

Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems 482

Francesco Calabrò

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María José Piñeira Mantiñán *Editors*

New Metropolitan Perspectives

Post COVID Dynamics: Green and Digital Transition, between Metropolitan and Return to Villages Perspectives

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Editors

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The ICOMOS Draft International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism (2021): Reinforcing Cultural Heritage Protection and Community Resilience Through Responsible and Sustainable Tourism Management. New Approaches to Global Policies, Challenges and Issues Concerning Cultural Heritage Preservation and Enjoyment Within Tourism

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Abstract. The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism decided to review the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter - Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance 1999 at its Annual Meeting in Florence in 2017. The main objective of the revision was to update this document to the developments experienced by heritage theory and tourism practice during the past twenty years. In October and November 2021 the Scientific Council and Advisory Committee of the organisation have approved the resulting ICOMOS Draft International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism (2021): Reinforcing cultural heritage protection and community resilience through responsible and sustainable tourism management in view of its adoption at the ICOMOS General Assembly in 2022. The main aim of this paper is to reflect on the long process for drafting and approving this Charter and on its new conceptual approaches. Both show the emerging trends affecting cultural heritage globally and allow delving on the main issues and subjects that will characterize the future of cultural heritage tourism management and its links with today's environmental, social and cultural challenges.

Keywords: Cultural heritage · Cultural tourism management · Resilience, adaptation, and mitigation · ICOMOS Standard Setting Texts · COVID-19

1 Introduction

This paper aims to disseminate and expand the debate on the *[Draft] ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism 2021: Reinforcing cultural heritage*

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protection and community resilience through responsible and sustainable tourism management summarising its approval process and new conceptual approaches to cultural heritage conservation within tourism¹. To do so we will delve into the reasons for the update of the previous ICOMOS International Charter on Cultural Tourism (1999), on the drafting evolution of the new one, on the impact that the COVID-19 has had on it, and on the main ideas behind its principles. We will use the Draft ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Tourism 2021 itself, and our experience as its coordinator, as the main basis of the paper since, due to the novelty of the document, there are no analysis about it yet.

Having the symposium and its ICOMOS Heritage Days' ethos and subjects in mind, the paper will particularly reflect on three subjects:

- The [Draft] ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism 2021 approach to the social, economic, cultural, and environmental issues that are currently and increasingly re-framing and re-orienting cultural tourism and heritage preservation: Sustainable development strategies and the SDGs, climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions, and the stakeholder-centred approach to heritage practice.
- The challenges for cultural heritage planning and management posed by global tourism uncertainty and recovery (between overtourism and tourism disruption), with a particular attention to heritage destinations' carrying capacity and communities resilience and adaptation.
- How can the [Draft] ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism 2021 future implementation contribute to transform the unsustainable and unfair aspects of the tricky relationships between tourism, cultural heritage preservation and communities wellbeing and to enhance the positive ones.

2 Why a New ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Tourism?

2.1 The Goals of the Review

The ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Cultural Tourism (ICTC) decided to review the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter - Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance 1999 to update it to current tourism evolution and problematics in its 2017 Annual Meeting and Scientific Symposium in Florence, which was devoted to that subject. To address pertinent issues and progress on the review a Charter Review Taskforce, coordinated by the author, was appointed.

The main reason for the review was the unprecedented growth experienced by tourism in the previous twenty years and the need to avoid ill planned and unmanaged tourism and mass tourism negative impacts on cultural heritage and communities. A very important

¹ The Draft Charter has been drafted by the ICOMOS International Committee on Cultural Tourism through a task force composed of the following members: Celia Martínez (Coordinator), Fergus Maclaren (President of the ICTC), Cecilie Smith-Christensen, Margaret Gowen, Jim Donovan, Ian Kelly, Sue Millar, Sofia Fonseca, Tomeu Deyá, Ananya Bhattacharya and Carlos Alberto Hiriart.

