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► **To cite this version:**

Rafael Mata Olmo, Carolina Yacamán Ochoa, Esther Sanz Sanz. Transformation of Everyday Landscapes into Heritage: A Driver for Territorialized Agro-Food Systems in the Peri-Urban Context of Madrid. Frank Lohrberg; Katharina Christenn; Axel Tempe; Ayça Sancar. Urban Agricultural Heritage, Birkhäuser, pp.168-175, 2022, 978-3-0356-2251-5. 10.1515/9783035622522-021 . hal-04142868

**HAL Id: hal-04142868**

**<https://hal.science/hal-04142868v1>**

Submitted on 1 Aug 2023

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## Livre: Urban Agriculture Heritage

### **The transformation of everyday landscapes into heritage as a driver for territorialized agro-food systems in peri-urban contexts. Insights from the urban region of Madrid (Spain)**

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#### **Introduction**

Multifunctional urban agriculture provides a series of ecological services in addition to the supply of fresh and local quality food. Landscape services (Termorshuizen and Opdam, 2009, *passim*; Bastian et al., 2014, *passim*) are specifically acknowledged as being important for the strengthening of the territorial embeddedness of agro-food systems, going further than the functions of leisure and recreation. Quality landscapes increase the added value of local production and help farms to become economically viable (Yacamán Ochoa, Sanz Sanz and Mata Olmo, 2020). Furthermore, agrarian landscapes are the foundation for rethinking rural-urban relationships through the sharing of memories and the communication of knowledge (Sanz Sanz, 2011; Mata Olmo, 2015).

This new focus has led us to propose a conceptual, methodological and empirical approach to analyse an initiative of concerted, institutional, community-based enhancement of agricultural and peri-urban landscape heritage, the ordinary *Huerta* de Fuenlabrada in the south of the metropolitan region of Madrid (Spain). This initiative is part of a set of wider overall strategies for the preservation and revitalisation of extremely

vulnerable agriculture in peri-urban contexts in Spain (Yacamán Ochoa, Sanz Sanz and Mata Olmo, 2020). As to be shown, the landscape and its heritage features are highlighted as an objective and a strategy to bring about a change in the territorial model of congested urban and metropolitan regions and improve their environmental and cultural quality.

We present the process of the historical construction of peri-urban agricultural landscapes as cultural heritage. Our aim is to highlight that especially a “bottom-up heritage creation” can transform an everyday landscape into heritage. This involves the collective appropriation of mostly ordinary landscapes that apparently do not have an important heritage value but do show strong historical links between the agrarian landscapes and small-scale family businesses. We explain how local communities use Urban Agricultural Heritage to create a nexus between local agricultural production and quality food, as well as a sense of place. This procedure contributes to healthy, well-managed, educational environments on the outskirts of urban settlements.

The loss of agrarian land puts risk to the outskirts of many Spanish cities, in particular to the south of the Metropolitan Area of Madrid, where the abandonment of a large number of farms, the low intensity of production and the fragmentation of agrarian areas have caused the deterioration of the formal, functional and aesthetic features of the inherited agrarian landscape. There has been a “loss of memory”: the history of the place and the know-how that agricultural landscapes hold and express is being forgotten. This material and symbolic loss of peri-urban agriculture in Madrid has led to an increasing invisibility of and disinterest in local agriculture. Farming is disappearing from the collective urban consciousness, and so it is to the legitimacy of farmers themselves, which are increasingly ignored by the city.

From our heritage perspective, taking action in the context of an ordinary, degraded and fragmented agrarian landscape does not mean to make inventories and protect historical remains – as it often happens. Based on our own experience, the most important, and

probably the only viable aspect of these degraded and pressured areas is to start a process of social re-appropriation that moves away from traditional heritage approaches. In the end, this is about understanding the values of traditional agriculture, and treating these as resources on which territorial sustainability can be built through the consideration of its three dimensions: economic, environmental and social.

