

# CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION OF SUSCEPTIBLE SPANISH LANDSCAPES TO BE INCLUDED IN THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST OF UNESCO<sup>1</sup>

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For several decades now, territorial social, economic and government agencies have shown growing interest in having the heritage assets there gain institutional recognition. This is not only on account of their cultural value, but also in response to a marketing and spatial visibility strategy that is often framed in territorial development programmes aimed at having heritage assets –as specific and non relocatable resources– considered as fundamental competitive assets. Globalisation, the expansion of flows and rising inter-territorial competitiveness are currently heightening the importance of international distinctions, especially those awarded by UNESCO through its MaB programme and, to an even greater degree, those presented by the *Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (hereinafter, the Convention), from which the *List of World Heritage* (hereinafter, the List) derives.

Also in recent decades, and in parallel with this process, greater complexity has arisen around the concept of heritage which, amongst other things, cedes the relevance of the object (the materiality of the asset) to the subject (the society that creates and enjoys said asset). Spatial consideration of cultural resources has also changed. Up to the nineteen-seventies, historical town centres were the most generous areas where interrelationships between cultural heritage and society were understood. During the final decades of the last century and more especially, the first decades of this, the spatial perspective has widened to take in broader spatial concepts, and cultural assets that, though appreciated, did not really conform to the traditional conceptual framework and management, have taken on greater importance. The emergence of the territory as a fundamental element in which heritage is to be under-

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stood (both as a stage and also an actor) drives forward new forms of understanding cultural resources in general terms and, in particular, those intrinsically linked to territories that transcend the local scale to become framed in the regional district, at the very least. This was the time when industrial and public works archaeology, heritage landscapes (better known as *cultural* landscapes, see below) and cultural itineraries began to be valued.

It is heritage landscapes that this paper is interested in, especially those that are on the List; these are landscapes that have achieved international recognition on the basis of scientifically proven criteria and, more especially, they are included in this inventory for their management to be held up as a benchmark for other landscapes with similar features. UNESCO's intention is not to create a record of the planet's best real estate, but to set out an array of representative examples where those responsible for heritage management can find criteria to help them better identify their assets and address their recognition, protection and capitalisation.

Spain is a country with a great quality of landscapes (not only of heritage landscapes) but it is also a country where the high quality landscape settings have been badly affected, as a result of both the country's development model and the scant sensitivity and knowledge of their values. The current crisis is a crucial time for setting out new landscape strategies, and initiatives have already been taken. These strategies will be a turning point with respect to the way that society considers landscapes and, in this line, this has to be a two-way street: actions should be both top-down (from the administrations to civil society) and vice-versa.

Landscapes, in the sense of a territorial legacy resulting from the appropriation of areas by the society that modelled them and identifies with them, are themselves cultural assets. Landscapes' heritage dimension takes on a special significance in the current context of the hybridisation, trivialisation and loss of authenticity to which many have been subject. The *European Landscape Convention* states in its preamble that landscape is a «basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity» (European Council, 2000). If landscape is a condenser of territorial identity and, therefore, cultural heritage, the question that should be asked is, what do the words *cultural* and *heritage* add to a reality that is, intrinsically, culture and heritage? The answer must be framed in the way that the concepts of (cultural and/or natural) heritage and landscape have themselves evolved. Until recently, the concept of heritage was restricted to historical heritage, whereas natural assets were considered to be a different type of asset worthy of protection, but with no great conceptual connection with the former. Meanwhile, the notion of historical heritage, limited until well into the twentieth century to emblematic monuments, preferably in an urban setting, has expanded to include even modest and everyday elements, wider and more complex areas, and landscapes (Castillo, 2009). Natural assets have in turn become heritage and been confused with cultural assets to the point that any heritage that involves appropriation and the assignation of value by society is usurped by culture and is cultural heritage, irrespective of whether it is a natural asset or of human construction. The difference between natural and cultural heritage is an operational issue for differentiating between assets dominated by one or other of these features, but which, conceptually, result from the same fact: acknowledgment of unique identity values. The explanation given for protecting the Garajonay

national park, for example, is that it is in the interest of our culture to defend as resources areas that have been barely impacted by humans, but which have scientific-natural values; thus this park is, first and foremost, the product of cultural expression.

The existence of natural landscapes is denied by a question of conceptual incongruency. The concept of landscape always involves human sighting; i.e., the image processed by a brain influenced by cultural keys, even when the sighting is of an untouched natural area. So, talking of *natural landscape* is an incongruity in the same way that saying *cultural landscape* is a redundancy. Be that as it may, it is possible to talk of landscapes with a prevalence of nature or culture depending on the importance and character of the elements and attributes of which it is composed.

When reflecting on places in Spain that could be included on the List as *cultural landscapes*, the starting point is areas whose heritage value has already been recognised institutionally. This is not an easy task given the wide scattering of regulations that exist (the Law of Spanish Historical Heritage, the Law of Natural Heritage and Biodiversity, etc.); the profusion of Administrations involved (culture, the environment, agriculture, regional planning, etc.); and, above all, the duplication of regulations and institutions by the central State and regional autonomous community governments, which exercise competences in these matters. Firstly, it is advisable to filter out the regulations and administrations that are not specifically heritage-related. The basic reference laws are Law 16/1985, concerning Spanish Historical Heritage and Law 42/2007, concerning Natural Heritage and Biodiversity. Applying a second filter enables a distinction to be made between *protected natural spaces (pns)* and *assets of cultural interest (aci)*, and the equivalent regional denominations, those which, *a priori*, could be considered heritage landscapes.

