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Section II: Vulnerabilities within the Settings of Monuments & Sites
Understanding the Threats & Defining Appropriate Responses

*The Evolving Concept of Cultural Landscapes as Settings:
From the Athens & Venice Charters to the
2004 Combined World Heritage Criteria*

Patricia M. O'Donnell, FASLA, AICP, Principal
Heritage Landscapes Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners

INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUE OF SETTING AS CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

This paper explores the evolving thinking and approach to the settings of protected monuments as seen in international and national charters, declarations, preservation standards and guidelines over the past seven decades. Looking at specifically at conventions, charters, and advisory guidance addressing settings, from the viewpoint of how cultural landscapes of value are considered, provides a specific and revealing viewpoint on the issue of settings, which are often larger landscapes surrounding the cultural monument. This effort to trace conservation and preservation declaration concerning urban and rural cultural landscapes as settings seeks to respond to the questions:

- Do ICOMOS Charters and Guidelines give sufficient guidance on settings?
- How can the appraisal of settings address the dynamic as well as static nature of settings?
- How do we improve, develop and implement legislative, regulatory, administrative or management measures to address the needs for protection and adequate control of settings of monuments, sites and other types of heritage places?
- Do World Heritage Management Plans have wider application as a means of protecting setting?

From the outset, it is important to define both setting and cultural landscape as they are accepted terms and as used in this paper. In accordance with the UNESCO Convention of 1972 addressing World Heritage considers cultural assets to include monuments, groups of buildings and sites. The setting for these cultural assets that have a defined boundary related to their history and cultural value is the presumed to be the immediate surrounds beyond that boundary. The dimensions of the setting, how far it extends beyond the protected heritage property, are often vague and require site-specific definition. The accepted international definition of cultural landscape, as set forth in 1992¹, groups these cultural properties into three groups:

- Designed landscapes
- Evolved landscape, both relict and continuing
- Associative landscapes

¹ World Heritage Operational Guidelines, Cultural Landscapes definitions, Santa Fe, 1992

The setting around a protected heritage resource, be it monument, building, group of buildings or site, is often an unprotected urban, suburban or rural cultural landscape. For World Heritage property management plans, the setting is most often defined as the buffer zone around the protected cultural resource that is contiguous to it. However, in the case of many resources, there are non-contiguous areas that function as setting as well as contiguous ones. For example, a recent visual study of an important cathedral², demonstrated that from considerable distances beyond the city boundary the view of the church spire was iconic. By valuing that iconic view, guidelines for development within the Cathedral viewshed were recommended to limit high constructions that would compete with the church spire. This points out that settings for heritage properties are sometimes at a distance from the primary resource and its defined boundary. This more distant setting may be an area or sequence of points where the views and vistas toward the resource are framed that requires careful study to define and then to protect.

For protection of heritage properties in our practice at Heritage Landscapes we find in general that four types of tools can be applied to preservation and conservation efforts to varying degrees, based on the project objectives. These four groups of tools are often referred to in international and national cultural resources protection documents in more or less comprehensive and explicit ways. The groups of tools are:

1. Legislative and Regulatory Tools
2. Advisory tools or Plans
3. Educational Tools
4. Financial Tools

The international, regional and national conventions, declarations, guidelines and the like, serve as components of the first two sets of tools and can serve in the third group to raise awareness. These are, therefore, useful constructs for ongoing heritage protection that can best serve the preservation community and the larger populace when they are in fact, used. Therefore, an assessment of what guidance they offer, can add to their usefulness.

This chronological examination of heritage documents aids in gaining an understanding of the evolving concept of *setting* as an important element of protection of the heritage values of a protected resource.³ There is a basic lack of clarity inherent in focusing on the setting as cultural landscape that requires explicit consideration as the various charters and guidance are reviewed and assessed. That is the confusion of setting as stated to often mean the cultural landscape as the setting for the protected cultural resource which is often implied, especially in earlier guidance, to mean a tightly defined monument listed as a World Heritage property or a national registered heritage resource. This is confusing when a site or more recently a cultural landscape are terms used to refer to a larger protected cultural resource and, this larger resource also has a setting beyond its defined boundary. This issue is partially about language but also about clarity of language and conceptions of cultural resources at the time these documents were framed.

