

INTRODUCTION

Pablo Vidal-González

During the last three years, the University Institute of Anthropology at the Catholic University of Valencia, from now on referred to as UCV, has coordinated a European project on Landscape Anthropology in European Protected Areas, financed by the Erasmus programme, Education DG at EU level, as an Intensive Programme in which a significant number of students and lecturers from the universities involved have participated.

During the three phases of the work, the participants from each of the countries submitted their contributions in order to allow a more profound understanding of the different protected natural spaces that, due to their special characteristics, should have been preserved without any interference from human beings. Each of these examples, from Iceland to Portugal, however, demonstrated that human beings have shaped, transformed and built territory in order to make the most of the natural resources which nature could offer them. From this, we can conclude that there are no spaces which have not suffered, to a greater or lesser degree, at least some type of modification by humans throughout the centuries. This use of resources, over a long period of time, was carried out in a sustainable way, precisely because the inhabitants of those places were the first people interested in maintaining the equilibrium which would allow them to continue using its resources and guarantee them for future generations. Unfortunately, we can observe, from the Industrial Revolution onwards, an abusive exploitation of the environment, when the urban areas and the factories which were to be found there, started a voracious consumption of resources, which provoked a collapse of the traditional use of these resources.

In any case, the choice of three protected spaces, a discretionary option made by the public authorities, artificially, to conserve spaces considered to be natural, is a decision which is not very coherent. It is the authorities that legislate on what is worth conserving, fencing off, protecting, almost always making decisions which do not take into account the opinions of those who for centuries have respectfully maintained the territory in which they lived.

That new space, now protected, is hugely attractive to city-dwellers, the potential customers of these natural spaces, in need of green areas to compensate for the pollution and stress of city life. Precisely for this reason, the creation of these spaces has made them popular, and is attracting a public which until now had ignored their existence. Protection attracts an overexploitation of tourism and often causes the opposite effect.

At the beginning of the third year of the project, the possibility was raised of collecting together cutting-edge research which had been presented throughout the project by the participants in a monograph that reflects the spirit of the European project. That is to say, to illustrate the diversity of the protected areas of the European continent, but at the same time reflecting many of their common characteristics. Comparative research is key to anthropological work, and therefore the different examples which are given, highlight this methodology and offer a European perspective for studies on landscape in specific settings, such as protected areas.

The intense pressure from urban development and a stressful city life, contribute to making citizens miss that more natural environment, in which our ancestors lived many years ago. This initiated, at the beginning of the 20th century, a process of declaring the protection of natural spaces. It first appeared in the shape of nature reserves meant to protect these last wild natural spaces from the pressures of urbanisation. However, and paradoxically, this process of declaration, this creation of new frontiers within natural spaces, has provoked greater interest in visiting these areas. There is now a profound discussion about which territories should be protected as well as about the restrictions which this protection implies. There is also debate about the profound transformations which, during centuries, man has made of land when creating the landscapes which now, from our urban point of view, we wish to preserve.

The first text of this monograph is the theoretical work of Calero which allows us to have a detailed knowledge of the origins and evolution of the term landscape, as well as a study on the different definitions which have been given of this word which is so full of meaning. The author, researcher at the University Institute of Anthropology at the UCV, defends the role of anthropology in the study of landscape by providing the point of view of someone who coexists with territory, who lives and breathes it on a daily basis. Landscape cannot be understood without the people who value it, admire it,

preserve it, model it and, unfortunately, destroy these spaces which we admire, summon us and invite us to contemplate. Also, and too often, those who live closer to protected landscapes are precisely those who are forbidden to or restricted from using and exploiting it in a sustainable way. It seems as if, and using a classical Spanish expression, "we wish to put gates on the countryside", by declaring a territory protected which these people have enjoyed, and in a sense have designed themselves. As always these regulations are imposed by the decision-making centres of power which are far removed from the spaces which are to be protected.

Kavaliauskas and Veteikis present us with a proposal to analyse the importance of and the interest in protected areas. It is a technical tool which will allow us to discover which the most valuable landscapes are. This is a necessary previous element for its conservation and valorization. Both authors classify landscape, following the experience which results from the study of Lithuanian landscapes, by pointing out the different levels of protection in relation to their greater or lesser valuation. In short, they propose a tool to quantify the relative value of a given territory, within a landscape, so that it may be protected for future generations.

