

5th DRAFT OF THE ICOMOS CHARTER ON CULTURAL ROUTES (September, 2005)

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comments and eventual adoption at the 16th GA in Canada**

Introduction

The evolution of the sciences of conservation of cultural heritage has led to an increasingly rich and comprehensive approach to this concept. Fruit of that evolution, the concept of the Cultural Route is innovative, complex and multidimensional in nature.

Over time, the notion of "monument"—originally seen as an artifact in isolation from its context— has gradually evolved and expanded with the recognition that a historic site, or historic ensembles such as a public square, a neighborhood or a city, as well as cultural landscapes, can be considered as cultural heritage properties. The elimination of chronological barriers and recognition of the importance of other manifestations of culture, such as those from the industrial and technological field, have also opened a path for the assessment of new elements as integral components of the cultural heritage. This more extensive notion requires new approaches to their treatment within a much wider context in order to describe and protect their significant relationships directly associated with their cultural and historical setting. Within this advance in the field of concepts, Cultural Routes introduce and represent a qualitatively new approach to the notion of conservation of the cultural heritage.

The consideration of Cultural Routes as a new concept or category does not conflict with established and recognized categories of cultural heritage. It enhances their significance within an integrated, interdisciplinary and shared framework. It does not overlap with other categories or types of properties —monuments, cities, cultural landscapes, industrial heritage, etc.—that may exist within the orbit of a given Cultural Route. It simply includes them within a joint system and creates new relationships among them by means of an innovative scientific perspective that provides a multilateral, more complete, and more accurate vision of history. This approach enhances not only understanding and communication among the peoples of the world, but also increases cooperation to preserve cultural heritage.

From a scientific point of view, Cultural Routes represent interactive, dynamic, and continually evolving processes of human intercultural links that reflect the rich diversity of the contributions of different peoples to cultural heritage. Within this context, the notion of Cultural Routes constitutes a new concept that enriches and illustrates the growing worldwide tendency to approach cultural heritage from a multidimensional perspective, and contributes significantly to our understanding of this heritage.

Therefore, as an aid to the comprehension of any tangible and intangible heritage which presents shared roots and influences, Cultural Routes have become an essential tool for understanding cultural relationships and exchanges between two or more groups linked by an intentionally-established historic route.

Though Cultural Routes have resulted historically from both peaceful and hostile encounters, today they present a number of shared dimensions which transcend their original functions, offering an exceptional setting for a culture of peace based on the ties of shared history as well as the tolerance, respect, and appreciation for cultural diversity of the communities involved.

The innovation introduced by the concept of "Cultural Routes" reveals the heritage content of a specific phenomenon of human mobility and exchange that developed via communication routes that facilitated their flow and which were used or deliberately served a concrete and peculiar purpose. A Cultural Route can be a road that was expressly created to serve this purpose or a route that takes advantage either totally or partially of preexisting roads used for different purposes. But its existence and significance as a Cultural Route can only be explained by its use for this specific purpose and by it being provided with functional elements expressly created and serving the route.

Cultural Routes have sometimes arisen as a project planned a priori by the human will which had sufficient power to undertake a specific purpose (for example, the Incan and the Roman Empire Routes). On other occasions, they are the result of a long evolutionary process in which the collective interventions of different human factors coincide and are channeled towards a common purpose (such as in the Route to Santiago, the African trade caravan routes, or the Silk Route). In both cases, they are processes arising from the human will to achieve a specific objective.

The new concept of Cultural Routes shows the evolution of ideas with respect to the vision of cultural heritage, as well as the growing importance of values related to its setting and territorial scale, and reveal the macrostructure of heritage on different levels. It also helps to illustrate the contemporary social conception of cultural heritage values as a resource for sustainable social and economic development. This concept introduces a model for a new ethics of conservation that considers these values as a common heritage that goes beyond national borders, and which requires joint efforts. By respecting the intrinsic value of each individual element, the Cultural Route recognizes and emphasizes the value of all of its elements as substantive parts of a whole.

