

The Cultural Park as a Platform Connecting Human Ecology with Cultural Landscape Management

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Abstract

A cultural park is a model of active participation which aim and applicability concern the conservation and valorization of cultural landscapes; the improvement of rural population quality of life; land's memories preservation; sustainable development new practices; new areas of knowledge and apprenticeship. So, cultural park it's a tool relying the main aspects of human heritage: the connection between mankind and its natural environment and the footprints and marks that he spread in the landscape. This platform of intervention is particularly important what Mediterranean landscapes concern because they are disturbance-dependent features modified by anthropogenic factors since millennia and its ecodiversity is particularly threatened. Therefore finding out and developing new means of land management, including conservation of nature policies, is a central issue specially in the context of the actual rural world paradigm, where farmers need to move towards multi-functional activities and society is demanding both a broad spectrum of products and a high environmental and landscape quality level. Cultural parks is a contribute to an holistic approach to the landscape values understanding where ecological and natural values play a relevant role, increasing citizenship among landowners and public in general. With Cultural Park concept we just intend to find out a meeting point of many studies we work with. Through two case-studies (Évora and Viseu regions) we intend to illustrate the referred model that can contribute to local development favouring the presence of man in landscape.

Introduction

For a long time has Man been an active agent in the process of ecosystems development, particularly in what respects the use of energetic subsidies (Odum, 1997, p. 66) and the installation of technical assistance fluxes (Frontier & Pichot-Viale, 1993, p. 365).

Man's creative capacity has reached in the last decades such levels that the anthroposystem may be nowadays considered almost autonomous in relation to the principles of functioning of the natural systems. But most Man developed systems are not innocuous and have created such environmental impacts, since the industrial revolution, that it is believed that they have started to affect the whole of the terrestrial globe. Some authors even think that the functioning capacity of the bio-cybernetic natural mechanisms, responsible for the rebalance of the ecosystems following several disturbances, is already

seriously affected. Under these circumstances, the re-establishment of an ecosystem balance, which allows future survival of the human species on Earth, will support itself each time more on cultural noospheric mechanisms in spite of refusing a purely technocentric interpretation (Naveh, 1990, pp. 51-52 and Naveh, 2000). They should be applied to different levels and in different fields, such as that of land planning.

Among the many unbalances, which recently have affected human societies, one should refer to those related with the gradients of human concentration in the territory. For a correct interpretation of this situation one must understand the relationship between urban areas – rural areas, which may be greatly explained, according to certain researchers, by the phenomenology of the contact among ecosystems at different levels of development and with different information contents (Frontier & Pichot-Viale, 1993, pp. 370-371). Here also the re-establishment of a balanced and sustainable

situation should be supported on human creativity, by means of development of new cultural mechanisms.

In the Portuguese context, one sees nowadays a dynamic of human desertification of the inland areas in benefit of the more developed urban areas, mostly located along the seacoast. The conception of new means for the valorisation of such depressed inland areas is becoming each time more urgent, although this is a problem of high complexity, which even includes the features of geo-politic nature. This tendency may well lessen and even change in after-years. Similarly to what happened in France, where during the nineties, one could see that migration grew to isolated rural areas, as a result of pensioners and sections of the working class being attracted by rural employment (Cavailhès & Schmitt, 2002, pp. 40 and 47) or other types of "ruralized" work (*Idem*, p. 49). The motivations are generally complex and are not based only on rational or economical reasons. Also to be considered are those related with affection, with ecology or even with ethics, where one should account also for fancy, representation and utopia (Diry, 2002, p. 71).

With the notion of Cultural Park, the authors intend to give a contribution towards the revival of those depressed rural areas, by creating new attractions both economical and social, which will allow the populations to settle through the development of new activities. So, this conception must be placed in the context of the present rural world paradigm, where:

- The farmers need to move towards multifunctional activities;
- The society is demanding a broad spectrum of products;
- The society is requiring a high environmental and landscape quality level.

Through the development of Cultural Parks some solutions to match these requirements can be found.

What is a cultural park?

A Cultural Park (CP) is a model of active participation and landscape management and its purposes are different from most existing parks: archaeological, natural or other type of land and open-air parks and museums, as is explained later.

The main goals of a CP are the promotion and conservation of the heritage values (natural and man-made) in an articulated form, and in a cultural landscape context. Included is a dynamics of a new pedagogic activity and of population education.

With these purposes in view, a CP presents itself as a mechanism of management, because it pays attention to the hierarchy of heritage values (natural and man-made), it deals with elements related with the natural and social - cultural evolution of an area; and it insists in emphasizing the pedagogic relevance in relationship with schools. In this way, one could say that a CP is an instrument, which corresponds to the new demands of Land Planning facing the challenges the societies have.