### **The renewed sense of heritage and the everyday peri-urban agricultural landscapes**

The initiatives for creating heritage in agrarian spaces in crisis, as in the south of the urban region of Madrid, are based on the convergence of two strategic approaches: on the one hand, moving towards a more open and democratic approach to heritage and landscape, including the whole territory and its communities. On the other hand, developing projects which defend and activate multifunctional and local scale agro-food systems, with different alliances between stakeholders. These projects, as expressions and experiences to boost the character of territories, find more than one solution for the protection of landscapes. They work to establish closer links between farmers producing quality food and urban residents as consumers.

Since the 1990s and based on the work of Guy Di Méo (1995), José Ortega Valcárcel (1998) and other geographers and professionals, the significance of diverse values of natural and cultural heritage, and of landscapes, has been increasingly recognized in academic and political fields. In recent years, the concept of heritage has **developed a** spatial dimension, thus widening the attribution of heritage-related meanings and values to territories. The semantic aperture and the “accumulative widening” (Castillo, 2007: 4) of heritage has been reflected in both spatial and interpretative terms, as well as in the fields of government and territorial management (Mata Olmo, 2010; Feria, 2012; Manero Miguel, 2017; Silva Pérez & Fernandez Salinas, 2017). On one hand, the number of heritage entities has increased, covering a trajectory from individual elements to historical settlements, and from historical settlements to territories as a whole. An

important document for debate and exploration drawn up by the European Council in 2002 (Conseil de l'Europe, 2002) finally understands heritage as an expression of the character and diversity of places and communities, compared with the eminently symbolic and singular nature of the past. Noteworthy, there is a conceptual proximity between this understanding of heritage and the modern idea of landscape as defined by the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000) which builds upon the character, perception and representation of the territory.

However, it is important to highlight the fact that this bottom-up approach of opening up and renewed thinking is also present in the governance of heritage and in the conservation and management of cultural resources. This opens up a path that is different from the conventional heritage declaration which is simply based on the imposition of authority, as criticized by the anthropologist Llorenç Prats (2004), and moving towards a participatory form of heritage creation. Kate Clark and Paul Drury have addressed this turn explicitly with the expression "from the monument to the citizen" (Clark and Drury: 2002, 119-124). Therefore, the increasingly open conception of heritage can be interpreted, according to these two authors, as a form of democratic progress involving the local community in the enhancement of agrarian landscapes in territorial policies.

This open and democratic understanding of heritage is included in the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society and in the European Landscape Convention. The former defines it as "a set of resources inherited from the past which are considered to be a reflection and expression of continually evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions, going beyond the ownership of assets". In this way, the Council of Europe has made important advances in conceptualizing cultural heritage in recent years.

The European Landscape Convention, which is clearly linked to heritage, was the first international agreement to consider landscapes as being a quality belonging to a whole

territory and to all types of territories. Therefore, the landscape study and management should not be limited to outstanding landscapes but cover all kinds of landscapes. This means also to include the commonplace landscapes - the rural, urban and peri-urban ones in which people go about their daily lives (Dewarrat, Quicerot and Weil, 2003).

### **The case study of the agrarian park of Fuenlabrada. A renewal heritage approach for the activation of peri-urban agricultural landscapes**

In line with this conceptual and strategic renewal of heritage thinking, a participative approach for the agrarian landscape of Fuenlabrada was set up to drive and innovate its peri-urban agri-food systems. The Fuenlabrada municipality, of barely 3,000 inhabitants in 1960, currently has a population of 200,000 and is the third largest city of the urban region of Madrid. In spite of the drastic reduction of cultivated land due to urban expansion and road networks, Fuenlabrada still has 800 ha of land for agrarian use, of which 220 ha can potentially be irrigated (Figure 1). Its *Huerta* (name of the historical and smallholder irrigated agricultural landscapes in the Mediterranean basin, usually close to cities and towns, cultivated with vegetable crops) and rainfed land covered with cereals make up a unique peri-urban agricultural landscape, as it is one of the few enclaves with professional agrarian activity in the metropolitan region of Madrid.

