

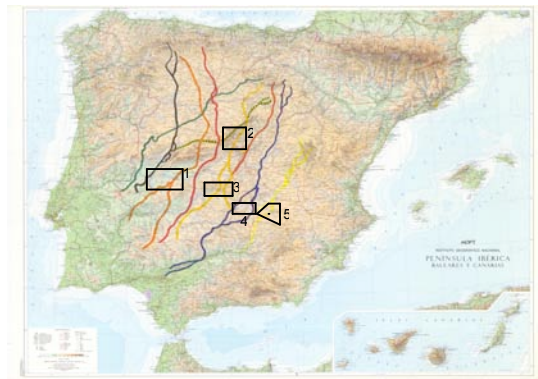
## The Spirit of Place in the Cañadas Reales de la Corona de Castilla

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**Abstract.** This work seeks to identify, through the analysis of various areas of this cultural route, the main variables that grant it the specificity of a “Place with spirit”. It has been based on the research of sources and on the analysis of the particular features of some sectors and components of the property. Likewise, they have been assessed with the criteria of authenticity and integrity, as well as with its values as an ensemble, and its landscaping and biodiversity values. For the transmission of the acquired knowledge, several aspects have been explored, such as walking and the itinerary, among others, all of which relate to ancestral behaviors of the human being.

### The Cultural Route - Its distinctive features.

The system of the Cañadas Reales and its roads of access, (Figure 1)



*Figure 1:* Cañadas Reales and Natural Parks. 1. Monfragüe; 2. Cuenca Alta del Manzanares; 3. Cabañeros; 4. Tablas de Daimiel; 5. Lagunas de Ruidera.  
(Ministry of Environment)

constitutes a dynamic ensemble of great economic and historic transcendence (600 years of history) in which the road traces of

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different times relate to each other, within a skillfully organized productive process, and focused on a concrete commercial purpose, each one with its particular testimonies as regards forms of construction, technology and materials, in a vast internal territory. It is representative of an industrial process at different scales: 1) the general and systemic scale of the net, 2) the relation between the different supply and processing establishments within the Castile Crown, 3) the industrial process of the particular establishment in the area, 4) the components involved with each of the production or processing units. The dynamics of such an ensemble has generated reciprocal influences through continuous exchanges of people, goods and knowledge, which have all modeled a landscape with clear-cut features and shared values, and which is illustrative of a significant period of the European history tied to farming and cattle-raising as well as wool production and trade.

Its landscape cast can still be clearly identified in great part of the Spanish territory and reached an extraordinary economic and cultural projection, both internal and external, between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It links and integrates each place and element within a value of ensemble, respecting and highlighting its own values and meanings as a landscape, as a historic city, or even as an archaeological whole, but also, for their significance regarding the global sense and meaning of the cultural route. It contains a heritage system that constitutes a real ensemble and is reflected in countless heritage manifestations, both tangible and intangible, generated around the transhumance that circulated along such rights of way for herds of sheep, called *cañadas*. This complex system is completed by numerous historical elements and remains, as well as cultural landscapes and natural parks which enhance its environmental value: it is integrated by magnificent sheep-shearing buildings, bridges, water troughs, folds, fountains, wool laundries, sites devoted to festivities, worship and devotion, as well as many items of furniture and utensils specifically related with the functionality and the meaning of this cultural route.

The sites, their purpose and functionality at the service of the route, constitute a linking and bonding element. It has generated human exchanges, covering the basic physical and spiritual needs of the man and of the rural habitat, as well as the specific functions of the activity. It is an example in which the construction of the spirit of place is considered within its *dynamics of relation, (...) "in its plural and polyvalent character, with the capacity to generate multiple meanings, change its sense through time and be shared by many groups"*.

(Turgeon 2008). In such a sense, this route contains a superlative degree of historic authenticity, in which relations of continuous interaction between activities and living beings are manifested –people, animals and vegetation- interacting with the natural and cultural environment. This entire procedure is kept alive through custom and in the collective memory of the shepherding towns, and still remains in force in the stretches where the activity continues in present times. Since they have great **Values from the points of view of landscape and biodiversity**, some Natural Parks maintain relations, some of them closer than others, with the Cañadas Reales, some of which are of international importance, since they are Special Protection Zones for Birds, their survival and biodiversity. The conservation of this ecosystem has been favored because it is protected by the surrounding pasture lands. This ensemble constitutes true **“green and/or ecological corridors”** that possess an important quality consisting in their double cultural and natural aspect. It is, on one hand, a cultural landscape created by the human activity, but also has had an influence in the above-mentioned evolution and development of ecosystems and of vegetal and animal communities, the biologic diversity, with the interaction of man and nature.