Besides, a CP points out to new forms of promotion and environmental protection because it stands for those access and usufruct restrictions, which are only socially accepted if well understood and justified. Here an attitude of widened engagement is called for. The State cannot be the only entity responsible for the preservation of the heritage and for the definition of the underlying policies. With these parks the

citizen is arisen towards the problems of heritage protection with which he contacts daily and which he may and should protect since in the majority of cases it does not benefit from any specific classification.

In fact, the CP new forms of heritage management can be developed involving new economic realities. With the CP one is dealing with structures where tourism is involved as well as associated economical activities contributing to support the real regional sustained development.

The CP project appeals to quality criteria and objective evaluation of heritage and other landscape values. That is why the CP areas must be chosen carefully. Heterogeneity and richness of cultural landscape values must be considered in the selection of those areas, which must offer a high landscape ecodiversity (Naveh, 1998).

Cultural parks, ecomuseums and natural parks

Due to what is at stake, a cultural park may be mixed up with an eco-museum, as this is also a structure with the purpose of preserving the memories of a community thus including its natural and cultural heritage; likewise an eco-museum has in its genesis a pedagogic programme for the community itself and intends to be a tool for diversion and deepening of their roots (Maggi & Murtas, 2004).

The big and main difference is that the cultural park is intended to be an instrument of intervention in land planning getting much closer to the idea of a natural park. Besides, a cultural park has a scope as well as economical, social and pedagogic purposes, which tries to surpass the horizon of the community in which it is inserted, typical of the ecomuseum; it is in fact turned to the outside and tends to create universally acceptable landscape management forms. It covers new problems which mankind face at present, of which a good example is the worry about the mass of tourist affluence to areas with high fragility or the urban pressure which starts to overflow into peri-urban areas, where at times natural and cultural heritage values of great interest may be found.

On the other hand, in spite of the natural park trying to develop a notion profile based on the idea of landscape and of the importance of the ecosystem, it has presented evident limitations and failures:

- The tendency to have a widened geographical basis and working badly with restricted space;
- The incapacity to apprehend the notion of humanized and semi-humanized landscape in its more integrated form; or rather, in those landscapes, in what the values to be maintained concern, it is not possible to separate the natural elements from the cultural ones, as they are part of one only structure, the preservation, protection and valorisation of which may be only done globally;
- The difficulties which have been evident in the sense of defining a sustainable frame of valorisation;
- The difficulties in developing the pedagogic potential of those spaces related to investigation but also to learning since basic schooling;
- The tendency to make these areas the basis of a sustainable development, preferring in most cases their defence while an island; the difficulty in establishing clear and convergent criteria in their relationship with the inhabitants living in them.

As is understood, the CP is close to the idea of ecomu-

seum inasmuch as it intends to involve the population in its new ways, but gets away as it implies the concentration of a scientific critic mass for the monitoring and management of the system, which at the most is only present in some way in the cultural park.

Table 1 – The conception of Cultural Park: major premises

<p>MITIGATED TOURISTIC ACTIVITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitation of the number of visitors (according to the carrying capacity) • Limitation of the touristic substructures (lodging and eating) • Priority to rural and nature touristic activities <p>CONDITIONED PRODUCTIVE AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority to traditional agricultural activities • Promotion of handicraft activities • Conditions for industrial and commercial activities <p>SPECIALIZED MUSEOLOGIC ACTIVITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference for local museums and interpretation centers • Expert participation <p>SUSTAINED SOCIAL AND ECONOMICAL ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessity for a population management participation • Maintenance or improvement of the local and regional environmental features • Direct material benefits for the populations • Reinforcement of the endogenous resources <p>LAND PLANNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitting in with the local plans • Supported and adequate to the multi-functional purposes of the land • Definition of monitoring mechanisms and indicators

Cultural parks case-studies

For a good understanding of the theoretical problems raised ahead, the authors will present two case-studies, the first one in Viseu, north of Portugal, and the second one in Évora region (south). Both are good examples of the possibilities of intervention planning concerning the connection between landscape preservation and new environmental policies.

They also enhance how this model has a worldwide applicability, because they deal with quite different situations in what concerns: types of landscapes, kinds of heritage, urban influence degrees, regional contexts, human activities and habitats.

