

The Florence Declaration on Heritage and Landscape as Human Values (2014)

Declaration of the principles and recommendations on the value of cultural heritage and landscapes for promoting peaceful and democratic societies

Preamble

Over 1,650 participants from 94 countries came together in Florence from 9-14 November 2014 for the 18th General Assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). 1300 technical proposals and the exchange between heritage specialists have culminated in the following Declaration of principles and recommendations on the value of cultural heritage and landscapes for promoting peaceful and democratic societies. All individuals and communities have the right to benefit from cultural heritage and landscape to the same extent that they have a duty to preserve its authenticity and cultural diversity as a human right. This declaration encourages deep reflection on heritage management ethics and practices so that the challenges facing present and future generations can be addressed. ICOMOS can steer this process thanks to a holistic vision of harmonious development focused on the potential of cultural heritage as a testimony of peace and cohesion.

In 2014 ICOMOS celebrated its 18th General Assembly and Scientific Symposium dedicated to the theme of “Cultural Heritage and Landscape as Human Values”. This declaration reflects the aims of ICOMOS and its work with UNESCO in assessing tangible and intangible values associated with World Heritage properties, and is an opportunity to bring together the organisation’s specialist skills. Among other discussions that took place at the Florence Symposium, it was suggested that evaluating and assessing a site as World Heritage should be considered as an ethical commitment to safeguarding and respecting human “values” in order to protect the spirit of place¹ and people’s identity so as to improve their quality of life.

This is also an extraordinary occasion for the ICOMOS community to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Venice Charter and the 20th Anniversary of the Nara Document. We therefore celebrate both our own founding act, demonstrating its potential, and also a key document resulting from many scientific and philosophical debates on authenticity², that has promoted the diversity of cultural expression³. In response to today’s challenges, the main aim of the 2014 Symposium was to facilitate the inclusion and participation of people and groups from a variety of cultures and to move forward in defining principles, strategies, standards and practices that can contribute both to the recognition of the human values of cultural heritage, as well as to safeguarding and encouraging cultural diversity, working together to develop the necessary organizational frameworks and skills⁴. These principles have been well expressed in previous international documents⁵ and founding charters on safeguarding and protecting human rights and cultural heritage⁶.

¹ ICOMOS, *Declaration on the spirit of place* (Quebec, 2008)

² ICOMOS, *Nara+20: On heritage practices, cultural values and the concept of authenticity* (2014)

³ UNESCO, *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (Paris, 2005)

⁴ ICOMOS, *Heritage as a driver for development* (Paris Declaration 2011)

⁵ Hangzhou Declaration, *Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies* (2013).

UNESCO, *Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscape* (2011).

Barbados Declaration - *Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States* (1994).

⁶ Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (2005) known as the Faro Declaration. It recognises UNESCO’s concerns that “...rights relating to cultural heritage are inherent in the right to participate in cultural life, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.

ICOMOS views the Symposium theme in the context of sustainable development (UN Sustainable Development Goals), making up for the lost opportunity caused by the exclusion of culture from the UN Millennium Development Goals. UNESCO is already working towards this end through its contributions to the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which were discussed in October 2014 in Florence⁷. ICOMOS, together with some of the world's largest cultural, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, has discussed these issues, presenting its reflections on them at the recent Symposium.

The Symposium Declaration

The ICOMOS 2014 Florence Declaration promotes a broad debate that will enable ICOMOS to provide insights for encouraging sustainable, harmonious and intercultural development, placing people at the centre of the cultural debate where cultural diversity is expressed through heritage and landscape values.

We recognize our responsibility for fully integrating culture into society and the need for shared tools that can be used to translate ICOMOS's ethical commitment into concrete action. We recognize the responsibility of ICOMOS members to cooperate actively in the development of resolutions, documents and conventions to improve quality of life through the management of the world's cultural heritage, producing shared technical resources that contribute to integration and interculturality.

We acknowledge that landscapes are an integral part of heritage as they are the living memory of past generations and can provide tangible and intangible connections to future generations. Cultural heritage and landscape are fundamental for community identity and should be preserved through traditional practices and knowledge that also guarantees that biodiversity is safeguarded.

