

**Portraits of the cultural landscape of the pantheons: Construction of identity and collective memory****Retratos del paisaje cultural de los panteones: construcción de identidad y memoria colectiva**

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**Abstract**

Globalization seemed to become the enemy to defeat. For decades some authors have observed a phenomenon that devours everything in its path, destroying identity. However, there is a counterpart, one that has caused many communities or researchers decide traditions or document certain elements of their daily lives with the certainty that his eyes back to the local, encourages and protects the collective memory. The following paper discloses how by using photography and direct observation was possible to document the elements of the cultural landscape in two local cemeteries, whose habits, customs and architecture are completely different. The importance of this study is how the apprehension of these elements can recognize the construction of collective memories of the groups of mourners, mourning processes which were impacted by what lies in both scenarios.

**Photography, Cultural landscape, Collective memory, Mausoleums, México****Resumen**

La globalización pareció convertirse en el enemigo a vencer. Durante décadas algunos autores la han observado como un fenómeno que devora todo a su paso, destructora de identidades. Sin embargo, existe una contraparte, aquella que ha hecho que numerosas comunidades o investigadores, decidan documentar ciertas tradiciones o elementos de su vida cotidiana con la certeza de que volver los ojos a lo local, incentiva y resguarda la memoria colectiva. El siguiente trabajo da a conocer cómo mediante el uso de la fotografía y la observación directa fue posible documentar los elementos que conforman el paisaje cultural en dos panteones locales, cuyos usos, costumbres y arquitecturas son completamente diferentes. La importancia de este estudio radica en cómo la aprehensión de dichos elementos permite reconocer la construcción de las memorias colectivas de los grupos de dolientes, cuyos procesos de luto se vieron impactados por lo que yace en ambos escenarios.

**Fotografía, Paisaje cultural, Memoria colectiva, Panteones, México**


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## Introduction

Emmanuel Hoog (2005) says that the demand for collective memory has never been so strong, why is this? Why do communities suddenly seem to have a need to safeguard those elements that they consider part of their identity? How is this collective memory built today? How is it preserved? Globalization seems to be one of the triggers. This has existed since the trade routes were inscribed in history, the difference lies in how this phenomenon is experienced today. For thousands of years, people — and later companies — have sold and bought items from distant lands, just think of the idea that led Columbus to embark on America: shorter trade routes that promote greater profit.

Today this opening of routes is lived from the technological development; Creations like the internet have fueled large-scale commerce. While in ancient times the groups of merchants carried out strenuous physical migratory movements, currently this physical movement is no longer necessary, you can contact, buy or sell using portals, online visits, contacts via network. Globalization and technology go hand in hand. The sale can be made in distant places, it is faster given the contact via the internet, and in some cases cheaper, given the customs support in some countries. The space was modified, the time also (Silva Silva, 2008).

The international free market based on technology, promoted the exchange, at first of goods or services, later sociocultural elements began to travel without restriction from one place to another. Societies market knowledge, traditions, customs, and lifestyles (James and Rodner, 2001). At this point, cultural exchange has generated resistance to globalization, to a certain extent subjects and governments try to recognize the transculturation or hybridization processes that are experienced, as part of a defense of their heritage, identity and memory, all of which are based of this research.

## The cultural landscape

The object of study of this research is the cultural landscape in the local pantheons. The cultural landscape is defined as a space without limits. This concept has as its antecedent that of natural landscape, a space in which all possible natural resources lie and that has not suffered the intervention of man (see figure 1).

This one experiences a second moment when the subject carries out the cultural impression of him (Krebs in Sauer, 2006); the man begins the registration of him on said geographical territory and the landscape changes from natural to cultural. Cultural landscape is considered any space in which subjects, other living beings and all those elements that make up the environment converge and coexist (see figure 2).