There is also an important issue of the level of protection of the defined setting that can be carried out effectively in the real world. The setting, beyond the target cultural resources, may

² Presentation at Vienna UNESCO meeting on World Heritage cities and modern architecture, May, 2005.

³ The author is particularly indebted to landscape architect, Carmen Anon Feliu, for the work she carried out to edit and bring to publication *Culture and Nature: International legislative texts referring to the safeguard of natural and cultural heritage*, 2003 and also grateful for the many expert meetings, conferences activated by and papers and expertise presented by Mechtild Rossler, chief of Europe and North America Unit, UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

require controls to provide the desired and appropriate visual, physical and tactile context for the heritage resources but these contiguous or distant surrounds may gain little in serving as this needed and important setting. This further complexity arises when considering setting as an area to be subject to controls on behalf of the preservation of the defined cultural resources.

A. ATHENS CHARTER, 1931

In 1931 the Athens Charter set forth an international declaration for the protection of cultural monuments throughout the world.⁴ This charter focused on identification and properly guided curation and restoration of monuments with a bias in the language toward monumental buildings and sculptures. The specific term setting was not used in the Athens Charter however surroundings was used. This charter contains statements on the aesthetics of the surrounding areas of ancient monuments calling for care in the development of constructions near them citing that “surroundings should be given special consideration”. Surroundings were to be preserved with picturesque intent avoiding power poles, signs, and other distracting elements and ornamental vegetation around monuments was to “given special study” to preserve the “ancient character” of the monuments.

B. VENICE CHARTER, 1964

The 1964 Venice Charter⁵ text opens with a focus on ancient monuments as a common heritage and a shared responsibility. This charter indicates a bias for architecture as the monument but includes the setting in Article 1 stating that “The concept of an historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or an historic event.” The setting is defined as important but secondary to the designated historic monument. While principally addressing the importance of the preservation of monuments and the broad international interest in this work the charter sets forth guidance for proper safeguarding and intervention on behalf of preservation. There are three additional articles, 6, 7 and 14, use the term “setting” as an element of the text to address the surrounds of the cultural property

Article 6. The conservation of a monument implies preserving a setting, which is not out of scale. Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept. No new construction, demolition or modification, which would alter the relation of mass and color, must be allowed.

Article 7. A monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in which it occurs. The moving of all or part of a monument cannot be allowed except where the safeguarding of that monument demands it or where it is justified by national or international interests of paramount importance.

⁴ **Error! Main Document Only.** Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments, 1931. Resolution Adopted by the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation on July 23rd, 1932, noted “That States acting in accordance with the League of Nations Covenant should establish closer and more concrete co-operation with each other for the purpose of ensuring the conservation of monuments and works of art”.

⁵ The 2nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments met in Venice from May 25th to 31st 1964, and approved the text of the Venice Charter.

Article 14. The sites of monuments must be the object of special care in order to safeguard their integrity and ensure that they are cleared and presented in a seemly manner. The work of conservation and restoration carried out in such places should be inspired by the principles set forth in the foregoing articles.

Specific issues of setting are noted in these excerpts without defining setting in a comprehensive manner. Monuments should not be moved so that they are divorced from their historic surrounds, neither should the scale of the setting change, nor construction. Losses or modifications of setting be allowed. Curiously the final reference indicates that sites should be “cleared and presented in a seemly manner” which implies aesthetically directed changes to the setting. The guidance regarding setting as set forth in the Venice Charter appears to be inadequate to thoroughly define, protect or determine protection measures for the settings of monuments. While setting as discussed appears to imply landscape and buildings around the ancient monument, the terms landscape and/or cultural landscape do not appear in the text of this charter.

