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Patagonian Rock Art Heritage and its Tourist Use

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Abstract

The following paper presents the project known as “Project for the regional recreational tourist management of rock art sites in the north of Neuquén. Awareness and productive possibilities”, developed in the north of Neuquén province in Argentinean Patagonia and whose purpose is to coordinate the construction of management models through which local communities shall identify the existent relationship between heritage symbols and the community, and its recreational, tourist and productive possibilities. The working team has been documenting and studying various high quality rock art sites for over two decades. Among them there is Colomichicó, considered one of the biggest opencast rock art sites in Latin America. Its systematic studies led to the creation of Archeological Park Colomichicó. For the creation of this Park, the constitution of the Board of Administration was necessary, formed by the Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism and the Del Comahue University through Faculty of Tourism to which the research team in charge of every survey assignments elaboration of proposals of enhancement and tourist purpose and belongs.

The continuity of the relation of experiences of documentation, signification and preservation of the heritage of cave resources in particular and of heritage in general is of essential importance. The main role of custodians of this is played by local inhabitants with who is necessary to perform a work of awareness and acknowledgement of these resources. The point of view and the special attention paid by the tourist activity to the cultural aspects of the different destinations in the last decades generates the necessity to establish management policies on them, so that its approach and use is performed in optimal conditions of sustainability in order to guarantee its durability over time.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage - Management – Tourism – Tourist Use

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1. Patagonian Rock Art Heritage and its Tourist Use.

The scenery in today's world is characterized by passing in the evolution of a dialectic constituted by, on one side, an accelerated time that comes, usually, accompanied by the loss of "before and after" notions; what has involved the loss of foundational aspects of the identity of the people; and on the other side, what comes as an opponent is the yearning of past, the search of roots and the diluted identity in the scheme of the homogenizer monster called globalization. This is one of the most meaningful manifestations adopted by the contemporary society towards the "conscience of loss" of their cultural continuity.

Within that framework, the archeological cultural resources as part of cultural heritage of the humanity and, more specifically, rock art, are one of its most relevant expressions; may be even the most important manifestation of prehistoric humanity that has come to us. Its preservation through millennia is almost a miracle, and its documentation and study are priority tasks, since the actual conditions of socio-economic life conspire against its conservation. (Gradín, 1988:7).

Scientific literature that has treated the issue concerning conservation over the last forty years is abundant; and this can be easily seen in the multiplicity of manifestos and international proclamations for the shelter and protection of cultural heritage, such as the Athens Charter, 1931.

After this, a landmark of substantial character was the development of the International Letter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments- Venice, 1964- considered a document that, still nowadays, a type of official code for the conservatives.

What also stands on a prominent space is the Letter for Conservation of Places with Cultural Value- Burra Charter, 1979- which includes in its own definition the use value of cultural heritage.-Art. N°1; 1.4 -. It is to highlight the reference made of the man of the present, also, as a beneficiary of that and that the conservation carries with it this interaction. Another novel aspect that this document contributes is the acknowledging of the environment, under the concept of environment, circumscribing its conservation against the type of interventions that may be performed on the cultural heritage per se.

The fundamental aspect of these documents, among which the International Letter for the Management of Archeological Heritage shall be mentioned- ICOMOS, 1990- is the advances on the vision of disciplines associated to conservation, developing room for of interdisciplinary and social participation.

The brief presented has meant more than thirty years of research, intervention and conceptualization papers for the construction of a CORPUS of knowledge that provides with the elementary tools for the approach to cultural heritage in its various manifestations.

In the case of archeological heritage, the sustained increase in the "use" of the sites in the last twenty years has provoked many deep changes in the way its conservation and preservation is approached, which has implicated multiple reflections as regards to content, scope and implications of its conservation. Among these, its interdisciplinary aspect has been acknowledged and the undeniable existence of the value of the use of archeological heritage, this being in evaluative equality with other types of cultural heritage.

In this respect, addressing the management and preservation of the sites with rock art uses methodologies and information from disciplines such as: Archeology, Geography, Tourism, Geology, Architecture, Art History, etc. in a compendium of interrelations with various types of triangulations and adaptations to the complex frame of deontology of conservation.

The work field is the North Patagonia in consideration of the archeological and/or cultural value in terms of quality and quantity of existent rock art distributed in numerous sites; its vulnerability and fragility and the increasing and not controlled influx of visitors, that results in damage of the heritage itself and of the local community. It also includes, as regards to the communitarian dimension, the reference to aspects of the culture that take part in communitarian recreational practices and that enroll as a substantial part of the local identity. Such is the case of holidays (Scribano, 2012, p. 58), popular games and different leisure time activities that set de local recreation.