Viseu cultural park case – study

The Viseu case is part of an urban renewal program (*ViseuPolis*) and here the aim is to preserve and put in value a historical landscape inside a defensive camp (*Cava de Viriato* – Viriato Trough), where ancient forms of agriculture are still present. Its main characteristics are the following (Plate 1):

- It is a small area (about 45 ha), classified National Monument since 1910, situated until a few years ago in the outskirts of Viseu and now almost totally surrounded by

the urban mesh of the city;

- The fact of existing a well-preserved heritage landscape surrounded by the urban tissue is not a common situation. Inside the Trough there are also traditional and very typical agro-systems, which for several reasons have survived up to this date;
- As main values of the archaeological heritage an octagonal wall is seen made of an enormous slant of earth and trunks (over 7 m high in certain places), surrounded by an exterior trench also visible on the northern side. There are indications of this fortified field having been of Arabian origin. Inside one finds what looks like a roman fortified camp of an almost rectangular shape, the main axis of which will have structured the surrounding landscape;
- As to the natural heritage, the vegetation gallery stands out on the main wall, on the northern and western sides, and where enormous specimens of trees can be seen (especially oaks, eucalyptus and plane trees). There are other vegetation corridors on the limits of the agricultural parcels structure inside the octagon as well as along the watercourses outside the court but connecting with it. This appearance together with the fact that these formations are important habitats, especially for the avifauna, allows to enhance its contribution towards the Cava landscape ecological quality;
- The structures of the vernacular heritage (farms and attachments, stores, hydraulic structures, etc) associated with the agro-systems and traditional agricultural practices are also an important contribution towards the heritage richness of the area;
- Inside the trough live around one hundred persons whose families are in most cases the landowners and who accustomed to traditional ways of exploitation find it difficult to imagine new alternatives for the future.

Évora cultural park case – study

The second case, in the outskirts of Évora (Tourega/Valverde region), is a rural area (about 2400 ha), with a rich and diverse natural and cultural heritage, and with traditional agricultural types as *montado* / *dehesas* systems. Its main characteristics are the following (Plate 2):

- The area is inside a cultural landscape with high heritage value and several landscape types, well represented in Alentejo province, can be seen;
- The area is rich in what natural heritage values are concerned, namely habitats included in Attachment I of the Directrix 92/43/CEE (21st May). Some rare species floristically relevant, such as *Salix salviifolia* Brot. subsp. *australis* Franco and *Cytisus scoparius* (L.) Link subsp. *burgaei* (Boiss.) Nym. are present also.
- Some typical agro - systems, as the cork and holm oaks *montados* traditionally managed, are present in the area; the presence in the area of some of these formations allows the people to interpret the vegetation dynamics and its relation with the agricultural history of the zone. Also we can see remains of disappearing ancient *montado* type: mixed holm oaks and olive trees these being grafted in oleasters.
- Ecological landscape values can also be found, such as fluvial vegetation corridors of willows, ashes and even alders, always edged with blackberry bushes and rushes. Wall and road vegetation corridors are also present. All these corridors determine sometimes important ecological

nodes. Some stratified formations, as cork and holm oaks woods, and dry thorn bushes and shrubberies generally settled down on granite reefs or in agricultural rocky mounds play also an important role as faunistic habitats.

- Spread in the area we can find a high diversity of built heritage structures: archaeological (Neolithic/Chalcolithic habitats and dolmens, two Bronze Age hillforts, several Roman remains – the Tourega *villa*, habitats and a necropolis, a Medieval castle), architectonic (convents, manors from different periods, churches, some of which are in ruins) vernacular (watermills, ancient walls, springs and wells) hydraulic systems (vegetation-garden irrigation structures).
- Many other kinds of landscape values can be found in this area: Roman cadastrations landmarks materialized by walls, vegetation galleries, paths, ancient roads and canalized water lines; a dam, the first biggest masonry dam (1951-53) installed in the region; remains of a village

deserted in the 19th century, the ancient Tourega.

- In this relatively limited area, about 26 sq km, characterized by the existence of large farms (among them the University of Évora properties) where extensive agriculture is done side by side with small landowners' properties surrounding the village of Valverde, lives a population that seems to face the same challenges as those of their ancestors.

As the human abandonment in this area is a real problem, the maintenance of those landscapes and their heritage turns out to be an important issue for environmental policies.

Viseu and Évora cases are also good essays for new social and economic ways of looking for local development through innovative forms of favouring the presence of man in the landscape.

The comparison of the case-studies management targets, according the main CP criteria, is showed in Table 2.

Table 2 – Comparing the two case studies main management targets.