The Huerta of Fuenlabrada still witness a practice that was common for many municipalities of the southern metropolitan area of Madrid until the beginning of the 1970s. Urban sprawl has now caused the loss of much of this fertile land. Despite urban pressures and the decline of production activities, the remaining agricultural land in Fuenlabrada still shows the structure, signs and symbols of the traditional small-scale family farming, mainly the patchwork of fields and an intricate network of rural paths and livestock routes. These elements have always been linked to the food supply of Fuenlabrada but also the capital city of Madrid.



Figure 1. View of the *Huerta* of Fuenlabrada (Madrid Region). In the foreground, a farmer harvesting chard, a traditional and high quality crop in this city.

In 2012, the City Council of Fuenlabrada decided to develop an agrarian park by using a multifunctional, agroecological and participative approach. The aim was to preserve and strengthen professional agrarian activity, and drive specific programs to allow the development of the economic, environmental and landscape potential of the territory. Two years later, the Management and Development Plan of the Agrarian Park of Fuenlabrada was drafted (Figure 2). It was based on an exhaustive participative diagnostic document that identified the problems, needs and demands of the local agrarian sector and the peri-urban space in general. The document revealed the strengths and opportunities to drive the local, quality agri-food system forward. It was agreed that one of the keys to strengthening the identity of local production should be adding value to the landscape, which presented a challenge, as this was not an exceptional location like the large Spanish *Huertas* in Valencia, Murcia and Aranjuez, but an ordinary everyday landscape, ignored by the urban citizens. Therefore, it was

necessary to start a bottom-up process of a collective landscape appropriation and enhancement of the agrarian landscape with the participation of the different stakeholders, especially farmers, citizens and policy makers.



Figure 2. Working group held for the creation of the territorial and action plan with management guidelines to boost a quality agro-food system and a living landscape. A SWOT analysis was done to identify strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats with the participation of public administration technicians, policymakers and representatives from the agricultural sector. Source: Management and Development Plan for the Agrarian Park, (Yacamán Ochoa, 2014).

### **The participative approach to territorialize the agro-food systems in peri-urban contexts**

The participative approach for the activation of the peri-urban agriculture was developed in the context of the “new ruralities” following the guidelines of the European Landscape Convention (2000). It was supported by public participation aiming at defining the “character” of the landscape and identifying the specificity of the traditional agrarian activity which has modeled it (i.e. types of crops, irrigation systems, land ownership, size of the properties and plots, surnames of the landowners, productive organizational



models, role of historical local agriculture, agricultural techniques and tools, places of residence of the land owners and peasants, and common property resources); other examples of this kind of approach can be consulted in Ambroise, Bonneaud and Brunet-Vinck (2000).

This process was materialised through the historical reconstruction of the role that the *Huerta* played in the local and regional food supply. Furthermore, this approach enabled to understand the importance of the past local agriculture in both the symbolic and collective memory of the city, which is still present in the know-how and life experiences of the older farmers. And to reconnect production with consumption by incorporating a territorial approach.

The process of valorisation of agrarian heritage developed in the Agrarian Park of Fuenlabrada started with different phases aimed at the description of the territorial context and dynamics of peri-urban agriculture and the identification of the territorial instruments of protection and management of the fertile areas. Statistical analysis and spatial analysis of urban sprawl, farmland loss and territorial fragmentation were carried out by experts from the agrarian park and researchers. This was the starting point for the real participative heritage creation process. The Agrarian Park became a living laboratory for designing and testing new heritage-based strategies for the conservation and valuation of multifunctional agrarian landscapes through the cooperation of several stakeholders. This type of geographic and historical studies concerning how cities organized their food supply in the past are extremely useful to understand the general logic, character, organizations, and techniques of agriculture and related societies over the centuries (Scazzosi, 2020: 19).