The research proposal will be kept developing in the departments Minas, Chos Malal y Ñorquin in the province of Neuquén.

2. Literature Review.

Until a very recent time, two definitions have been used as synonyms: “management plan” and “management”. This is an important issue when proposing scientific investigations associated to the theoretical and applied knowledge relating to cultural heritage. Today we are able to affirm that, conceptually, a management plan is established as a substantial tool for the cultural heritage management, but it does not define it since it is an aspect of it.

In such sense, the heritage management is defined as the set of actions programmed to obtain an optimum conservation of the heritage assets and a use of these heritage assets adequate to the contemporary demands. (Ballart, 2003). The starting point of the management is unfailingly the conservation, but it does not end there; it implicates two great functions: the administrative and the technical-commercial, which is the one that is more directly related to the management, falling within its definition, since it is the vital manifestation of the proposed enterprise. The ideological and institutional components are definers of the type of cultural policies to be established as support of the management in each of the involved scale, which will generate different dialectics within one scope, country or region.

As regards to the Archeological Heritage management, this is a novelty in Argentina, not so in countries like Australia and some European countries, which present trajectory and successful examples in the application of management plans supervened in integral management programs. The significance that this specific topic of the archeological field as object of cultural heritage gains is clear, and with it the contents and implications that its recognition as such signifies, both in its relationships with the leisure time ambit and in the aspects related to local development.

Within that frame, the conservation and the enhancement of cultural heritage in general and of the archeological heritage in particular are confined under the paradigm of sustainability, which holistically implicates the economical growth, the environmental conservation and social equality around sustainability. In this perspective the presence of the man is constituted in a central element of the process as the dynamic component of changes and as receiving object of these, both in past and in present.

A relatively new look at this is the analysis from the study of cultural landscape, which consists in the result of the action of the development of human activities in a particular territory. The World Heritage Convention acknowledged that the term "cultural landscape" embraces a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment. Cultural landscapes often reflect specific techniques of sustainable land-use, considering the characteristics and limits of the natural environment they are established in, and a specific spiritual relation to nature. Protection of cultural landscapes can contribute to modern techniques of sustainable land-use and can maintain or enhance natural values in the landscape. The continued existence of traditional forms of land-use supports biological diversity in many regions of the world. The protection of traditional cultural landscapes is therefore helpful in maintaining biological diversity.

Cultural landscapes fall into three main categories, namely:

The most easily identifiable is the clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man. This embraces garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles.

The second category is the organically evolved landscape. This results from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. Such landscapes reflect that process of evolution in their form and component features.

They fall into two sub-categories:

- a relict (or fossil) landscape is one in which an evolutionary process came to an end at some time in the past, either abruptly or over a period. Its significant distinguishing features are, however, still visible in material form.
- Continuing landscape is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress. At the same time it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time.

The final category is the associative cultural landscape. The inclusion of such landscapes on the World Heritage List is justifiable by virtue of the powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent.

This approach enables the transversal reading of the territory and the superimposed changes that form the current cultural landscape of the north of Neuquén interacting in each of its moments and enabling the heterogeneity of heritage values in a double analysis: the historical and the spatial. The access to visitors to places with rock art has brought an endless number of prejudices created by the presence of men (loss of art due to vandalism, acceleration of natural deterioration processes, etc.)

Because of the manifest fragility of the heritage, a new specific disciplinary field related to the conservation and administration of rock art sites. The first studies begin in the sixties and in the eighties and nineties, the associations and studies in pos of the conservation of rock art sites proliferate. The precursor countries in the studies of rock art conservation were France and Spain. The most famous example is the Lascaux Cave case (located in the south west of France) which, after receiving visitors for over 20 years, had to be shut down due to the appearance of accretions called “white and green diseases”. This subject caused commotion within the scientific community and sensitized the public opinion about heritage protection. Right after them, the countries that follow are Australia (Kakadu National Park, Uluru National Park, Laura, Split Rock, Carnarvon Gorge, Cathedral Cave, Paroong Cave, etc.), Canadá (Peterborough , Petroglyphs Provincial Park; Mazinaw Lake Bon Echo Provincial Park; etc.) and U.S.A (Petroglyph National Monument; Irish Canyon, etc.).

