

Chapter 15

Urban Landscape Quality Management and Monitoring: A Methodological Proposal to Study the Case of Porto, Portugal

Isabel Vaz de Freitas

Portucalense University, Portugal

Jorge Marques

Portucalense University, Portugal

Carlos Augusto Rodrigues

Portucalense University, Portugal

Cristina Sousa

Portucalense University, Portugal

ABSTRACT

The issue of the landscape quality or, more precisely, of its goal was addressed in the European Landscape Convention in 2000 to guide the public authorities and the aspirations of the population concerning their characteristics. It also happens regarding the landscape management that leads the authors to a sustainable development preservation, orientating and conciliating the changes that result from the human interaction with the environment. For a research on urban landscapes management, it is proposed a methodological analysis to the case study of Porto (Portugal) with a historical approach to understand how the increasing pressure of tourism is manifested on its image. The main goal is to identify the quality of the landscape and guide its sustainability towards a constant monitoring of images perception.

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BACKGROUND

In this first analysis, it should be noted that this project integrates a larger one that has its origin in Seville and Malaga. Meanwhile, other cities in Portugal, such as Guimarães, can integrate this project, particularly the Portuguese World Heritage Cities, allowing further comparative analysis. The intention is to develop a wide collaboration between other cities, as European Landscape Convention (ELC) suggests, to change experiences and results of research projects. In this first framework, methods, elements and urban components that can be used to establish an image perceived of the historic area are analyzed. The main goal of the central project is to design and test a methodological proposal to obtain information about landscape perceptions and valuation with the collaboration of the residents and visitors. A series of instruments have been proposed to collect people's opinions and compile information. As conclusions the project already developed in Seville, with the research questions answered, the researchers concluded that the citizen participation process helped to define a guide for the design of landscape policies. (Mercado-Alonso, Fernández-Tabales, & Muñoz-Yules, 2017)

INTRODUCTION

According to the ELC, "landscape" has the meaning of territory as a result of the action and interaction of man over space and nature over time that gives places character and identity. The perceptions of local populations and the resulting interaction of human processes over the natural environment are explicit, factors which are intrinsically linked to a space that is available for the development project of the city, what Maciocco (2008) identifies as "landscape project, city project." In this human-generated interaction, a historical and complex cultural system is created, holding itself a specific meaning for those who live or visit. Landscape "is a complex environmental-cultural system with a certain physiognomy" (Sowińska-Świerkosz & Chmielewski, 2016, p. 596). The Cultural landscape is "history made visible" (Goetcheus, Karson & Carr, 2016, p. XII), nature modified by human societies through times.

The continuous human movements and actions over a given space, contribute to its identity construction, which gives the territory unique elements of place/man relationship. It is this uniqueness that promotes the attractiveness of the places and allows to understand the landscape not only as "seeing the area but the way people interpret the place and experience the cultural elements in it" (Samsudin & Maliki, 2015, p. 434). This uniqueness must be protected and preserved as a testimony of the passing time. This time-passing phenomenon is very striking in the urban context where social and cultural needs live from mutations and where the marks of the time and cultural currents are relevant. The constant mutation is inherent in the territories and, as such, today there are marks of identity which allow tracing paths and histories. So, the question is not about the development and construction of new times, but about how decisions can change and erase those paths and histories, destroying memory.

According to Antrop (2005), what guarantees the identity of the landscape is its "coherence." In fact, the landscape is changing, adapting to new experiences, new habits and new technologies, but it is the coherence of the resilient that gives it a character. It is this core that cannot be destroyed, with the risk of abandoning identity, the soul of the landscape.

The visitor perceives coherence and identity since his/her first contact with the place. Visitors easily point out the distinguishing elements and identifiers of the territories. Scazzosi (2004, p.337) refers to the landscape as a "document" and as such "any place can be read for its cultural, natural and environmental

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