Landscape is a human construct which is difficult to quantify since its value depends on the subjectivity of the observer. Both authors, with their proposal, help us to value landscape in a more objective way. As a result, we can get to know and prioritise those spaces with greater value, not only emotionally but also quantitatively.

Brisebarre reflects on the evolution of the concept of landscape in protected natural areas, taking the Causses et Cévennes Natural Park in France as a reference. It is a strongly anthropized territory where the centuries-old presence of pastoralism linked to seasonal migration has modified the landscape. The recent classification of this protected space as World Heritage by UNESCO has allowed the author, who took an active part in the classification process, to reflect on new concepts of landscape such as heritage and the criteria used for the declaration of this territory as World Heritage.

Kavoliūtė, Veteikis and Jukna present us with the profound changes which the Lithuanian territory has suffered due to the richness of its lands and the intensive use they have been subjected to, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries, with

particular reference to the heavy pressure of Soviet collectivism. The authors analyse the traces which this transformation has left behind and how the authorities have tried to recover some of the spaces by classifying them as protected, with a view to protecting them from strong anthropic pressures and creating "original" islands between cultivated areas.

The constant pressure on potential agricultural land is another of the difficulties in preserving territories from changes made by human beings. Not surprisingly, protected spaces are usually far off marginal lands, of little agricultural value, which is the reason why they have gone unnoticed under anthropic pressure.

Vidal-González text introduce us into a paradigmatic study case, as is the deep anthropic changes of Mosquera, a valley into Sierra de Espadán Natural Park, in Castellón county, Spain. The modifications made by are, precisely, the origin of a jewel, the hearth of the protected space and a reference place for local villagers. Their inhabitants are, first, and then the hikers, who consider this territory, in their personal opinion, as an idyllic and dreamy place, the lost paradise, of the entire Park. Mosquera is a built landscape, modeled by human action. Precisely this gradual and respectful intervention, make, as a result, a referent place for neighbors, visitants and researchers of this Mediterranean forest example, a highlight and attractive space, that never would be the same without the direct human intervention, in the past, developed by local people that knew how to take profit of the important natural resources of the valley with sustainability criteria.

Seguí's contribution leads us to another significant issue of great interest which is the agricultural and livestock exploitation of the scarce resources of Mediterranean mountain dry land where shepherds try to develop all their skills in order to make the best possible use of scarce and changeable pastureland as befits the elements in the area.

The continued use of the territory throughout the centuries has provoked important changes in landscape, for example terraced hillsides and also buildings which are typically associated with livestock such as pens and other types of animal shelter. Seguí has proven to us how a small territory has been stretched to the limit. The local people have combined a poor dry land agriculture with sheep and goat farming and this has

allowed them, in places with limited resources, to survive. The limited number of sheep and goat herds and the strong competition to access pastures which have been used to the limit, prove the difficult balance which exists between space and human beings to ensure survival. This has left indelible traces of these activities, in full recession, on the landscape.

Christ proposes an interesting case study, the small coastal islet of Marøy, on the Norwegian coast at Rogaland. In this Nordic country, they have traditionally protected mountain reserves, those which are the least populated and the furthest away from built-up areas. In the case that he provides us with, the interest for protection lies precisely in the use which has been made by man over the centuries in a coastal territory, which has been traditionally strongly anthropized and where land and sea resources have been exploited. The long process of anthropization in this restricted area underwent a profound change due to its abandonment, triggering a reversion process which concealed the traces of this occupation, in a period when the struggle between man and his surroundings for survival was extraordinary. Agricultural and fishing activity, as well as farming (which exploited the scarce pastures for sheep), were the only sources of wealth for the few families which inhabited this territory. The recent process of recovery of this space which has been built, modified and sculpted by man is presented in this interesting work.

Cervinkova and Golden introduce us to a unique case study, namely the urban landscape which surrounds the Warsaw Centennial Hall (Poland), which has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. It is a prominent urban element, of great symbolic significance, which has been the subject of multiple interpretations and controversy, given its origins and uses throughout history and up to the present day. The authors analyse the different messages that a cultural landscape, in this case urban, can offer the public, and point out that Cultural Heritage is not without innocent interpretations and, the same as the analysis of historical memory, it also generates polemic in cultural areas.