Figure 1 Krebs natural landscape



Figure 2 Krebs Cultural Landscape

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) observes the existence of two types of cultural landscape: the clearly defined landscape (PCD) and the organically evolved landscape (PEO). The PCD is created and designed intentionally by the human being, it is about landscaped landscapes and parks, built for aesthetic reasons. The PEO is born from an initial imperative of a social, economic, administrative or religious nature, it evolves in response to the adaptation to its natural environment. Three types emerge from this type of landscape (see figure 3). The vestige landscape (PV), the active landscape (PA) and the associative cultural landscape (PCA) are PEO (see table 1).

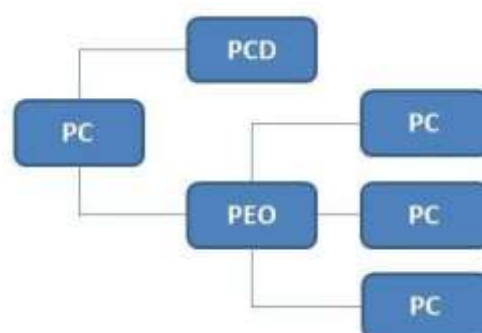


Figure 3 Types of cultural landscape

The first of them, also known as a fossil, is one whose evolutionary process concluded at some point in the past but its features are visible. The second maintains an active role in society and is associated with the traditional lifestyle; its evolution is still active. The third is a landscape in which there are powerful religious or cultural associations with the natural environment (ICOMOS in López Zambrano, 2014).

Tipos de paisaje evolucionado orgánicamente (PEO)	
Paisaje vestigio	Proceso concluido, rasgos visibles.
Paisaje activo	Activo, se asocia con el estilo de vida tradicional.
Paisaje cultural asociativo	Asociaciones religiosas o culturales con el medio natural.

Table 1 Types of PEO

### Identity and the cultural landscape

It is said that the cultural landscape is closely linked to that of identity because from the adaptation that the subject makes of a geographical space, it is possible to appreciate the development of customs, traditions, rites, architecture, social movements, among others, all of them built in the same frame.

Identity arises when it is recognized that there is someone in front of me. What I am manifests itself in the presence of the other. Identity is a simile of the individual's life history: it is born in the social space, it is built from the community and it leads the subjects to organize around it (Castels, 1997).

Identity and culture are linked, there is no culture without an actor and he conforms it from values, traditions, beliefs, symbols and modes of behavior that affect him and the social group that allows the development of that sense of belonging, which ultimately it gives him an identity (Giménez, 2007).

The identity seen from the culture allows the existence of diversity since there are individuals or groups with interests, codes, norms and rituals that allow them to identify with each other. The way in which all these cultures are related is what they call interculturality. Knowing the identity of each of these cultures allows negotiating that coexistence based on respect and recognition.

Mircea Eliade (in Flores, 1999) points out that there is a constant in societies that become aware of their identity: for each one of them there is always a clear difference between their own territory, between the known world and the indeterminate space that surrounds it.

Everything that a community builds as part of its cultural landscape gives it identity, in addition, it also allows the recognition of the other through a very simple act: recognition. Identity, then, is also built from the cultural landscape.

### The importance of documenting the cultural landscape from photography

In its beginnings, photography did not enjoy respect as it does in the social imaginary, in reality, it was seen as a sacrilegious act that reproduced copies of nature in a slavish way. It is said that Matisse said that the photographic record had disturbed the imagination, because the photographic image left feeling aside. Baudelaire labeled her as a servant of the arts and sciences but none of them thought about the value she would acquire for society (Debray, 1994).

Documentary photography - the basis of this work - has become an element of great value for contemporary society. The photographic image ceased to be a purely illustrative document; offers the opportunity to freeze in time events, facts, lines, colors, objects, subjects that, at a certain moment, were part of a reality that already was.

When speaking of the image as a document, reference is made to the possibility that it offers to study, understand or analyze these fragments. In this regard, Félix Valle Gastaminza (2002) established three modes of image-world relationship: the symbolic, the epistemic and the aesthetic. The symbolic mode refers to the way in which man represented the world around him, with magical symbols, cave paintings or simple drawings.