#### **The spirit of place**

The traditional concept of **Genius Loci**, comprises a series of meanings in the history of culture, which go from the concept of guardian spirit, present in the Roman mythology, to the distinctive atmosphere of a place. This becomes a character which, though intangible, takes a corporeal form impregnating the site. It is manifested through its identity and timelessness. Its elements are seen and felt integrated with the built or natural environment that supports them. Moreover, it is in these surroundings that a strong sense of belonging to a place can be perceived. Its permanence depends on the type of bond with the environment and carries implicitly the idea of harmony. Integrating with the type of surrounding that there exists, without breaking the natural laws, its distinctive feature and its character, shall foster its continuity.

The environment, in terms of space, as well as the general atmosphere of a place, are a consequence of the interaction between the reading and the interpretation that the individual makes of such an environment and on the diverse tangible and intangible elements present there. Hence, listening to, and detecting that unique

atmosphere denominated *spirit of place*, is an invitation to regard it from different points of view and with diverse instruments of recognition, such as the visual observation, the topography, the vegetable elements, the natural characteristics of the ensemble (stream, lake, swamp, grassland, etc.); the presence of the existent elements, their palette of materials and colors, their type; the outstanding elements and the light, which always reveals the Genius Loci of a place. Discovering their wrapping sensations, their sounds, the subtle scents, the quality of light and characteristics of stimulation. Understanding the power of the palette of materials stimulated by the existent structure and the singularity in their forms and textures. Beginning with the scenes that attract the attention of one's eyes and ears, those that awake our interest and enjoyment while seeing and listening. It is a form of looking from a place which is completely involved with what is happening, in a serene degree of concentration and with a slow stimulation. It is a model of communication that moves away from mere appearance and superficial attention. The genius or *presiding spirit* over the place.

In light of the importance that the **transmission of the spirit of place** holds in the conservation of heritage, in order "*to guarantee the survival of that which is bequeathed, and to avoid its abandonment and subsequent disappearance,*"(Turgeon 2008) we have probed into certain mechanisms that could contribute to the understanding and later transfer of the ensemble of values contained in this cultural route.

### **Exploration of indicators**

It is generally acknowledged that important generic indicators of the character and *Genius Loci*, or spirit of place, are, among others, its shape and design, use and function, localization and surroundings, language and other forms of intangible heritage, spirit and impression, and the authenticity emanated from its ensemble. However, the problem lies in the way of transmitting each of these concepts. The hypothesis departs from the premise that actions learned during childhood, are not present nowadays in adulthood due to their automated nature; thus, a reunion with very simple human actions is proposed. Needless to say that this is an approach that bears an important dose of subjectivity. We depart from the premise that only what is known through experimentation is what we would be in conditions of transmitting, and hence, stress has been placed on the interaction mechanisms linked to: **traversing, walking**, and with it, a

return to the **nomadic** and **sedentary natures**, to continue with the **journey, the sense of time, experience, storytelling and narration**.

This cultural route takes us back to the primitive dichotomy between **nomadic** and **sedentary groups**, with different ways of inhabiting the world and of conceiving the use of the living space. A pair that makes different uses of the space responding to different uses of time. Some, reflected with an architecture understood as perception and symbolic construction of the space, and the others, with the physical construction of the space and the form. **In it, the two opposed and complementary (1) archetypes of human being come together:** Homo Ludens and Homo Faber, represented by Cain and Abel, children of Adam and Eva. Homo Ludens - the man and shepherd leaving a trace, exploring the place and, while the flock plays, building an ephemeral system of relationships between nature and life. Homo Faber, ruled by the division of the time destined to work. Even though the Cañadas Reales, in their road representativity, were created with a certain purpose, the process of transhumance, in which habitual roads are followed, brings together the most free and ludic facet, both linked to a use of the territorial and existential space closer to nomadism; and that of the sedentary road, which, due to its function, is distributed within a closed space. A sedentary space, denser and more consistent, whose furrows are the walls and enclosures able to be traveled along, and a nomadic space, *"less dense, an empty space"* (Careri 2002: 36) presumably flatter and with signage that could periodically be marked and erased. *"The quality of the empty space has been understood, since times of Democritus, as that which allows movement. Beyond its penetrability, emptiness can be qualified and be used as a form to define the place"* (Espuelas, 1999).

