

IMPACT OF RECENT URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE LANDSCAPE OF BASQUE CASERÍO; A METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL ON THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE OF URDAIBAI

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Landscape, as most visible manifestation of the relationship between society and territory, immediately reflects the adequacy or otherwise of uses and human activities (Zoido, 2002). According with this idea, the goal of the European Landscape Convention (CEP) is practical and prospective order, pursuing the definition of policies for the protection and management of landscapes through the management of changes induced by social, economic and environmental evolution. However, the process of degradation of the landscape can be very fast, so sometimes protection policies may be late. This could be the case of the Basque landscape, very affected by urban development derived from the Basque Legislation developed in the last 15 years.

The Basque rural landscape takes its most popular expression in small *caseríos* neighborhoods that structure the habitat of the Atlantic Basin. Since 1998 an specific urban figure of Basque Legislation was developed for regulate this form of rural habitat: the *Núcleo Rural*. This work aims to analyze and assess the landscape impact caused by urban development in the districts of *caseríos* of the Biosphere Reserve of Urdaibai; the knowledge of its effects on the landscape character and integrity is essential for the establishment of the protection and management initiatives that the CEP advocates.

I. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CASERÍOS NEIGHBORHOOD ON THE BIOSPHERE RESERVE OF URDAIBAI: THE NÚCLEO RURAL

In the territorial context of the Basque Country, densely populated, urbanization becomes relevant from 1980s. The phenomenon is linked not only to the construction of housing in rural areas, but also to the increasing proliferation of detached house on rural land (Ainz,

2001). It is the second vector of the urban sprawl that is particularly pernicious as it affects the whole territory, from seemingly minor and punctual impacts; in addition, the spread of detached housing threatens the trivialization of whole territory.

The Basque law “*Ley vasca 5/98 de Medidas Urgentes en Materia de Régimen de Suelo y Ordenación Urbana*” and the law “*Ley 2/2006 de Suelo y Urbanismo del País Vasco*” make into this form of habitat in a urban figure called *Núcleo Rural* (NR) which is one of the three categories of the undeveloped land with common ground and protected land (Uríbarri Bilbao, 2007). NR specificity lies in its ability to admit residential developments unrelated to farming. NR is defined as the group of between six twenty-five *caseríos* around a public space, whose assigned plots can be extended to the number of homes till they duplicate the existing and never exceed the maximum of 25.

The legal definition of the NR in 1998 has caused a great urban housing development not related to the farm. This has caused a number of impacts that affect negatively to the landscape.

II. METHODOLOGY

According to the prospective nature and the character of the process addressed in this work, a methodology close to the EIA ex-post analysis has been adopted. The aim of the study is to assess the affection of residential development on the landscape quality of the neighborhoods of *caseríos* in the period 2000-2012. This approach involves the comparison between two temporary situations: the quality of the landscape before the process started and the present one, in order to identify which parameters of impact causes the difference between them. In addition to the aesthetic and scenic quality impact, we will try to assess how the “coherence” of the landscape it is being affected, understanding this as the adaptation of landscape to the geo-ecological and historical conditions of the territory, and its “integrity” or condition of the landscape as a whole (Mata, 2006).

This work has an aim not only academic, but applied. Therefore, a methodology similar to that used in the Studies of Environmental Impact was applied. Regarding the sources of information in addition to fieldwork based primarily on the survey, it was necessary to use documentary sources; they allowed us to establish the previous landscape quality before urban development took place. The research project was developed on a sample of 12 rural communities, 15% of the 79 rural neighbourhood of the Biosphere Reserve of Urdaibai.

The research is divided into two chapters; the first one focuses on the analysis of landscape quality prior to urban development of the NR selected, in the second the impact generated by this process is valued from 2000 to 2012 especially the impact of the process on the present landscape. Table 1 lists the parameters analyzed in each phase of the research.

The cumulative value of the intrinsic quality of the landscape and visible basin represents the landscape quality of the NR in prior to urban development in the last 12 years (see Figure 3). The highest values: Gorozika, San Román, Metxikas, Garteiz ... were reached in the NR that maintained a greater number of *caseríos* with farming activity. However, none of the NR having a high quality intrinsic landscape, had a high value on the quality of the visible basin. Antzora, Isla and Ondartza have the viewshed higher quality, largely due to the presence of sea and river Urdaibai, however, its intrinsic quality was medium or low. In the decade 1970-80, these neighborhoods were highly valued as second homes, sometimes as housing of new

