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***“Water, landscape and citizenship in the face of global change”
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WORKSHOP 1 – Water in landscapes

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Spain: A sustainable tourism for landscapes without water

Water scarcity sometimes becomes the driving force behind a substantial number of cultural landscapes. These are landscapes that often constitute genuine creative paradigms; places in which human intelligence and capability combine with nature to give rise to unique and imaginative expressions capable of overcoming scarcity.

Because of the very nature of these landscapes, tourist activities associated with them must take equally smart forms based on acknowledging the fact that these areas are highly fragile and outstanding; driving knowledge-based models, capable of creating tourist products where sustainability in itself is an attraction.

In general, these are territories that are seriously endangered by the effects of global change, but, at the same time, they provide smart models for the use of water. These models can give rise to some creative solutions for the sustainable use of water resources and ingenious ways of adapting and off-setting the effects of climate change.

KEYWORDS: Sustainable tourism, cultural landscape, heritage, local knowledge, water scarcity

Sustainable tourism and cultural landscapes

The concept of sustainable tourism was first coined at the World Tourism Conference held on the island of Lanzarote in 1995, when the Charter for Sustainable Tourism was adopted. This includes the landscape dimension in its articles. Almost thirty years later, the major challenges posed in this declaration continue to simmer in the global debate on sustainable tourism. Aspects such as the role of tourism in preserving landscapes of this kind continue to smoulder and, of course, remain unsolved in most cases.

The Charter of the Mediterranean, the fore-runner of the European Landscape Convention, warned that Mediterranean landscapes were undergoing processes of considerable change due to factors including the mass development of tourism, back in 1993. This remains a factor today if we think that in Europe alone, international tourism arrivals have increased practically three-fold since then (UNWTO, 2018). The recommendations and working documents associated with the European Landscape Convention and the Council of Europe Committee also frequently address this issue, leaving a record of the fact that tourism makes economic profit out of landscape, while, at the same time, sustainable tourism is expected to pay careful attention to the characteristics and evolution of the landscape both in rural and coastal areas, with special mention made of protected areas (Council of Europe, 2006).

Other international conventions and programmes pay special attention to the tourism-landscape relationship. The first and foremost of these is the UNESCO World Heritage Convention that emphasises the importance that it places on cultural landscapes. Against this backdrop, the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme represents a new approach based on dialogue and stakeholder co-operation where planning for tourism and heritage management is integrated at a destination level. Empowering local communities is an essential objective when addressing tourism and heritage conservation approaches, and this is especially important in the case of cultural landscapes.

The UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) and its Network of Biosphere Reserves have also addressed the crucial importance of consolidating sustainable tourism at these sites. As far as Europe is concerned, it is worth highlighting the fact that the Mediterranean Network of Biosphere Reserves, encompassing an enormous diversity of representative landscapes of the region, drew up a declaration and an action strategy for sustainable tourism during International Tourism Year in 2107 (Castellet Declaration, 2017).

In recent decades, we have witnessed a process of diversification of tourism and of travellers' expectation, giving rise to new specialised segments in the sector. With regard to sustainable tourism, a multitude of new concepts and forms of tourism have come into being, such as eco-tourism, nature tourism, cultural tourism, community-based tourism and other green or social forms of tourism that place the emphasis on one or several facets of sustainability. But experience has shown that, when it comes to tackling a complex destination like a cultural landscape, merely joining one of these currents of thought is not enough. It takes more than the habit to make a monk.

Paradigmatic cases of cultural landscapes without water

We have several island examples, ingenious by necessity, that demonstrate the evocative and creative power of certain waterless landscapes. Places and destinations that are also an expression of the

challenges to survival that landscapes face in tourism areas, and to such end, we can take the example of the Canary Islands.

The case of the La Geria landscape in Lanzarote (Canary Islands) is an example of a place that is unique in wine growing on volcanic soil. After the major volcanic eruptions of the 18th century, much of the island was covered by volcanic ash (lapilli), making it impossible to grow crops in a land that was arid enough as it was. In the face of such adversity the ingenuity of the former settlers brought about a new form of farming without water that harnessed the hygrophyllous properties of volcanic ash to trap water from the air in its pores. This wine-growing cultural landscape is now one of the main attractions of a small island that receives over three million tourists a year. But if we look closer, despite the fact that this area is one of the most important tourist attractions, maintaining this landscape does not depend directly on the income generated by tourism, but rather on the efforts of the waterless farmers who have managed to place high quality wines with denomination of origin in the market. They grow the Malmsey, or Malvasia as it is known in many regions, variety of grapes, the same variety of grapes that has generated another unique manifestation of arid, wine-growing landscape: growing vines in baskets on the Greek island of Santorini that dates back to the Bronze Age.

