

Fact sheet 14

Four concepts of quarry landscapes

I. Socially constructed landscapes: this concept can be used to isolate values of multi-period quarry landscapes in terms of time depth of quarrying and also use and re-use of the landscape for other activities. Authenticity of cultural remains are key to assessing historical values, although often ancient quarry landscapes can lose 'authentic' remains of earlier quarrying from later quarrying and re-use. To get at the significance of these multiple traces of quarrying over time, and its connection to other activities occurring across the landscape, the concept of a 'socially constructed landscape' allows for the historical value context to be assessed in its totality. Stone working traditions, aspects of ancestry, and connection to a landscape, are key concepts to get at. Contributions from landscape archaeologies, ethnography and social archaeology are key theoretical sources that can aid in re-constructing the social landscape and from which historical values may be linked to specific material resources.

II. Contact landscapes (consumption): ancient quarry landscapes do not exist in a vacuum but have connections with other places, sometimes over thousands of kilometres away, related to consumption of the material that came from the resource. In some instances these contacts may be extremely close to a quarry landscape and may be related to providing stone to a major city or monument of enormous historical importance. Hence, part of the historical significance of the ancient quarry, although this may be hard to visualise and attach to actual physical remains, is its connection to another more highly visible place. Consumption of stone from a particular resource over a wide geographical range can also be historically significant, in terms of identifying ancient trade patterns and values placed on particularly sought after resources over time. These contacts may also be significant in terms of identifying cross-cultural social relations between people, centred on the trade and consumption of a stone resource, that places the ancient quarry landscape at the epicentre of these connections.

III. Associated historical significance: at a macro-level, some ancient quarry landscapes may be implicated in and provide additional evidence about significant events and transformations in history and prehistory. For instance, political and ideological change at key periods in history may provoke intensive production of a specific resource due to its symbolic association with an emerging religious cult. Quarries can be key places to identify changing social relations in the transformation of early states, particularly where monumentality and large-scale material procurement were key indicators of an emerging political elite. Explosions in quarrying for utilitarian objects from a specific resource, such as grinding stones, may tell us about major changes in diet and methods of food processing at key transformative stages in prehistory. Important insights into past environment may also be directly and indirectly evident at ancient quarries. Technological changes in society over time can be reflected in quarries, for instance, the introduction of iron technology into quarrying.

IV. Dynamic landscapes: quarry landscapes, as with any type of landscape, are dynamic places that are not static in time. Although the concept of a 'socially constructed landscape' allows us to view multi-period transformations as adding new layers of historical significance, directly or indirectly related to quarrying, how do we articulate values of quarry landscapes where re-use for other activities may have completely or partially destroyed them? The aim is to view the landscape holistically from a perspective of how human agency into the present may have totally changed an earlier landscape and what threads of these past elements have been inherited and still survive. This is a particularly useful concept to use when a quarry landscape has been totally integrated into a modern city and where we need to assess historical and informational values through human agency as characterising the present-day landscape, rather than its past.