Given the cultural richness and variety of both the interrelationships and the characteristic assets directly associated with the reason for the existence of Cultural Routes (such as monuments, archaeological remains, historic towns, vernacular architecture, intangible, industrial and technological heritage, public works, cultural and natural landscapes, transportation means and other examples of the application of specific knowledge and technical skills), their study and management requires a multidisciplinary approach that illustrates and reinvigorates scientific hypotheses and stimulates increased technical, artistic and cultural knowledge.

Objectives of the Charter

- To establish the basic principles and methods of research specific to the category of Cultural Route as they relate to other previously established and studied categories of cultural heritage assets.
- To propose the basic mechanisms for the development of knowledge about, evaluation of, and conservation of Cultural Routes.
- To define the basic guidelines, principles and criteria for correct use of Cultural Routes as resources for sustainable social and economic development, respecting their authenticity and integrity, appropriate preservation and historical significance.
- To establish the bases for national and international cooperation that will be essential for undertaking research, conservation and development projects related to Cultural Routes, as well as the financing required for these efforts.

Definition

Any route of communication, be it land, water, or some other type, which is physically delimited and is also characterized by having its own specific dynamic and historic functionality, which must fulfill the following conditions:

- a) It must arise from and reflect interactive movements of people as well as multi-dimensional, continuous, and reciprocal exchanges of goods, ideas, knowledge and values between peoples, countries, regions or continents over significant periods of time;
- b) It must have thereby promoted a cross-fertilization of the affected cultures in space and time, as reflected both in their tangible and intangible heritage;
- c) It must have integrated into a dynamic system the historic relations and cultural properties associated with its existence.

Defining elements: context, content, cross-cultural significance as a whole, and dynamic character of Cultural Routes.

1. *Natural context:* Cultural Routes occur in a natural context upon which they exert an influence and which they help to characterize and enrich with new dimensions as part of an interactive process.
2. *Content:* A Cultural Route must necessarily be supported by tangible elements that bear witness to its cultural heritage and provide a physical confirmation of its existence. Any intangible elements serve to give sense and meaning to the various elements that make up the whole.
 - a) The indispensable physical element that determines the existence of a Cultural Route is the communication route itself as a project designed or arising through human activity to accomplish specific goals.
 - b) Other basic substantive elements are the tangible heritage assets related to its functionality as a historic route— staging posts; customs offices; places for storage, rest, and lodging; ports; defensive fortifications; bridges; markets; hospitals; urban centers; cultural landscapes; sacred sites, places of worship and devotion; etc.—as well as intangible heritage elements that witness to the process of exchange and dialogue between the peoples involved along its path.
3. *Cross-cultural significance as a whole:* The concept of Cultural Route implies a value as a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts and gives the Route its meaning.
 - a) The cultural route constitutes a cultural asset enriched by the different cultures it has fertilized and which transcends them in overall value by offering a substantial number of shared characteristics and value systems.
 - b) Within its overall identity, the value of its parts resides in their common, shared, multi-faceted significance.
 - c) Its wider scale permits a cultural linking of peoples, countries, regions, and continents.
 - d) This breadth of scale is important from the point of view of both the territory included and of the comprehensive management of the various heritage elements included in it. At the same time the cultural diversity it implies provides an alternative to a process of cultural homogenization.
4. *Dynamic character:* In addition to presenting physical evidences of its historic path, along with cultural heritage elements, Cultural Routes include a dynamic factor that acts as a conductor or channel through which the reciprocal cultural influences have flowed.
 - a) The dynamic of a Cultural Route does not obey natural laws or casual phenomena, but rather exclusively human processes and interests, and is therefore understandable only as a cultural phenomenon.

- b) By understanding a Cultural Route as a set of dynamic elements of cultural communication between peoples, its cultural heritage assets can be appreciated in their true spatial and historical dimensions, which allows for a comprehensive and sustainable approach to the conservation of the Route as a whole.