The history of the origins of humanity is the history of walking. The road is a dynamic element of exchange, which guides the actions of the walking. It favors a certain way of looking at the landscape, the architecture and the art with a limit in movement. It constitutes a frontier that is developed jointly with the road and that crosses different intermediate spaces whose appreciation is possible while we travel them. Learning to look is reflected in the corporal, individual and social movement. **Traversing** is an action, a tool of the phenomenological knowledge and interpretive of the symbolism of the territory. At the same time, it is a psycho-geographical (2) reading (Careri 2002) that provides an inventory of attitudes, philosophical reflections, and new forms of sociabilization. The Roads and walking

not only connect places and transport properties, but rather they *are* places. **Walking** possesses the simultaneity of reading and writing, and by means of it, man has built the natural landscape. The walking spaces link islands that could be interpreted as the spaces of being. It shows the inner frontiers of the city and reveals and identifies its areas. It is an aesthetic instrument of exploration. Each topographical accident is an event, a place of orientation and change. *“The space appears as an active and vibrant fellow, an autonomous producer of effects and relationships. A living organism with its own character, an interlocutor who experiences changes of humor and who can be frequented with the purpose of establishing a reciprocal exchange.”* (Careri 2002:83) As a means to achieve it, it uses the body, its capacity of movement and displacement. It carries with it the elements its own strength permits and the itinerary is also subject to the corporal limitation - period of time. With the **body**, in its instrumental character, it allows for measurement of cultural time and space. The same as in nomadic displacement, it is used to measure *“its own perceptions, the variations of the atmospheric agents. Walking allows registering the changes of wind direction, temperature, sound. Measuring means identifying hallmarks, pointing them out, aligning them, limiting spaces, placing them between intervals forming patterns and directions.”* (Careri :150). The act of walking is a journey, and therefore, an experience that triggers relationships between man and territory, a succession of stages and sequences. In the beginning, it responds to a material necessity of survival, subsequently transforming into a symbolic need and allowing man to inhabit the land. The term **itinerary**, refers at the same time to the act of traversing (the itinerary as the action of walking), the line that crosses the space (the itinerary as an architectural object) and the traveling account as a traveled space (the itinerary as a narrative structure). It constitutes an ephemeral system of relationships between nature and life. Transhumance is the archetype of the itinerary and walking, by nature, links the menhir, the sculpture, the architecture and the landscape.

In the **Cañadas Reales** the sense of time is the history of a past, a story that takes place in an atmospheric time and in a chronological time. Just as Paul Ricoeur expressed in Temps et récit I, *“time is human as long as it is expressed in a narrative form; in turn, the narrative account is significant as long as it describes the features of the temporal experience.”* **The relationship between individuals and objects is drawn with words, spoken and/or written, that is to say,**

**in a narration.** It wraps the day-to-day experience in the same way as ornamental elements enhance our domestic existence. The form of incorporating the built elements into our life is produced through the **experience of relationship with the others, as developed in our inner being**; therefore, *“without words it would not be possible to distance buildings and to distinguish what we call architecture”* (Segui 2006:36). **Story telling is narration**, tale and description of the knowledge of concrete facts. It is the linguistic resource to express memory or the remembrance of what has happened, as (Segui 2006:36) says, *“the way of being of the memory, and it is communicative construction of significance (of the symbolism which is at the very foundation of life in common)”*. For Ricoeur the narration allows building the significance of experience and *“Emilio Lledó used to say that we see with words and that it is words that make it possible to distinguish among visual sensations.”* (Segui 2006:36) Furthermore, if we think that current investigations *have shown that “the sight is a mental phenomenon, which is produced by the conjunction of both corporal and brain functions. Accordingly, seeing depends, among other things, on having experienced a variety of vital situations and on exercising the habit of discriminating within diverse contexts, i.e., with the use of reason, of having words available to recall what is discriminated when looking. Without appropriate narrations it is impossible to dissociate the object from its historically changing contextual background.”* (Segui: 2007, 2008:2). Thus, when the elements are “seen” as objects lacking acknowledgement of their productive process, even at the level of suspicion, their qualities, whether artistic (poetic) and/or technical, become invisible, and therefore, lose their significance. “Seeing” involves implicitly facing the place that is being investigated. T. Mann says that *“what wraps, what surrounds and doesn't allow confrontation, becomes invisible”*, a concept sustained by B. Zevi as regards the insertion of architecture within the three-dimensional emptiness of life. (Segui 2006:36). **Inhabiting the place** feeling its encircling atmosphere implies seeing and, therefore, **relating, in narrations, spatial configurations with behaviors. The environment** that surrounds us contains the life scenarios. Therefore, the **elements making up an atmosphere are expressed in an associative and interpretive way.** One, as human being, can feel as an integral part of that environment. And this happens when it fits into its system of laws and relationships of aesthetic elements, provided these are well-known, close,

recognizable and familiar. And associated to time, to movement, to pause and reflection, thus creating a space for connection, and also the relationship and interdependence between the human being, landscape and nature. **Experience** is a means of transmission that departs from a personal relationship with things; it is what remains in our inner self as a concentrated experience. It departs from the individual's internal being and it is projected towards the exterior. Having relationships equals having experience. And it involves the bodily organs and the corporal expression that each one uses.

