



CULTURAL LANDSCAPES RECORDING AND DOCUMENTATION

Theories, methods and techniques

[Executive summary](#)

Executive summary of the project submitted to the Getty Conservation Institute's 2018-2019 call for projects in the field of conservation, preservation, heritage science and related fields of research.



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Description of the project

Over the last 30 years, we have witnessed an acceleration of the processes that are transforming our surroundings, both in urban and rural environments, as a result of the rural flight, development of tourism, climate change, technological innovation, socio-economic and geopolitical imbalance and population growth.

This transformation affects cultural heritage with different degrees of intensity depending on the scale. The first cultural heritage protection policies in the Western world at the end of the 19th Century related to movable objects and sought to avoid the illegal trafficking of works of art. Later, given the progressive destruction of immovable heritage with the expansion of land development, authorities also increased the mechanisms for their protection. In recent decades, however, this protection has proved insufficient and new instruments have begun to be developed to preserve large urban and rural areas in the face of large-scale territorial transformation processes. This trend was consecrated with the inclusion of cultural landscapes in the UNESCO's *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of World Natural and Cultural Heritage* in 1992.

Since then, the knowledge and publication of theories, methods and techniques for the management, protection and conservation of cultural landscapes has increased, in both the academic and administrative fields. This increase in knowledge has also taken place in the standardisation of their registration and documentation, albeit still with contributions linked to specific projects not extensively shared amongst the scientific-technical community as a whole. In this context, I must highlight the documentation work carried out by English Heritage in relation to the historical landscapes of England, the cultural landscape inventory compiled by the United States National Parks Service, the cultural landscapes of the Frisian Coast through the LANCEWAD project between Denmark, Germany and Holland

and the Register of Andalusian Landscapes of Cultural Interest by the Andalusian Institute of Historical Heritage (IAPH)¹.

However, we need to bear in mind that, in a heritage registration and documentation project, it is important consider the purpose, characteristics and territorial scope of the area around the object to be documented right from the start.

- a) Cultural landscapes are probably the most complex heritage object to document as, in addition to being wholes that are greater than the sum of their parts, they include tangible and intangible value and their management requires inter-administrative coordination through specific instruments, with greater scope than those developed by the sectoral policies.
- b) A documentary project with the objective of publishing cultural and tourist information will not register the same details as another designed for the purpose of protection, research or conservation.
- c) If a documentation project on a national or regional scale is to take place, the initial level of information registered will be of a more extensive nature than if said documentation is performed in relation to a single heritage object, in this case a cultural landscape, as a preliminary study before conservation or restoration work.

The purpose of this project is to analyse the different proposals for the registration and documentation of cultural landscapes for their protection, research and conservation, in order to identify both the common and distinguishing elements in addition to the underlying conceptual base of each one. Both the extensive -inventory- registration and documentation scale and the local scale, i.e., the registration of data for the execution of specific plans or actions for the conservation of their cultural value will be taken into account.

The Getty Conservation Institute's experience in the development of the *Arches* system and in other cultural heritage registration and documentation projects² (including an illustrated basic terminology for alterpieces in collaboration with the IAPH³), and that of the IAPH's Documentation and Studies Centre itself in the design of heritage information and the documentation of cultural landscapes, could facilitate the initiation of joint actions in this area in the future.

Methodology

The execution of this research project would fundamentally rely on bibliographical and documentary sources, mainly available in the Library of the Getty Research Institute, and the knowledge of the technical personnel of the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) in order to study the way in which the registration and documentation of cultural landscapes is to take place in the *Arches* project⁴.

The project's main phases or tasks will be organised as follows:

1. Bibliographical search of documentary standards applied to the registration and documentation of cultural landscapes to gain preliminary knowledge for decision-making in relation to the preservation of their cultural value.
2. Comparative analysis of the data models used to register the textual, graphic and cartographic information depending on the purpose and characteristics of each inventory.

¹ The specific bibliography of these projects is incorporated into the bibliographical selection attached to this project.

² https://www.getty.edu/conservation/about/field_projects/recording.html

³ Such as *ALTARPIECES. Illustrated basic terminology*, produced in collaboration with the IAPH in 2002 <http://www.iaph.es/sys/productos/retablos/> [Accessed 10/09/2018]

⁴ https://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/field_projects/arches/ [Accessed 10/09/2018]

- Evaluation of results, highlighting the best practices and proposing a data structure to register cultural landscapes with different levels of detail, from a basic information data model to the registration of detailed information.

Benefits of the Getty's resources for the project

The theme of the project is not very different from the lines of work of the GCI which, together with the World Monuments Fund, has designed the *Arches* information system which can be an important resource for this project.

At the same time, a basic search in its resource catalogue returns more than 1000 entries of books and journals related to cultural landscapes and more than 200 with data models, making the GRI's library a noteworthy provider of resources in this area. The attached graph shows the distribution of said resources based on the various search criteria used.