### **The phases and content of participatory heritage creation process**

We will go on to summarize the participatory phases followed during the heritage creation process of the *Huerta* within the framework of the Fuenlabrada Agrarian Park. The

process consisted of combining different participative methods (workshops, perception surveys, semi-structured interviews and video interviews) with the support of historical and modern maps and photos on the social perception of the landscapes. The comprehensive research methods used in the first phase included an analysis of national and local historical archives of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which contain historical cartography and land registry documents (Figure 3). The study allowed the interpretation of the foundations and structures inherited from the agrarian landscape, in particular, those of the *Huerta*, characterised by a series of major features.

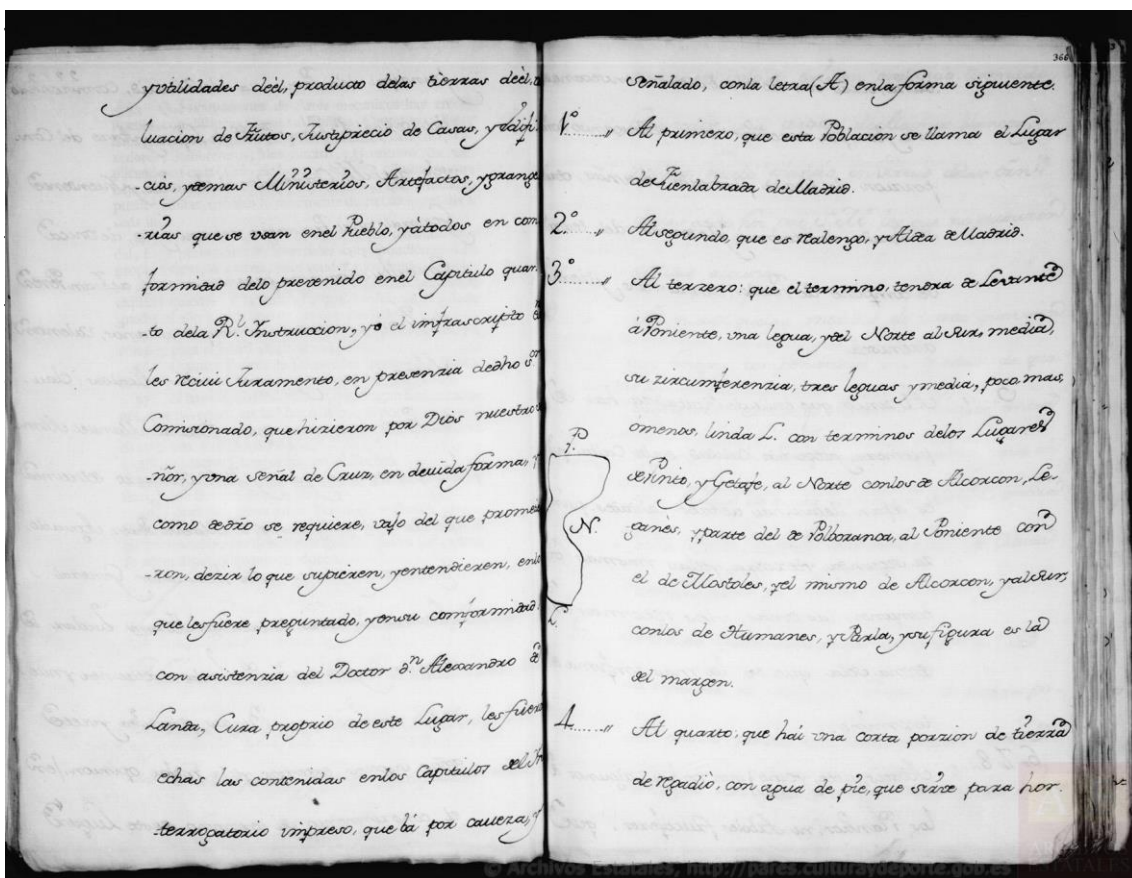


Figure 3: First page of the *Respuestas Generales del Interrogatorio del Catastro del Marques de la Ensenada* (1749) (General Answers to the Interrogatory of the Cadastre of the Marquis de la Ensenada), containing questions on the name, limits, jurisdiction and sources of wealth of neighbors, including plots, crops, livestock among others in the municipality of Fuenlabrada.

