

The Value of Cultural landscape and Heritage from the Perspective of the Local Communities: A Case Study From Al- Ula, Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Cultural landscape values can be act as an operational strategy in applied landscape management and planning, adopting as cross-cutting theme in governmental and civil society institutions will encourage its role not only in panoramic sight seen but moreover to engage it in daily life, people's aspirations and nation building.

In spite of governmental efforts to develop heritage all over the country, it is necessary to recognize sites as cultural landscape. This shift leads to overcome barriers by empowering community not only engage them.

Regarding its uniqueness landscape, Al-Ula needs more attention ,from all relevant institutions to promote its policies, media and activities to interpret its values recognizing local community. . Obviously it is necessary to raise local community awareness of the value of the cultural landscape and promote their understanding for continuing activities.

1.Introduction:

There are many definitions of the term cultural landscape reflecting differences in perspectives and priorities, however, in spite of these differences which ultimately reproduce themselves in the literature, almost all researchers in this field are in agreement as regard the components of the cultural landscape which can be summarized as follows:

Landscape= nature+ people

Landscape= past+ present

Landscape = places+ values

. Cultural landscape is a term which is widely used during the last three decades. It was officially adopted by the UNESCO and ICOMOS .

According to success stories worldwide, local communities play crucial role in assessing, managing and protecting cultural landscape. This paper examines the cultural and natural heritage assessment in Al-Ula from the perspective of the local community. Al-Ula encompasses cultural and natural sites including, but not limited to,,Madain Saleh,World heritage site, located in unique panoramic natural environment: rocks, volcanic platue. These combination between people and nature t provide outstanding cultural landscape in Al-Ula

2- Definition of Concepts:

The term cultural landscape has gradually developed over the last thirty years based on paradigm shift in the relationship between, nature and people Early contributions addressed cultural landscape as it is fashioned out by a culture group, culture is the agent, the cultural landscape is the result (Sauer,1925) .

The Cultural landscape is defined as: a geographical area that reflects the interaction between humans and the natural environment, this interaction is complex and continually changing.

therefore, it may have different meanings for different people at different times (Ballinger,2012:43). Some writers defined the concept from historical development for environment protection. Von Droste et al.(1995) stated that: 'cultural landscape represent the permanent interaction between humans and their environment , with the rapid social and economic development cultural landscape belong to the most fragile and threatened sites on earth". Based on different prespectives of cultural landscape , Meining (1979:2) said "landscape is defined by our vision and interpreted by our minds".(Potschin and Aains-Young,2006) suggested that the landscape can be understood as complex mosaics of the physical environment and social constructions and processes experienced by people with their senses.

Since cultural landscapes are products of local people's modes of life and livelihoods activities, the landscapes cannot be conserved without also sustaining their modes of life, which is an intangible element. To conserve these landscapes, it is therefore necessary to raise the awareness of local residents of the values enables the management of appropriate and effective future results..

The rise of cultural heritage and environment protection movement made great expansion on cultural landscape which extended to wide-range of activities covered many sectors, such extended concept consist of:(Ballinger,2012)

Landscape and settlement

Landscape and enterprise

Landscape and communication

Landscape and water management

Landscape and experimentation and innovation

Landscape and defense

Landscape and leisure

Landscape and association with particular community

Landscape and symbolism

This wide-range of classifications of the landscape put it as cross-cutting theme which reflects application of cultural values such like: aesthetic, historic, social, spiritual and scientific values. Interestingly, World Heritage Convention and Operational Guidelines recognized cultural landscape as a link between universality, uniqueness and representativity of a certain cultural phenomenon or natural feature. The value of cultural landscapes is not only the summation of their elements, often the objects of the special interests of historical geographers, heritage or nature protection. No one ignores the potentials of cultural landscapes for identity and nation-building (Rohing,2011).According to (Casey,1996) in spite of the universality of landscapes, we must recognize its associative values and features to indogenous people. However, whatever the country or region, local residents have shaped its destictive landscapes over a long period by working on their local environment.

In 1992, and after a long debate, World Heritage Committee agreed that cultural landscape could meet the criteria of "outstanding universal value" and have values in their own right which different, unique and complicated from the cultural and natural values (Mitchell and Buggey,2000:35).The World Heritage Convention defines "cultural landscape" as "combined works of nature and man". World Heritage Committee classified landscapes into three categories as shown in table (1)

Table (1)

Categories of World Heritage Cultural Landscapes

Cultural Landscape Category	Extract from the Operational Guidelines for the Implentation of the World Heritage Convention
1	The most identifiable is the clearly defined landscape designed and created

	<p>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.</p>
2	<p>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:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>a 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.</p>

3	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.
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Source: Mitchell, N. et al. (2009): World Heritage Cultural Landscapes- A Handbook for Conservation and Management, UNESCO- ICOMOS Publications, 19-20.