The epistemic mode tells us about the information provided by an image, playing a role, and the aesthetic mode emphasizes the relationship of the image with society (here there is a relationship with art).

For his part, Polo Yañez (in Valle Gastaminza, 2002) talks about the three elements that allow the generation of a documentary photograph: it must contain an ethical factor, the document-gene and objectivism.

The ethical factor refers to the intention of the documentalist to capture reality without any modification, the documentgenic element is related to the interest that the photographic work may provoke in the viewer, thus arising a comparison between the world that the viewer has had to live and the world that he sees represented or captured in the image, objectivism is related to the technical and compositional decisions chosen by the photographer. When it comes to research, there are rules for documentary photography

Why document photographically? Protecting, documenting and preserving are actions that have been present in the history of man. At first, being part of this memory was reserved for very few objects and subjects (Hoogs, 2005); With the passage of time, globalization, fear of the loss of identity and the democratization of the media, the need to save what each considered important was generated in the subjects. Since such importance has been given to commerce in the first instance, and to the government in the second, that culture has been left aside (Rifkin in Silva Silva, 2008).

The importance that culture has in what is called the constitution of social trust is not treasured or recognized, thus, the importance that churches, civil associations or sports societies that confer identity to any community is minimized, therefore, in a world globally, it has become important to preserve what makes a community different, what is interesting is that this identity is shared taking advantage of the use of technologies, thus, communities will have the opportunity to re-understand their identity, and recognize that of others.

If men's memory is erased, photography is an option to bring back what already was and that, at some point, is no more. Photography is man today, what painting was in its time, when it was the means to portray subjects and their environment. The painting was a source of information for the researcher for a long time.

Today, photography rises not only as a representation, it does so as a social image, it makes it possible to portray historical aspects of the societies of each era; photography has become a document that, constructed - and read - correctly, allows us to stop time on details as important to the cultural landscape as architecture, clothing, infrastructure, behavior, among others. Every cultural landscape seen from a lens is a plastic space that each culture creates (Panofsky in Saavedra, 2003).

Since every cultural landscape contains aesthetic and cultural values that emerge when the subject makes his record on the territory he occupies (Sabaté in Galimberti, 2013), it is worth approaching the stones and monuments - as Foucault said - and portraying what they show us.

### **Construction of the collective memory from the image**

“From time immemorial, one of humanity's main concerns has been the conservation of its riches, whatever they may be. Thus, as soon as something is classified as valuable, it is immediately treasured, protected and venerated” (Hoog, 3, 2005).

The collective memory is part of these riches and photography, without expecting it, has played that role to which Hoog refers. By enabling the apprehension of facts, moments, subjects or actions at the precise moment in which they took place, the art of playing with light and shadows offered the possibility of capturing not only all of the above, but also those identity elements that define eras, periods, you were complete. Photography became, without knowing it, the tool to capture what each community decides, is inherent to its identity.

In the case of the cultural landscape, photography offers the opportunity to generate a visual record of the changes that it is facing. That is why documenting memory is important, with or without globalization, every society evolves, changes or modifies patterns. Photography then becomes a document of great help when reflecting on the past, approaching it; "To want these documents to pass through time is to help our children not to know but to understand" (Hoog, 2005, 13).

Documenting the cultural landscape is not gray literature, it is part of the culture, the intelligentsia, the knowledge and therefore, part of the memory of a people, built through the rites, traditions and acts of a people, captured in an image.

### The cultural landscape of two local pantheons

A cultural landscape goes beyond the panorama that we can appreciate when we stop at different points of the city, a cultural landscape is one of the business cards that the community has built, it represents to a large extent the formation, consolidation and maintenance of a territorial identity. The anthropologist and historian Lourdes Arizpe (2011) highlights the cultural strength that Mexico possesses in multiple identity elements, such as its gastronomy, customs, family relationships or artistic manifestations. And among those other elements, we mention perhaps one of the most representative of the Mexican: death and his mourning.

