TANGIBLE - INTANGIBLE HERITAGE(S): AN INTERPLAY OF DESIGN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CRITIQUES OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Periurban identity landscapes under pressure: Spanish Mediterranean Huertas.

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• Presentation Method. I would like to:
  i. present via pre-recorded film (without a written paper)

• Abstract:
The Huerta is one of the unique periurban landscapes in Europe, present in specific parts of Spain, Italy and Greece. In Spain, three areas fall within the established Huerta classification: the Huertas of Valencia, Murcia and Vega Baja. This landscape pattern supported a thriving agriculture-based society for centuries, shaping the territory with functional networks —tangible components— and providing a powerful social and territorial cohesion with specific governance rules —intangible components—. Most of these components are related to the important role of water distribution management in one of Europe’s most arid regions.
From the 1990s until the property crash of 2008, economic growth based on property development drove city growth and urban sprawl, which greatly impacted the Spanish Mediterranean Arc area. These changes involved a thinking-shift as communities transformed from a traditional agricultural-based to a service-based economy, where huge profits could be made from real-estate developments. In these areas, the Huerta’s resilient green canopy has lost its agricultural function, becoming an aesthetic asset exploited by property developers for profit maximisation, with little evidence that the Huerta’s environmental and functional role has been considered. The extent of the development suggests that the Huerta’s productive function has been gradually abandoned at the city outskirts. The emerging paradox is that the Huerta landscape has become fragmented, isolated, and diminished, eroding what was initially considered an attractive environmental asset for property developers. From 2011, green infrastructure strategies are core issues in EU environmental policies, and Huerta landscape pattern a unique opportunity in these Mediterranean cities. This study signals that treating the Huerta as part of the city’s green infrastructure should not be at the exclusion of Huerta’s productive nature and important environmental function, which contributes to the unique identity of these cities.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Dr. Clara García-Mayor, Architect (Polytechnic University of Valencia, 2000). Ph.D. University of Alicante, 2015. Lecturer and researcher in the Urban Design and Regional Planning Unit at the University of Alicante, since 2004. She lectures in urbanism, urban project and urban and territorial landscape. Her main research area is the territorial context and dynamics for Huerta landscape in the Spanish Mediterranean Arc. Her Professional activities have included developing land planning projects, and designing urban public spaces, urban developments and public building facilities. Furthermore, Clara has collaborated in research with MappingAME City Lab in relation to perceptual analysis techniques of territorial and urban space. She is a qualified architect and is registered with the Spanish Architects Association.

Dr. Pablo Martí holds a Ph.D. in Urban Design from the Urbanism Department, Polytechnic University of Valencia. Currently, he is a Senior lecturer in the Urban Design and Regional Planning Division, University of Alicante (UA). His expertise is in the field of urban design and urban dynamics in the Spanish Mediterranean area. He also heads up a research group called MappingAME (http://blogs.ua.es/mappingame/) which identifies urban dynamics via social media. He has extensive teaching experience, especially in the field of planning history, housing development and urban design. At UA and other universities he has taught at undergraduate and postgraduate level (Master and Doctorate). He is a qualified architect and is registered with the Spanish Architects Association. He has practised as an architect, urban designer and planner in Spain.