

## Marinilla's cultural landscape and spatial characterization (Colombia)

Catalina Montoya Arenas, Lina María Escobar Ocampo,  
Claudia María Vélez Venegas

Facultad de Arquitectura, UPB. Medellín, Colombia

E-mail: catalina.montoyaarenas@upb.edu.co, lina.escobar@upb.edu.co, claudia.ve7@gmail.com

**Abstract.** *The historic center of Marinilla, a National Monument since 1959, is located 50 kilometers east from Medellín in the San Nicolás Valley. It has exceptional landscape conditions, highly productive lands, and a large percentage of the water reserve that supplies the region and the country, giving the territory an economic center character since colonial times. These physical values are part of the collective imagination as a recreation area and an opportunity for development since the 1960s, according to the construction of large national infrastructure. At the same time, it was affected by the internal armed conflict in the 1980s and 1990s, and more recently, related to the spatial dynamics of the region: unplanned urban expansion, changes in land use and vegetation cover, with great effects on the cultural landscape. In a post-conflict situation, the economic strategies of different groups have used tourism as a social-spatial management strategy to improve the territory. However, the rural identity shows spatial imbalances, not recognizing elements of historical construction whose legacies must be revealed to ensure equitable development. We propose an approach from cultural landscape in a revision of the historical, symbolic and relational transformation through five dimensions—anthropic, productive, political, symbolic and spatial—analyzing competitiveness, tourism, the real estate pressure and social management, in different scales, during three historical moments.*

*Keywords: Marinilla, cultural landscape, paths and highways, landscape transversality, tourism*

### Introduction

The municipality of Marinilla has a wealth of natural, agricultural, forestry and heritage resources. It is located at 2120 meters above sea level, in the Santa Rita Valley of the geological formation called Valle de San Nicolás, and is part of the Negro River basin, source of the Guatapé dam, the largest in the country since it was built.

The valley of San Nicolás had an accelerated process of occupation during the seventeenth century with the change of the region capital, formerly in Santa Fe de Antioquia (1541), to Santiago de Arma Rionegro in 1783. Although Marinilla was only proclaimed a 'Villa' in 1787

taking advantage of preexisting indigenous settlements located in areas near El Peñol. The first two municipalities "only reached maturity as urban centers by the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century" (González, 2015). Since then, they form a triangle that shared territorial interests of power, mining resources, processes of occupation, among others, and they formed a corridor that was part of the route of gold exports from the interior of the country to Spain. This situation favored the population growth through commercial routes and spatial relations with the valley of Aburrá—where the city of Medellín is located from 1675—and the Río Cauca valley, where the capital of the region

was located then (Santa Fe de Antioquia), and founded as a product of the Spanish conquest.

Marinilla and its cultural landscape are indissoluble, because the landscape reflects the history, the traditions, and the customs of the settlers of the East part of Antioquia. The territorial importance of this area has been constant in many diverse historical moments due to the character of the place as a “passage” (place of transit) in the construction process of the nation and instrumental in the configuration of a regional identity. In this context, the landscape has been the “backdrop” and the sustenance and support of the human spatial transformations.

Geographically, Marinilla is located in the area historically called “Juntas”, a term that indicates ‘meeting place’ and articulation of paths that sought the appropriation of resources, mainly mining, but which required other resources such as agricultural and outsourcing services. The image of the “paisa”, as are known the natives of the Antioquia region, and within them, the “Marinillo”, is identified with the expansion of an occupation model that struggles with the adverse geography and takes advantage of the wealth of natural resources. Marinillos are well known as accomplished merchants and traders throughout the region.

