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# **The cultural heritage and landscape of the province of Valencia as the territorial capital**

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## ARTICLE SECTION

### **The cultural heritage and landscape of the province of Valencia as the territorial capital**

*Abstract:* Valencia, as territorial system, has various components articulated that give structure and influencing alternatives progress. These parts of the provincial territorial system form the landscape and many of them are also considered cultural heritage. Heritage and landscape involved in the creation of collective identities and the processes of territorial development, an issue on which we focus in this article.

*Key words:* territorial capital, resources, cultural heritage, landscape, local development, Valencia.

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

The province of Valencia is a complex space system. It constitutes a territorial framework, of remarkable power, for its resources and for the knowledge generated, linked to its use. There are several components that articulate this territory and give it structure. And they are all components that influence the progress alternatives. We start from the initial hypothesis that in territorial development processes, there are three factors that act decisively. On the one hand, innovation, on the other, the creation of networks and, finally, the rational use of existing resources. However, in order to use our own resources we need to identify them and contextualize them spatially and temporarily. It is precisely in this last question that we focus on this work.

The way followed to verify the hypothesis is based, first, on the revision of a series of concepts such as landscape, heritage and territorial capital; and second, in the characterization of those basic landscape and heritage structures that can support development strategies in the province of Valencia. Innovation, networks and resources set the basis for an integrated territorial development, which is capable of making competitiveness, social welfare and environmental sustainability compatible; and reduce territorial imbalances, combining economic development with social development, sustainable development, and territorial cohesion.

The territories compete and for this, they take advantage of their advantages and potential. That is why resources acquire special significance. A set of resources, material or intangible, public or private, that represent the development potential of places and which are also called territorial capital. Natural and cultural heritage, landscape, and cultural identity are considered as part of territorial capital. This heritage can contribute to improve regional and local expectations, and act as a resistance factor in periods of crisis.

This work has as a frame of reference the province of Valencia, and as objectives a revision of the provincial landscape and heritage system. Another objective is to reflect on the capacity of heritage and landscape to consolidate and promote socioeconomically the provincial territorial system, guaranteeing the quality of life of its inhabitants.

At present, the culture has been valued. It is considered a resource for socio-economic development and a catalyst for human development. The culture has multiple manifestations. These manifestations have consolidated as something proper and genuine of a collective. Culture gives a human group the ability to recognize, devise, develop and continue creating. It is learned and transmitted through a process of socialization. UNESCO (1972) defines culture as the set of distinctive, spiritual and material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes arts and letters, ways of life, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs. Culture is constituted by a variety of components (norms, institutions, procedures, objects ...) that constitute a whole; not everyone interprets it the same way; and it is not something fixed at all but it evolves and adapts to new events.

The capital that is culture becomes territorial capital through cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is the testimony of culture; or also, the consensual manifestation of the culture of a community. It is not the culture itself, but a representation of it through stereotyped and commonly accepted objects, symbols or signs. Although the term cultural heritage continues to refer to something inherited from the past, the current conception of the term has evolved beyond what our ancestors considered heritage. It is heritage both the

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<sup>1</sup> Authors' exclusive translation. The full version of the article is available in Spanish.

architectural or artistic manifestations of each historical moment and any manifestation that has the ability to safeguard memory and identify as members of a collective. This change is observed in both state and regional legislation. Cultural heritage is not only historical or artistic objects, but includes several elements that explain the collective memory, and reinforce the sense of place.

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention proposed in 1972 a modern definition of cultural heritage, considering landscapes as collective goods. However, it was not until 1992 when he established a legal category to identify, protect and conserve cultural landscapes. Cultural landscape is defined as the spatial configuration resulting from human activity in interaction with the natural environment.

Cultural heritage is considered as a resource capable of generating goods and services to a community, after processes of appropriation, transformation and management of certain elements of the environmental and sociocultural system. In Europe and therefore in Spain, cultural heritage is considered as a development factor. At the end of the 20th century, UNESCO (1997) recognized the capacity of cultural heritage as a resource for sustainable territorial development. Faced with a situation of economic crisis, such as that experienced today, cultural heritage is an opportunity for job creation and economic income. Greffe (2003) states that cultural tourism, which is based on the landscape and cultural heritage, is not only a byproduct of the current economy, but it can also become a solution for many places, if the capacity of load. If the load capacity was exceeded, the development process would be reversed.