The second phase was crucial for combining expert knowledge with the accounts of the protagonists of the agrarian history of Fuenlabrada, the traditional family-owned farms.

The in-depth interviews with different members of the family-owned farms were designed to identify the traditional farming know-how and the historical governance of the agrarian space (communal and private practices, estate leasing systems, irrigation regulations etc.). The accounts which came from the interviews were complemented with historical family photographs provided by the residents and farmers of Fuenlabrada related with the countryside and the agrarian activity. This information was used to gain a greater insight into the tangible and intangible heritage aspects of the agricultural activities and the landscape (Figure 4). Finally, the rediscovery of stories, and images of the actors themselves were complemented with the analysis of press releases and books of the historical cultural events related to agriculture. As a result, a documentary and a traveling photographic exhibition was made for schools and municipal buildings. Also a book was published to recover the agrarian memory with the title *History of a peri-urban landscape with a future (Huerta and Countryside of Fuenlabrada)* (Yacamán Ochoa and Mata Olmo, 2017). These accounts and photographs provided by the inhabitants are excellent proof of the enjoyment of the landscape as a collective asset and are useful to create public awareness of the public goods and services provided by peri-urban irrigated landscapes.



Figure 4: Travelling photographic exhibition on Fuenlabrada with photographs provided by residents, farmers and funds from the municipal archive.

The third phase of the process of heritage creation regarding the Huerta of Fuenlabrada aimed to describe the recent transformation dynamics, and define the landscape character based on shared heritage values related to agriculture. This process started with field work conducted together with the farmers, which focused on visually identifying and characterising the main landscape features and values: i) the layout and tangible components of the landscape (agroclimatic, geomorphological, hydrological and soil conditions and land use, including the crop mosaic), ii) the structure of properties and farms (Figure 5), iii) the dynamics and pressures of the territorial context, and finally, iv) the identification of the key elements of the landscape for later expert study and valorization.



Figure 5: Historical plots in the Fuenlabrada Agrarian Park. Each color represents the property of a different landowner. Source: Yacamán Ochoa, C and Mata Olmo, R. (2017).

Interviews were later carried out with urban residents in Fuenlabrada who are not involved in agriculture to discover their perception of the current landscape. Moreover, we conducted a workshop using participative techniques based on collective creation processes to map the relevant socio-cultural information regarding the agrarian space that remains in the memory of the agrarian community and the local residents (Figure 6 and 7). During the workshop, people marked sites on the maps that were valuable in the past as they represent history, cultural identity and places with values related to traditions. The aim was the identification of observation points and itineraries, making the most of the network of rural paths and livestock routes and the inventory of the cultural and natural elements of major heritage interest (hydraulic infrastructure, plots, rural path network, other elements of ethnologic interest, etc.) This information is useful for the valorization of the agrarian landscape to enable public use and enjoyment.



Figure 6 and 7: Workshop for the mapping of identity-forming elements related with cultural values of agriculture. The points marked features related to water, grazing, common pastures, public laundry areas, shrines, spiritual locations and hills. Source: Yacamán Ochoa et al., 2018.

The objective of the last phase was to promote agreed-upon practices to boost the quality agro-food system and the enhancement of the living landscape between public and private bodies. Some of the most important strategies developed until now are: a) strengthening the relationships between farmers and urban residents through the promotion of short food supply chains; b) granting strategic value to food as a cultural asset which recognizes the singularity and quality of local production with a historical background; c) improving the links between food production and the historical and cultural narrative from where the products originate to provide added value to local produce; d) creation of walking and bike paths to access the agrarian landscape and to enable public use and enjoyment. All these strategies also reinforce the objective of the Agrarian Park of Fuenlabrada, which focuses on developing measures aiming at ensuring the profitability of local production and the protection of the agrarian land.

The methodology used for the transformation of everyday landscapes into heritage as a driver for territorialized agro-food systems in peri-urban contexts is described below (Table 1). The main objectives and actions of the proposed methodology enhance the multiple values and functions that peri-urban landscapes through a strategy that involves local stakeholders using different participatory techniques.