Specific indicators

As basic differentiating indicators applicable to the category of Cultural Route, the following should be considered: the structure of the route and its physical substratum; historical data about its use; the existence of cultural manifestations of shared origin along (or at given points of) the route; any physical structures associated with the functionality of the route; practices, traditions, customs, and common uses of a religious, ritual, linguistic, festival, culinary, or similar nature; reciprocal influences in activities such as music, communication elements, and other material and immaterial cultural assets whose full understanding derives from the historic function of the route itself.

Types of Cultural Routes

Cultural routes can be classified as follows:

- According to their territorial scope: local, national, regional, continental, or intercontinental.
- According to their cultural scope: within a given cultural region or extended across different geographical areas that share a process of reciprocal influences in the formation or evolution of cultural values.
- According to their goal or function: social, economic, political, or cultural. These characteristics can be found shared across a multi-dimensional context.
- According to their duration in time: those that are no longer used versus those that continue to develop under the influence of socio-economic, political, and cultural exchanges.
- According to their structural configuration: linear, circular, cruciform, radial or network.
- According to their natural context: land, aquatic, mixed, or other physical setting.

Identification

The identification of a Cultural Route must necessarily be based on a set of tangible evidences and elements that witness to the significance of the route as such. The identification process will also take into account its natural and geographic context, its functionality, its duration in time, its structural configuration, and its symbolic and spiritual dimension, which will contribute to its identification and to the understanding of its significance.

The intangible assets of a Cultural Route are fundamental for understanding its significance and its associative heritage values. Therefore, material elements and artifacts must always be studied in connection with other values of an intangible nature.

Even if in certain sections the material traces of a Cultural Route are not clearly preserved, the existence and value of the Cultural Route as a whole can be shown through its immaterial aspects.

Every Cultural Route should fulfill authenticity criteria in terms of both its natural and built environment, and concerning both its defining elements and its distinctive features of a material and immaterial nature:

- These criteria should be applied to each section under study to assess its significance in relation to the overall meaning of the Route throughout its historical development, and to verify the authenticity of its structural layout through the vestiges of its path.

- Authenticity should also be evident in the natural context of the Route, as well as in the other tangible and intangible heritage elements included within its historic functionality and its setting.
- For the purpose of its comparative evaluation, the temporal duration and historic significance of the different sections of the Route in relation to the whole should also be taken into account.

For identification and evaluation purposes, the following criteria may be considered:

- Expressions of dynamic social, economic, political, and cultural processes which have resulted from exchanges between related areas;
- Distinguishing characteristics that are shared by areas connected by historical and cultural bonds;
- Evidences of mobility and of relationships forged between peoples or ethnic groups of different cultures;
- Specific cultural features rooted in the traditional life of different communities;
- Heritage elements and cultural practices—such as ceremonies, festivals and religious celebrations representative of shared values for different communities within (a) specific cultural and historic area(s)—related to the significance and functionality of the Route.

Methodology

A Cultural Route requires a specific methodology for its research, protection, conservation, assessment, use and management. Given its breadth and its value as a whole, as well as its territorial dimensions, this methodology needs the establishment of a system of coordinated and integrally managed activities. It is essential to start with the identification both of the Route as a whole and of its individual sections, along with an inventory of the assets that comprise it and a strategy for its preservation. It also requires the creation of specific legal instruments for its protection, use, and management. The highlighting of the Route's intrinsic value also requires a plan for promoting knowledge of the Route and creating interest in it among public and private entities.

- Research – Identification

The study of cultural routes may extend across different geographical areas, possibly widely separated from each other. It is therefore advisable to set up several research teams located at the main characteristic points of the Route under study.

The research methodology, along with the adoption of practices for proper assessment and conservation of the different sections of a Cultural Route, should never lose sight of the meaning of the Route as a whole, in order to avoid any loss in the meaning or historic significance of the route.