ethos of the review was also the necessity to stress and support the requirements of cultural heritage conservation and protection within tourism, requirements that are implicitly understood but generally poorly respected and developed within this activity. On the one hand, since 1999, cultural heritage has become a “must” for any kind of tourism and leisure activity incrementing visitation until unexpected levels. On the other hand, by 2017, heritage conservation, visitors and sustainability concepts have been extended, and citizen and communities’ demands and active involvement on heritage have constantly grown, all of which was demanding a general update of the document. There were a clear consensus that four main conditions were required to reach improvements concerning these aspects: 1) Pursuing a stronger cooperation among all actors concerned in tourism 2) Persuading the tourism industry to contribute to heritage preservation; 3) Fostering the identification and implementation of cultural heritage and communities’ carrying capacity indicators able to inform the management of visitors and destinations; 4) Enhancing capacity building concerning the requirements for cultural heritage protection, valorisation and participatory governance among all tourism stakeholders, decision makers and communities.

With these guiding ideas in mind, the four main objectives of the first two years of the revision were:

- To update the 1999 International Cultural Tourism Charter to include current trends in heritage identification, protection, dissemination and sustainable, participative and balanced development within its principles, enhancing the following: Equitable gender participation and benefit in the cultural tourism domain; Reinforcing support for all communities affected by/participating in cultural tourism; Climate action; Carrying capacity several dimensions and application to the management of visitors and destinations; Professionalization of heritage dissemination and interpretation within the tourism field; Conservation awareness among the tourism sector.
- To analyse and study the alignment of the resulting document with ICOMOS and other relevant organizations’ principles in this field: ICOMOS standard setting texts (ICOMOS s.d), UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2030 (UN 2015), UNWTO doctrine and recommendations (UNWTO 2019), UNESCO Sustainable Tourism Programme and its future Visitor Management Assessment Tool (VMAT) (UNESCO 2022), among others.
- To raise the understanding and level of awareness about the several degrees of tourism’s impact (positive and negative) on heritage properties and to encourage ICOMOS International Scientific Committees involvement in this process, as most of their thematic areas are impacted in some way or another by tourism.
- To support and empower ICOMOS members in efforts where tourism is a concern, reach a wider ICOMOS integration and alignment in the resulting document, and achieve a better understanding of current tourism problematics within ICOMOS and beyond.
- To produce an updated Charter able to confront the several complex and multi-layered facets of heritage preservation and visitor management and to enhance ICOMOS/ICTC credibility and relevance in a tourism and conservation scenario that has changed dramatically this century (and that was about to drastically change again).

The reasons and aims of the review and the progress made to update the 1999 International Cultural Tourism Charter were presented at the Scientific Council and Advisory Committee meetings during ICOMOS General Assemblies of 2017 in New Deli, 2018 in Buenos Aires, and 2019 in Marrakech. In the later, the first version of the review launched a debate on whether the result was a major or minor change of the original document. The ICOMOS Board decided that the proposed draft was a major change and that the reasons for the review were strong enough to draft a new charter according to present time problematics and characteristics of tourism, while maintaining the 1999 Charter as an historic and pioneer standard setting text of its time, still relevant in many of its principles. It was also decided that the document would be circulated and adopted according to article 10 of the Rules of Procedure of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS 2019: 8–9).

2.2 The Impact of the COVID-19: The Draft of a New Document

The Charter Review Taskforce circulated the revised draft among ICTC membership in November 2019 introducing its input in the second draft. We were ready for the first round of consultation with ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, National Committees, Working Groups and membership when the COVID-19 deeply impacted our lives, work, and heritage conservation practice worldwide.

