

WORLD RURAL LANDSCAPES

A worldwide initiative for global conservation and management of rural landscapes



INTRODUCTION AND ORGANIZATION

**International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes
ICOMOS/IFLA (ISCCL)**

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1. BACKGROUND

Throughout many different areas of the World, rural landscapes are threatened by huge changes due to pressures of development and increased urban population, resulting in the abandonment of the land, intensive agricultural practices and the loss of traditional and local knowledge.

Paradoxically, urban inhabitants' interest in quality rural landscapes is also rising, as evidenced by increases in both tourism and recreational use of rural scenic areas and the demand for food products grown on these lands. It is interesting to observe how fascination for the rural landscape increases as it is being progressively destroyed. Although awareness of the importance of a quality rural landscape is growing among some sectors of the population, given the universal value of this landscape, it is essential to increase this awareness throughout all populations.

Fortunately, many initiatives to protect the various aspects of the rural landscape are being developed at both local and regional levels by different disciplines and interests to safeguard productive, sustainable, and quality rural landscapes. Nevertheless, despite the large number of individual initiatives, public-private collaboration is still scarce, greatly limiting the effectiveness of such initiatives. This, together with the seriousness of the situation, has created an urgent need to develop administrative initiatives that will ensure the conservation of rural landscapes, as well as the values they contribute to: quality of life and environment, food production, cultural heritage, safeguarding local and traditional knowledge, and sustainable development.

On the other hand, international bodies such as UNESCO, FAO, ICOMOS (International Council for Monuments and Sites), the Council of Europe, IFLA (International Federation of Landscape Architects), and ITKI (International Traditional Knowledge Institute), are working hard in that regard and making urgent pleas for the quality of landscape. A recent one is the 2012 UNESCO *Florence Declaration on Landscape* which calls "upon intergovernmental agencies and secretariats, responsible UN programs and international conventions, together with non-governmental organizations concerned, to strengthen the global awareness on the need to safeguard and improve landscapes as an integral element of sustainable development processes; share information and make expertise available; and establish effective partnerships". IFLA is also working on the development of a Global Landscape Charter and several regional ones have already been approved.

In this context, many feel the need for a common discussion to outline shared principles, as well as to develop methodologies and ways of managing rural landscapes at various levels (international, national and local). Such approaches should not only incorporate the values that rural landscape represent, but also develop appropriate and efficient means of passing them to future generations. With this initiative, we want to go a step farther in realizing this.

2. THE WORLD RURAL LANDSCAPES INITIATIVE

The International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes ICOMOS-IFLA (ISCCL) has launched the *World Rural Landscapes* initiative, which conforms with the principles established in the UNESCO 2012 Florence Declaration.

This initiative aims to promote worldwide cooperation in the protection, understanding and management of rural landscapes through the creation of a place for international collaboration. This place is meant to allow different institutions and stakeholders to:

i) exchange experiences and knowledge and ii) to reinforce the important value of quality rural landscapes based on their local conditions and traditional knowledge and uses (with future projection through the application of new technologies).

2.1. Objectives

The objectives of the Initiative are as follows:

- Define a **concept of rural landscape**, valid for all cultures, in order to enable a common dialogue.
- Establish **general principles** about knowledge, conservation and management of these landscapes to ensure the safeguarding of its values.
- Provide a **place for international, public-private and interdisciplinary cooperation**, through the creation and administration of: a website, an online workplace and a collaborative network. This place is meant to encourage collaborative work on a common strategy and the exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences.
- **Promote the collaboration** between associations and local stakeholders all over the world, and enhance the projection of their initiatives and knowledge towards other spheres of land and heritage planning and legislation.
- Act to **prevent the loss of traditional knowledge and local values**, and **reinforce their importance** by recognizing and disseminating them.
- **Promote research** on issues related to the conservation and management of rural landscapes and encourage the development of practical actions.
- **Disseminate the Initiative** via the Website and collaboration with international institutions.
- **Raise people's and stakeholders' awareness** of the importance of safeguarding rural landscapes and their values.

The Initiative is not to be imposed on or compete with other initiatives developed by many regions and localities, but to encourage them to share their knowledge and experience, in order to inspire similar projects in regions where rural landscape has not yet received adequate attention. It aims not to unify, but to strengthen the individual

values and characteristics of each place and promote them internationally in order to reinforce its preservation and enhancement. We want to establish collaborative bonds between cultures for the protection of their identity.