	VIRIATO TROUGH	TOUREGA / VALVERDE
HERITAGE VALORISATION	Exhibition Center <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arabian walled structure • Roman military field • Evolution of the through occupation • Landscape morphology • Traditional agrarian systems 	Interpretation Center: Building of the social landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fortification systems • Cadastration systems, farms and disappeared village • Individual structures: Roman Villa, archbishop's manor, etc. • Diversified landscape
LOCAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to local social activities • Incentive for the trough owners to participate in the local management • Large public financing • Urban community and IPPAR involvement • Opening of commercial structures for the inhabitants • Support to mitigated lodging systems • Agricultural renewal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to local social activities • Incentive for the owners to participate in the local management • Local and private financing • Support to the promotion of rural tourism • Support to the promotion of nature tourism
NEW FUNCTIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROMOTION AND PROTECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of the riparian gallery • Conditions for the non-aedificandi areas • Protect the wall tree corridor and recover it • Local training • Reinforce self-teaching • Post-graduate courses • Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bigger general protection • Mitigated tourism especially in the most fragile places • Conditions for the type of building • Protect the ecosystem (managing the woods in order to avoid fire) • Protection plan for rare species and communities • Protection plan for archaeological sites and structures
INCENTIVES FOR NEW MECHANISMS OF LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery of the traditional agrarian systems • Sustainable and shared management. Town Council involvement • Mitigated industry and commerce • Support to owners for building maintenance • Conditioning the nr. of visitors and monitoring activities • Training to the locals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to owners for building maintenance • Monitoring activities • Less conditionings for visitors • Shared management • Training to the locals
PROMOTION OF NEW TYPES OF PEDAGOGIC/ SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES	Training and research centred on some subjects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed cultural agro-system of the Beira region • Fortified structures and settlements • Environmental education 	Training and research centred on some subjects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydraulic heritage • Studies of vegetation physiology • Archaeology • Environmental education

PLATE 1
VIRIATO TROUGH AREA



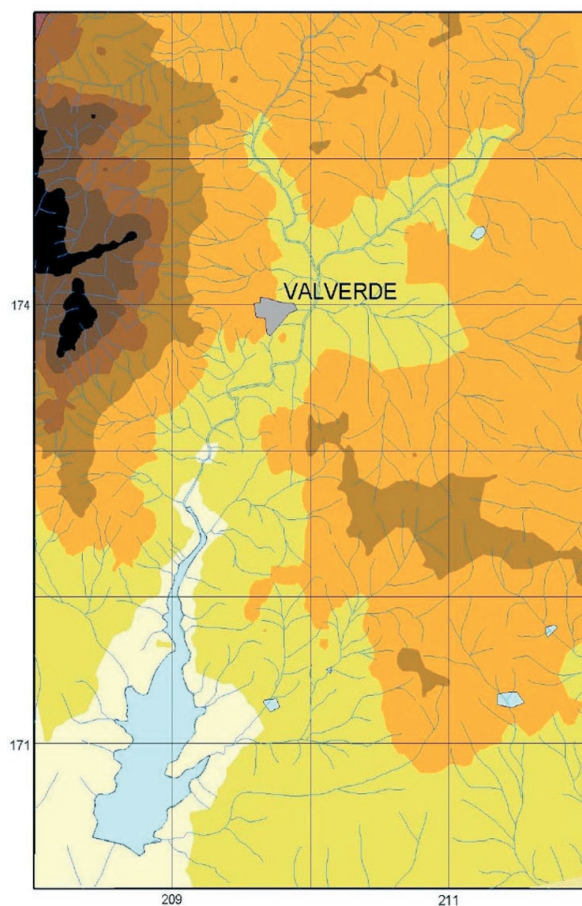
Left view: a northern typical farm (Vila Ferreira) inside the Viriato Trough.
Below, the ancient wall covered by monumental trees can be seen in an oblique aerial photograph.



Inside the Viriato Trough near Viseu town centre there is still small farms with typical traditional agrosystems (lower view).



PLATE 2
TOUREGA / VALVERDE AREA



Hypsometry of the area
(upper class: > 325 m; grid: 1 km)



Two examples of natural heritage:
Above: a typical cork/oak *montado*
Below: a riparian vegetation gallery



An example of the architectonic heritage: the XVIth century Bom Jesus da Mitra convent, in a *montado* landscape.

Concept applicability

Our cultural park model has universal validity and can be applied elsewhere. Nevertheless, the management guidelines we have developed, as well the best practices, concerns mainly Mediterranean geographical contexts characterized by disturbance-dependent landscapes shaped by anthropogenic factors since millennia.

The concept is applicable to:

- The conservation and valorisation of cultural landscapes;
- Improvement of rural population quality of life;
- Land's memories preservation;
- Sustainable development new practices;
- Tourism development addressed mainly for ecocultural purposes;
- Development of new areas and apprenticeship tools.

So, how to explain in this context the CP operational framework?