Landscapes currently face unexpected threats that need be managed by applying new approaches to safeguarding the relationship between cultural and natural heritage by sharing practical experiences. An approach is needed that is based on the protection of human rights and on strengthening new and traditional knowledge and local governance.

⁷ UNESCO, *Dichiarazione di Firenze 4 Ottobre 2014 " Cultura, creatività e sviluppo sostenibile. Ricerca, innovazione, opportunità", Terzo Forum Mondiale dell'UNESCO sulla Cultura e le Industrie Culturali (2014).*

The participants at the 18th General Assembly address this Declaration to intergovernmental organisations, national and local authorities and all organizations and specialists, recommending the following actions:

1. Sharing and experiencing community identity through tourism and interpretation

1.1 Sharing community identities: opportunities to empower communities and tourists

- a. Community identity is rarely uniform or static but is a living concept that is constantly evolving thanks to an interplay of past and present in the context of current geo-political circumstances. Around the world, contrasting – and often conflicting – community identities are expressed through (and can be shaped negatively or positively by) the range of activities and service provision offered at cultural heritage tourist destinations that are intended to take advantage of the economic, social and cultural benefits of tourism.
- b. Community engagement in tourism through service provision, entrepreneurship, cultural production or volunteer activities can mediate an appreciation of their cultural heritage and provide opportunities (supported by capacity building) for promoting the diverse identities of resident communities in a positive way.
- c. Community traditions – festivals, dances and culinary traditions – shared with visitors subtly change over time and this can lead to an inferior experience for residents and visitors alike. A community with highly-developed cultural awareness and the capacity to identify unique cultural values within their community is in a position to be empowered to protect the integrity, authenticity and continuity of the cultural heritage recognised within that community.
- d. Community involvement with cultural heritage sites affected by disaster and conflict offer opportunities for healing and reconciliation. In rebuilding the fabric of their own lives in the face of painful memories, communities retain or create physical memorials in the landscape recording the psychological damage of ‘crimes against humanity’ or devastation of disasters in terms of human lives lost. In turn, as visitor attractions, opportunities arise for a range of community interpretations and ongoing dialogue with tourists.
- e. Increasing knowledge and cultural awareness of the heritage of a place – tangible and intangible - among a host community and visitors fosters meaningful inter-cultural dialogue, engenders respect for cultural differences at a personal level and enhances the quality of the tourist experience, linked to the concept of travel for knowledge. It is the foundation for peaceful co-existence.

1.2 Cultural interactions and communication: building knowledge and changing perceptions through experience

- a. Sustainable conservation and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in a local tourism context can be achieved only by fostering awareness, in-depth knowledge and understanding among local communities of the significance of their heritage and diverse influences that have come together to create – and continue to create - a unique culture.
- b. Building intergenerational capacity among local community members, especially in young people, to support them in engaging with and interpreting their heritage and in communicating successfully with visitors, has the dual benefit of enhancing visitor experiences and strengthening their own sense of self-worth and identity.
- c. Two-way communication between visitors and communities can also stimulate curiosity, allow multiple interpretations (when appropriate), and enable hosts to recount their own stories in a personal way.
- d. Community-based tourism development responds to increasing visitor expectation for more personalized and life-enhancing experiences. Collaborative and ethical local tourism networks are drivers of specialist tourism where cultural interactions are central to active visitor participation.
- e. Authentic holistic immersive experiences of cultural heritage are a key component of inter-cultural dialogue through tourism and an important element of a community’s diaspora re-engaging with its past as tourists.

- f. Cultural events are strategic tools for many communities seeking to attract tourism. Sharing and enhancing the balance of mutual knowledge, sorrow and enjoyment through a carefully structured inclusive approach to local rituals – religious or secular - and entertainment through cultural festivals can, if well managed, lead incrementally towards an enhanced territory.