**Table 1. Objectives and actions for the transformation of everyday landscapes into heritage as a driver for territorialized agro-food systems in peri-urban contexts**

Objectives	Actions
Define the steps, the objectives and method for the patrimonial activation process of the territorial and landscape agro-food systems.	Establish the phases of the participatory process combining different methods (workshops, perception surveys, semi-structured interviews and video interviews, discussion groups, etc.).
Describe the territorial context and identify existing tools and policy instruments for the protection and enhancement of the values of the agricultural landscape	<p>Classify and describe tangible and intangible characteristics of the landscape to improve knowledge recognized in official documents.</p> <p>Diagnose the dynamics and pressures of territorial phenomena due to anthropic actions using methods as a SWOT analysis.</p> <p>Select the landscape and territorial planning instruments for the conservation of natural and cultural heritage elements at various scales (national, regional and local).</p> <p>Identify labels that indicate the quality of food products (ex. Protected Designation of Origin and Protected Geographical Indications).</p>
Define the actual resources, actors and policies to have a wider understanding on peri-urban agriculture for the activation process of heritage creation	Select active stakeholders and identify their relevant interests: Farmers, experts, local authorities, members of the scientific community, representatives of associations and social organizations etc.
Synthesize the noteworthy aspects and elements of the heritage creation process for the recovery of a co-evolutionary relations between urban and rural domain especially around sustainable agri-food systems.	Create an inventory and map the main cultural heritage elements linked with agriculture: hydraulic infrastructures, plots, rural path networks, other elements of ethnologic interest, that can be requalified.
Develop policy and an action plan for a multifunctional peri-urban agriculture and its landscape	<p>Develop a territorial action plan with management guidelines to boost the quality of the agro-food system and the living landscape.</p> <p>Encourage local networks to promote farmers, citizens and experts to work together to improve participation in the decisional and action process.</p> <p>Make awareness-raising programmes and campaigns to promote the consumption of local products.</p> <p>Promote local labels of fresh products to support local agriculture.</p> <p>Scale-up short food supply chains (farmers´ market, box schemes, farm sales, community supported agriculture, food festivals, sales to school canteens, etc.).</p>



	<p>Organize a travelling historical photographic exhibitions in the city's districts and documentary of the local agricultural history.</p> <p>Design a route with information panels going through the whole agrarian space with information on the landscape and agrarian history of the municipality.</p> <p>Start new programs for visiting educational centers.</p>
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## Conclusion

The participatory and historical approach used in the study case seeks to identify the agricultural evolution of communities and their landscapes within the context of urban sprawl. Therefore, the methodology presented enables the characterisation of peri-urban agricultural landscapes that integrate both tangible components (e.g. plots of land, traditional paths, historic hydraulic infrastructure and buildings of ethnographic interest) and intangible and symbolic aspects (e.g. know-how, community practices, narratives, images, meeting places and memory, needs and aspirations). Such landscape characterisation should be developed within a participatory process of heritage creation that aims to strengthen the self-confidence and the role of farmers in the current urban society through the recovery of memory and the enhancement of the landscape. Thus, this process of co-creation can transform an apparently ordinary landscape, which has been ignored and become almost invisible, into a heritage landscape, with both tangible and intangible values that become evident in the process itself. Finally, this bottom-up process of the valorisation of peri-urban agricultural landscapes can be used as a territorial resource to support strategies to improve the sustainability of the local agri-food systems focusing on their multifunctionality and territoriality, strengthening the production and consumption of local high-quality food and safeguarding the environment (Yacamán Ochoa, Sanz Sanz and Mata Olmo, 2020). To sum up, the valorisation of agricultural landscape values from a renewed heritage perspective should be seen as an opportunity for cities to address the challenge of sustainability.

## Acknowledgements

The authors will develop further research on this topic within the recently granted project, "Multifunctional and territorialised agro-food systems for the development of rural spaces in Spain (SAMUTER)" PID2019-105711RB-C6.

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