Every culture in the world has built its own beliefs and ceremonies around death. In Mexico, the ideology that exists in this regard derives from a mixture generated by the influence of the Mesoamerican peoples who inhabited the territory and by the conquerors of these peoples, they are rituals sheltered by religion with pagan overtones. The way of living the duel, makes that of the Mexicans is considered by other cultures as a practice of a festive nature.

For this research it was decided to work on two pantheons whose architectural characteristics were completely different. On the one hand, it was chosen to document the cultural landscape of the "Panteón Ejidal de Terán" (of a public nature), a demarcation that is part of the capital city Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas. In this pantheon only burials are carried out. On the other hand, a crematorium was chosen, "Mausoleos La Esperanza" (private). Both geographical spaces could not be more different.

Photography allowed us to study how the architectural design and infrastructure in both places define the mourning process of the mourners, therefore collective memories are built around this ritual, very different.

While on the one hand we have an ejidal pantheon located on an irregular terrain with little planning, and dirt walkways (see Figure 4), in contrast, the Mausoleum is seen as a strictly planned place, with a garden design, everything is perfect, balanced: lines, strokes, architecture (see figure 5).



Figure 4 Access to the Mausoleum



Figure 5 Access to the Ejidal Pantheon of Terán

Once inside, it is possible to observe how the relatives try to provide their own identity to each of the tombs, depending on the freedom that each of the spaces offers them. For example, in the ejidal pantheon, it is possible to find a diversity of designs, sizes, colors, shapes.

This does not happen inside the Mausoleum, where all the niches in which the urns with the ashes are deposited measure exactly the same, and have the same shape and size: square and small. The same is true in the area where coffins can be placed. It is possible to make a contrast even on the floors of both places, while in the public pantheon there are dirt floors, in the private pantheon, these are grass, green, natural and well-cared for (see Figures 6 and 7).



**Figure 6** Panoramic of the ejidal pantheon



**Figure 7** Overview of the mausoleum

Little by little we are entering the changes that globalization, that which has led to sharing organizational models, is generating in some of the spaces in which death begins to be experienced in different ways. The following photographs are testimony to the way both cemeteries are organized. While on the one hand the public space offers cheaper costs to bury the deceased, the costs in the private mausoleum are even doubled.

In the ejidal pantheon, 6 thousand pesos are charged for burial (space) and an annuity of 150 pesos; in the private one, a space for a coffin reaches 23 thousand pesos plus an annuity of one thousand pesos. It is clear that costs impact what the debtor receives. But this does not matter to the debtor of the public pantheon, unlike the debtor of the private mausoleum, he makes the grave of his deceased his own. None is the same as the others, within the apparent disorder, there is an order. Each tomb of the ejidal pantheon provides us with information not only about the debtor but also about his family.

### The burial rite

Observing the burials in both spaces and photographing them allowed us to learn about how the cultural landscape affects the process of mourning that each debtor lives. In the ejidal pantheon, pain is experienced on the surface.

The long and long-suffering cries accompany the last journey of the coffin. This is done walking due to the type of terrain on which the pantheon lies (a plateau with slopes). In an open space, where disorder and diversity prevail, it is easy to lose one's composure, the relatives cry, scream, other graves even serve as a seat while waiting for the placement of the coffin in the grave. It is common that while the coffin is lowered, handfuls of earth or flowers are thrown at it. Once the burial is finished, the family members place all the flowers received marking the grave, making use of plastic or metal jars (see Figures 8 and 9).



**Figure 8** Burial in the ejidal pantheon

In the case of the private space, the mausoleum where cremations take place, the rite is completely different. The aesthetics of the place allow the emotions that the relatives feel, to be experienced in a different way. The fact of accessing a place where access to the coffin is done by car does not give the mourners the possibility of crying after a coffin.

