

Cherishing heritage through landscape – a future vision

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Abstract

Landscape and heritage are closely linked ideas and their reciprocal relation is explored within the CHeriScape network (www.cheriscape.eu, under the EU Joint Programming Initiative Cultural Heritage). After organising five interactive conferences, CHeriScape has yielded an astonishing wealth of experiences, perspectives, points of debate and joint opinions about the interacting societal relevance of landscape values and heritage. Five conferences touched on the joint contribution of landscape and heritage in terms of policy and science, of their relationship to community and to environmental change, and of their connections to creative arts and the ways we envision future landscape and construct new heritage. This paper is based on reflections on heritage and landscape that we shared and developed during those conferences. We sketch out the first lines of a future vision of addressing heritage values in a landscape context – and vice versa. For this specific presentation we focus on the inherited values of place. These values are clearly in need of proper attention by the public, the landowner, the policy maker, the volunteer and the entrepreneur (often in tourism), to be able to safeguard a promising future development of living landscapes. The landscape should then accommodate, incorporate or provide an amalgam of at least a substantial part of the heritage values still available, within the boundary conditions posed by new land use functions, whilst also creating new heritage for transmission to the future. But we also discuss the role of the heritage and other experts in providing proper knowledge and making this publicly available, in raising awareness, in facilitating dialogue, in bridging disciplinary boundaries, and in participating in social learning themselves.

Landscape and heritage – what's new?

The European landscape is in transition, as much today as throughout its history. The patterns and traits written on the land by the age-old history of evolving land use systems and ownership patterns can still be recognised, but current land uses and services are rarely in equilibrium

with the inherited landscape. In other words: today's land use would not have produced the landscape we have, and sooner or later it must lead to different landscape patterns, adapting to the functions it now has for the user. Today's land use and people's perception and valuation form the landscape heritage of the future. The landscape will follow the use, either in a consciously designed way, such as mechanised farming, land reclamation, land consolidation or rewilding, or in spontaneous unintentional ways, through neglect, the abandonment of farmland, disappearing drove roads, degrading slope terraces, etc. A static, unchanging landscape cannot exist, because a museum landscape in which the inherited features are conserved can only function when certain types of land use are being practiced. And that can rarely be afforded.

A well-elaborated, integrated new management approach for the future of European landscape and heritage is needed, in academic discourse, in policy practices and in the public debate (Bloemers et al 2010), but it still largely to be developed. On the contrary, although almost all European countries have ratified the Florence Convention (the Council of Europe's Landscape Convention (COE 2000)) there is a tendency to leave the landscape to the tourist brochures, and let it be covered as a secondary dossier by sector policies on culture, environment or even economics.

There is thus an urgent – and increasing – need for reflection and debate about current and imminent landscape transitions (EC 2015). The value of the European landscape and its future should be related to the underlying heritage values. Heritage and landscape both require a democratic process capable of responding to the diverse and pluralistic public perceptions of landscape in ways that can enhance transformation in many relevant fields of European life. This takes them beyond questions of conservation or market mechanisms into the sphere of the ordinary and commonplace landscape that is essential to everyday life and citizens'

communities everywhere. This paper is concerned with neither 'heritage landscapes' nor 'landscape heritage', but with what happens when these two concepts are tuned and coordinated with the same perspective, informing and strengthening each other so that threats and problems can become challenges and opportunities. These are all issues and problems that the CHeriScape project (funded by the European Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage, A Challenge for Europe) has been able to grapple, through its five conferences themes on Policy, Science, Community, Global Change and Imagination (and through sessions that members of the CHeriScape team have organised at other conferences (Fairclough et al 2015; Fairclough et al 2016; Fairclough 2016; Fairclough et al forthcoming). After organising five interactive conferences, CHeriScape has yielded an astonishing wealth of experiences, perspectives, points of debate and joint opinions about the interacting societal relevance of landscape values and heritage. This paper is based on reflections on heritage and landscape that we shared and developed during those Conferences. We sketch out the first lines of a future vision of addressing heritage values in a landscape context – and vice versa.

Landscape as Heritage in Policy

A major question that came up during the CHeriScape project is how to enable heritage concerns to play a more practical role in landscape management and policy that can be balanced against the apparent policy dominance of other sectors such as economy, recreation, biodiversity, flood protection. And what can heritage experts do about this? How to avoid being left in a sort of ghetto-like loop: heritage policy for the protection of heritage? Is landscape any more successful at this, or is 'landscape policy' also too often a matter of self-protection instead of seeking to influence and shape mainstream policy and action and behaviour? Are we able to clearly explain the societal importance of both heritage and landscape to politicians? Under which circumstances do they regard heritage – or for that matter landscape in its narrow aesthetic sense – as 'window dressing'? When is landscape (not) seen as/treated as just nature, green or the scenic areas?

