



ICOMOS-IFLA International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes  
ICOMOS-IFLA Comité Scientifique International des Paysages Culturels  
ICOMOS-IFLA Comité Científico Internacional de Paisajes Culturales

## Statement on the Workshop on the Florence Charter

### Preamble

This statement is an outcome of the international workshop titled *The Florence Charter on Historic Gardens revisited: long term experience and new approaches*. The workshop took place in Florence, Italy, over three days (22-24 June 2016) and was promoted by the ICOMOS-IFLA International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes (ISCCL) and the *Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco*.

The purposes of the meeting were: (1) To review the content and contemporary application of the *ICOMOS-IFLA Florence Charter on Historic Gardens*; (2) To plan for new guidelines on Historic Gardens and/or Designed Cultural Landscapes in contemporary and diverse cultural contexts; and (3) To disseminate the proceedings of the meeting. The workshop comprised one day of presentations, one day of field visits to Historic Gardens (*Villa Medici, Villa Le Balze, La Petraia, Castello*), and one day of reflection and discussion.

This statement reflects the findings of the workshop and proposals for future directions with regard to the development of guidance and tools for the heritage conservation of gardens, Historic Gardens, and/or Designed Cultural Landscapes. The statement will be circulated to all ISCCL members, to ICOMOS Scientific Committee and Advisory Committee members, to IFLA Cultural Landscapes Committee members, and will be published on the website of the *Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco*.

### **1. We recognise that the 1981 Florence Charter on Historic Gardens is a document of its time and place.**

- The *Florence Charter on Historic Gardens* (the Florence Charter) was developed in a European context. Its scope was confined to Historic Gardens (that is, it does not refer to other forms of monuments or sites, or to cultural landscapes in general).
- The Charter was created in a particular historic moment (19-21 May 1981, Florence) following a series of meetings and discussions held over many years.
- The Florence Charter was the first international document to officially acknowledge Historic Gardens and the need for universal principles for their conservation and protection.

**2. We recognise that there are similarities and important differences between the Florence Charter and the *Carta Italiana*.**

- The *Carta dei Giardini Storici* of Italy (the *Carta Italiana*; 1981) was prepared in reaction to the Florence Charter.
- The two documents are different in principle and approach, have some differences in practice, and have different emphases.
- The two documents are in general agreement with regard to use, legal protection, inventory, and knowledge/appreciation. However, there are significant differences in the definitions used and the meanings and practices of protection, conservation-restoration-reconstruction, and maintenance. In particular, the *Carta Italiana* rejects the concept and any form of reconstruction.
- Since 1981, the Florence Charter has been used and applied in various ways by different countries and in different administrative and cultural contexts. In some jurisdictions the Florence Charter is not used at all while in some, though it is not used, it acts as a point of reference.

**3. We acknowledge the considerable shift in the meanings of heritage and in heritage philosophy and practice in the 35 years since 1981.**

- In 1981, the Florence Charter was seen as a definitive and universal statement on Historic Gardens that would be applicable to all times, situations, and heritage practitioners. Charters or doctrinal texts are no longer viewed in this way today.
- The Charter was based on different assumptions concerning the idea of heritage than exist today. For example, the definition of 'Historic Garden'; the changing nature of expertise; the role of communities; and the cultural context of authenticity. It also established ideas widely accepted today – for example, the importance of 'ordinary' heritage alongside outstanding heritage. Furthermore, contemporary heritage practice recognises worthiness of conservation treatment based on cultural and natural significance more than solely the age of a garden.
- Historic Gardens versus Designed Cultural Landscapes: How are they different and what are the overlaps? Are Historic Gardens a subset of Designed Cultural Landscapes?

**4. We recognise a need for a preliminary evaluation of the Florence Charter on Historic Gardens.**

- There is value in developing a brief commentary for each article of the Florence Charter. The purpose of such work is to recognise the changing theory and practices of heritage and also to identify those articles that continue to have currency.
- A commentary document on the articles of the Florence Charter is to be prepared in the coming months and presented and discussed at the ISCCL 2016 Annual Meeting (Bath, UK; 7-9 September 2016).

**5. We recognise that caring for and safeguarding gardens is today a complex mix of processes and culturally diverse set of practices.**

- Identification, documentation, management (maintenance and intervention), and presentation are not easily separated in practice and are typically complementary processes and practices.
- Nevertheless, universal principles and common and agreed meanings are useful as 'anchor points' for collective understanding and discussion.

**6. We recognise the need for guidance and tools, including case studies.**

- The heritage management of Historic Gardens takes place within increasingly complex contexts that require consideration of not only conservation, but also, for example, wildlife protection, public access for different abilities, and public safety.
- Furthermore, safeguarding of significant Historic Gardens takes place in contexts wider than the garden itself, including in relation to urban and landscape planning instruments.
- Case studies are useful for recognising, understanding, and addressing different issues. Case studies can comprise existing examples and new examples illustrating particular issues and solutions.

**7. We recognise contemporary challenges with regard to sustainability (environmental, cultural, social, and economic) and the management of change in heritage landscapes.**

- Increasing human populations, urbanisation, and a changing climate make Historic Gardens vulnerable to risks of loss and/or abandonment. The threats to Historic Gardens reflect three inter-related orders of change: Demographic (population growth, development pressures, loss of traditional practices and techniques); Structural (globalization, competing administrative systems across jurisdictions); and Environmental (climate change, pollution, environmental degradation including impacts on soil, vegetation, water and air quality, loss of plant species diversity, plant diseases).
- Considering that change is part of the cultural significance of gardens, additional principles are needed to manage transformations and to define limits for appropriate transformations. We recognise that each situation is specific to its own time and place.

**8. We have identified and considered several options for new approaches to the treatment of Historic Gardens.**

- We will not change or add to the original Florence Charter.
- We express our preference for a new document that provides conservation principles and guidance for designed landscapes (including historic gardens and parks). The document should draw on a values-based approach to heritage conservation.

- The new document may comprise, for example, informal guidelines for all gardens and/or designed landscapes regardless of time period. The proposed document should not be static but be updateable.
- We draw attention to Annex 3 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, which concerns cultural landscapes, but note that discussion of designed landscapes (a category of cultural landscape) is lacking entirely.<sup>1</sup> We would wish to investigate the possibilities of a review of the Annex 3 text by the ICOMOS-IFLA ISCCL, in collaboration with ICOMOS and UNESCO, in order to address this current omission.

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<sup>1</sup> We note that the ISCCL is currently undertaking work on Historic Urban Public Parks, a specific form of defined (or designed) cultural landscapes, as well as on World Rural Landscapes, which are typically recognised as continuing cultural landscapes.