The municipality has been historically associated with an idiosyncrasy of “vigorous” people and merchants that favored the processes of occupation and the battles of independence from Spain. The old urban center has been declared as a Colombian

national patrimony since 1964 and it has been the scene of dramatic changes of its traditional central square in the last decades, with the passive attitude of the authorities, who have condemned these important real estate to tourist sites where only some religious buildings are maintained (Figure 1), and “where architecture has been replaced without aesthetic references by a new form of construction associated with the growing tourist demand, demystifying the presumption of styles, and drawing attention to the ‘consumption’ of heritage as well as clear and abusive use of regulations and declarations” (González, 2016)

On the other hand, the rurality developed into exceptional landscape conditions of smooth hills, with a variety of vegetation coverings, and with a structure of small family plots (Figure 2). The vernacular architecture that traditionally responded to the bioclimatic conditions with traditional techniques that considered the resources of the zone, are now replaced by an unreflexive architecture that does not value the existing heritage.

These conditions confirm the problems faced by most cities with heritage values in developing countries: social inequality and the city-countryside disjunction stimulating the installation of tourism without articulation with the multiple dimensions of the territory in strategies that allow their promotion through social management and to serve as a resource for territorial planning that make it possible to solve spatial and landscape imbalances as well as the protection of their patrimonial values.



**Figure 1**

**Typological changes of the protected historical center by commerce and tourism use. Source: The authors.**

That is to say, in relation to the problems associated with economic, social, political, educational, productive, among others, it is also appropriate to consider a number of values of the municipality of Marinilla as physical–natural–environmental, landscape, cultural and heritage. These values are worthy of being considered as important resources that can be integrated to the economic activity through tourism and also, to promote their conservation as productive assets, due to their intrinsic heritage qualities and values.

It is fundamental to consider the promotion and socio-spatial management of the landscape and the territory in its double character of cultural and natural heritage in order to consolidate solid orientations that include the perception and significance of the local character for its implementation (starting from a spatial identification of the territorial changes over time), and oriented to look for the historical coincidences of the landscape transformation and its possible manifestations. In this sense, the study proposes the revision of a spatial transversality as a starting point for the characterization, because the analysis will to establish the value of the landscape from the relations of its components, because the territorial singularity must be recognized and then be valuable to finally be managed by the community. (Pérez, L. C., Español, I. 2009)

The transversality that concerns us, is composed of two road corridors: the Medellín–Bogotá highway (national road system), that crosses the municipality, and the detour of a secondary road corridor that connects

the municipality with one of its historical neighbors, El Peñol. From that junction, a “micro–basin” landscape is formed by the paths Salto Arriba and Salto Abajo, the northwest slope of Las Cuchillas Reserve and its descent to the Río Negro basin and the Guatapé dam. This transversality is reviewed in the perspective of landscape dynamics and its condition of passage, path and connection, that has accompanied the cultural landscape. Therefore, the various scenes through this communication channel, reveals veiled contents of the economic model and a dialogue with multi-scale spatial phenomena.

First of all, the real estate pressure affects the landscape in terms of perception and valuation of the landscape heritage by the transformations of the scenic background. Secondly, tourism affects occupation processes, promoting typological changes in architecture, reclassification of land and the provision of tourism services. The discourse of competitiveness, territorial marketing and patrimonial marketing are favored by connectivity and accessibility, generating social transformations that streamlining the structure, and form, identity of the landscape. Finally, socio-spatial management is the possibility for action that, under the pressure of the economic model, allows its valuation and safeguard it, based on the right to the landscape (and its use), representativeness and understanding of the conflicts ranging from impacts in the landscape itself, to other aspects of an environmental and social nature. This last conflict introduced dramatic changes in some



**Figure 2**  
**Rural zone occupation in small family plots. Source: The authors.**

paths under the influence of armed sectors in the internal conflict that forced a re-structuring of the spatial dynamics in the last three decades.

In this sense, “the cultural landscape is considered as an extended analytical and conceptual category that allows a review of the historical and symbolic transformation of the territory, which includes physical issues in accordance with anthropic action and whose spatial evidences are the product of a process of historical reasoning of living, and therefore, a social construction in development and cultural production” (Montoya, C., Patiño, E., Escobar, L., González, LF. 2016) This approach, includes of the following assumptions:

-The laws of territorial organization in Colombia has entitled the right to the landscape implicitly, in a good part of its normativity, but has not articulated it to territorial planning. At present, the revision of spatial complexities beyond municipal limits, makes possible the use of the cultural landscape as a complement, from and for the decision making, since it could identify landscape imbalances due to its relational perspective with multi-scale, multi-temporal changes and significance, which currently escapes the objectives in urban and regional planning.

