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Methodological proposal for the study of cultural representations of landscape: the case of the western Costa del Sol (Málaga, Spain)

The interrelations between landscape and cultural elements are common and constant in the heritage context. These cultural manifestations can form part of the landscape as a constituent element, as is the case with the abbey and mountain of Montserrat, or they can be an element that enhances cultural heritage, as occurred with the protection of the landscape on the outskirts of the city of Segovia in the face of urban growth that encourages the loss of heritage value.

The European Landscape Convention (2000) refers, in its preamble, to the important role of landscape in the cultural field as a favourable resource for the generation of economic activity and employment. Its article 5.d on general measures, it indicates that landscape should be integrated into land-use and urban planning policies, as well as into cultural policies due to the direct and/or indirect impact on the landscape.

The interrelations between landscape and cultural elements reach their highest degree of interrelationship in what are known as cultural landscapes. According to Sauer (1925), a cultural landscape is the result of the modelling of a natural landscape by a cultural group in which the culture is the agent and the natural area is the medium. In the framework of planning, the National Plan for Cultural Landscapes (2015) defines a cultural landscape as the result of the interaction over time of people and the natural environment, being a territory perceived and valued for its cultural qualities, a product of a process and support of the identity of a community.

Cultural representations of landscape are also a result of this interrelation between landscape and cultural elements, since landscape is a relevant subject of artistic representation, as can be seen in works by landscape painters such as Friedrich, as in the case of *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*. Furthermore, an artistically depicted landscape enhances its value, the clearest example of which can be seen in Cézanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from Bellevue*. This work has brought this environment to the attention of society, promoting activities such as tourism in the region to which it belongs.

For all of the above reasons, the object of study of a cultural representation of the landscape can be understood as that image which reflects, from a non-zenithal perspective, the landscape existing at a certain historical moment and which is endowed with certain artistic connotations.

The main objectives of this study are to design a procedure for collecting and analysing the cultural representations of the visual landscape; to develop a procedure for analysing the cultural representations of coastal tourist landscapes; to qualify the landscapes through their representations; to understand the evolution of the landscape; and to identify the structuring elements of the landscape.

The Western Costa del Sol is a geographical area located in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, on the Andalusian Mediterranean coast, to the west of the province of Malaga. From a physical point of view, the delimitation of this area lies between the mountain ranges, which reach heights of over 1,000 metres and are approximately parallel to the coast, and the sea, forming a narrow strip along the Mediterranean coastline of the peninsula of approximately 100 kilometres of coastline and a maximum

of 15 kilometres wide, the first five kilometres being the most developed in terms of urban development and tourism. In total, the study area has a surface area of 650 square kilometres.

The current landscape of the Western Costa del Sol is the result of the combination of a series of construction processes, among which there are reminiscences in the current state of the territory. However, in the last sixty years, it has undergone its greatest landscape transformation due to the boom in urban development linked to sun and beach and residential tourism.

For the study of the cultural representations of the landscape of the Costa del Sol, a total of 1,496 images from the 15th century to the present day have been selected. These images are unevenly distributed both spatially and temporally due to the degree of interest, attractiveness and characterisation of the different coastal areas that make up the area, as well as the historical evolution of its territory and settlements. The tourist activity of sun and beach since the mid-20th century is present in most of the images. This space has been present in promotional materials, personal experiences, as well as in films. The analysis was based on the study of the following variables:

- Type of representation
- Origin
- Location
- Dating
- Landscape prominence
- Main scene
- Dominant landscape
- Types of landscape
- Central element
- Scenic background
- Aspect
- Field of view
- Perspective and viewing angle

The analysis of the representations of the Western Costa del Sol is the result of the study of the 1,496 images used for the area. Approximately half of these images are concentrated in two municipalities: Torremolinos and Marbella. These municipalities host this number of representations because they are the two earliest tourist destinations on the coast and because they have become two international tourist brands. There is a high concentration of representations in the central years and decades of the 20th century, coinciding with the boom in tourist activity. The temporal overlap is complete from the 15th century in all centuries until the beginning of the 21st century.

In addition, the four main types of representations are photographic, film, pictorial and postcard. The prominence of landscape in the images analysed is very high, exceeding 90 % of the images in several municipalities. The most represented scenes are portraits, ports and marinas, buildings and urban roads. The main types of landscape are rural landscapes, an image of the Costa del Sol's past, and seascapes. The third type of landscape is the suburban type due to the residential fabric developed since the 1960s. On the other hand, the main orientations shown are north-east, north, south-west, north-west and south, the most southerly ones being maritime views, while the most northerly ones show the closes and mountainous backgrounds. The central spaces of the images are occupied by buildings, beaches, streets, harbours and rural settlements. Among the scenic backgrounds depicted, the mountainous ones stand out, followed by the architectural and maritime ones. The field of vision is dominated by closed representations, clearly conditioned by urban development, which prevents open views. Finally, on the horizontal plane, it can be seen that the normal perspective is the most common, followed by the chopped perspective.

Broadly speaking, the cultural representations of the landscape of the Western Costa del Sol cover the territory on a municipal scale. There is a clear dominance and variety of representations in Torremolinos and Marbella with respect to the rest of the municipalities due to their pioneering character in the tourist boom of the sixties and seventies. There is no great covering of the natural spaces apart from the mountain bottoms or some coastal cliff areas in the eastern sector which are currently degraded. Temporally, there are representations from the 15th century onwards, although there is not a covering of all the centuries in each study area. This is due to the historical interest of certain geographical areas for artists. Among the heritage and cultural elements of the landscape of the Costa del Sol, the coastal watchtowers and religious architecture stand out, sometimes being landscape landmarks such as the church of La Encarnación in Marbella or the church of Los Remedios in Estepona. These elements have long shaped the landscape of the study area but have been altered by growth in height or architectural envelopes.

The most represented stage corresponds to the beginning of the tourist boom, where there is a large amount of photographic and film material, the latter motivated by the promotion of tourist areas in the 1960s and 1970s. The pictorial material dates from centuries prior to this period, although the vast majority comes from artists

who usually live in the study area. A great attraction for developmentalism can be seen in many of the images, reflected in landmarks and landmark spaces of tourist projection in the municipalities: the Torre de Pimentel and the Carihuela neighbourhood in Torremolinos, the Plaza de los Naranjos in Marbella, Puerto Banús, Mijas and Benalmádena Pueblo or Casares.

The evaluation proposals set out in this study are intended to become measures for the enhancement of these elements and the recovery of those that have been altered, as they had an important significance in other historical periods and should be considered territorial heritage. Furthermore, this analysis should be taken into consideration when establishing mitigation measures for landscape impacts where the recovery of these elements is not integral. It is necessary to reiterate the importance for socio-economic development in this type of coastal area. It offers a good opportunity to diversify economic activities through cultural proposals that help to alleviate endemic issues such as seasonality. It is understood that the use of performances in this type of work can constitute an extremely attractive resource for visitors who come on cultural and thematic tours or for those seeking new activities related to artistic training or, in general, to other sectors.

This work opens up a path in which new research challenges are set out in order to carry out a first qualification based on a multi-criteria evaluation procedure that enables the cultural assessment of landscapes considering the variables dealt with and others not included due to the absence of measurement parameters, such as the artistic quality of the work or its authors. It is therefore necessary to set up panels of experts and to apply the Delphi method or similar methods to evaluate the results.