The ICT Charter Review Taskforce decided not to circulate this second draft of the revision until the text would be updated to the new situation, taking into account COVID-19's huge global impact on tourism: restrictions on travel, the new tourism national and international trends, i.e. the unprecedented fall of international tourism arrivals, the rise of domestic and local tourism, citizens and tourists preference for rural, natural and open-spaces, new tourismophobia and its targets, the decline in tourism revenues and the subsequent effect on funding for conservation and job losses. COVID-19 also affected several key subjects of the Charter that had to be re-thought: mass tourism, cultural heritage visitation conditions, carrying capacity, limits of acceptable change, site interpretation and presentation, climate change, cultural tourism's positive and negative effects on heritage sites and communities, communities' involvement and profit from tourism, resilience and capacity of adaptation, etc. In addition, the first draft had a strong focus on mass tourism's negative impacts on cultural heritage conservation and significance, and on the need to better manage tourism, but COVID-19 unexpectedly changed the situation: it was thought to be the end of mass tourism in certain countries and it forced to re-designing the flows and management of visitors according to safety measures. The impacts of COVID-19 also led us to include cultural heritage sector respond to COVID-19 and the recommendations that ICOMOS and other organizations, such as UNESCO and the UNWTO, were developing to confront these challenges.

All in all, the shift of approach and the need to carefully regard the new priorities compelled us to delay the consultation and approval process for a year and to establish a Drafting Committee in charge of writing a new draft (see note n.1), circulating the document for comments and introducing the input received in a new draft. The second draft of the Charter was distributed among the ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, National Committees, Working Groups and membership, as well as among

some partner organizations, during April and May 2021. The third and final draft Charter has been substantially improved thanks to the input received from ICOMOS Italy, ICOMOS Finland, ICOMOS Australia, ICOMOS Norway, ICOMOS Venezuela, ICOMOS France and ICOMOS Spain; from the ICOMOS ISCs on Vernacular Architecture (CIAV), Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM), and on Training (CIF); from 12 individual ICOMOS members coming from all the regions of the world and from many other ISCs; and from 25 ICTC members. It has also been enriched by the input of several partner organizations: the IUCN TAPAS Group, the World Monuments Fund, the Cátedra UNESCO de Turismo Cultural Untref-Aammba (Argentina), the Romualdo del Bianco Foundation, and representatives of the UNESCO World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Programme, whose involvement show the importance of this Charter².

Finally, the [Draft] *ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism (2021): Reinforcing cultural heritage protection and community resilience through responsible and sustainable tourism management*, including an annexure of useful references and international recommendations, was distributed by the International Secretariat across ICOMOS and approved by the ICOMOS Scientific Council and Advisory Committee in October and November 2021 and by the ICOMOS Board in March 2022 in view of its adoption at the ICOMOS General Assembly in 2022.

3 The Draft ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism (2021): Reinforcing Cultural Heritage Protection and Community Resilience Through Responsible and Sustainable Tourism Management

3.1 Structure and Overview of the Charter

The [Draft] ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism (2021) (The Draft Charter from now on) consists of a preamble, three objectives, a section targeting its audience, a background and seven principles. It aims to be universally applicable, taking into account existing and future regional guidelines. To ensure language inclusivity, it is available in English, French and Spanish, with translations into Italian, Chinese Mandarin, Arabic, Portuguese, Danish and Norwegian in progress.

The preamble defines cultural heritage tourism as “all tourism activities in heritage places and destinations, including the diversity and interdependence of their tangible, intangible, cultural, natural, past and contemporary dimensions”. It recognizes heritage as a common resource, “understanding that the governance and enjoyment of these commons are shared rights and responsibilities”. It also addresses the intensified tourism use of cultural heritage places and destinations and increasing concerns about the degradation of cultural heritage along with social, ethical, cultural, environmental and economic rights issues associated with tourism (ICOMOS ICTC 2021: 1).