-Although several studies have dealt with the impact of national roads and historical regional dialogue, second-level inter-municipal corridors that articulate the rural terms of municipalities, tend to become suburban corridors with no urban services and attributes, and with a high landscape impact: already occurs in the route Rionegro-Marinilla and begins to show signals of the interaction of real estate pressure, tourism industry and the discourse of competitiveness in the Marinilla-El Peñol corridor and its effects, that are hardly revised for the advance of social management of the territory.

-The cultural landscape includes in its perspective the scenic background, the main receptacle of these vectors of change where historical and symbolic transformations in their encounter with the economic dynamics, threaten the dialogue between the cultural identity built in time and the landscape, and establishes a direct relationship with the transformation of the habitat and the landscape environment.

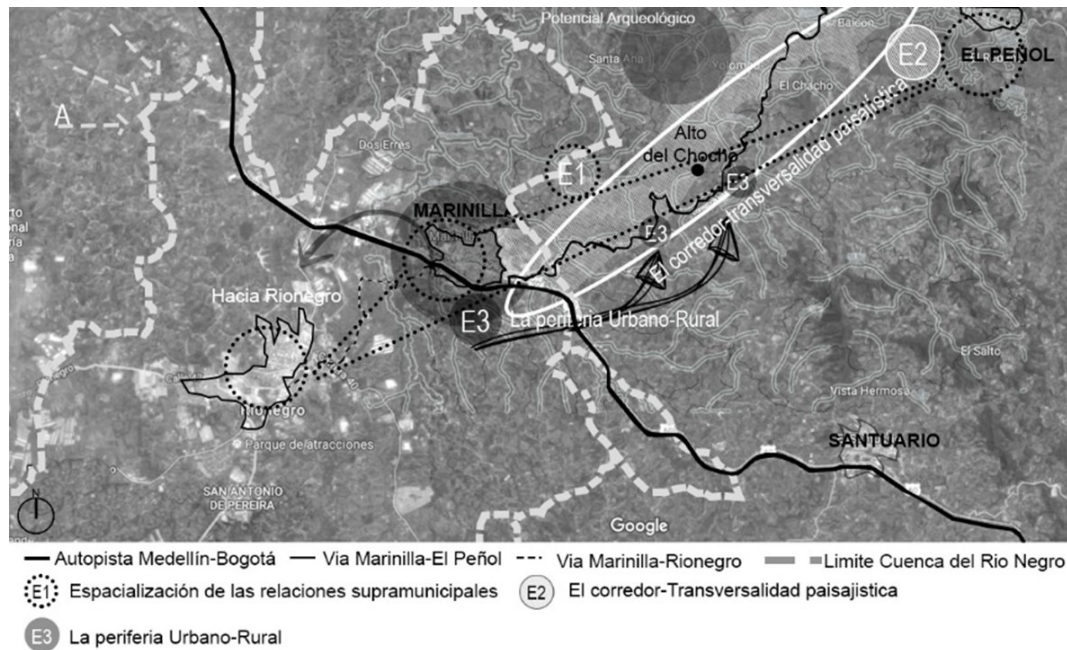
-At the time of the analysis context, there are two transcendental facts: the national road infrastructure program Autopistas de La Prosperidad (Prosperity Highways) in 2010, and the final stage of the conflict that allowed the return of people and tourists to the area between Marinilla, El Peñol and Guatapé.

The consolidation of these facts, gives a new suburban character to the intermunicipal routes of secondary level and shows a tendency for change in the rural area towards urbanization of first and second housing, but without endowment of services or urban attributes, with some impact on the landscape and the persistence poverty of a large part of the original rural population.