Although worldwide tendencies in the nineties were the implementation of management plans, PROCÔA case (Côa Valley Integrated Development Program) in Portugal constitutes a clear example of integral management of this type of heritage, without disregarding the aspects that make the use and enjoyment of it. The countries previously mentioned were the pioneers of the foundation of organizations specialized in the field, for instance, the Canadian Conservation Institute, Getty Conservation Institute, American Rock Art Research Association, Australian Rock Art Research Association, etc..

Throughout Latin-America, conservation and administration of rock art sites projects have begun to be developed. The most outstanding one is located in Mexico (Sierras of California, designed by Stanley Price); after this there is Brazil (Sierra da Capivara, under the responsibility of Pessis) and Bolivia (Batea Cocha, Torotoro, fomented by the SIAB), as well as in Chile, geoglyphs of the Azapa Valley.

In Argentina, the following background is known as regards to the management plans of rock art sites: nationally, within the Documentation and Preservation of Rock Art Program (D.O.P.R.A.R.A, in Spanish) initiated in 1995 by Rolandi Perrot; Gradin; Aschero; Podestá; Onetto; Proaño and Wainwright and Helwing. Moreover, management plans for the Cueva de las Manos and Cerro de los Indios (Santa Cruz) have been developed, as well as sites near Antofagasta de la Sierra (Catamarca Southern Highlands) and the Andean Region of parallel 42 (Podesta and Bellelli 1995 et.al. 1997). The latest works have been performed in La Pampa Province as Quehue Valley Region, Salamanca Cave (Gradin 1995), Lihue Calel National Park (Gradin 1995).

In Chubut Province the Conservation and Management in eaves in Los Alerces National Park conducted by María Soledad Caracotche and others, conservation and public in the eave of Roca Lake in Los Glaciares National Park (Santa Cruz), initiated in 1999 by María Soledad Caracotche and Claudia Manzur. In Córdoba province, Archeological and Natural Park of Cerros Colorados can be found. (Boelle; Weber; Wypyski y Charola 1995). In Neuquén Province, Colomichicó Archeological Park is been executed. (Gelós, Vega, Bestard 1998). This paper we will be presenting the current state of the situation of Colomichicó Archeological Park.

3. Methodology

To achieve the objectives, we use the following methodology. It has four stages:

- A) HEURISTIC MOMENT, as technique involves finding sources of information.
- B) CRITICAL MOMENT, is the qualitative analysis of the material obtained in the heuristic moment.

The logical moments of this process are: when morphological analysis of veracity, or hermeneutic interpretation and axiological or assessment.

C) SYNTHESIS MOMENT, all the above elements must be united, compounds, combined in order to achieve a coherent unit that facilitates understanding.

D) EXHIBITION MOMENT, the exhibition is to present the creation of what has been studied.

Aims

General aim

Further the development of methodologies associated to the integral management of cultural heritage, particularizing sites with rock art, aimed to the regional development to involve local communities as its performers and administrators.

Specific aims

- Conceptualize theoretical lines of the various disciplines employed to the conservation, shelter and use of cultural property.
- Select the cases of study considered more characteristic of rock art, typical holidays, popular cult and crafts of the north of Neuquén.
- Identify and analyze the categories from the phenomenological, experiential, ritual and aesthetic field.
- Enlarge the documental archive of images in different media.
- Recognize the most characteristic of the cultural aesthetic visual of the north of Neuquén.
- Identify excavatable archeological areas and the legislation about it.
- Continue the technical advice from local craftsmen for the elaboration of products with regional art rock motifs and the service providers for the incorporation of the same to their offers.
- Identify and characterize the mode of recreation of the local communities associated to the cultural heritage.
- Identify the best uses for the heritage assets selected attending its preservation and social value.
- Propose strategies for the revaluation of the recreational practices associated to cultural heritage.

Location and access to Colomichicó archeological park

Colomichicó Archeological Park is located in Minad Department, in the North of Neuquén Province, approximately 9 kilometers away from Varvarco (nearest place) and 6 kilometers away from School number 234. Its geographical coordinate is 36° 57' 30" south latitude and 70 ° 40' west longitudes, with an altitude of the reservoir of approximately 2000 meters above sea level against Del Viento Range mountain occidental hillside. The urban points situated in its area of influence are: Varvarco, Las Ovejas, Huinganco, Invernada Vieja and Butalón. Within the posed interventions, an extension of the area is approximately a total of 81 hectares (811915 m²), including archeological deposit, the area destined to Service Center near School number 284, and the urban lot destined to the construction of the Visitors Center in Las Ovejas.