These questions are further developed in the background, which highlights that “when responsibly planned, developed and managed through participatory governance,

² The compilation of the input received was assisted by Lorenza Stanziano (ICOMOS Spain) through the ICTC Emerging Professional Mentorship Initiative (EPMI).

tourism can provide direct, indirect and induced benefits across all dimensions of sustainability. However, unmanaged growth in tourism has transformed many places throughout the world, leaving tourism-dependent communities significantly altered and less resilient” (Ibid: 3). This is mostly due to the phenomenon of mass tourism and ‘overtourism’, which, together with the widespread promotion, marketing and use of cultural heritage, have caused a pervasive congestion and unacceptable degradation of tangible and intangible heritage, with associated social, cultural and economic impacts. These include gentrification and the rapid and insensitive commodification, commercialization and overuse of local culture and heritage, which “have placed irreplaceable assets, communities and cultural integrity at risk and resulted in negative and disruptive effects”. Among the worst of these effects stand out the restrictions on rights of use, access to and enjoyment of cultural heritage by local people and visitors alike (Ibid).

The context within which these matters have been considered in the Draft Charter includes “the climate emergency, environmental degradation, conflicts, disasters, the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, mass tourism, digital transformation and technological developments” (Ibid). These issues show that there is a need and opportunity to “recalibrate the perpetual economic growth-based approach to tourism, recognizing and mitigating its unsustainable aspects” (Ibid). This is why the Draft Charter is formulated within the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN’s 2030 Agenda, the Climate action, and the right based approaches to participatory governance and cultural heritage management.

The Draft Charter aims to provide guidance for governments, decision makers within international, national and local government agencies, organizations, institutions and administrations, tour operators, tourism businesses, destination managers and marketing organizations, site management authorities, land-use planners, heritage and tourism practitioners, professionals, civil society and visitors, all of which share the responsibility to conduct cultural heritage tourism responsibly. It also aims to be a reference for educators, academics, researchers and students engaged with cultural heritage and tourism. It applies to the management of all cultural heritage properties and to the entire spectrum of their protection, conservation, interpretation, presentation and dissemination activities, since all are connected with, and influenced by, public use and visitation (Ibid: 2).

The main objective of the Draft Charter is to place the protection of cultural heritage and community rights at the heart of cultural heritage tourism policy and projects, by providing principles that will inform responsible tourism planning and management for cultural heritage protection, community resilience and adaptation. To do so it aims to align the work of cultural heritage and tourism stakeholders in the pursuit of positive transformative change, offering principles for regenerative tourism destination management that is conscious of heritage values, as well as their vulnerability and potential. It seeks the fair, ethical and equitable distribution of tourism benefits to and within host communities, contributing towards poverty alleviation and promoting the ethical governance of cultural heritage and tourism. To achieve these crucial aspirations, the seven principles of the Charter provide a framework for guidance on this subject that is not present in other documents concerning cultural heritage or tourism, calling for their integration into all aspects of cultural heritage tourism (Ibid).

We will deal with these principles, their conceptual innovations and their links with the global policies and problems affecting cultural heritage, tourism and life quality in the following section.

3.2 The Principles of the Charter: Global Policies and Problems Affecting Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Communities Wellbeing

- Principle 1: Place cultural heritage protection and conservation at the centre of responsible cultural tourism planning and management;
- Principle 2: Manage tourism at cultural heritage places through management plans informed by monitoring, carrying capacity and other planning instruments;
- Principle 3: Enhance public awareness and visitor experience through sensitive interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage;
- Principle 4: Recognize and reinforce the rights of communities, Indigenous Peoples and traditional owners by including access and engagement in participatory governance of the cultural and natural heritage commons used in tourism;
- Principle 5: Raise awareness and reinforce cooperation for cultural heritage conservation among all stakeholders involved in tourism;
- Principle 6: Increase the resilience of communities and cultural heritage through capacity development, risk assessment, strategic planning and adaptive management;
- Principle 7: Integrate climate action and sustainability measures in the management of cultural tourism and cultural heritage.