## Methodology

The research project “socio-spatial management of the territory from the cultural landscape of Marinilla” proposes a conceptual and methodological structure from the Cultural Landscape perspective for the social management of the territory-based on strategies of spatial and landscape analysis-as a result of social and cultural constructions, which relies on tourism as an activity for the economic take-off of the region and guarantor of development.

The analysis is developed in a landscape transversality to constitute a complex vision of the territory to start a relational analysis for what the constitutive elements of spatial phenomena were identified through the variables: real estate pressure, tourism, discourse of competitiveness and, in this occasion, socio-spatial management. By the type of relationships suggested within the cultural landscape, these are revised from the physical-spatial, symbolic, productive, political, and anthropic dimensions with scaled changes. The spatial characterization includes the revision of the constituent elements of the landscape and the new maps through a descriptive, interpretative and pro-positive methodology that combines tools of geographic information systems with analytical info graphics and multi temporal and multivariate analysis, to obtain relational



**Figure 3**

**Analysis scales. Scale 1 (E1) Spatialization of supra-municipal relations, (E2) Landscape transverse corridor, and (E3) The rural-urban periphery.. Source: The authors.**

information (Montoya, C., Patiño, E., Escobar, L., González, LF. 2017).

The spatialization, definition and analysis of the variables and dimensions reviewed in the various scales of landscape transversality, resumes the application of the conceptual and methodological proposal of the case study Santa Fe de Antioquia, and applies to the context of Marinilla with a particular variation: the point of analysis is not part of the generational matrix historical center–environment, but focuses on rurality where the landscape is constrained by the advance of the economic model and the perspective of socio–spatial management that is added as a measure for the valuation and safeguarding of the landscape. This second case of application, allows to change the specific weight of the dimensions that constitute a conceptual pendulum, a consideration that can only take place after an approach to the cultural landscape of the area of study with plenty of field work for the verification of the state of the documentation (Cartography of the territory ordering, special plans of patrimonial management, historical aero photos and cartography, literary narrative and pictorial narrative).

The spatial scales of analysis are as follows: the first revises the supra-municipal relations between Rionegro, Marinilla and El Peñol, and the historical value of the corridor in regional relationships from the beginning of the occupation to the present day. The second scale includes the Marinilla–El Peñol corridor whose main tensions are the economic character of the national highway that interact with the urban area, and the natural landmark of the Peñol Stone with the Guatapé dam, both main tourist attractions since the seventies. This corridor was updated with the expansion and adaptation of the national road in the “Roads for Prosperity” program. The third and last scale presents the spatial transformations of the last three decades generated in the meeting of the urban and rural areas, emphasizing the trends of change in land use and, consequently, in the landscape of the place. (Figure 3: Scales of study).

### Measurements and analysis

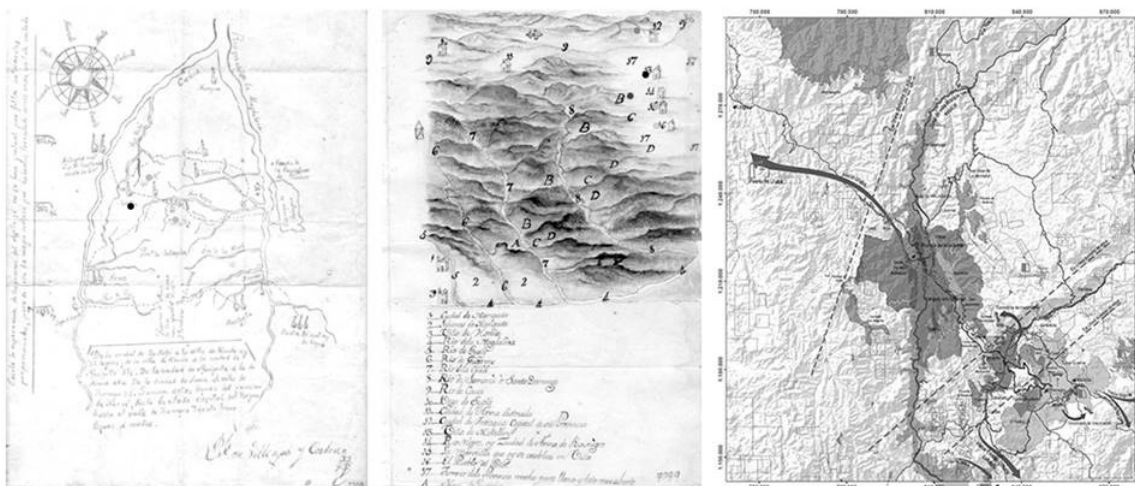
Scale 1: Spatialization of supra-municipal relations. Although it has been emphasized