Tourist-recreational Site Relevance

The main attribute of Colomichicó Archeological Park is a rock reservoir in the open air, of approximately 600 blocks with different motifs, covering an extension of approximately 76 hectares. Because of the quantity and variety in motifs, this site is regarded by investigators that have intervened it as one of the most important sites in Patagonia and Latin America, from an archeological point of view, and of international acknowledgement for its aesthetic value in terms of its predominant style in parallels. These expressions provide evidence of the cultural prehistoric manifestations (Paleolithic state) in the territory of the province. In such sense, the area has a high value in historical, archeological, aesthetic-landscape and geological terms.

According to Tourist Recreational Development Plan of North Zone (1999) and with the corresponding projections of manpower allocation, equipment, installations and management, the park possess a level II potential hierarchy, with the capacity to attract visitors from the domestic and/or receptive business that may have reached the zone for other tourist motivations. Nevertheless, this hierarchy can still be grater (level III) just by attracting itself a current in the domestic business and, on a smaller percentage, in receptive tourism as are specialists in issues relating archeology, history, art, among other disciplines.

Current and Potential Upgrade of the Demand

The data about the current site visitors does not have a systematic and permanent register that allows a characterization of them. Nevertheless, it can be stated, from different investigations and what has been manifested by locals, that the area bears the spontaneous and not controlled visit of people with different reasons to know the place.

In this sense, and in the frame of “Colomichicó: Preservation Proposal and Site Management of Rock Art Sites” project, elaborated in 2000, 51 people acceding to the reservoir, most of them being people from Buenos Aires province and north zone of Neuquén Province, have been registered in the period between 12/22/01 to 02/22/02.

It can be inferred that, for Colomichicó Archeological Park, the demand is characterized by unfolding on the base of groups both of general and specific interests. Among the first ones, the ones mentioned can be those tourists and recreationists, who are in the zone due to other tourist motivations, while for the second ones, it can be regrouped in demand segments with punctual investigation and historical, archeological and artistic values study motives present in the area. This way, the relevant market for the Park could be determined a priori by families, groups of friends, groups of interests or investigators that, in the form of residents, hikers or tourists, wish to know about other attractions in the area, inform themselves and investigate the cultural manifestations of the ancient people.

Environmental Problems Arising from the Public Use

Not only does the natural deterioration of the stones and their engraving affect the site, but also the human deterioration due to economical interests of precious minerals, subtraction of pieces for their own personal collection, trampling, block motions and overwriting of the engravings. In this sense, the advent of not controlled neither administrated touristic phenomena has conspired against the conservation of these sites which during recent times have been plundered and degraded and, if not effectively administrated, will substantially affect in the total degradation of the Park. Finally, for the development of this proposal, the following dimensions have been established:

Historical dimension: what there is yet left to precise through archeological studies is the chronology, extreme antiquity, stratigraphy, ethnic identity and interethnic cultural contacts. However, it is estimated that, a priori, engravings would belong to Pehuenche culture and that its antiquity would date from approximately 800 years. These expressions would give evidence of cultural prehistoric manifestations (from Paleolithic) in the territory of the province.

Scientific dimension: in this aspect, the factors that cause the deterioration on the rocks and engraving have been determined, along with the litho logical studies of rock type, disposition, conservation state, chemical composition and absolute age of the rocks, determining the geological history of the site, delimitation of the area and geological assessment for the interpretation of the landscape, plotting and trail constructions. What is left to develop is the evaluation of blocks and graving preservation and protection methods; further studies related to the relative age of the blocks, fungi and lichens.

Aesthetic dimension: an aesthetic formal study of rock carving in the site and surrounding landscape has been conducted. For the first case, the predominant style is of “parallels”, with variety in geometric styles, a minimum presence of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic. Due to the quantity of engraving and the variety of its motifs, this site is considered, by investigators who have intervened in the site, as one of the most important in Patagonia and in the country and of international acknowledgement from the archeological point of view. So far a systematic documentation in relation to 800 blocks still pending to culminate total site documentation.

For the second analysis, and to the effects of a first weighting of tourist-recreational potential, approximations of the aesthetic attributes of the surrounding landscape were made, through the application of the Interpretation of Landscape (by Milagros Escribano) methodology. This gave a composition of great harmony and strength (due to the topographic and geomorphic configuration of the place) of the landscape as a preliminary result, and of little variety in terms of heterogeneity of scenes. In such sense, as touristic value, the landscape functions as an important complement of the rock art site that under current conditions would present a level II hierarchy (capacity of attracting domestic and/or receptive market visitors that may have reached the area for other touristic motivations), but if put in value it may reach a level III because of its

archeological, scientific, geological and cultural importance (attract by itself a domestic market current and, in a smaller percentage, of inbound tourism as are specialists in issues concerning archeology, history, art and other disciplines). It is to highlight that these studies would have to be completed with an analysis of the aesthetic answers that the ecological rock landscape produces in the observer in subjective terms; as well as progress in deepening landscape aesthetic considerations, studies of plant species and the capacity of environmental burden.

