

1st International Conference for the Alliance of World Heritage Cultural Landscapes

Aranjuez, 13-15 December 2007

THE ARANJUEZ DECLARATION

In Spain, Aranjuez, city promoting this initiative, is to date the only city declared a World Heritage Cultural Landscape since 2001.

In Portugal, Sintra was declared, in 1995, the First World Heritage Cultural Landscape by the UNESCO in Europe.

Since then, 60 cities, natural spaces, gardens or regions have received this title, this award and this important responsibility.

During these past few days, thanks to the sincere and generous participation of everyone, some of the problems and difficulties have been brought to light, problems and difficulties that are often common to us all and bring us together. However, a demand - almost a cry for help - has also been put on the table.

The public asset managers, the politicians or the heritage managers show their concern as regards dealing with issues that arise from the management of assets declared World Heritage by the UNESCO.

We believe, based on the agreed assumption that all the Cultural Landscapes have their own specificity, that there exists two basic tasks that should be carried out jointly with the World Heritage Centre:

- Classification of the types, in the broadest sense, of the problems derived from the Declaration itself;
- A methodology with which to deal with the different types of problems.

Obviously, this means greater dedication by all and increased work following the Declaration by the UNESCO, but it is also clear that it is precisely afterwards that the problems arise.

The UNESCO, quite rightly, seeks to preserve, together with the local authorities, an Asset that is the collective memory of a country and of humanity.

All in all, and with exception to those monuments with a profile that consists of giving historical testimony of a specific era in history, heritage should revert in benefit of the local population, which expects - almost demands - that the primary consequence of the Declaration be its repercussions in development, in a higher level of economy, and in a better quality of life.

We know that development, in relation to heritage, presents two aspects, on one hand, one of increased wellbeing and on the other, one of preservation; however, it should be possible to bring both together harmoniously if sustainability criteria are properly applied.

Our politicians must fulfil the proposals submitted in their programmes, precisely because our cities are growing, they are expanding and we do not believe that the UNESCO seeks to maintain static societies destined to become immobile.

Therefore, in order to walk hand in hand, we need to have basic rules for managing Cultural Heritage, be it a building, a landscape or an intangible element.

We know that we have to present a Management Plan, but in most cases we should receive help in drafting it with a wide perspective of the future, in the medium to long term, and without the immediacy that tempts us all becoming a prioritising factor.

Likewise, from this perspective, consideration should be given to the best way of generating culture within the population so that the people can value their own heritage: one can only value that which one knows.

It is in this context where one of the critical points of management and its proposals are to be found, due to the close relationship between culture and development. We cannot ignore the fact that most of our countries, including the Cultural Landscapes, are in the rural environment. The inertia of the city population takes a large part of the values for which the Declaration was granted out of the local original and traditional context, particularly due to the incidence of the external markets in the economic activity.

Consequently, the same rule cannot be established for all the Landscapes, as the action, cultural, economic and social phases are different and, therefore, the proposals for the future must, necessarily, be different.

The ARANJUEZ DECLARATION seeks to be, in this context, a formal cry for help and a call for attention from the UNESCO in three specific areas.

- **We request** that the World Heritage Centre organises differentiated seminars for politicians and managers in the area of best practices, thus contributing to consolidate in the future a more coherent philosophy among the civilisations and the cultures that we seek to preserve and develop.
- **We point out** the risks of increasing, in the context of globalisation, the north-south differentiation, not only in Europe, but also in the world in general and most specifically in the Mediterranean basin. For this reason, we would like to see around the table in coming meetings the representatives of the Cultural Landscapes in the Arab world and have them share with us their experiences and difficulties in managing their heritage.
- **We demand** the implication, complicity and commitment of the scientific and academic world in all actions carried out by those in charge of Cultural Landscapes, in order to maintain and improve the World Heritage and guarantee the sustainability of our territories.

Finally, all that remains is to declare that this Alliance comes from a deep-seated need to respond in a serious and authentic manner to the demands of the local population and the obligations arising from the privilege, but also from the commitment assumed with the Declaration of World Heritage.

Thus, the ARANJUEZ/SINTRA DECLARATION becomes an express demand for mutual collaboration between the UNESCO, and the World Heritage Cultural Landscapes.

Signed in Aranjuez (Spain), on 15 December 2007

The Promoter Group
Aranjuez (Spain)

Sintra (Portugal)

Eivissa (Spain)