Valencia have been forging their own culture, which manifests itself through various cultural assets and expressions. These cultural goods, of a material and immaterial nature, constitute a substantial cultural heritage that helps us strengthen our identity as a people. But in addition, this heritage becomes important when it is conceived not only as the reflection of our ways of life, but also as a part of the territorial system and the resulting landscapes that conditions the spatial planning. The defense and exaltation of cultural heritage has become a necessity and is present in numerous forums for debate and public and private policies. An example of this has been the establishment of a legal framework for the protection of Valencian cultural heritage. The legal framework that regulates public and private action in this area, in Valencia, is the law 4/1998 of June 11, of the Generalitat Valenciana, of the Valencian Cultural Heritage and its subsequent modifications (laws 7/2004, of 19 of October; 5/2007, of February 9; and 10/2012 of modification of the law 4/1998.

Our legislation fosters the general appreciation of cultural heritage through education and information, and ensures that assets are properly managed through an instrument such as the General Inventory of Cultural Heritage. From the law 4/2004 of Territory Planning and Landscape Protection of the Valencian Community, repealed by Law 5/2014, of July 25, on Land Planning, Urban Planning and Landscape, of the Valencian Community, also modified by the law- 1/2019, a new vision of the territory and the landscape is incorporated, considering them as a heritage of the Valencians. The landscape can therefore be considered a mixed heritage. A whole that integrates in its definition the material, the immaterial, the movable and the immovable.

A territory of contrasts such as that of Valencia, with the Mediterranean coast to the east, foothills accompanied by mountains in the central sector and rugged mountains to the west, is manifested in a series of landscapes that an ancestral human activity has been responsible for configuring. Valencian landscapes are cultural landscapes, which present fundamental ecological processes, but with rhythms marked since ancient times by

anthropic action. We also consider all its environmental wealth as a heritage of the Valencians. At present, we have varied landscapes in the province of Valencia, from foresters to agricultural, to urban, industrial and tourist areas. They are dynamic landscapes, constantly evolving. However, some of the most symbolic landscapes are experiencing negative dynamics, because they have been decontextualized from the economic activities and the ways of life that originated them. This happens especially in the coastal strip, where urban processes linked to the growth of cities, the industrialization of the metropolitan area of Valencia, logistics activities, tourism and urban sprawl severely press spaces very fragile. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on our landscapes and promote them for citizenship. The goal is for citizens to consider this landscape heritage of them, which is a resource if it generates well-being and a sense of belonging.

In regards to cultural heritage, we have 9.510 elements cataloged in the Valencian Inventory System. Of these, 420 elements have been declared BIC, while 1.021 have been declared BRL. Of all the city's BICs, half correspond to civil buildings, while 44 % to religious buildings. A small percentage of all the BICs declared in Valencia capital corresponds to the military architecture. This is explained by the fact that a large city has a greater presence of civil structures (representing 36 % of all civil buildings in the province) and religious (35 % of all religious buildings in the province) intended to provide public and spiritual services to the population.

After Valencia, the areas with the highest number of architectural heritage declared BICs and BRLs are the Ribera Alta (with 11 % of the BICs and 10 % of the BRLs), the Safor (with 9 % of the BICs and 8 % of BRLs), Camp de Turia (with 8 % of BICs and 5 % of BRLs), Camp de Morvedre (with 7 % of BICs and 5 % of BRLs) and Vall d'Albaida (with almost 7 % of BICs and 12 % of BRLs). La Costera and Los Serranos register 6 % of the BICs respectively. It is the most dynamic and socio-economic areas that have the highest percentage of buildings declared cultural heritage. These are the coastal areas, or areas close to the city of Valencia. However, inland areas, such as La Costera or Vall d'Albaida, have an outstanding number of heritage assets, due to their historical and economic relevance. Inland areas, further away, less populated and with an eminently rural character, have fewer elements of the monumental architectural heritage (Rincón de Ademuz, la Meseta de Requena-Utiel, la Hoya de Buñol, el Valle de Cofrentes-Ayora and la Canal de Navarrés).

Cultural heritage has a growing consideration among citizens, who need references on which to strengthen their identity. The reason is the speed and magnitude with which everything is evolving. Given this, cultural heritage can provide a sense of belonging to current societies and serve as a reference. Knowing the past through heritage and landscapes is appropriate to solve certain problems, both current and future. But in addition, cultural heritage plays a fundamental role as a raw material for one of the most important economic sectors of our economy: tourism. The landscape and heritage act as support and demand for tourists. An active landscape and cultural heritage management is necessary. For this reason, work to identify heritage and landscape, and its strategic treatment by decision makers, are appropriate.