Spain has a major presence on the List with 44 assets, only surpassed by Italy. This recognition, however, becomes a major obstacle when it comes to new assets being accepted onto the List, as can be deduced from UNESCO's priorities; but there are strategies for further increasing the number of assets on the List. However, for these to be activated the complex process that Spanish assets have to go through to be added to the List has to be considered in great detail, although this would be very different if Spain did not already have so many assets on the List, if it were not located in UNESCO's *Europe and North America* region, or if its assets were not mostly *cultural*.

This article sets out four basic markers for identifying Spanish landscapes that could be included on the List:

- a) A typology of heritage landscapes that goes further than the typology used by the general UNESCO typology with its lack of fine distinction and that puts forward arguments to back up any possible Spanish nomination.
- b) The preferences of the World Heritage Committee for assets to be included on the List.
- c) Places recognised by Spanish heritage regulations concerning landscape interest.
- d) The position of Spain on the World Heritage List in general, and regarding *cultural landscapes*, in particular.

Cross-referencing all the information produces an initial proposal of places that could be recognised as UNESCO *cultural landscapes* that is both open and nuanced.

As a general criterion, the presence of landscapes that are representative of practically all the categories in Table 1 has been sought in order to provide UNESCO with a wider scope of reference than the categories currently in force. Territories that are under-represented on the List are also taken into account, as are those on the Tentative List (Lanzarote *cultural landscape*, the so-called «Cultural Bridge», etc.) for greater territorial balance –not simply a balance between autonomous communities– which is an issue that the Council of Historical Heritage has still not resolved. This is why Table 6 includes landscapes that are more than 100 km from any of those on the List. Criteria in keeping with UNESCO’s preferences include:

- a) Assets already recognised on the List, but not as *cultural landscapes*. It is proposed that the scope be broadened, which is the most feasible action with respect to UNESCO policy, with a change in the scale of protection given to the asset (expanding Cordoba’s historical old town centre to include the city’s urban landscape; the Vizcaya suspension bridge to include the Nervion river estuary’s *cultural landscape*, etc.).
- b) Assets already on the Tentative List that could be registered as *cultural landscapes*; however, as above, with changes made to the current scale (extending the proposal for Mediterranean windmills to include Iberian wind landscapes; splitting the Ancares-Somiedo proposal into two: Los Ancares and Brañas-Cultura Vaqueira; or making adjustments to the nomination of the Mediterranean Facet of the Pyrenees to take in the landscape of Ampurdan).
- c) Transnational assets (Dehesas and Montados; the Arribes del Duero, etc.).
- d) Assets shared by various autonomous communities (bocage landscapes; dry stone structures, etc.).
- e) Assets corresponding to criteria that are under-represented in UNESCO *cultural landscapes*: criteria I, VII, VIII, IX and X (Cabañeros; Saltos del río Navia, etc.).
- f) Assets that contribute originality to the *cultural landscapes* already recognised by UNESCO (the Castro culture of Asturias-Galicia; the tabarchins in Spain, Italy and Tunisia, etc.).

An analysis of Spanish places on the List confirms the presence of cultural assets over natural and mixed assets by a large majority. This also provides keys that give an idea as to which nominations are more likely to be successful. The simplicity and scant operability of the UNESCO categories has led us to use a heritage landscape classification that focuses on considering the space that underpins all landscapes in three ways: the space as a territorial system, as a productive system and a system of symbolic values. The need to move towards coordination between the administrations and towards the rationalisation of nominations is compelling; this would enable strategic priorities to be established and the chances of success to be quantified on a scale. To this end this article proposes a number of criteria for identifying and selecting Spanish heritage landscapes that could be submitted to UNESCO:

- Heritage landscapes given prominence in the scientific literature (agricultural landscapes in their various typologies -vineyards, silvopasture, areas of historical irrigation, etc.; historical urban landscapes, etc.).

- Places that are already recognised under the Spanish Law of Historical Heritage or the Law of Natural Heritage and Biodiversity and their counterparts in the autonomous communities; and/or that have received international heritage recognition (the Natura Network, Biosphere Reserve, etc.).
- Places that are representative of different types of heritage landscape in UNESCO's estimation, and, especially, with respect to the new taxonomies for heritage landscapes proposed in this article.

The procedure for selecting heritage landscapes that can be submitted to UNESCO uses the following criteria:

- As a general, underlying criterion, the presence of landscapes that are representative of all the previously established heritage categories.
- The landscapes considered are those that are most likely to succeed, including: the most poorly represented in the UNESCO categories (natural and mixed landscapes) on the national level; those on the Tentative List; those that have already been recognised in other categories, whereby the status of *cultural landscape* implies extending or reconsidering previously declared assets; and those that are subject to management plans and programmes (Natural Resource Management Plans («PORN») and Usage and Management Masterplans («PGRUG»), special plans, etc.).
- Seeking a fair distribution between the autonomous communities and territories bearing in mind, above all, different spatial categories (mountain ranges, coasts, plains in the interior, etc.).

