

## ICOMOS-IFLA PRINCIPLES CONCERNING RURAL LANDSCAPES AS HERITAGE

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### PREAMBLE

Rural landscapes are a vital component of the heritage of humanity. They are also one of the most common types of continuing cultural landscapes. There is a great diversity of rural landscapes around the world that represent cultures and cultural traditions. They provide multiple economic and social benefits, multi-functionality, cultural support and ecosystem services for human societies. This document encourages deep reflection and offers guidance on the ethics, culture, environmental, and sustainable transformation of rural landscape systems, at all scales, and from international to local administrative levels.

**Acknowledging** the global importance of culturally-based food production and use of renewable natural resources, and the issues and threats challenging such activities within contemporary cultural, environmental, economic, social, and legal contexts;

**Considering** The United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), the United Nations *Convention on Biological Diversity* (1992), the UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2001), the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* (2007), the *International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2011), and the United Nations 2015 *Sustainable Development Goals* (in particular but not limited to Sub-Goal 11.4<sup>1</sup>), which state that all human beings have the right to adequate, healthy, and secure sources of food and water;

**Considering** international documents such as the *Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (1964), the UNESCO *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972); the ICOMOS-IFLA *Florence Charter on Historic Gardens* (1981), the ICOMOS *Washington Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas* (1987), the ICOMOS *Nara Document on Authenticity* (1994), the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage* (2003), the ICOMOS *Xi'an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas* (2005), the UNESCO *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* (2011), the ICOMOS *Florence Declaration on Heritage and Landscape as Human Values* (2014), the UNESCO *Florence Declaration on the Links Between Biological and Cultural Diversity* (2014), and the UNESCO Policy to integrate a sustainable development perspective within the processes of the World Heritage Convention (2015) which relate to the heritage and cultural values of landscapes;

**Considering** regional and national documents related to rural landscapes, including the *European Landscape Convention* (2000), the *European Rural Heritage Observation Guide* (CEMAT, 2003), the Council of Europe's *Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (2005), the *Tokyo Declaration on the Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes in the Conservation of Biological and Cultural Diversity* (2005), the *Santiago de Cuba Declaration on Cultural Landscape in the Caribbean* (2005), the *Latin American Landscape Initiative (LALI)* (2012), the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (The Burra Charter)* (1999-2013), the *IFLA Asia Pacific Region Landscape Charter* (2015);

**Considering** the UNESCO World Heritage Centre *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2015), which, from 1992, primarily designate rural landscapes as 'Continuing Cultural Landscapes';

**Considering** the ICOMOS-IFLA *ISCCL Milano Declaration on Rural Landscapes* (2014) concerning rural landscapes as heritage;

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<sup>1</sup> "Strengthen the efforts for the protection and safeguarding of the world's natural and cultural heritage" (United Nations Agenda 2030).

**Considering** the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognition of Category V Protected Landscapes and Seascapes in their management system, the IUCN efforts of sustaining pastoral nomadism (*World Initiative on Sustainable Pastoralism*, 2008), the joint ICOMOS-IUCN initiative “*Connecting Practice - nature and culture*” and the importance of people interacting with their environment in ways that sustain bio-cultural diversity (including agrobiodiversity, as well as cultural and spiritual values);

**Considering** the FAO *Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems* (GIAHS) programme that aims to identify and safeguard remarkable land-use systems and landscapes with heritage value and rich in globally significant agricultural biological diversity and knowledge systems;

**Considering** other documents solely related to aspects of rural landscapes, such as the *Charter of Baeza on Agrarian Heritage* (2012), the *Recommendations of the World Heritage Thematic Expert Meeting on Vineyard Cultural Landscapes*, Tokaj, Hungary (2001) and recommendations of many other thematic expert meetings on rural cultural landscapes as heritage;

### ICOMOS and IFLA

**Commit** to expand their cooperative actions by adopting the dissemination and use of the following principles in order to promote the understanding, effective protection, sustainable transformation, and transmission and appreciation of rural landscape heritage as part of human societies and cultures and a crucial resource across the world.

The principles presented in this document seek to address loss and adverse changes to rural landscapes and their associated communities through the recognition, safeguarding, and promotion of their heritage values. Its goal is to promote an appropriate balance between economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects.