Obviously Landscapes is manifestations of cultural achievements of mankind, however, its deeply rooted in people's memories and imaginations and linked to place names, myths, rituals and folklore. This existence create people's awareness of place.

The World Heritage Committee decided in 1992 session to remove reference to "man's interaction with his natural environment" and to "exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements" in natural criteria 1 & 2 respectively.

UNESCO's adoption of cultural landscape was final round and creative solution of dichotomy between culture and nature> (Plachter and Rossler, 1996:16) noted that the Committee tried to overcome dichotomy and bridge the gap between different schools of of thought and scientific backgrounds, namely art history and nature protection.

Describing dichotomy and trying to find new approach to overcome it, William Cronon argued that we must consider the natural landscape as a cultural landscape and they met in such fertile, unique middle ground.

Many researchers argued that the dichotomy between culture and nature is deeply rooted in western thoughts especially enlightenment era which manipulated different kinds of dichotomies that pushed knowledge to a new direction: nature/ culture, man/ woman, subject/ object and fact/ value . Last decade witnessed shift in cultural landscape concept; The European Landscape Convention 2000 mention the historic urban landscape. This definition extends the cultural landscape from kind of semi-natural surroundings to a more spatial approach which make all human settlements are landscapes.

The experience of cultural landscape management during the last forty years approves the crucial role of local community in cultural values assessment, intervention plans and interpretation (Mitchell & Buggey,2000:44).Moreover, cultural landscape can be seen as the repository of collective memory. Inspirational landscapes may become familiar to people through their depiction in painting, pottery or songs (Mitchell et al.,2009:22). To achieve success in heritage management, putting local community as primary component when mapping stakeholder is guarantee to outstanding management. We must consider community's inclusion not only during management process , but begins from values identification (Waterton,2005:320).

It is well-known that local communities have a significant contribution in a sustainable landscape management, because they possess valuable knowledge of the functions and social values attached to cultural landscape (Tuan,1977:Zube,1987). The link between community and landscape raises the issue of social landscape values which emerge from environmental experience(Brown,2005). These values can be aesthetic, cultural, religious or recreational. The concept of landscape values can be seen to act as an operational bridge in applied landscape management and planning(Brown,2005)

3. Case Study:

3.1 Al-Ula: Geography, History and People:

Al-Ula , also called Dedan, is a city some 110 km southwest of Tayma (380 km north of Madina) in north-western Saudi Arabia. In the past, Al-ula was located on the incense route, it was the capital of the ancient Lihyantes (Dedanites) and well known for its archaeological remains, which are dated back to over 2000 years ago. The Mineans established a center at this desert oasis in order to protect the frankincense trade route. At Al-Ula (Dedan) the road branched, with one branch going to Babylon, via Tayma, and the second branch to Petra and Syria. Dedan is situated between Madina and Tabuk, it played an important role as a link between the Southern and northern civilizations of Arabia . It remained an important center from ancient times until the 1st century BC. It declined when the Nabataeans adopted Madaen Saleh as their second capital., there are magnificent carved tombs in the mountains around Al-ula (Dedan). These tombs are decorated with beautiful geometrical motifs (Ansary and Abu Al-Hassan, 2001).

In the 13th century the old city of Al-Ula was built and became the main settlement of the region again until modern times. A railway station was in 1901-08 built along for Hejaz railway.

The vertical sandstone cliffs surrounding Al-Ula provide ample surfaces for rock art. The mountains there have a large petrographic panel scenes with humans and a variety of animals, strange symbols and inscription.

Al-Ula encompasses a wide-range of cultural and natural attractions, the most famous one is Madaen Saleh (Alhijr) World Heritage Site, which is dated to Nabtean and Lehyanite era. The place offers unique natural attractions (mountains, farms, desert, etc).

Figure 1. Location of Al-Ula



Figure 2. Alhijr (Madain Saleh)



Figure 3. The Elephant Rock



Figure 4. Harrat Alowaired



Figure 5a. Old city (Aldeera) provide traditional urban fabric reflecting way of life and community's values.