so far in Marinilla, the valley of San Nicolás, cannot be analyzed without establishing historical spatial realities with the Aburrá Valley and the Western Valley, where the first capital of the colonial era, Santa Fe de Antioquia, is. In spite of the geographical, climate and resource differences, spatial connections between the three valleys and natural landscapes are decisive. There have been dynamics of occupation and settlement according to the territorialities and power over resources (mining, forestry, agriculture and livestock) throughout its history. Recently, with the appearance of national infrastructures such as dams, roads, and tourism potential promoted by the richness of its landscape resources, there is an impact in urban and rural scenarios, and generate a palimpsest landscape that awaits for an update.

The evolution of the landscape of the study area has been described in terms of prosperity since the seventeenth century (Jimenez, O. 2010). The region of Antioquia understood as countries, landscapes, paisano and paisa includes communication in its perspective. The Juntas road, besides leading to the Samaná and Nare river basin, was associated with the possibility of discovering new territories and articulating these small ‘countries’ to culture them during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and constituted routes that, from

their narrative, did not only reconstruct the landscape of the moment, but associate places with spaces, and these to societies and cultural landscapes (Figure 4).

This gradual process of settlement, economic growth, impacts on the landscape, environmental and social conflicts, has found in recent decades “an important milestone for the case of the San Nicolás Valley: the Medellín–Bogotá highway and the Guatapé dam. The 1970s are a process of occupation previously unknown in the region around access to goods and services that is not restricted to urban centers but the rural terms affected by the same works. This infrastructure becomes insufficient more than thirty years later, when the depletion of the soil in the Valley of Aburrá—especially in Medellín—moves the urban growth to the East, to be now the “second floor” of the Medellín’s first residence. In 1985 the José María Córdova international airport was added to the Rionegro municipality, but it mainly served the metropolitan area of the Aburrá valley. With the Medellín-Bogotá highway, which in the beginning was associated with the Sunday tourist image of the “Eastern Circuit”, it came present with the promotion of projects of first residence of high standing and with architectural and “urban” typologies that focuses on commercial services and where the mountain landscape is only an accessory.



**Figure 4**

**Mosaic of historical spatial relationships. First, Road Plan between the cities of Sanfé and Antioquia by Pedro Biturro Pérez in 1781 (left). Second, a Plan to open a path from Marinilla to Mariquita order by the Governor Francisco Silvestre, dated in 1875 (center), both from Archives of Antioquia; and finally, Regional Landscape (Montoya, C., Patiño, E., Escobar, L., González, L.F. 2017) on the right.**

Scale 2: Landscape transverse corridor. This corridor presents the interaction of the previously cited variables with the scope, resulting in a complex network of spatial relationships associated with the dynamics of commercial connectivity, passenger traffic, tourist spaces and the use of resources. In this sense, a proposal for an urban–rural continuum of human habitats can not be detached from this review (Lynch, 1976). The transverse landscape reflects the national ways and its changes to inter municipal with a suburban environment bordering the road and the historic center, which, at the same time, to the secondary corridor to El Peñol, allows the ecological continuity of the rurality of two neighboring municipalities, as well as the reserves of national protected areas and the Nare River Basin. The landscape conditions and visual basins are highly varied and with alerts on changes caused by the mentioned facts.