## 1 PRINCIPLES

### A Definitions

**Rural Landscape:** For the purpose of this document, rural landscapes are terrestrial and aquatic areas co-produced by human-nature interaction used for the production of food and other renewable natural resources, via agriculture, animal husbandry and pastoralism, fishing and aquaculture, forestry, wild food gathering, hunting, and extraction of other resources, such as salt. Rural landscapes are multifunctional resources. At the same time, all rural areas have cultural meanings attributed to them by people and communities: all rural areas are landscapes.

Rural landscapes are dynamic, living systems encompassing places produced and managed through traditional methods, techniques, accumulated knowledge, and cultural practices, as well as those places where traditional approaches to production have been changed. Rural landscape systems encompass rural elements and functional, productive, spatial, visual, symbolic, environmental relationships among them and with a wider context.

Rural landscapes encompass both well-managed and degraded or abandoned areas that can be reused or reclaimed. They can be huge rural spaces, peri-urban areas as well as small spaces within built-up areas. Rural landscapes encompass land surfaces, subsurface soils and resources, the airspace above, and water bodies.

**Rural landscape as heritage:** Refers to the tangible and intangible heritage of rural areas. Rural landscape as heritage encompasses physical attributes – the productive land itself, morphology, water, infrastructure, vegetation, settlements, rural buildings and centers, vernacular architecture, transport, and trade networks, etc. – as well as wider physical, cultural, and environmental linkages and settings. Rural landscape as heritage also includes associated cultural knowledge, traditions, practices, expressions of local human communities’ identity and belonging, and the cultural values and meanings attributed to those landscapes by past and contemporary people and communities. Rural landscapes as heritage encompass technical, scientific, and practical knowledge, related to human-nature relationships.

Rural landscapes as heritage are expressions of social structures and functional organizations, realizing, using and transforming them, in the past and in the present. Rural landscape as heritage encompasses cultural, spiritual, and natural attributes that contribute to the continuation of biocultural diversity.

All rural areas can be read as heritage, both outstanding and ordinary, traditional and recently transformed by modernization activities: heritage can be present in different types and degrees and related to many historic periods, as a palimpsest.

## **B Importance**

Rural landscapes have been shaped over millennia and represent significant parts of the earth's human and environmental history, ways of living, and heritage. Many areas of the world are vital sources of food, renewable natural resources, associated world view and wellbeing for local and indigenous communities, as well as for visitors and tourists. Landscapes used for the production and/or harvesting of plant and animal species, including edible resources, demonstrate the entangled connections between humans and other species across broad areas. The diversity of agricultural, forest, animal husbandry, fishery and aquaculture, wild-resource, and other resource practices is essential for the future adaptation and resilience of global human life.

The heritage values of rural landscapes are recognised in some heritage inventories, such as the UNESCO World Heritage List as '*continuing cultural landscapes*'. The values may be recognised in regional, national, and local heritage inventories and protected area regimes. Identification of rural landscapes values at any level aims to provide awareness of rural landscapes' tangible and intangible characters and values, and is the first and necessary step to promote the sustainable conservation of such areas and transmission of their associated knowledge and cultural meanings to future generations.

## **C Threats**

Increasing human populations and climate change make rural landscapes vulnerable to risks of loss and/or abandonment or radical change. The threats to rural landscapes reflect three inter-related types of change:

- 1 Demographic and cultural (population growth in urban areas and depopulation in rural areas, urban expansion, intensive infrastructure works, development pressures, loss of traditional practices, techniques, local knowledge, and cultures);
- 2 Structural (globalization, change and growth of trade and relations, economic growth or decline, intensification of agricultural practices and techniques, change of land and loss of native pastures and of domesticated species diversity);
- 3 Environmental (climate change, pollution and environmental degradation including non-sustainable resource mining, impacts on soil, vegetation, and air quality, and loss of biodiversity and agro-biodiversity).

## **D Challenges**

Heritage should play a significant role in the recognition, protection and promotion of rural landscapes and biocultural diversity due to the significant values it represents. Heritage can contribute to sustaining and increasing the adaptation and resilience of rural landscapes by supporting rural and urban inhabitants, local communities, governments, industries, and corporations as integral aspect to managing the dynamic nature, threats, risks, strengths, and potentialities of such areas. Conservation of the integrity and authenticity of the heritage should focus on assuring the standard and quality of living of local populations working and living in rural landscapes. As all heritage, rural heritage is an economic resource: its use should be appropriate and should provide vital support to its long-term sustainability.