Heritage professionals urgently need to keep up with social media. 'Professional amateurs' are surpassing them at the local level. We conclude that social media is a form of landscape, a form of commons. Is the visibility gap between experts and the public on social media a symptom of something even bigger, that heritage is being

carried out (as it was always) all the time, invisibly, under the radar, by everyone else, not by the experts (we have allowed ourselves to be corralled into reserves, 'special sites').

CHeriScape has learned that landscape is at the heart of many scientific, societal and political discourses across Europe. At the same time the definition of landscape remains plural, which is not only an unavoidable, indeed essential, characteristic of the concept but probably a healthy and desirable one. Among the participants of our conferences, there was a large measure of agreement about a holistic, broad approach, although with diverse balances between the ingredients and functions of landscape. When it comes to discussions with 'non-landscape' policy makers and the public, however, the scope of the word is generally taken as being narrower, and is often drawn back into traditional definitions of landscape as 'nature' or 'scenery'. How this gap can be bridged is still unclear. If each group uses their own definitions without explanation, it is difficult to take debate and decision-making forward, yet at the same time, somehow, the validity, indeed 'reality', of each group's perspective is something to take into account and be valued. Much the same goes for heritage: whose heritage, what is heritage, why do we worry about it, how do we use it?

Landscape as Heritage in Science

Not only did CHeriScape discuss what exactly landscape means for research, the public and policy makers, we also reflected on three broad issues. The first relates to daily practice and theory. For example, GIS is used extensively in landscape and heritage studies, but are the theoretical assumptions behind its use always explicit or even understood (no research is ever a-theoretical)? Sometimes the theory is hidden and thus overlooked, becoming an obstacle not a tool. We also discussed the problems with the many different theories that exist to choose among and the lack of a clear direction. New theories may evolve appropriate techniques, and as an example one could analyse eg bodily experience and practice in the past.

A second issue was whether data and methods that have proven to be successful in several situations (such as using LiDAR, landscape biographies, GIS, non-destructive archaeological survey or using photo reconstructions, etc) are as effective in other situations. In other words: can we uncritically transfer our successes in one situation to every situation or do different situations need different

methods? This is part of a much larger need, to continue to question our methods constructively (for example, it is commonplace in landscape studies, and heritage, to canvass the views, eg on place, of elderly people and of children, but it seems we might overlook the bulk of the population).

In cases of landscapes with a heritage coloured by war and other conflicts, how could we develop a kind of heritage management policy that balances preserving historical evidence with the legitimate desire to record the stories of the people involved, independent of which side they were on? How do lessons learnt in the black and white clarity of still-felt grievance or guilt, regret or repentance, transfer to older heritage, or to the shifting mental landscapes of migration? Indeed, looking forwards not back, how will those clear lessons adapt to the passage of time and the changes in perspective that time will inevitably bring? An important question concerning interpretation came up: whose heritage is actually shown in landscapes with a post-war or post-migration heritage: that of the winners or that of the losers? And how do the descendants (or the successors – not every heritage link is through genetics or even ethnic transmission) of these parties perceive the way it is shown in a museum? Recent, easily recognisable situations can be indicative of many less evident cases of labelling heritage values, eg in comparing the heritage of poor with that of rich people, of various religions, of colonial heritage, etc, and in looking into the more distant past beyond living memory. But the reach of ‘living memory’ is becoming ever-longer – our ‘window’ on the past is staying open longer with greater human longevity and (perhaps even more importantly?) with the continued presence of the past – for at least 150 years now – in vivid imagery, as opposed to just the written word. The materiality of heritage also brings it towards the category of ‘living memory’; the addition of landscape when the past is legible within it also arguably extends the term ‘living memory’. Science needs to be very aware and explicit in these issues.

The responsibility of scientists and their academic mode in the landscape debate was another central issue that was raised and discussed – including the question whether scientists are politically responsible and should be obliged to state their opinions. Important conditions for sound science are reflexivity and transparency. To be able to explain landscapes and why they appear as they do is another important contribution of science, in addition to the ability to enhance alternative worlds and views.

Finally, it was stated that some values are measurable and interpreted as ‘tangible’. Consequently, unmeasurable values are often considered ‘intangible’. But all values are intangible and negotiated. This observation makes clear that interpretation of quantitative data is an intangible action as well.