The physical–spatial dimension (Fs) refers to physical and natural sustenance–relief, hydrography, vegetation and climate–understood as an ecosystem; that is, its potential condition for the site in interaction with anthropic actions and whose conditions of dialogue determine the actual conditions, value, uniqueness and “use” of the landscape in general. In it lies the constructed elements and the model of occupation. Within the protected areas system, it is important to emphasize the National Forest Reserve Nare, as well as the DMI (Distrito de Manejo Integrado de Recursos Naturales) La Selva and the DMI Peñol–Guatapé, which together with other areas make up the ecological structure of the sub region, rich in water resources.

The symbolic dimension (S), which articulates the evidence of historical significance, reflects the links between the memory of the collective place and the accumulated material and immaterial values. This structure involves the declaration of real estate, the valuation of its heritage, historical construction, and cultural heritage. This system links the immaterial ties with the built space and traditions, now recognized as intangible heritage. In the declared urban centers of Marinilla and Rionegro are highly valued for

their spatial qualities of urban and architectural characteristics product of a colonial layout whose center is the town square, that begins to blur before the attack of commerce and tourism and from where emerges the main constructions that hosted the most renowned and illustrious characters who accompanied and achieved the national liberation and independence proclamation, as well as high value religious estates.

The productive dimension (Pr) establishes links between the exploitation of resources and the sustainability of the territory and synthesizes the relations between the local productive activities with the management of the water resource and the use of the land. This synthesis provides a reading of the landscape as a cultural fact. To this urban spatial structure is added the rural occupation where the work of the countryside has been constant in the use of the territory and has become a spatial symbol of popular traditions. This environment begins to mutate in the face of the risk represented by the change of vegetative cover for production by others outside the place, subject to market conditions and with a dispersed urbanization of an industrial, recreational and service character, showing imbalances of the rural with its surrounding landscaping, thus contributing to a growing deterioration and loss of its natural heritage values.

The political dimension (P) identifies the roles of the various actors and their interference in the facts that motivate spatial changes in the territory, whether in terms of normative, political participation, and/or economic. It identifies the type of relations between the relevant actors with associated projects and programs and interprets from the normativity established for the occupation of the territory a specific weight that is given to the landscape. This system has the responsibility to establish the dialogue between what the territory says about itself and the planning discourse. It is evident in the main programs, management and strategic projects, which seek to strengthen and insert the territory within the national and international markets, reinforces them for greater competitiveness and economic, industrial, tourism and service development.

The anthropic dimension (A) links the

reading of the cultural landscape to the human and technological actions that interact and transform the natural environment, thus revealing the conditions of dialogue and balance of the existing habitat. It consists of processes of housing occupation, growth and/or transformation trends, local favorability, and environmental effects. It is the mark of the cultural force in the territory.

Consequently, the physical-spatial dimension is considered superior to the character of the problem studied. The political and symbolic dimensions continue to stress the figure in view of the socio-spatial management and it depends on this link. Finally, all are articulated by adding the productive and anthropic dimension (Figure 5).

Scale 3: The urban-rural periphery. In this scale of analysis we can read the peculiarities of cultural landscape transformations, especially the landscape and tourism variables after the period of major socio-spatial changes due to the construction of the national infrastructure, the middle phase of the conflict And the trend of change in the post-conflict phase. The survey of cultural landscape units in the Medellín-Bogotá Expressway, combined mapping, fieldwork with on-site surveys, reading of scenic

landscape components, targeted interviews for perception and valuation, and support in graphic sections with the main elements of the landscape singularity among which the use of the land, the impact of the tourism in the architecture of the scenic bottom and the image of the landscape stand out. (Moreno, C. 2016; Correa, M. 2016)

Four landscape units were defined: UP1 corridor with industrialized rurality, UP2 related rurality areas, UP3 urban-related urban areas, and UP4 contiguous areas of recreational rurality (Figure 6).