Figure 5b. Aldeera (Old City)

3.2 Sample's Response:

A small educated sample asked to value natural and cultural heritage in Al-Ula, whether they consider it natural or cultural?, the main purpose of polling is knowing how this educated strata thinking about cultural landscape. Sample consist of 75 persons as follows:

25 university's student

32 government's clerk

6 school's teacher

12 university's staff member

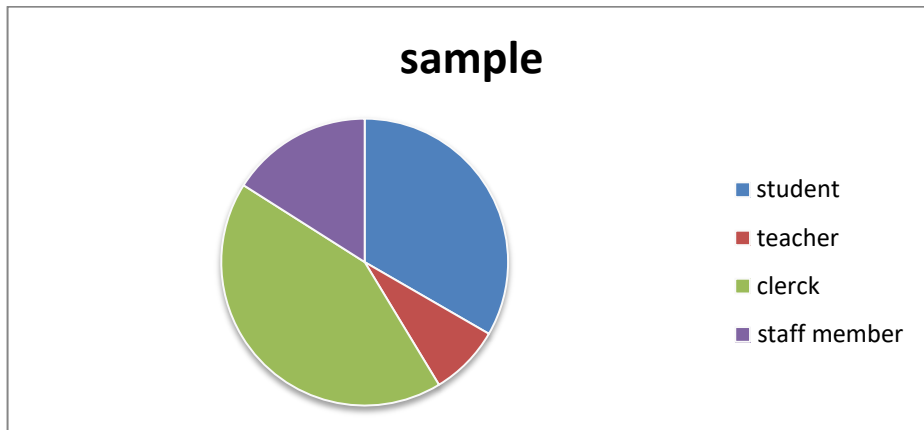


Figure 6. Samples' Clusters

According to qualification, 76% of the sample secondary depending on below details:

Group	Qualification	Number	Percentage
students	secondary	25	33.3%
clerks	secondary	32	42.7%
teachers	university	6	8%
Staff members	university	12	16%

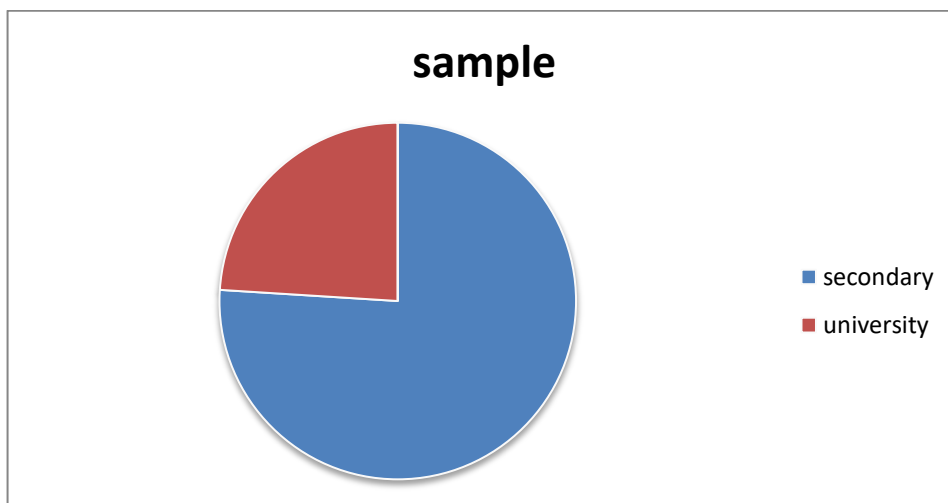


Figure 7. Sample's Qualification

When they asked to list natural and cultural attractions in Al-Ula, respondents stated 12 cultural, 7 natural and 8 others.

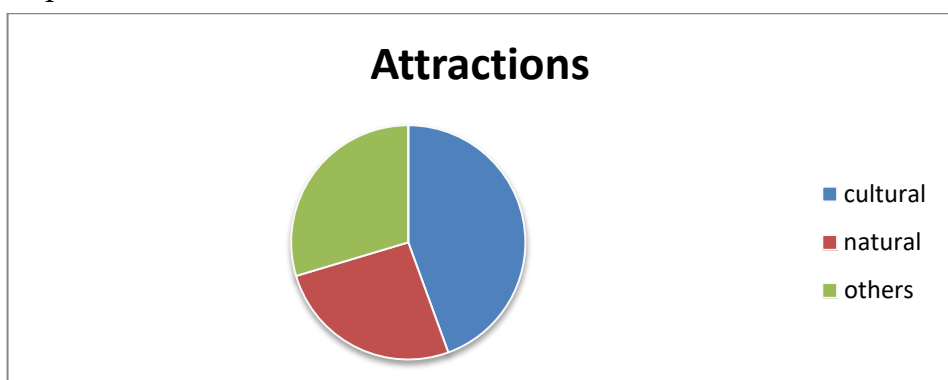


Figure 8. Attractions

In spite of the rich intangible heritage in the region, none of the respondents mentioned it!¹Government clerks (secondary qualification) highlighted natural attractions and ignored archaeological sites, this may reflect traditional link between man and nature but cannot explain absence of Madaen Saleh (World Heritage Site) from the clerk's list, is it lack of awareness and

¹ Al-Ula is a hometown of one of the famous Arab classic poet , Jameel Ben Muammer, his story known in Arabian literature similar as Romeo and Juliet.

failure of media to assume its role of publicity and information? Is it such conservative culture? This needs more in-depth research.