Landscape as Community

The transformation that the processes and aims of heritage are undergoing has transformed the perception of heritage and landscape, and their relationship to even large spheres such as culture and sustainable development (Dessein et al 2015). It emphasises inclusivity and the relationship to communities and participative democracy; landscape is coming to be seen as much a matter of everyone’s everyday heritage as a top-down selected canon of special protected sites. This transformation has accelerated since the 1990s from a slow start in the 1960s. It is represented by the codifying influence of the Council of Europe’s Faro Convention (COE 2005), by the ‘critical heritage’ discourse or simply by the new ways of doing heritage. Its key challenge is to make heritage more reflective and, above all, people-centred rather than object-focused; a key principle is recognising that heritage values are not intrinsic to the object but are attributed by people, a more constructive and instrumentally-useful approach. It is an approach that brings heritage into close alignment with landscape, ‘an area as perceived by people’ in the words of the Council of Europe’s Florence Convention (COE 2000 Article 1).

Community makes landscapes, but at the same time landscape can create, bond or fragment a community. Central questions are how to handle the tension between change and heritage preservation, how to improve policy tools so that they can adapt to dynamic societies and landscapes and support well-being through the relationship between people, landscape and communities. Intangible values are problematic here in the relationship between public/official/material on the one hand and the personal/unofficial/experiential on the other. Almost equally problematic are the relationships between the views and aspirations of local residents, stakeholders (which may not be the same set of people), ‘incomers’ (and those who have left but who retain memory-based stake), legal (the ‘real’?) owners, and every level of governance from municipality to the EU and in some cases to UNESCO World Heritage bureau.

Facing the Challenges of Global Change through Landscape

In another major CHeriScape theme, landscape allows major environmentally-based and -related issues such as responses to environmental and climate changes to be discussed in a people-centred and socially relevant way; this is another critical area – the human/nature/environment relationship into which landscape history (and archaeology) can give such deep, time-embedded insight.

Global change motivated us to explore the potential that landscapes can provide for confronting the transformations in market economy and climate conditions that are seen around us today. Three themes drew our attention.

A first issue addressed was global environmental change and how it affects the landscape. This issue encompasses many current challenges to society, notably though not only climate change. It brought many questions regarding the relation between climate and the landscape, with an eye on how to protect and adapt the latter to the former. A second issue was tourist pressure, which is a great challenge for landscapes, particularly – though not only – in southern Europe. We addressed this issue by providing non-standard viewpoints focused on assessment and solutions.

A third issue was land abandonment and old landscapes. When people leave rural areas to find new lifeways abroad or in cities, the landscapes left behind can often lose their purpose, and become neglected and unmanaged, and in extreme cases even a 'return' to 'nature', constituting a very direct threat to their inherited character. We saw some of the effects of this constant tension between anthropic landscapes and 'naturalization'.

Landscape in Imagination and Virtual Future

The fifth theme will be discussed during the conference that will take place in the interval between writing this paper and the conference in Galway, and the issues that will rise to prominence are difficult to predict. The conference's aim however is to round off our series by looking hard, and mainly through artistic and creative lenses, at how landscape, and inevitably heritage, resides and is continuously re-created in the human virtual realms of memory, imagination and perception but also increasingly in the 'artificial' virtual realms of cyberspace, social media. It has three overarching themes. First, 'Looking Back from the future: the future legibility of the past': is it possible to imagine future landscapes and in particular to conceive of how and in what ways their

history – their heritage – will remain legible to our successors. That which can be imagined can be created. Second, 'New neighbourhoods, New neighbours': how we can (re)imagine landscape after major change in both the physical, material sense (sea levels, climate change, urbanisation) and a perceptual sense at socio-cultural level, though processes of for example migration and mobility. Third, 'Looking Inwards: imagined and remembered landscapes': landscape and heritage at a mental, imaginary level, in which personal landscapes and heritage may be distant in both space and in time, including imagined or wished-for future landscapes, but are nevertheless close to the heart and mind.

Perspective: heritage is more about the future than about the past

One of our conclusions is that to properly manage heritage in the landscape, one should know both the heritage values of the landscape and the feasible options for the future. Interestingly – being values – both are defined by the perception of the people. That makes heritage management in landscape a highly interactive and democratic exercise. The vision developed by CHeriScape has the character of a research agenda, but at the same time represents an appeal to the public, policy makers and other stakeholders to realise that heritage and landscape are two sides of the same coin. Landscapes that contain strong, widely accepted heritage values – be they tangible or intangible – will be the ones that most effectively fulfil the societal demand for sustainable landscape quality objectives. Heritage embedded in landscape as a whole, and sharing landscape's affinity to community and culture most broadly, will be the heritage that most fulfils its potential for social value.

Landscape and heritage theory now share similar intellectual and philosophical positions – people-focussed, inherited from the past but equally (and necessarily) transmittable to the future; the 'possession' of or access to heritage and landscape being a human right (Egoz et al 2011) but of course one that carries responsibilities towards other people's heritage and landscape. This takes the discussion into the realms of intra-community harmony (or conflict) and of migration and mobility that have become so topical in Europe.

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