For all units, correlations were identified between land use and landscape identity revealing architectural geo symbols (Contreras, 2015), which are not always associated with vernacular architecture but with the architecture that accompanies new land uses such as industries, services, commercial premises, hotels and restaurants necessary for tourism, generating an impact from the perception and the valuation. For each case, new geo symbols appear associated to productive activities and these are the main indicator of changes in landscape identity that are not the same for local and foreign viewers (Moreno, C. 2016). In UP1 the industrial chimneys appear and in

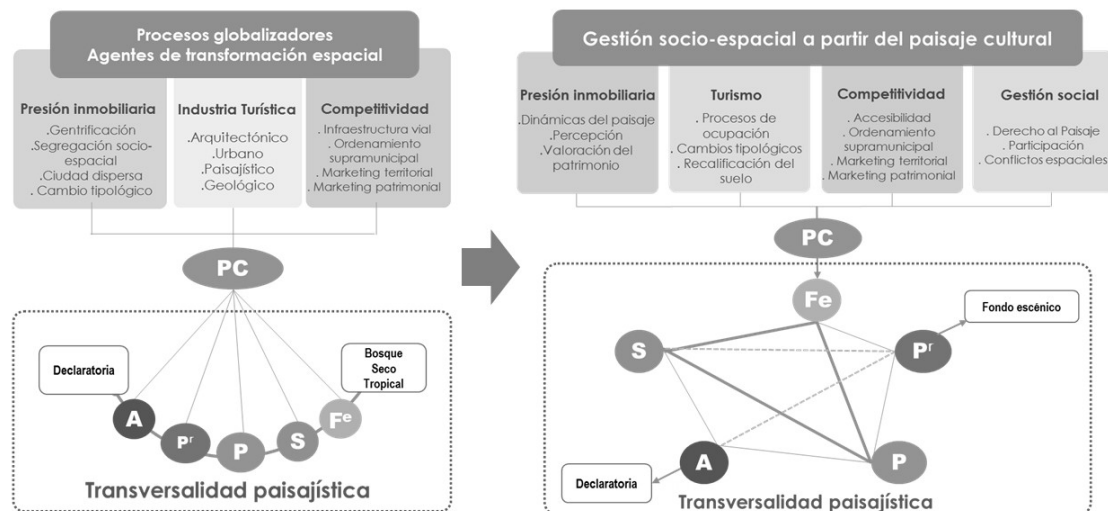


Figure 5

Changes to the conceptual pendulum according to Marinilla's case study (right). Source: the authors based on the Conceptual Pendulum (left) (Montoya, C., Patiño, E., Escobar, L., González, L.F. 2017).



UP 3 the service infrastructure to the side of the road with new commercial uses in previously agricultural land, while rural vernacular housing remains the most valued in this new landscape of UP2 and UP3 and conflicts with the image that begins to outline the new social housing real estate projects that revalue soils for their location, denying with their architecture, values of technology and a space for adequate reflection. All of them with the scenic background as a common denominator (Moreno, C. 2016)

In UP2 and UP4, the impact of the typological transformation of vernacular architecture and its relationship with soil productivity is analyzed, resulting in a correlation between the architectural style and the use of housing (recreational, productive) with the new compositional elements And land use (Correa, M. 2016). The agricultural activity in the small family plots, of the UP2 is almost entirely manual (82%), it is accompanied by a rural architecture and the compositional elements of the rural peasant housing in the region are maintained (Correa, M. 2016). While in UP 4, with its own architecture of tourism marketing, it presents the patterns of the market without reminiscences to the cultural landscape. In these

places, the land occupation for the implantation of housing and recreational spaces is close to 95% and the rest for agricultural activities (Correa, M. 2016). In the same landscape unit, buildings with rural architecture use housing 62%, recreation 18%, and agricultural activity 20%.

Of these landscape units, UP 2 and 4 are replicable to the sector of the corridor between the Salto Arriba and Salto Abajo sidewalks whose main vector of change focuses on tourism and where socio-spatial management is a pressing need for the situation of balance of the scenic background as indicator of the capacity of transformation of the landscape in the different scenes.