Responding to question: what is the barriers under-estimate Al-Ula as tourism destination?, they listed:

6 points in infrastructure

7 points lack of tourism institutions

10 points policies, media and community.

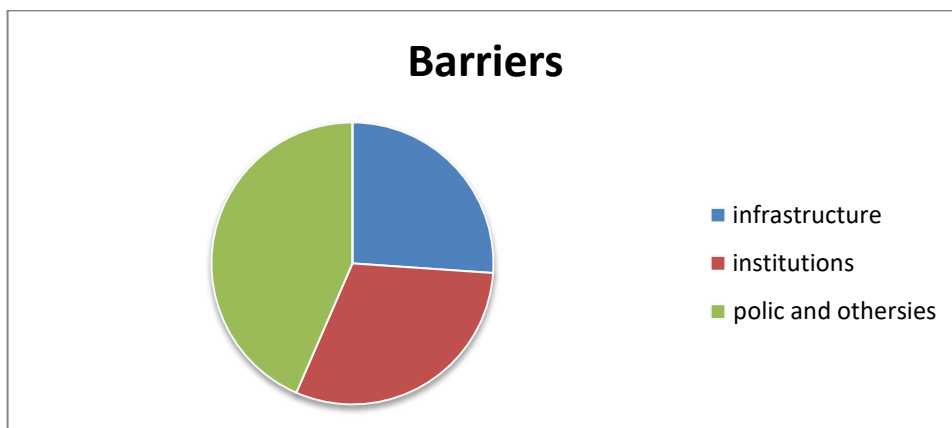


Figure 9. Barriers

Barrier's list express respondents' view of tourism destination and issues targeting to overcome threats.

Simple questionnaire showed that local community recognize Al-Ula landscape but they vary in their valuation of the heritage sites, when four groups (students, clerks. Teachers and university staff members) listed cultural and natural heritage as attractions, clerks and teachers highlighted nature and value it more than culture. Respondents appreciated Old City (Aldeera) especially Masjid Alezam (Bones Mosque) for its spiritual values.

According to sample findings we can sum up heritage values in Al-Ula as shown below:

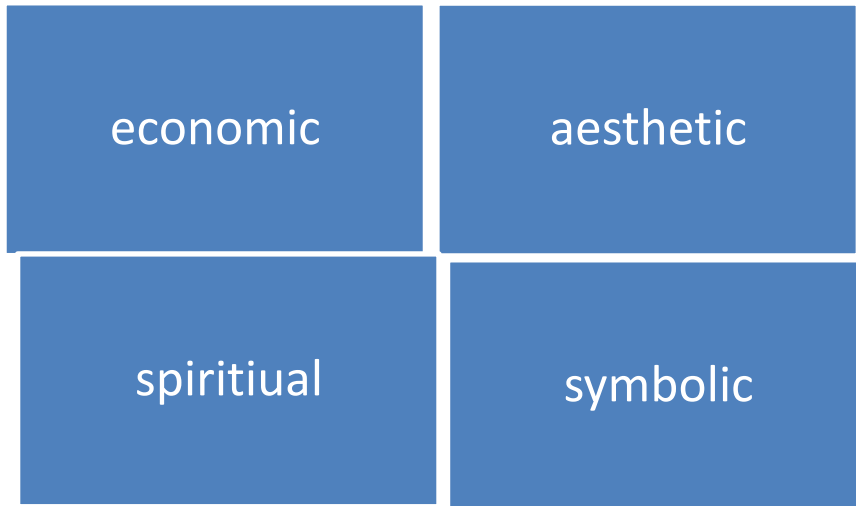


Figure 10. Heritage Values

This wide-range values provide cultural landscape more diverse and outstanding, considering that this landscape it is not only combination between nature, culture and people but setting unique scene when we zooming out Al-Ula in its whole region.

4. Conclusion:

Cultural landscape values can be act as an operational strategy in applied landscape management and planning, adopting as cross-cutting theme in governmental and civil society institutions will encourage its role not only in panoramic sight seen but moreover to engage it in daily life, people's aspirations and nation building.

In spite of governmental efforts to develop heritage all over the country, it is necessary to recognize sites as cultural landscape. This shift leads to overcome barriers by empowering community not only engage them.

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