Table 1
ANALYSIS OF IMPACT IN LANDSCAPE OF "NR". METHODOLOGICAL OUTLINE

LANDSCAPE QUALITY NR 2000	
a)	Quality of intrinsic landscape of the <i>Núcleo Rural</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Physiography ▪ Land use: diversity and dynamics ▪ Existing farmhouse: architectural value, state of conservation, spatial arrangement. ▪ Singular heritage ▪ Discordant elements
b)	Quality of the landscape of the viewshed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Amplitude ▪ Main land uses ▪ Scenic combination
LANDSCAPE QUALITY NR, 2012: Previous Quality – Impact	
URBAN DEVELOPMENT IMPACT 2000-2012	
a)	Gross Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intensity ▪ Integration into the area: Architectural typology, artificialization of the plot, alteration of the topography, integration in the existing spatial structure ▪ Fences ▪ Land uses
b)	Weighted impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Previous landscape quality ▪ Visual fragility

plant, but also to the rehabilitation of *caseríos*, reinforced the process of leaving the village and farm, to introduce the expectation of sale between owners earth. This reinforced the process of leaving the village and farm, introducing the expectation of sale between landowners.

The impact of recent urban developments on the landscape quality of the selected nuclei was measured from the parameters listed in the table. The ultimate goal of this work is prospective; the comparison between the previous landscape quality in NR analyzed and their current quality allows the measure of the impact caused by urban development in the short period of time analyzed but also the level that can be achieved in the coming years. According to the methodology, the current landscape quality is obtained by subtracting the impact value generated by the urban development, to landscape quality in 2000.

Today neighborhoods of *caseríos* in villages with a good landscape quality are located at the edges of the Reseva Urdaibai: Garteiz, Gorozika, Metxikas; whereas the NR best connected and those which views have been more valued socially, have accelerated the deterioration of the landscape. The bad distribution of new housing in relation with the spatial structure of the existing village, the inadequacy of the new buildings on volume, shape, material, color ... the big fences bordering plots are aspects that municipal planning not been able to effectively control, and it has resulted in a clear loss of the integrity of rural communities. The bad distribution of new housing in relation with the spatial structure of the existing village, the inadequacy of the new buildings on volume, shape, material, color ... the big fences bordering plots are aspects that municipal planning has not been able to effectively

Figure 1
LANDSCAPE QUALITY OF "NÚCLEOS RURALES" IN URDAIBAI IN 2000

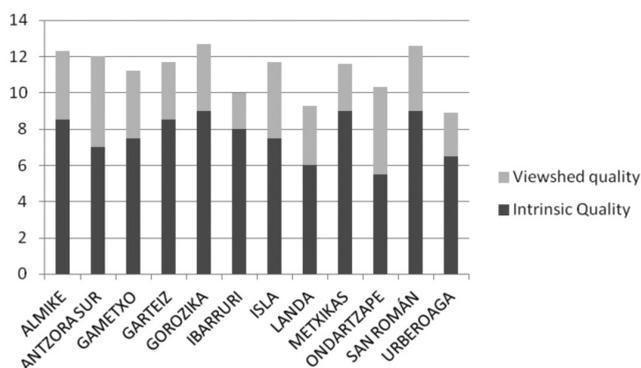
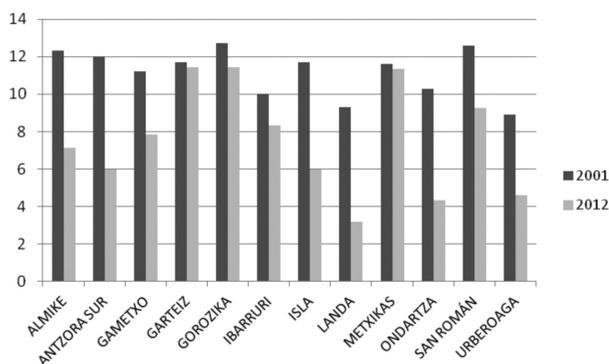


Figure 2
LANDSCAPE QUALITY OF "NR" OF URDAIBAI, 2000-2012



control, and it has resulted in a clear loss of the integrity of rural communities. However, perhaps the most important aspect is the loss of the character of the neighborhoods of *caseríos* as a result of their dysfunctionality as agricultural areas.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Landscape is dynamic and changing; It is not possible to stop the time and rebuild the lost landscape, but it should guide the evolution of the place because it will determine the future landscape (Council of Europe, 2008). Such an orientation requires more than mere recommendations, at least in the case of the Basque *Núcleos Rurales*. Having established the factors of impact, it is urgent to seek greater integration of new housing on NR. However, it is not sufficient simply to speak on the purely formal aspects; We must assess if the urbanistic figure of *Núcleo Rural* is appropriate because it may influence the future functionality of rural areas. It is occurring not only a deterioration of the landscape of villages, but also a kind of privatization of the landscape because in it, is being locating a particular type of housing.