## E Benefits

Rural landscapes are critical resources for the future of human society and the world environment: they provide food and raw materials as well as a sense of identity; they represent economic, spatial, environmental, social, cultural, spiritual, health, scientific, technical and, in some areas, recreational factors. In addition to food and raw materials, rural landscapes contribute to land conservation (nature, environment, soil, hydrographic networks) and the transmission of rural cultures (techniques, knowledge of environment, cultural traditions, etc.) to future generations. Rural landscapes often provide distinct economic and tourism benefits when closely associated with the communication and enhancement of their heritage values.

Over the past decades, environmental and cultural heritage have been the subject of increasing international, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research. Communities as knowledge-holders or local initiatives and collaboration among stakeholders, rural and urban inhabitants, and professionals have contributed to conservation, awareness, and enhancement of rural landscapes as a valuable shared resource. Many international, national, and local public administrations have supported this idea through their legislation and policies.

## F Sustainability of rural landscapes

Many rural systems have proven to be sustainable and resilient over time. Various aspects of these systems can inform future management of rural activities and support conservation and improvement of biocultural diversity and peoples' rights to adequate quantities and good quality of food and raw materials.

As landscapes undergo continuous, irreversible, and inevitable processes of transformation, rural landscape policies should focus on managing acceptable and appropriate changes over time, dealing with conserving, respecting, and enhancing heritage values.

## 2 ACTION CRITERIA

Specific measures are: understand, protect, sustainably manage the transformation, communicate and transmit landscapes and their heritage values.

### A Understand rural landscapes and their heritage values

- 1 **Recognise that all rural landscapes have heritage values**, whether assessed to be of outstanding or ordinary values, and that such heritage values will vary with scale and character (shapes, materials, uses and functions, time periods, changes).
- 2 **Document the heritage values of rural landscapes** as a basis of effective planning, decision-making, and management. Inventories, catalogues, atlases and maps provide basic knowledge of rural landscapes to spatial planning, environmental and heritage protection and management tools, landscape design and monitoring.
- 3 **Develop base-line knowledge of the physical and cultural characteristics of rural landscapes**: the status of the rural landscape today; its historical transformations and expressions of tangible and intangible heritage; historic, inherited, and contemporary socio-cultural perceptions of the landscape; past and present links (spatial, cultural, social, productive, and functional) between all elements (natural and human-made, material and immaterial) of rural landscape systems; and the stakeholders involved in both their past and present. Inventorying and cataloguing aim to describe rural landscapes in the current state but also to identify changes over time.

- 4 **Inventory and catalogue rural landscapes at all scales** (world, regional, national, local). These tools should integrate local, traditional and scientific knowledge and use systematic methods that are readily achievable and suitable for use by both specialists and non-specialists in all countries in order to collect and compare rural landscapes internationally and locally. In order to achieve an effective database, inventorying and cataloguing activities should consider complexity, costs of human resources, timing of data collection and organisation, and involve both experts and local inhabitants.
- 5 **Develop knowledge to enable comparison of rural landscapes at all levels** (world, regional, national, local), monitoring historical changes to rural landscapes and support shared learning and collaboration from local to global scales and among all public and private stakeholders.
- 6 **Recognize local populations as knowledge-holders** who in many cases help to shape and maintain the landscape and should be involved to the building of collective knowledge.
- 7 **Promote extensive and ongoing cooperation among public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and universities** for research, information sharing, technical assistance, and coordination of a wide variety of knowledge building activities at all administrative levels.