C. *FLORENCE CHARTER, 1981*

The joint ICOMOS-IFLA International Committee for Historic Gardens took up to topic of designed landscapes in Florence in 1981. The preservation of historic gardens had not yet been codified until that date and previous charters had not specifically noted either gardens, landscapes of cultural landscapes except in the generic terms of surrounds or setting.⁶ The subject of the charter was narrowly defined in Article 1 as “An historic garden is an architectural and horticultural composition of interest to the public from the historical or artistic point of view. As such, it is to be considered as a monument.” No use of the terms setting or cultural landscape appears in the Florence Charter. This charter was conceived as an addendum to the Venice Charter addressing the value of historic gardens as monuments in and of themselves. In Article 6 historic garden is noted as “applicable to small gardens and to large parks, whether formal or landscape”, presumably with landscape meaning the informal style of design. Interestingly, the components of “architectural composition” an historic garden, also defined as a larger landscape were listed in Article 4 to include

- Plan and its topography
- Vegetation, including its species, proportions, color schemes, spacing and respective height
- Structural and decorative features
- Water, running or still, reflecting the sky

There was no specific mention of views and visual relationships except in terms of the implied relationships of an architectural composition. It is instructive to compare this list to the longer and more comprehensive list in current use in cultural landscape preservation practice in the United States.⁷ The character-defining features are identified and enumerated as a series of interrelated, unique aspects of the cultural landscape as:

⁶ The ICOMOS-IFLA International Committee for Historic Gardens, met in Florence on 21 May 1981 and drew up a charter on the preservation of historic which was registered by ICOMOS 15 December 1982.

⁷ The Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, 1996, and a number of other United States sources refer to these elements as the character-defining features of a landscape. See the

- *Spatial Organization and Land Patterns*—The three-dimensional organization and patterns of spaces in the landscape, land uses and visual relationships, shaped by both cultural and natural features; the uses of the land and the views and visual relationships that organize the landscape as defined by topography, vegetation, circulation, built elements, and often a combination of these character-defining features to create the overall patterns of the landscape. When the cultural landscape includes a single building or several buildings, the spatial organization and overall character of the landscape is affected by these structures and these affects are studied and presented.
- *Natural Systems*—The ecological, biotic and aquatic systems in situ on the ground today, and the evolution of these systems under climate, natural event and human influence.
- *Topography*—The shape of the ground plane and its height or depth; topography occurs naturally and as a result of human manipulation.
- *Vegetation*—Vegetation cover and groups of plants, individual plants, agricultural fields, planting beds, formal or informal tree groves, woodland, meadow, or turf.
- *Circulation*—May include roads, drives, trails, walks, paths, parking areas individually sited or linked to form a network or system. Alignment, width, surface and edge treatment and materials contribute to the character of circulation features.
- *Water Features, Surface Drainage*—May be aesthetic as well as functional components of the landscape and typically include fountains, pools, cascades, irrigations systems, ponds, lakes, streams, aqueducts and surface drainage patterns.
- *Non-habitable Structures, Site Furnishings & Objects*—Structures are non-habitable, constructed features such as walls, bridges, secondary buildings, arbors, gazebos, terraces, steps and fences.

In terms of applying these character-defining features, a further process is generally undertaken to identify the component landscapes or landscape units. It is useful to identify, organize and define the character of the property by delineating a logical series of landscape units each with a distinct, identifiable character. Within the natural, constructed, and legal boundaries of the property, units having particular character emerge based on land use, spatial organization, views and visual relationships, topography, vegetation, circulation, structures, site objects, etc. Boundaries of landscape units may be loosely delineated by vegetation or slopes or clearly defined by physical features such as a wall, path, or road. Some of these features remain constant while others change over time. The character of the unit is part of the character of the property as a whole. Identifying and defining these areas or units clarifies the spatial organization of the property and facilitates a clearer understanding of the historic evolution of the property.

The Florence Charter refers to the unity of a garden with a building and the environment in Article 7 stating that the garden is “an inseparable complement” and “cannot be isolated from its own particular environment, whether urban or rural, artificial or natural.” This concept of the environment around the garden is further articulated in Article 14, which states

Article 14: The historic garden must be preserved in appropriate surroundings.
Any alteration to the physical environment, which will endanger the ecological

equilibrium, must be prohibited. These applications are applicable to all aspects of the infrastructure, whether internal or external (drainage works, irrigation systems, roads, car parks, fences, care-taking facilities, visitors' amenities, etc).