2.2. Contents

The contents of the Initiative are to be embodied in:

- A **General Document** that structures the initiative. It encompasses at least: a definition of rural landscape, the principles governing the initiative and operational and methodological guidelines.
- A series of **Appendices** to the General Document. These will include topics such as: an overview of the state of rural landscapes in the world, specific studies on topics or regions, and a glossary of key terms.
- A **Website** for collaboration and dissemination of the Initiative that will be associated with a web workspace, and a collaborative network.
- **Actions** focused on raising international interest in the Initiative, which will be promoted at different levels in order to:

Involve all stakeholders interested in the Initiative, such as: researchers and experts in related disciplines, public institutions that make decisions on the management of rural landscapes (at all levels, international, national and local), and NGOs.

Enhance scientific and institutional inter-sector linkages on methodological and operational issues.

Promote attention and action on rural landscapes during and after the development of the Document.

2.2.1. General Document

The Document is different in that it has an *evolving definition*. In other words, it can be: i) adjusted to incorporate new international guidelines on the issues or according to specific geographic or cultural areas, in order to define, develop, or update existing issues or add new ones; ii) referred to in various appendices, and iii) promoted by either public or private bodies (NGOs...). The Document is meant to be a reference framework that can engender more detailed documents, either while it is in progress or even after it is approved.

This document will at least include the following:

- **The concept of rural landscape.**

- **The initiative's principles:** Rural landscape as tangible and intangible cultural heritage; concepts such as integrity, authenticity, and tradition in rural landscapes; field of application; rural landscapes as resources; knowledge; continuity of historic and cultural character; endurance and changes (criteria); principles for a policy on rural landscapes; and key points to define a policy on rural landscapes.
- **Methodological and operational guidelines** to be applied to the projects and documents developed within the Initiative regarding: issues for the comprehension and study of rural landscapes; cataloguing criteria and methods; conservation, management and evolution of rural landscapes; rural landscapes and land planning; rural landscapes and agriculture policies; rural landscapes and conservation of nature; rural landscapes and food; awareness-raising, training, and updating; rural landscapes as heritage resources to showcase and demonstrate historical management techniques; etc.

The Document shall abide by ICOMOS' cultural protocols, such as the Venice Charter (for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites), the Florence Charter (of Historic Gardens), the Washington Charter (for the Conservation of Historic Towns), and the Nara Document (on Authenticity). The Document will complement those, which already exist, that solely or partly deal with issues related to cultural heritage at both international (UNESCO 1972 World Heritage Convention, 2003 Convention on Intangible Heritage and 2012 Florence Declaration on Landscape), and regional levels (2000 European Landscape Convention, 2009 Faro Convention,, 1985 Amsterdam Charter and IFLA 2012 Latin American Landscape Charter). In no way, will the Document either conflict or compete with any of the existing international guidelines and principles.

As usual, the Document will take the name of the city in which the final Convention that approves it was held

2.2.2. Appendices

The General Document's Appendices will be developed as the initiative progresses, even if the General Document has not yet been approved. In accord with the evolving character of the Document, neither the number of Appendices nor the themes to be developed will be defined or limited. The issues to be addressed in the Appendices will be organized as follows:

- **A summary report that** describes the common features, differences and problems linked to the management of rural landscapes at an international level. It will contain:

A report / white paper on Rural Landscapes: information and comparison of rural landscapes in the various regions of the world, such as general information on characteristics, vulnerabilities, threats, strengths, policies, economic and social problems, and methods of management.

An Atlas of Rural Landscapes, including descriptions, primary classification, general mapping, etc.

- **Documents on specific regions or themes**, conforming with the principles and guidelines defined in the General Document.
- **A glossary**: definition of common terminology for researchers and institutional users. Might be created on the basis of international documents and existing glossaries.

2.2.3. Website

The Website is the main vehicle for the promotion and dissemination of the Initiative and brings together, for example: a place for collaboration of the ICOMOS/IFLA Rural Landscape Working Group, the online library and the Collaborative Network. People, stakeholders, associations, and others interested in the Initiative can follow its progress and get involved through the Website. It is structured as follows:

- Home
- About us:
 - ISCCL
 - Partners
 - Supporters
- About the Initiative
- The Document
- Actions
- Related links and sources
- News and events
- Working Place
- Collaborative Network

3. TO WHOM?

The Document is addressed to many different stakeholders: researchers and experts from related disciplines, scientific institutions, political decision-makers, public institutions and administrative bodies, economic stakeholders (especially farmers), and rural populations (especially associations). It first addresses researchers and experts who should in turn involve the other stakeholders.