The characteristics of unity, and which build up the Spirit of Place in this cultural route are represented by their values constituting a real ensemble, which are based on the culture of the *Mesta*, which was developed between the agricultural and urban world, and which has been sustained by: 1) the pastoral conception of the world based on a philosophy of the natural and empiric life, immerse in a recurrent process of coexisting on and with the land and in which the firmament, the paths for flocks of sheep, or *cañadas*, and the horizon interact, tied to the natural cycles of movement of the sun and the phases of the moon. 2) With affective contrasts, in common geographical areas of habitat, where the farewell to the mountains in autumn will be ensued by a cheerful return in the summer. The same contrast is shown in the activity, with the hardness of the act of giving birth, as opposed to the sheep-shearing stage. 3) With a different perception of the space, according to the cattle transhumant or to the farmer, thus opposing the two lifestyles, the nomadic and the sedentary, the dynamic and static, the one using land for displacement and the who clings to it. 4) As influenced by this differential dynamics in lifestyle that has impregnated the historical culture of many communities bound to the cycle of the *Mesta*; for example, that of the mountain villages of the Castilian Plateau. 5) With its own forms of settlement, with a very simple way of articulating time and space, as well as of modulating their reality and, fundamentally, of dreaming. 6) With a care of the traveled territory, because cabins modeled it with the form of grazing. 7) As an instrument that favors the contact of man with nature and also, an instrument for establishing an order of the environmental surroundings. 8) In its environment, transhumance has generated pasture land ecosystems; 9) It has created the ostensible biodiversity of the shepherded meadow; 10) It has favored the proliferation of animal species, many of which are today under protection (like vultures, for instance); 11) It has allowed and fostered the interconnection of



natural spaces and it has served as a shelter to animal and botanical species.

### **Final approaches**

Therefore, their values as an ensemble grant it with unity, and the spirit of place extends, reinforced by the great climate and landscape diversity, the transhumant/transferable factors are present in different districts of the peninsular geography. Along their itinerary it becomes apparent that the meaning of the testimonial values of ensemble prevail above the value attributable to particular elements. It has involved an extraordinary cultural exchange between regions, and it has promoted the permanence of the population in a rural-natural environment. It has also favored the understanding, the communication and the bonds joint in the pursuit of one common goal, through coincidences, overlapping and exchange of collective activities. The spirit of place, as in the particular case of the Park of Monfragüe (3), lies in the special microclimate prevailing in the area; it is the atmosphere contained and framed within the spatial container, in this particular case, of mainly vegetable character. Its peculiarity arises from the combination of its biological characteristics, its landscape features and its extension, as well as from the potentially necessary elements that grant long-term continuity to the ecosystems and the biological diversity processes. This spatial container we have previously referred to and which now is presented as built and represented in the town of Cabanillas, shows those same relationships of variables of light, color, textures, among others, but here the man feels a greater power of decision. The building of the Esquileo, or sheep-shearing, allows us to experience the type of work and the lifestyle that was once developed there, without any affectation, idealization or nostalgia.

As a result, the variables that grant these environments with the specificity of “Place with spirit”, beyond items characteristic of their particularity and scale differences, depend on a more human social appropriation with the heritage, with the new incorporations adapting in tune with the existent context, responding to the unavoidable interdependence of the activity and that of the individual with the landscape. It is clear that these depend on the interpretation that is made of them, and of the emotional and momentary particular situation of the individual who is carrying out the registration. And of the political decision. But that does not mean that it is impossible.

## Notes

1. Abel comes from Hebrew and it means 'breath' or 'vapor'; a term linked to any thing that moves and that is transitory, included its own life. The root of the word "Caín" seems to be the verb 'kanah': 'to acquire', 'to obtain', 'to possess' and therefore, 'to govern' or 'to subdue.'
2. Study of the precise effects of the geographical environment, consciously conditioned or not, on the affective behavior of the individuals (Francesco Careri 2002:97)
3. "Biosphere Reserve", UNESCO 1979, by virtue of its space singularity with ecological and cultural values.

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