1.3 Cultural places: finding frameworks for cultural heritage developments

- a. Creative solutions to planning the physical environment can lead to a deeper symbiotic relationship with a place for both visitors and communities. Cultural corridors, for example, can highlight the value of historic research and cultural significance with the sensitive reinstatement of traditional routes.
- b. Access to cultural heritage places at tourist destinations requires a multi-layered approach to planning and interpretation in order to be effective. Physical, intellectual, emotional and economic access need to be reconciled within bespoke strategies for interpretative planning and quality assurance mechanisms.
- c. Creative spaces – virtual and real – are dependent on the interwoven interrelationship between tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Memories of the ephemeral is itself an integral part of the visitor experience and new methods must be found to preserve them and enhance them for the future.
- d. Coherent community-led strategies for cultural tourism development depend on the recognition of the significant nexus between places and dynamic cultural traditions.
- e. Governance related to safeguarding, protecting and managing cultural heritage sites within tourist destinations requires a holistic set of integrated plans, policies, regulations and practices that embrace but go beyond conservation planning.
- f. Integrated spatial and tourism planning can: promote the role of communities; set an agenda for the co-creation of quality cultural products and cultural heritage experiences; support innovation and adaption to changing priorities across the global tourist and heritage industries in a particular place at a specific moment in time, thereby reinforcing community identities.

2. Landscape as cultural habitat

2.1 A community-based approach

- a. The concept of landscape, whether urban or rural, is increasingly becoming a new paradigm for harmonious development, offering an approach that can integrate economic, social and environmental processes.
- b. There are multiple interrelationships between urban and rural landscapes related to cultural, socio-economic and environmental processes, as well as to the well-being of the population.
- c. The involvement of local communities, the recognition of, and respect for, their cultural heritage, as well as innovative and traditional practices can favour more effective management and governance of multifunctional landscapes, contributing to their resilience and adaptability.

2.2 Landscape as a fusion of culture and nature

- a. Cultural landscapes should not only be interpreted as conservation areas but also as places where sustainable development strategies can be successfully applied.
- b. In many landscapes, concepts such as “natural” and “cultural” have lost much of their meaning, being replaced by a biocultural understanding, where not only settlements and agriculture, but also species and habitats are determined and preserved by people.
- c. The time has come to challenge the artificial separation between conservation and innovation, seeing cultural landscapes as lessons to be learnt in light of new models of economic development, responses to climate change, risk management, biodiversity conservation and the human well-being.

2.3 *The landscape as a driver for growth*

- a. In order to gain a better understanding of the interplay between biological and cultural diversity at a landscape level and its implications for livelihood and wellbeing, further interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research is needed.
- b. It is necessary to overcome major intellectual differences arising from the distinction between the natural sciences and the social sciences and humanities. Wide-ranging cooperation between these disciplines is needed in order to develop new tools for landscape planning, management and conservation.
- c. Public awareness and political action are needed to implement effectively national and international commitments related to cultural landscapes.

3. Sustainability through traditional knowledge

3.1 *Quality of daily life produced by traditional knowledge*

- a. Study and awareness raising of the role of traditional knowledge systems for development that are based on what has been handed down from previous civilizations should be promoted.
- b. The importance of identities, social cohesion, community involvement and quality of life produced by traditional knowledge should be recognized.
- c. Further research is required into the meaning, symbolism and rituals related to traditional techniques and procedures.
- d. Traditional systems held by communities with regard to well-being, nutrition and ways of life should be identified.
- e. Support is required for the rights of local communities and indigenous people who are the holders of traditional and indigenous knowledge and systems.

3.2 *The value of traditional knowledge and practices as the basis for balanced technological, innovative development programmes and sustainable development*

- a. Knowledge of traditional systems should be enhanced in order to promote a new technological paradigm.
- b. A typology identification system for traditional knowledge should be created, as should a database of case studies and best practice.
- c. A balanced use of traditional and modern techniques and technologies should be promoted using a holistic non-invasive and sustainable approach.

