



The Macael landscape in the context of a possible candidate as Global Heritage Stone Province (Almería, SE of Spain)

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The beginning of the marble extraction activity in the Macael Area (Almería, South of Spain) date back 4000 years ago, and since then, it has been used in several and important monuments, principally, in Spain. The quality of the works carried out is more than proven. During this time, the extraction has alternated periods of activity with others of lesser or none-activity, ruling both the lives of the inhabitants of the region, and its landscape. The most well-known material extracted in the region, with international recognition, is marble “Blanco Macael” (White Macael), traditionally compared with “Carrara marble”. But there are other marbles such as “Amarillo Macael”, “Gris Macael” or “Anasol”, as well as serpentinites that are referred as “Verde Macael” or “Verde Almería”. All of them have been employed in many recent important buildings, at national and international level. The problem of this intensive activity through the years, from the point of view of the preservation of the old landscapes, is that the modern quarries have replaced the old ones, leaving few remains of the old quarries. In some cases it is possible to see Muslim vestiges (e.g. “Puntilla”), but this is an exception. Notwithstanding, the landscape of the region has a high value due to the combination of high mountains, high faces with a lot of banks, waste dumps and full restored areas. Nowadays, the surface occupied by mining exploitation, only in the closer area to Macael village, is more 8.5 km², with more than forty active quarries and many abandoned ones. These features have helped to configure a singular and beautiful landscape, possibly unique in Spain, in relation with an historic mining activity. This is an important added value to the possible candidature of the “Blanco Macael” as a “Global Heritage Stone Resource” and the “Macael Region” as a “Global Heritage Stone Province”, mostly if we consider that these designations must take into consideration the social importance of the activity in the region.