Associative dimension: here, the project enunciates history of the investigations performed in relation with the site; informing that there have never been archeological excavations carried out in the site neither chronological dating of any type.

Social dimension: this valorization refers to the use that modern population has in its different scales and groups of the cultural heritage. Because of this, it is determined that it is important to know which different sensations the community, in its different groups and scales of organization, has as regards to the preservation and use of Colomichicó site.

From different results obtained over each of the meanings of the archeological site the proposal has advanced in delineating, within an administrative context, which would be the interventions that should be carried out for the access of the visitors through a sustainable tourism be. Even though it is left to determine which the best way to carry it out is, the first interventions that at the time were considered important to carry forward to advance in the following aspect are being developed:

- Education- awareness: it is established through the in situ intervention and with the active participation of the visitors, under the guidance of an specialized guide and graphic supporting material (already designed).
 - Determination of types of use, zoning, permissions, restrictions and services as support to the site interpretation and conservation. Advancing, for instance, in the determination of the physical load and psychological capacity of 6 simultaneous visitors; in a zoning of the site from two areas (one for the access to visitors and the other restrained to the archeological studies), in the selection of visual landscapes and potential viewpoints, and in the construction of equipments and facilities, among others.
 - Last but not least, there are also delineated the basic actions of the administration of the park, from following variables :
 - Opening and closing timetables.
 - Legal aspects: land tenure.
 - Regulation of visitors and guides rights and obligations.
 - Monitoring the way climate conditions influence the blocks conservation and the adaptability of the interventions (vandalism).

Here a detail of the intervention strategies raised for public use of the site is presented:

Public use program:

Recreational and Tourism subprogram:

- Enhancement of resources
- Touristic services and activities
- Development of marketing actions
- Visitors prevention and security

Administration subprogram:

- General operative and administrative structure of the park
- Installations and equipment
- Administrative and management staff
- Visitors management

Interpretation, Environmental Education and Training subprogram:

- Axis sensitization
- Training axis

Financing and monitoring subprogram:

- Financing and monitoring

4. Conclusion

To conclude, the support of the results obtained in our previous investigations, provide the necessary conditions to advance our subject of study, with the delimitation of the actions aimed at the integrated management of the rock archeological heritage as central axis. The continuity of the documentation and signification works constitutes the base for such project to be possible.

As a recommendation, this study highlights that it yet left the training of guides specialized in archeological heritage; elaborating graphic material in English and Portuguese; developing viewpoints with interpretive panels of the geomorphology of the area; the construction of a closed refuge in the access to the path of interpretation; the definition of indicator to monitor the states of the blocks and the touristic/recreational interventions; possibility of widening the path of interpretation; implement surveys and statistics; establishing an strategically model of economical support of the park, and its integration with the surrounding local communities.

In relation to the visitors values of visitor access it is considered that it could be exponentially greater if taking into account the visitors increasing trends from the improvement of the vial communications infrastructure and the promotion of public and private tourist investment that are currently being promoted in the area. This is taken as a base and complemented with various surveys and proposals developed from a joint and collaborative work between the Faculty of Tourism, the Undersecretary of Culture and Sports and the Undersecretary of Tourism.

As it has been mentioned throughout this work, due to the quantity of engraving and the variety of its motifs, this site is considered by the investigators that have intervened it, as one of the most important in Patagonia and in the country from an archeological point of view, and of international acknowledgement because of its aesthetic value in terms of predominant style in parallels. These expressions provide evidence of cultural prehistoric manifestations (Paleolithic state) in the territory of North Argentinean Patagonia. In such sense, the area has a high value from a historical, archeological, aesthetical-landscape and geological point of view. Thence the importance of planning managing in an adequate way its enhancement, taking care not only of the conservation and preservation needs of the site but also of the interest of local communities and experiences experienced by the visitors.

This proposal aims to achieve the consensus on strategies of intervention necessary for the enhancement of the site, guarding the local cultural heritage and the interests of every stakeholder involved in the Park. Thus, the very same is put into consideration of all stakeholders involved in its management and public use, in order to achieve a consensual proposal of intervention coordinated between all that allows the achievement of conservation, care and sustainability goals of the Colomichicó Archeological Park.

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