María Luisa Gómez Moreno, Belén Zayas Fernández, Sergio Reyes Corredera
Departamento de Geografía. Universidad de Málaga

From the living to the painting. Territorial dynamics and cultural representations in a Mediterranean region

La Axarquía is a region located in a section of the Mediterranean region, the eastern coast of Malaga (Fig. 1). Its surface (995 km^2) range from the Camarolos, Alhama, Tejeda and Almijara mountains to the sea, including the Vélez river valley. The habitat linked to its 30 municipalities has Phoenician origin on the coast and Berber in the mountains, and has known in the last 50 years the fragmentation of its socio-economic dynamics, with rural exodus in the interior (26 municipalities that in 1900 had 51,000 inhabitants and in 2019 45,000, with a density of 58 inhabitants/km^2) and strong demographic growth on the coast (4 municipalities, which have gone from 40,000 inhabitants in 1900 to 126,000 in 2019, with a density of 417 inhabitants/km^2). The impact of urbanization linked to tourism and, more recently, the advance of subtropical fruit trees, are manifestations as deep as uncontrolled of the landscape crisis in Mediterranean shore pointed out by Bertrand (2000: 365), which has become chronic and that planning instruments they have neither regulated nor do they regulate with the urgency claimed by this author. Faced with the speed and depth of these changes, the murals that Evaristo Guerra made in the last decade for the hermitage of Nuestra Señora de los Remedios, located in the city of Vélez Málaga, offer a cultural image of this territory built on its physiographic units as the scene of the activities of its inhabitants in the phase prior to these transformations. It was the observation of this contrast that led us to consider the suitability of applying the methodological proposal of the geosystem, territory and landscape system concept: (*Ibid*., 365) (hereinafter GTP) to two objects of study that are complemented by this application: the territory corresponding to the Axarquía region and the murals of this hermitage, and to estimate the usefulness of this procedure as an instrument for analysis to aid decision-making in the planning of a territory subjected to these tensions. The foundation of the GTP system is the interaction between geosystem, territory and landscape. The definitions of these concepts fit into three complementary categories. We can relate the concept of geosystem[1] to that of the territory of origin[2], understood as the set of interrelated and anthropized biotic and abiotic elements. The application of the method focuses on this category "the analysis of the more or less degraded biophysical components" (Bertrand; 2000, p. 365), an analysis that we can identify with the one developed by G. Bertrand under the name of integrated landscapes and that has consisted of carrying out a taxonomic cartography of landscapes (Fig. 2 and Table I), applying the Geographic Information Systems, according to the following phases: (A) treatment of sources and preparation of geographic information, (B) intersection of the spatial data for the definition of the geosystems, (C) their taxonomy and (D) elimination of the non-representative areas at the landscape scale. The

[1] "Naturalistic concept allows to analyse the structure and the biophysical functioning of a geographical space as it currently works, that is, with its degree of anthropization" (*Ibid*., 366).

[2] Although in the text used, territoire source is translated as "source territory", we believe that "origin territory" or "root territory" is more appropriate to the idea of the authors. Therefore, we will call it "territory of origin".

territory itself[3] would fit into the category "resource territory", identified with the succession of productive cycles responsible for this anthropization, with special attention to current ones. The numerous bibliographic references that study these cycles have been used. Finally, the landscape corresponds to the category of rooting territory[4], corresponding to its socio-cultural dimension. In the case of study, the murals, dedicated to the surrounding landscape, provide a source in which to analyse which of the elements of the root territory and the resource territory are converted into art. Its content has been analysed with an interview with its author (Figs. 3 to 12). Likewise, a section is included dedicated to the treatment that different planning figures give to the processes analysed in the results. The conclusions obtained synthesize the results provided by the application of the *GTP* concept:

1. An interpretation of the relationship between the geosystem, territory and landscape components, in the following terms:
   1.1. The deconstruction by the process of artialisation of the geosystem and territory components. In the artistic landscape the painter:
      – Selects through their perception of the territory those elements that may be more identifying of their own personal experience and that, therefore, make up their image of the territory.
      – Identify and select the most beneficial in terms of pictorial technique, that is, elements that allow a greater chromatic game, thus avoiding natural elements that do not provide it or that are darker.
      – Either as a consequence of the experience factor or the aesthetic factor, it eliminates, on the one hand, the more technical elements of the landscape, such as high-rise construction or greenhouses; on the other, the Colmenar Flysch geosystem due to its subsident position from the observation point of the hermitage.
      – Probably because it is not part of their experiences, the artistic landscape does not include elements of high environmental and cultural value, such as irrigation linked to karst springs or terraces on slate hills.
   1.2. The contrast between the rooting territory and the origin territory, systematized in the recognized geosystems, allows us to identify the tensions and processes that degrade and threaten the continuity of the rooting territory.
   1.3. Ratifying Bertrand's idea of the contradictions between the dominant production model, the representation of the landscape and the reality experienced by the dominant social categories or classes the results reveal the incoherence between the pressures of the inhabitants demanding water to expand irrigation and the identification, in the dimension of popular religiosity, with an artialised landscape anchored in elements of the traditional settlement as well as in the dimension of associationism around defence factors unrelated to the dynamics of change (straw oxen, centenary olive trees).
2. Because of the previous conclusions, the application of the GTP procedure for decision-making in planning matters presents advantages and disadvantages:
   2.1. The main drawback is the risk of conservation planning, which we, the authors, reject. On the one hand, the application of the GTP methodology contributes to the recognition of the cultural values that have been granted by the inhabitants of a certain territory, values that are inherited by successive generations. However, the lack of authentic coordination of the figures of urban planning and sectoral planning, as well as the evident contradiction between the economic initiatives of the inhabitants and their cultural representations, calls into question the materialization of the cultural and environmental principles of these schedules.
   2.2. Among the advantages,
      – The scale of identification of the components of the geosystem (1: 10,000-1: 50,000), which facilitates the detection and correction of environmental problems induced by the dynamics of land use, and of agricultural uses.
      – The artistic cultural representations are re-

[3] "Concept well known by geographers, which allows to analyse the repercussions of the organization and of the social and economic functions on the considered space" (BERTRAND; 2000, p. 366).

[4] Although in the text used, *territoire ressourcement* is translated as "recurrence-territory", we believe that Bertrand and Bertrand make a play on words from the *source* lexeme, with which the idea of recurrence does not fit. We believe that "rooting territory" is more appropriate to the authors' idea, referring to how the process of "artialisation" of the "root territory" by possible artistic representations (painting, literature) can provide the basis for the decision making in the environment-development problem. In other words, the conversion of the landscape into a symbolic place for its observers facilitates their rooting and therefore provides a basis for spiritual renewal for them.

vealed as indirect sources for the knowledge of the rooting territory, especially in certain past times, providing a fixed image from which to follow the alterations experienced.

– However, the artialisation must be completed with the rooting territory to detect all the significant geofacies since the image selection process intrinsic to the artialisation of the landscape eliminates part of them.
– The spirit of the planning law applied in the study area (in its different categories, spatial planning, sectoral) coincides with this recognition of the environmental sustainability and cultural values of the study area.

In summary, the linkage of geosystem, territory and landscape facilitates the application of measures that favour the continuity of the most stable and representative geofacies, through the generation of new activities (guided visits, consumption of their products) within the framework of the multifunctionality of agrarian exploitation and based on a process of recognition by the inhabitants of the territory built by past generations, and which constitutes their rooting.