In fact, the number of cars to which access is given is three, the rest must leave their unit parked outside the property. The float is parked in the place where the remains will be cremated. Once the body is deposited, the box is removed and the float is removed. The relatives are not allowed to enter the crematorium, they must say goodbye before removing the body from the box. While the body is cremated, the relatives wait in a heated adjoining room. Some walk through the gardens.



**Figure 9** Crematorium

Figures 10, 11 y 12. Entierro tradicional en el panteón ejidal. Fotografía: Dago Zambrano.

The sound of the wind floods the gardens, while some murmurs are heard. All this happens until the family member receives the urn. The ashes will be deposited later, if they consider buying a niche. If so, it will look like the rest of the niches, with a marble or mirror-like finish. In both places food is invited but while in one there is music, in the other everything is silence.

### Identity contrasts and different memories

Despite the fact that both spaces worship death, the cultural landscape that exists in each of them is completely different. All this has to do with a fundamental element, the spatial location, the geographical characteristics, its planning and architecture. While one of them was founded in the last century to bury the dead of the 1910 revolution, the other comes as a result of a contemporary vision of death: it does not have to be grotesque. The mausoleum is seen as a closed, private place. The ejidal pantheon is a public place, there is no access control. Emotions seem to be unleashed more easily in the ejido pantheon due to the above. Since the mausoleum is run like an established business, the bereaved know that the rule does matter, by controlling their emotions.

The mausoleum represents what Martín Barbero calls the bourgeoisie, while the ejidal pantheon is the town itself (1981). A space for any inhabitant. For this reason it is easy to notice the mark, that sign that the relatives seek to leave in the grave of their dead, throwing a hand of colorful paint, photographs, flower garlands, everything that can be placed and that cannot be easily stolen. (Figure 10).



**Figure 10** Graves

In the mausoleum this does not happen. Niches and tombs look the same, the only permission granted to the debtor is to place a plastic flower or a small toy, if so chosen (Figure 11).



**Figure 11** Detail of niche in the mausoleum

Thus, we observe how, based on certain practices, collective memory is constructed from the way in which space and the norm conditions them. In both spaces we can find two different cultural discourses. In the private pantheon a diversity is not observed as clear as in the ejidal pantheon, the control is greater in the closed space. Paradoxically, both spaces, despite facing the culture of death, also represent life. Thanks to the dead, the living generate a relationship with these places. This allows them to keep, in some way, close to them, those who have physically already left. However, the construction is very different. In the ejidal pantheon, death is lived, torn apart, cried, shouted and at certain moments, it is celebrated. In the mausoleum, this is treated with respect, respecting the norm, in an organized and simple way. Each one, from their landscape, registers a collective memory and allows portraying how the different social sectors live and face the departure of their loved ones.

## Conclusions

Carrying out this type of research allows us to document the passage of time, and the decisions that local administrations make regarding the way in which they try to maintain the identity of a space (and with it traditions, rites and festivities) or, if they decide to replace it, which entails a change in the cultural landscape that is built in said space.

It is not so much about glocalization (of thinking globally to act locally), but about documenting to share or make known how people live in that community (space or collective), this type of research allows us to capture how a group of people or a group of people is living. collectivity reaffirm their identity through rites, in this case, funeral rites. It is important to understand and know who they are, how they are, how they relate or how they live with others.

We also see how photography becomes an indispensable tool to capture what happens with the cultural landscape in these spaces, or they try to maintain their identity or introduce changes to survive, trying to have their impact on the culture that lies here, suffers the least possible impact.

It is a fact that cultural landscapes change faster with the arrival of new visions, businesses or ideas to "improve" the image of the city, so it is imperative to document the spaces that are representative for a community. There will come a point when this type of study becomes an obligatory reference to understand how a community changed from the modifications that were experienced in its cultural landscape.

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