## **B Protect rural landscapes and their heritage values**

- 1 **Review and implement legal and policy frameworks** to ensure biocultural sustainability and resilience in use and transformation of rural landscapes with respect to global, national, local threats, risks and opportunities.
- 2 **Implement policies** via laws, rules, economic strategies, governance solutions, information sharing, and cultural support. The complex character of rural landscapes necessitates development of both specific and cross-sectoral policies that consider broad cultural, social, economic, and environmental factors.
- 3 **Define strategies and actions of dynamic conservation, repair, innovation, adaptive transformation, maintenance, and long term management.** These should seek to balance global and local approaches, and ensure the involvement and cooperation of all stakeholders and communities in their effective design and daily management.
- 4 **Consider that rural landscape heritage values are economic, social, environmental, cultural, spiritual and spatial** and that awareness of the values of each rural landscape enables the management of appropriate and effective future transformations.
- 5 **Prepare effective policies** based on informed local and other knowledge of the landscapes, their strengths and weaknesses, as well as potential threats and opportunities. Define objectives and tools. Programme actions with regard to long, medium, and short-term management goals.
- 6 **Define monitoring strategies** to review the effectivity of implemented policies and reassess short, medium and long term goals, related to the monitoring results.
- 7 **Consider that effective policy implementation** is dependent on an informed and engaged public, on their support for required strategies and involvement on actions. It is essential to complement all other actions. Public administrations should support proactive and bottom-up initiatives.



## C Sustainably manage rural landscapes and their heritage values

- 1 **Consider bio-cultural rights within food and natural resource production.** Implement planned management approaches that acknowledge the dynamic, living nature of landscapes and respect human and non-human species living within them. Respect, value, and support the diversities of cultures and various peoples' approaches to nature.
- 2 **Recognize key stakeholders of rural landscapes, including rural inhabitants,** and the local, indigenous, and migrant communities with connections and attachments to places, their role in shaping and maintaining the landscape, as well as their knowledge of natural and environmental conditions, past and present events, local cultures and traditions, and scientific and technical solutions trialed and implemented over the centuries. Acknowledge that the good standard and quality of living for rural inhabitants enables strengthening of rural activities, rural landscapes, and transmission and continuity of rural practices and cultures.
- 3 **Consider the connections between cultural, natural, economic, and social aspects** across large and small landscapes, in the development of sustainable management strategies for rural landscapes as heritage resource.
- 4 **Consider the interconnections between rural and urban landscapes.** Rural landscapes are a resource for urban inhabitants' quality of life (recreation, food quality and quantity, firewood, water and clean air quality, food gardening, etc.) in all metropolitan areas of the world. Urban areas can provide economic opportunities for rural landscape products and integrated other activities as recreation, education, agritourism, demanded by citizens (multifunctionality). Cooperation between rural, peri-urban, and urban inhabitants should be actively encouraged and practiced, both in sharing knowledge of rural landscapes' heritage and the responsibilities for their management.
- 5 **Find a balance** between long-term sustainable (economic, social, cultural, environmental) resource use and heritage conservation, and the short-term needs of rural workers' quality of living, which is a prerequisite for the continuation of activities that generate and sustain rural landscapes. Quality of living consists of both income and social appreciation, provision of public services including education, recognition of culture rights, etc. This requires finding appropriate ways and solutions in which living heritage values can be recognized so that change and adaptation are to be compatible with the conservation, use, and communication of heritage values, as well as with the economic enhancement of rural landscape heritage.
- 6 **Support the equitable governance of rural landscapes,** including and encouraging the active engagement of local populations, stakeholders, and rural and urban inhabitants, in both the knowledge of, and responsibilities for, the management and monitoring of rural landscape as heritage. Because many rural landscapes are a mosaic of private, corporate, and government ownership, collaborative working relationships are necessary.

## D Communicate and transmit the heritage and values of rural landscapes

- 1 **Communicate awareness** of the heritage values of rural landscapes through collaborative participatory actions, such as shared learning, education, capacity building, heritage interpretation and research activities. Develop participatory plans and practices that involve civil society, private organizations, public authorities, and amongst both urban and rural inhabitants.
- 2 **Increase awareness** of the means and methods for transmission of traditional and technical knowledge and practices and develop case studies to do so and disseminate best practices.

- 3 **Support shared learning, training, and research** using diverse tools, approaches and cultural practices, including cultural mapping, information-sharing, education, and on-site training involving stakeholders, such as local communities, heritage specialists, professionals of various disciplines, schools and universities, and the media.

**NOTE:** The document is promoted by *ICOMOS-IFLA International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes (World Rural Landscapes Initiative [www.worldrurallandscapes.org](http://www.worldrurallandscapes.org) )*