We can appreciate another kind of cultural landscape on the neighbouring island of Fuerteventura, sustained by a crop system based on collecting the scarce, occasional run-off water (*gavias*). These are solutions that enable local communities to create farmland and grow crops in extremely arid conditions, which are also replicated in other places on earth, such as the case of the *meskat* in Tunisia and the Mexican *cajas de agua*, or water boxes. In this case, their survival is seriously endangered and their future depends on public subsidies, the tenacity of heroic farmers and the opportunity to generate quality economies underpinned by their limited but outstanding products. In this case, the landscape of *gavias* is also a scenic attraction for many of the three million tourists that visit the island, but its direct economic relationship with them is practically inexistent. On both islands, declared biosphere reserves by UNESCO, the action plans arising from the nomination identify mechanisms that have to be put in place to force circumstances such that tourism can make a real, rather than a merely testimonial contribution to preserving and maintaining these landscapes as one of the key factors to resolve.

A different case can be seen in the epicentre of the mountains of Gran Canaria, an area that Miguel de Unamuno defined as a petrified storm. This is a cultural landscape nominated for entry on the UNESCO World Heritage List. These wild mountains were a sacred area for the ancient settlers of the island who developed an outstanding system of cave dwellings in villages clinging to the sides of crags and cliffs. This is where they located their temples that look to the skies, where water was a scarce and sacred commodity. It is a district that has remained surprisingly untouched by the effects of mass tourism on an island that receives over four million tourists a year. The local communities maintain their ancestral customs here, such as transhumance or the custom of living in caves, or storing water in subterranean pools dug out of the bed rock, to create a living cultural landscape, sustained by outstanding local produce and dotted with archaeological remains. The major challenge currently is to generate locally-based tourism initiatives from the local communities' grass-roots participation process, capable of dominating the captive, uniform models of mass tourism imposed on the island in recent decades.

There are arid cultural landscapes to be found at other latitudes that have tested sustainable tourism models adapted to the resources of the area and to local cultures. This is, for example, the case of Dana Biosphere Reserve (Jordan); an innovative, low-impact model, managed by the local communities, which help to create tourism products aimed at maintaining the landscape, bio-diversity, traditional

constructions and the ancestral water culture with their actions. Furthermore, it is a model that opts for using 100% renewable energy.

Salt gardens and skyscape

The traditional old saltworks were on the brink of disappearing from the Mediterranean and the Atlantic seaboard in the 1980s. Taken as a whole, they constitute one of the most suggestive and creative cultural landscapes to have survived over the centuries. These places can be considered as genuine mineral landscapes where the accumulated know-how of the salt producers gives shape to suggestive salt gardens. They are also genuine refuges of biodiversity created by man, as eco-tones between the land and the sea.

An international programme was started in 1995 with the support of the European Commission and UNESCO aimed at recovering the traditional European salt pans, based on precedents like the recovery of saltworks in the Canary Islands, Guérande (France), Marsala and Trapani (Italy) or Messolonghi (Greece) (Marín, 1997). Some of these cultural landscapes have managed to recover, thanks to the holistic vision that was applied when planning guarantees for their future. The successful cases have generally been based on the following combination of factors: promoting artesian salt as a high-quality, organic products (the main driver for maintaining them), recognition of artesian salt pans as natural and scenic heritage, the consolidation of innovative tourism products that associate the salt pans with places for art, contemplation and inspiration, or for enjoying salt-related cuisine and local produce.

When we talk about landscapes of this kind, we usually forget that seeing them is not just something that can be done during the daytime. If we add the skyscape dimension, then we can discover their evocative power under the stars. Arid places and the aforementioned cultural landscapes take on another meaning and supplementary attraction this way. All these guidelines are included in the Declaration in defence of the night sky and the right to Starlight, adopted in 2007, which places the emphasis on recovering the star-lit skies as a source of inspiration, as a reference of cultural heritage, as a resource for science and as an opportunity for sustainable tourism (Jafari & Marin, 2007). And that also means talking about climate change mitigation, as reducing light pollution involves not squandering resources on lighting that now accounts for 15% of world power consumption.

Conclusions and lessons learned

By way of summary, the following conclusions and lessons can be drawn concerning the tourism-waterless landscape tandem:

- Generally, they are endangered landscapes with no evolutionary replacements
- Local communities are the creators of the landscape. The disappearance or decline of the local know-how that sustains these landscapes and their associated produce often pushes them into extinction.
- It is essential to highlight the importance of local consumers, and even local inhabitants of the area as tourists and visitors. Identifying with the place, a sense of pride and belonging in appreciating these landscapes and their products, are the supports and windows required to consolidate responsible tourism in these destinations.
- Smart landscapes need smart tourism, by integrating a knowledge of them as a resource and attraction of the tourism product. This requires sound alliances to be forged with academe, experts and local wisemen.

- The exchange of best practises has proven to be a key factor in successful experiences of this kind.
- The landscape dimension has to become part of tourism policy. Landscape has conventionally been incorporated in land and environmental policies, but rarely in tourism policies.
- In general, but particularly in these cases, tourism policies should rest on actions and regulations that allow for a share-out of the workload, minimising leaks and an efficient distribution of the benefits of tourism.
- The governance of sustainable tourism in these outstanding destinations requires effective alliances among all the stakeholders involved: local communities, local administrations, producers, service companies and local tourism operators.
- Waterless landscapes can become models that express the alliance between past and future, between previous and future generations through innovation, and they also offer practical lessons and solutions for the challenges presented by global change.

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