All geographic and cultural regions – at all levels – are involved. Both regions that have already launched projects aimed at rural landscapes and those that have not yet done so, will greatly benefit from this initiative.

The ISCCL decision to promote the Document has already been more positively welcomed among researchers, institutions, administration and NGOs than was initially expected.

4. THE PROCESS

The process is open to changes and will be in constant evolution. A number of key actions are needed:

- Establish a **Secretariat** to organise and coordinate the initiative.
- **Introduce the Initiative** (ISCCL member's short report at 2012 ISCCL Meeting in China) and check and share the general work plan and structure of the Document.
- **Establish a contact network:** international institutions (ICOMOS, IFLA, UNESCO, FAO, Human Heritage, ITKI, Council of Europe.), universities, research centres, foundations and other national, regional and local administrative bodies.
- **Create and organise a working group** made up of experts to develop the General Document.
- **Discuss a more precise definition of the focus of the Initiative:** "rural landscapes" and its principles.
- **Establish a model format** to be used for any document developed within the Initiative.
- **Begin** the expansion of the **General Document**.
- **Start** the expansion of the Atlas of rural landscapes as an Appendix to the General Document.
- **Ask ISCCL regional representatives to develop a preliminary study of their regions**, addressing the following issues: identification of different rural regions and landscapes (at the most convenient scale), identification of common characteristics and problems of each one, analysis of the opportunities and threats, study of the ongoing projects and initiatives, and identification of potential partners. This should result in a first draft of a general report (characteristics, problems and perspectives) on rural landscapes by either Region (Europe, North America, South America, Asia...), sub-region areas or countries
- Analyse these reports in order to **organise and prioritize the themes to be developed in the Appendices**.
- **Collect existing definitions and glossaries** on landscapes from the scientific and technical communities or institutional bodies. For example: Landscape Lexicon, CEMAT, Council of Europe, and Eucaland research. ISCCL members will send these to the Secretariat, which will collect and disseminate them).
- **Seek sponsorship:** suggest contacts with supporters and define the strategy to involve them.

- **Create and manage the Website** (for the dissemination of the initiative and its products) and the infrastructure needed to make the international cooperative work easier.
- **Create a collaborative network** made up of associations, institutions, etc. willing to share their experience and knowledge.
- **Create an online library** of studies, manuals, experiences, projects, etc. Collect and evaluate existing documents, such as: International Conventions, Scientific Documents, and Operational Documents (ISCCL members will send these to the Secretariat, which will collect and disseminate them). Share the resulting database with existing ones in other institutions (ITKI, etc).

5. STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

ISCCL will promote and supervise the development of the Document and request the participation of, and related contributions from, other ICOMOS ISC, UNESCO, WHC and other major international institutions and organizations (FAO, IFLA, IUCN, Council of Europe, etc.), as well as other Research Centres, Institutions, Administrative and Cultural Associations that have an interest in the project.

ICOMOS/IFLA ISCCL is an international non-profit cultural organization with no funds. Members work on a volunteer basis and may receive funding and/or operational support from Sponsors who, in turn, may receive international recognition. Therefore, the ISCCL will facilitate the preparation of the Document and organize all meetings and conferences with the support of cultural and scientific institutions and bodies interested in the Initiative.

Work structure:

- Secretariat / General coordination
- Working group
- Collaborative Network
- Supporters (Sponsors, Partners, Auspices)

ISCCL has created a **Secretariat** for the administration and coordination of the Initiative, directed by Lionella Scazzosi. The Secretariat's basic tasks are:

Organizational support:

- Organize the Initiative and provide the required infrastructure.
- Oversee the Working Group by: coordinating the scientific activities, collecting and disseminating information within it, and organising specialized or general meetings.

- Create a contact network of researchers from inside and from outside the ISCCL (researchers, scientific international institutions such as research centres, cultural institutions, researcher's networks...).
- Provide scientific support to the Organizational Unit that will handle the ISCCL International Meeting for the approval of the General Document (2015?).
- Organise events for the dissemination of the Initiative and encourage the participation of institutions, researchers, stakeholders, associations, etc.
- Create and manage the Website.
- Create, coordinate and maintain the Collaborative Network.