The concept of surroundings is noted here and characterized as “appropriate” and notes in parentheses a series of modern improvements that may further that language indicates a value being placed on retaining the environment around the garden as it exists in order to avoid changes and potential damage to the garden and the ecology that may result. This article places the historic garden in a larger frame. One direction toward addressing the control of that surrounds or larger setting is discussed in Article 23 where “appropriate legal and administrative measures for the identification, listing and protection of historic gardens” and the provision of a “framework of land-use plans” at the local or regional level are advised to insure the preservation of the historic garden, that, if of universal value, would be inscribed on the World Heritage list.

The Florence Charter was an important document for its time placing historic gardens firmly in the realm of valued cultural resources. The constructs for addressing the setting of the garden or landscape are more fully developed than those cited in the Athens and Venice Charters but still limited in terms of the understanding of setting as developed in some cases in current practice and in particular in exemplary planning and management documents that fully consider the surrounds of heritage properties.

D. WORLD HERITAGE CULTURAL LANDSCAPES DEFINED, 1992

Further after considerable international debate and expert meetings the World Heritage Operational Guidelines were amended in 1992 to include *cultural landscapes* and it is apparent that this addition has been instrumental in focusing on the universal value of the combined works of humanity and nature. Cultural landscapes in three categories are provided in the 1992 guidance. These are, as simply described by the author

1. Designed landscapes, generally developed under design principles or in a recognized style at a specific time by a professional or amateur
2. Evolved landscapes either continuing or relict—continuing evolved landscapes are places that have acquired heritage value over time through the actions of many persons and continue to evolve today
3. Associative landscapes—are places of spiritual meaning, inspirations for art and literature, these social and communities meanings may or may not relate to a human imprint on the cultural landscape

These definitions are reasonably inclusive. They have aided in addressing the issue of universal values of cultural landscapes. Thirty-six evolved continuing or relict, designed and associative landscapes have received World Heritage listing between 1992 and 2003. These cultural resources are no longer confined to narrow thinking as isolated monuments but are defined as large areas of living culture where the scale of the designation has changed radically to include many acres/hectares of land with, in many cases. Multiple owners. However, even with this broadened context the question of the surrounds or setting are little addressed. The setting for a larger landscape may be considerably beyond the described boundary.

E. WORLD HERITAGE GUIDELINES MERGE CULTURE & NATURE, 2004

Reporting and reflections on World Heritage international and regional meetings addressing cultural landscapes since 1992 have again led to a shift. The recent developments in the IUCN categories of protected areas have been useful and important. In particular the 2004 revision of the World Heritage Operational Guidelines merging the cultural and natural criteria is a considerable shift toward integration of the variety of heritage resources in the world. The acceptance of integration may mean that some heritage properties are valued more highly for either their cultural or natural resources which is to be expected. However, this merging also aids in understanding the setting for heritage places in that these surrounds may express both cultural and natural values of their own.

F. CONCLUSION

This presentation will explore the evolution of charters and guidance on the issue of cultural landscapes from their consideration as secondary “settings” to the designation of cultural landscapes as World Heritage sites. Particular attention will be paid to the conception of settings within these documents. For this limited review of charters and guidelines, it appears that the concept of settings and their value in protecting heritage resources is not fully developed or clarified. Settings should not be seen only as a buffer or frame for heritage places, they should also be considered in their own right as places with specific character that evolved simultaneously with the heritage properties they relate to. Further thinking and a more complete expression of the importance of settings in terms of conceptual and spatial definition, planning and management approach, intervention and levels of acceptable change and other factors is needed in the future and will be addressed at this important congress.

Patricia M. O'Donnell, FASLA, AICP, is a US/ICOMOS member, served as Scientific Committee chair for the US/ICOMOS 7th International Symposium in 2004 and is a contributing member of the ICOMOS/IFLA Scientific Committee on Historic Gardens and Cultural Landscapes and a member of the IFLA Committee on Historic Gardens and Cultural Landscapes. She is principal and founder of Heritage Landscapes, Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners of Charlotte, Vermont and Norwalk, Connecticut. Since 1987, this professional firm has completed over 300 preservation projects addressing a variety of heritage landscape resources. She lives at Broad Reach Farm, Charlotte Vermont, USA, with Jim Donovan, her spouse.