The CP implementation process is influenced by some important factors:

- By the organizational structure and by the intervening actors;
- By the bureaucratic conditionings with particular relevance to the behaviour characteristics of the agents intervening in the process;
- By the sociological environment involving the area of intervention;
- By the distance which separates the level of the project plan (*upper level*) from the level of representation of the actors (*lower level*);

Normally a park of this type means quite a variety of work:

- Producing materials of cartographic nature and others, on differentiated support, about the various structures and with different depth levels;
- Promoting inside the scientific community studies on the most varied subjects related with the most important matters present in the park;
- Promoting the grouping of experts and teams and the participation in projects that aim at works in the area or related to it;
- Maintaining the people interested in the project and informed thereon.

The creation of a successful base to the park development will depend upon the following major premises:

- Effective application of heritage and landscape ecology knowledge;
- Integration of skills of the involved professions;
- Adequate training in heritage and landscape ecology management;
- Effective application of participative management principles;
- Public interpretation of nature, heritage and cultural landscape;
- Partnerships with the local community.

Cooperation between subjects such as landscape ecology science, nature conservation, agriculture, landscape design,

heritage and open-air museology management, together with local community engagement, will provide successful conditions for the park viability.

Concluding remarks. new land management policies

As we have tried to enhance, a Cultural Park is a global proposal connected specially with the dilemma of our rural areas. The goal is to discover new tools of land management, which can put both conservation and preservation perspectives together as well as development policies.

In summary, the challenge of new land management policies must concern:

- The development of new and more active types of citizenship;
- The development of new intervention tools able to preserve heritage and other landscape values in future contexts characterized by deep demographic and sociologic changes;
- These tools, as cultural parks, must be multi-faceted joining knowledge from very different fields.
- The conservation of the area activity global functions that exist; meaning an effort to find out and define new forms of financing projects, activities and regions where multi-functionality must be preserved.
- The permanent concern to balance economic advantages and the natural and cultural environmental carrying capacity of the area.
- Sustainability must be a main goal; this means to support projects, infrastructures and activities that do not damage environmental values (natural and cultural).
- If the Cultural Park *per se* is to have a local impact, it must be integrated in a set of tools to be developed and applied in a broader area.

As an example of what touristic options concern, the implementation of such a complex system is quite clear in the following figure, where the guidelines of tourism monitoring are presented.

Table 3 – Main Indicators for CP/Tourism monitoring

- 1. Protection of the place and area** – Regardful ness for the protection categories according to IUCN.
- 2. Pressure on the place** – Number of visitors and relationship with the area/region carrying capacity as a result of previous analysis.
- 3. Intensity of use** – Has to do with the relationship person/hectare.
- 4. Social impact** – Broaches the *ratio* tourists/residents. It includes the establishment of new residents (establishment index) as well as the number of new cultural institutions and clubs created (amusement index).
- 5. Development control** – Control procedures.
- 6. Management of residues** – Treated residual waters; recovered USR.
- 7. Use of new energy production systems**
- 8. Evaluation of the management systems of the hydric resources**
- 9. Planning procedure** – Existence of a general plan for the region – destination.

- 10. Critical ecosystems** – Concerns the *ratio* rare species and communities/those ones in danger and with affected development. Lower is the *ratio*, more critical is the situation.
- 11. Heritage at risk** – Inventoried heritage structures, areas and goods / state of maintenance of these elements. Implies the previous definition of the heritage values and of the intervention hierarchy.
- 12. Scientific and pedagogic innovation** – In the context of the CP activities
- 13. Tourist satisfaction** – Found through sounding.
- 14. Satisfaction of the local population** – Revealed through sounding.
- 15. Contribution of tourism towards local economy** – Appraised by the percentage of the tourism in general economic activity implying the definition of specific indicators.

With this approach, one of the main strategies of the Cultural Park as a land management policy tool is an attraction for the rural people as well as be of interest to urban

residents. Only in this local context can the area valorisation be achieved thus contributing to the inversion of the present rural land abandonment dynamics.

Of course most of these ideas have been debated in many specialized meetings and are still the center of many works and researches. With this, the main goal it is the effort to find out converging platform of thematic works, from different origin and themes still isolated and far from a multidisciplinary approach. We call it cultural park, because the idea is after all to enhance an integrated perspective of the problems and solutions. Therefore we answer to the appeal of researchers that since many years ago fought against a restricted vision of land management (Naveh, 2000).

The redefinition of the man – landscape relationships in a multi – functional countryside must be based on the creation and development of:

- New opportunities;
- New land occupancy forms;
- New land management policies.

Then perhaps will the implementation of cultural parks give a real contribution towards the revival of the rural areas.

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