisajes andaluces" *Territorio y Patrimonio. Los Paisajes Andaluces. Cuadernos*, XV. Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico. Junta de Andalucía. Granada. Pgs.: 16-27