Scientific support to ISCCL Working Group:

- Preparation of reports on issues.
- Collection, classification and internal (and/or external) dissemination of partial work reports developed within the ISCCL.
- Provide support for preparation of the Appendices to the General Document.
- Provide English and French translations of intermediate and final documents and work outputs.
- Create and maintain an online library containing all documents and projects within the Initiative, as well as other sources of knowledge useful for its development.

Organizational support for a synergy between ISCCL and external Supporters:

- Guide and coordinate the Supporters' and the ISCCL's actions and cultural contribution activities.
- Guide, inform and culturally support activities that promoters develop autonomously.
- Coordinate the supporters' network (internal and external dissemination of information).
- Find funding for the Initiative

The **Rural Landscapes Working Group** is made up of: ISCCL members who are interested in the initiative, ICOMOS ISC representatives, non-ISCCL members who have been invited by ISCCL, ISCCL members as consultants for the relations with the international institutions (past presidents of ISCCL), the Head of General Coordination and Regional Heads of Work Groups. The tasks of the Working Group are to:

- Develop, present and secure approval of the General Document.

- Develop regional and/or thematic preparatory scientific documents.
- Propose research topics.
- Take part in the meetings of the ISCCL Working Group (stand-alone or during other events, such as international meetings, conventions, etc).
- Gather documents and bibliographic references and collaborate in the library development.
- Collaborate in the dissemination of the Initiative.
- Collaborate in securing funding for the Initiative.
- Convene regional meetings to which external contributors are invited (not compulsory).
- Involve cultural and governmental institutions of one's own country and/or Region (not compulsory).
- Develop activities to further training, analysis and development of issues and actions linked to the Initiative, during and after the approval of the General Document.

The **Collaborative Network** is open to associations, institutions, universities, local stakeholders, etc. Members' tasks are to:

- Share their knowledge and experience.
- Actively participate in the Initiative's events and projects.
- Develop activities within the Initiative's objectives and adjust their professional practices to its principles (when possible).
- Collaborate in the dissemination of the Initiative.

Supporters (Sponsors, Partners, Alliances): international organizations (UNESCO, World Heritage Centre; FAO; Council of Europe; Euromed, Human Heritage, European Union, ICCROM, IFLA,...), public administrative bodies and other stakeholders (institutions, organizations, cultural bodies, associations) who are willing to support the ISCCL's actions, either at an International, National or other level.

Tasks:

- Provide organizational, cultural, political and funding support for the ISCCL's activities.
- Develop their own activities, in coordination with the ISCCL's activities and themes.

Help to obtain:

- Visibility at local, national and international levels, when hosting meetings and conventions.
- Contacts with both other international organizations and national public administrative bodies in other countries.
- International contacts with universities and experts within them.
- Grants for developing local scientific competencies in this field.

6. SCHEDULE

The Initiative was officially approved by the ISCCL during its General Assembly in Paris from 27 Nov-2 December 2011. It was presented to the scientific community by Emilio Sereni at the International Conference on the “History of the Italian Agricultural Landscape, Fifty Years Later”, held in Reggio Emilia, Italy on 10-12 November 2011.

It has also been presented recently at other events and international forums (China, Florence, Montpellier and New Jersey) where it was positively received.

We propose the following schedule of actions:

- Creation of the Secretariat: December 2011
- Establishment of the working space: 2012
- Creation of the Website: March 2013
- Preliminary reports from regions: 2014
- Search for sponsors: 2013-2015
- Creation of the Collaborative Network: 2013-2015
- General Document: First draft: October 2013
Presentation of the final document: 2015
- Solicit appendices: 2013...

7. FUNDING

Italy will host the Expo 2015 “Feed the Planet: Energy for Life” in Milan In this context, a number of institutions, scientific bodies and associations from Milan and Lombardy have expressed their interest in:

- Providing funding and organizational support to the ISCCL for the entire process of preparation and approval of the Document.
- Hosting the 2014 ICOMOS-ISCCL Meeting in Milan and contributing to its organization.
- Hosting the 2015 ISCCL Convention in Milan and contributing to its organization (to verify with the timetable of the ICOMOS-ISCCL Working Group)