

HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE

Spatial arrangement distinguished on the basis of characteristics of the natural and cultural heritage of a specific historical epoch or sequence of these epochs.

The natural and cultural elements of the landscape are subject to multidirectional changes, which become more visible in retrospect. Landscape systems such as mountain massifs, valleys and rivers, human settlements and creations have a history, they accumulate, flatten, move, deteriorate and disappear. Both the periodisations cited by the earth sciences and the humanities assign landscapes to places and points in time defined for them. Researchers specialising in tangible elements of the environment reveal successive temporal landscape layers, e.g. palaeoclimatic and archaeological studies investigate the historical landscape of thousands of years ago, while history, ethnography or sociology capture its character in the perspective of a few thousand, hundreds and tens of years.

The dynamics of changes in the cultural landscape are determined by geographical, biological and psychological, economic and cultural, political and military factors. They affect the distribution, development and change of human cultural systems, e.g. through cataclysms. These factors are related to the adaptability or demographic specificity of the community, but also determine the issues of economy and technology, which consequently organise the space and landscape of a given place and period, e.g. stone circles, millers' windmills, factory chimneys or forts or defensive fortifications.

The historical landscape can be interpreted using the key of horizontal and vertical order. Geography defines its spatial range and functions, e.g. working and manufacturing environments, housing, worship, etc. Archaeology and geology, on the other hand, reach further, overlapping layers of historical landscapes, which, as a result of succession, have passed away, although they have retained a certain specificity that allows them to be distinguished from each other, e.g. traces of several successive settlements or cultures. It also happens that the passage of time influences the change of landscape and at the same time the incorporation of elements of its earlier variants. It is then possible to speak of the multi-layered character of the landscape, the layers of which overlap and thus blur, so it is appropriate to speak of it as a palimpsest.

The historical landscape should be linked to categories such as *genius loci* and auraticity (Benjamin), which, due to their material, social, cultural and aesthetic qualities, give the landscape an emotional or even sacral dimension. As such, it provides a framework for various social practices, is experienced and participates in the processes of embodiment of knowledge. It can be subject to both distancing and abstraction in the processes of semiotisation where it is elevated to the rank of a sign.

The historical landscape reflects the aura of its time to varying degrees, which is why we can speak of a hierarchy of such landscapes and activities, often institutionalised in the form of legal acts (e.g. the European Landscape Convention) and programmes (e.g. the British

Historic Landscape Characterisation), aimed at protecting their original shape through preservation, conservation and restoration.

The historical landscape is an element of the cultural heritage. As such, it is an important reference system for many, often conflicting, groups and communities. Social memory is connected with identity, because it influences, but also results from belonging to specific groups – local, linguistic, religious, national, and so on. Building an identity based on the relation to the landscape entails the decision to protect or try to reconstruct some aspects of the historical landscape at the expense of other, less convenient for a specific concept of identity. Historical landscapes strengthen the sense of group affiliation, pride or injustice and may provide a reference framework for current and future political action (conflict between Greeks and Macedonians over Macedonia's heritage). Pierre Nora calls landscapes relating to the creation of a sense of identity memorial sites, although these are not always specific physical sites. A similar intuition, although in relation to specific material spaces is reflected in the term *mnemotopos* created by Mauric Halbwachs.

The historical landscape is valued for its aesthetic aspect. It influences the valorisation and hierarchisation of landscapes, comparing, breaking off or recalling old tendencies, e.g. neoclassicism or neo-gothic style. When assessed, the aesthetic qualities of the historical landscape are related to ethical issues. Beauty or originality may be secondary to the nature of the foundation act, e.g. violence against an ethnic group or criticism of perception, which is always historicised and connected with politics, e.g. imperial ideology. The aesthetics of ugliness, misery or magnificent ruins can support a sense of locality and patriotism, an idea of injustice and a difficult road to success, greatness in the past and hope for a great future. The historical landscape may be linked to alternative history and fictionality. Historic landscapes of New Zealand or Tunisia, as culturally distant and unknown, have been used in film productions such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars* as stage set frames to render the stories told probable.

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