### Conclusion

The transverse landscape shows in its structure, plans, basins, image and valuation, landscape changes and the testimonies of the cultural landscape. Hence, the need for a territorial review from corridors, because in it is the character of their identity and hopes to value the landscape as a cultural heritage.

In singular landscape environments, the

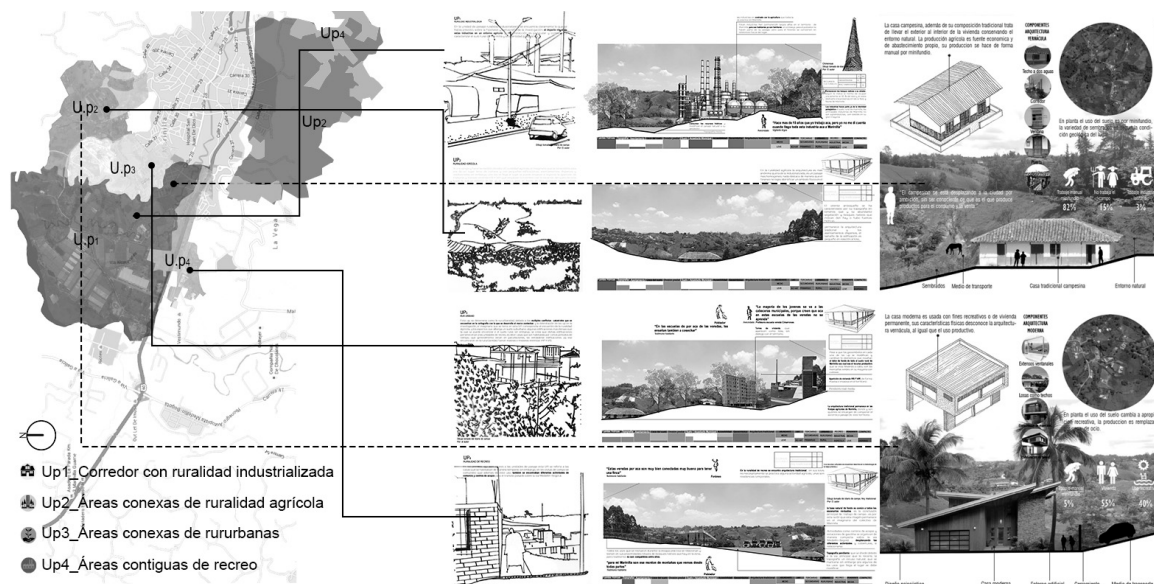


Figure 6

**Landscape Units. UP 1 UP1 corridor with industrialized rurality, UP2 related rurality areas, UP3 urban-related urban areas, and UP4 contiguous areas of recreational rurality. Source: Moreno, C (2016) and Correa, M (2016).**

effects of globalizing processes are greater because according to the scientific consensus from the cultural landscape, most of our landscapes are cultural facts (Martínez, 2009); Therefore, in direct relation with the way of constructing our territories. In this way, the analysis hopes to establish the favorability and viability of the insertion of a tourist structure for the social management of the Municipality of Marinilla along landscaped corridors, allowing the design of scenarios, which collect in the best possible way, the integrality of the cultural landscape and consider the elements of its landscape diversity as identity values. In order to do so, we review the spatial variability of the Marinilla landscape, since it is the character of its identity and hopes to put the landscape as a sine qua non condition for the conservation of its cultural heritage.

The spatialization of a detailed characterization of the areas bordering the Marinilla–El Peñol corridor and the resulting landscape units will also be the result of role, perception and assessment exercises among the various actors that currently influence the interacting landscape dynamics with resources, especially the water resource. Consequently, the tourist and economic initiatives that are expected to promote from the social management of the territory, will have to articulate a reflection of conflicts by this resource, necessary for agricultural production as the main land use on which falls the landscape value of this cultural landscape.

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