3.3 *Respect for sites and the decision processes that safeguard communities and people*

- a. Methods should be assessed for the protection of traditional knowledge that can be implemented by individuals, communities, disseminators and innovators of traditional techniques.
- b. Resilient traditional techniques should be promoted, as should their use in every country in order to face global challenges and risks, such as climate change, natural catastrophe, migration, and poverty. Identify resilient technologies and promote the use of traditional knowledge to achieve energy efficiency and reduce CO₂ emissions.
- c. The emergence of virtuous collective responses and participatory actions for the prevention of catastrophes should be encouraged, in order to better protect those heritage sites and properties at greater natural and anthropic risk.
- d. Communication and interpretation should be facilitated in order to create sustainable policies and programmes supported by learning systems and legislation.

4. Community-driven conservation and local empowerment

4.1 Community engagement in the enhancement of heritage

- a. The connection between communities and their heritage should be recognized, respecting the community's right to identify values and knowledge systems embodied in their heritage. Heritage places, be they sites or landscapes, may take on different values for the various communities associated with them and the process of value identification must take each group into consideration.
- b. Collaborative networks should be set up at different levels among multiple stakeholders in order to address issues related to heritage and create new value chains through innovative synergies.
- c. Dynamic, flexible, inclusive and integrated processes of engagement need to be employed for assessing long-term social impacts of heritage conservation programmes.

4.2 Bottom-up approach for effective conservation and management of heritage

- a. It is important to establish an active role for communities within formal planning/management systems giving the community a voice within conservation decision-making processes.
- b. The role of heritage professionals should be recognized as being that of providing technical advice in community-led conservation initiatives and that of a facilitator when a community's engagement with its heritage is fragmented.
- c. The 'human' scale of development as a foundation for creative bottom-up approaches should be reinstated.

4.3 Linking heritage conservation and sustainable local socio-economic development.

- a. Heritage conservation should contribute to sustainable development objectives.
- b. Good practices (based on measurable evidence) should be promoted, connected to the contribution of heritage to well-being, social cohesion, and sustainable economic development.
- c. Innovative approaches and tools, such as crowd-funding, should be used that can stimulate a pro-active role for community networks, transforming desirable future visions into reality.

5. Emerging tools for conservation practice

5.1 Cultural heritage objectives need to drive the development of emerging tools, not vice versa, so they can consolidate the centrality of cultural heritage

- a. New tools and technologies should support the various steps of the conservation process, as a means and not an end, promoting the centrality of cultural heritage as a human right.
- b. Guidelines and networks should be drawn up and shared for theoretical and methodological objectives and applications to ensure authenticity in conservation practice.
- c. Guidelines should be developed for interdisciplinary research (including those related to funding policies) in a collaborative way in order to fill gaps - technological, but primarily cultural - between technology specialists and heritage practitioners, between managers and users of information.

5.2 Promote new technologies that are accessible and inclusive for shared cultural growth

- a. Local and traditional knowledge should be respected in order to ensure a fair and profitable balance between cultures, knowledge, materials, traditional and innovative technologies.
- b. The key role of non-governmental organisations in strategic partnerships should be recognized in order to improve conservation outcomes.

- c. Platforms and tools for the dissemination of knowledge should be consolidated and shared in order to overcome cultural and social inequalities.
- d. There should be an active contribution to the exchange of best practice in conservation processes through debate and discussion in professional communities, while seeking to avoid the duplication of efforts.

5.3 *Facilitate collaborative standardization and simplification of procedures and tools*

- a. Internationally recognised and applicable tools should be developed in order to ensure accuracy, reliability, and verifiability of results and ensure the possibility of comparative analysis both geographically and over time.
- b. Priority should be given to user-friendly and low-cost technologies to ensure the adoption of tools that can be used for cultural heritage documentation, conservation and monitoring, as part of a virtuous circle.
- c. On-line toolkits and open source platforms should be developed as a priority, to provide access to standards and procedures in cultural heritage conservation practice in a democratic way.
- d. It should be ensured that the application of technologies to cultural heritage responds to well-defined key objectives, avoiding the risk of only making progress in the technological sector without improving conservation practice.

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