Research teams working on this cultural heritage category should be of a multidisciplinary and co-operative nature. Common working criteria should be established based on the principle of starting with an investigation of the parts, but without losing sight of the project as a whole. Similarly, common methodological instruments—standardized in advance—should be used for the collection of data. The project plan should include coordinating mechanisms that will facilitate communication and cooperation among the researchers in order to make it possible to transmit data about the work and achievements of each team.

Researchers should keep in mind that the presence of various types of cultural heritage properties along the path of a Cultural Route does not, in and of itself, imply that they are necessarily integral components of that route or are appropriate objects of study in relation to it. The only elements that should be highlighted in the scientific investigation of a Cultural Route are those related to the use of the route and any influences arising from its functional dynamic.

- Funding

Given the scope of the tasks involved in identifying and highlighting the value of a Cultural Route, funding should be obtained in stages that will allow for balanced, coordinated progress in the research projects as well as the conservation, use, and management projects related to its various sections. This requires that funding be obtained through bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements, as well as through the creation of bodies specifically devoted to researching and highlighting the value of the Route. Along the same lines, regional bodies whose jurisdictions coincide totally or partially with the historic path of a Cultural Route should determine how they can best gain the interest of the States involved and obtain their cooperation. It is also important to attract the cooperation of philanthropic institutions and private donors.

- Protection – Conservation – Assessment

Cultural Routes require new instruments for their protection, preservation and assessment. It is not sufficient to guarantee protection of their heritage elements. It is necessary to develop a strategy and appropriate instruments that guarantee the conservation and integral assessment of their structure and their system of authentic values as a whole.

- Sustainable Use – Relationship to Tourist Activities

With regard to its use, a Cultural Route can be used to promote an activity of social and economic interest of extraordinary importance for stable development.

Special care should be taken to avoid confusion between the concepts of tourist routes—even including those of cultural interest—and Cultural Routes. However, it should also be recognized that a Cultural Route is a reality that can have great importance for territorial cohesion and sustainable development. From this point of view, and respecting certain conditions, efforts should be made to promote knowledge about Cultural Routes, along with their appropriate and sustainable use for tourism purposes. Aiming at this objective, protection and promotion of a Cultural Route should harmoniously integrate a supplementary infrastructure – for tourist activities, access routes and information – with the essential condition that it does not jeopardize the integrity, meaning, and authenticity of the historic values of the Cultural Route as key elements to be conveyed to visitors.

Tourist visits should be managed on a rational basis in accordance with prior environmental impact studies and with plans for public use and community participation.

The development of a Cultural Route for tourism purposes should guarantee in any case that priority is given to the participation of the local community and to local and regional tourist companies. Every effort should be made to prevent the creation of monopolies by large international companies or by powerful companies based in the more developed countries through which the historic path of the Cultural Route passes.

- Management

Management of Cultural Routes implies ensuring that all activities related to their research, preservation, conservation, assessment and use are carried out in a coordinated and harmonious manner. This requires a cross coordination that guarantees the combination of policies relating to conservation, territorial organization and tourism. Therefore, joint projects need to be prepared that ensure durable development on a national (at the provincial, regional, local level, etc.) and international scale, as well the establishment of management tools designed to protect the Route against all kinds of risks, especially the negative repercussions of tourism.

- Public participation

The protection, conservation/preservation, promotion and management of a Cultural Route calls for the stimulation of public awareness and the participation of the inhabitants of the areas which share the Route.

International cooperation

There are notable examples of Cultural Routes whose historic paths involve various countries. For this reason, international cooperation is essential for research, assessment, and preservation of the assets that make up international Cultural Routes.

When Cultural Routes exist which involve countries with different degrees of development, it is recommended that the more developed countries provide the means for economic, technical, and logistic cooperation as well as assistance in the exchange of information, experience, and researchers.

It is highly desirable that UNESCO and other international organizations should establish mechanisms of cooperation (financial, technical, and logistic) to help foster and implement projects related to Cultural Routes that are of interest to more than one country.

Cultural Routes should be seen as symbols of union between peoples. The historic ties developed along Cultural Routes can serve to promote projects based on renewed cooperation between peoples who shared certain values and knowledge in the past.