Principles 1, 2 and 5 stress that awareness and understanding of long-term protection and conservation requirements of heritage places is necessary in tourism planning and management. Cultural heritage is a significant resource for tourism and plays a major role in the attraction of travel, but its fragility and conservation requirements are insufficiently recognized. The aim of these principles is therefore to provoke a shift from the current focus on heritage tourist promotion and perpetual growth towards heritage tourism destination planning and visitor management through the carrying capacity and limits of acceptable change approaches. The most important innovations in this regard come from: 1) The call for the coordination between tourism planning and cultural heritage management across all levels of governance in order to identify, assess and avoid the adverse impacts of tourism on heritage fabric, integrity and authenticity. Heritage and Environmental Impact Assessments must inform the planning and development of tourism, going beyond the legal boundaries of cultural heritage properties to include infrastructure projects and management plans that might affect the integrity, authenticity, aesthetic, social and cultural dimensions of heritage places, including their settings, natural and cultural landscapes, host communities, biodiversity characteristics and the broader visual context. 2) The proposal to reinforce cooperation for heritage conservation within the tourism industry and other stakeholders, encouraging investors and enterprises to dedicate part of their revenues to this aim and to the responsible enhancement and promotion of less visited heritage places. Tourism' revenues must provide benefits to local communities and be collected and allocated in a transparent, fair, equitable and accountable manner making visitors aware of their contribution to cultural heritage funding and maintenance. 3) The identification of the several dimensions of carrying capacity

(physical, ecological, social, cultural and economic) and their monitoring through ad hoc indicators. The monitoring of these indicators has to guide destination planning, the flows and management of visitors and the set up of site specific actions to limit group sizes, time group access, restrict entry, close sensitive areas, restrict or increase opening hours, zone compatible activities, require advance bookings, regulate traffic and/or undertake other forms of supervision.

Principle 3 proposes several measures to conduct the interpretation and presentation of heritage sites professionally and within an appropriate certification framework, bearing in mind that they are key to increasing site awareness and resolving possible conflicts and needs. Interpretation and presentation have to be inclusive and based on “interdisciplinary research, including the most up-to-date science and the knowledge of local peoples and communities” (Ibid: 8). They also have to address “conservation and community rights, issues and challenges, so that visitors and tourism operators are made aware that they must be respectful and responsible when visiting and promoting heritage” (Ibid). Interpretation methods should not detract from the authenticity of the place, but they can use appropriate, stimulating and contemporary forms of education and training, networks, social media and technologies, including augmented reality and virtual reconstructions based on scientific research (Ibid).

Principles 4 and 6 go beyond the 1999 International Cultural Tourism Charter focus on communities’ participation to claim for the participatory governance of heritage commons. This fosters a shift of approach to this subject, which is consistent with ICOMOS current priority to emphasize right and people centred approaches to cultural heritage (ICOMOS 2017) and based on the principle of free, prior and informed consent’ (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007). This means the inclusion of all types of communities in cultural tourism decision-making, taking into account the diverse and often opposing interests of experts, professionals, host communities and tourists, as well as a wide range of local, economic and political actors. As a result, capacity building in the field of cultural heritage and responsible tourism for all these kind of communities and actors needs to be urgently strengthened so that their participatory management is real, fair, balanced and able to increase and defend heritage preservation. Capacity building should also aim to “increase the ability of communities to foresee and reduce risks and to make informed decisions concerning cultural heritage management and tourist use of resources to minimize the negative societal and economic impacts of disruption or intensification of use” (Ibid: 11). This is particularly important considering “disruptions affecting tourism, ongoing systemic and pervasive global problems and emergent risks, all of which demand to enhance the resilience, adaptive and transformative capacities of communities to deal with future challenges related to climate change, loss of biodiversity and/or calamities that affect cultural heritage” (Ibid). In addition, tourism planning has to engage with and apply extensively heritage impact assessment (HIAs), environmental impact assessment (EIAs) and other relevant risk assessments, as well as mitigation and reduction measures which involve all stakeholders. An special consideration should also be paid to design models for assessing climate change impacts on cultural heritage, “which will become increasingly important in the future” (Ibid).

Finally, and conscious that climate emergency is an existential threat to the planet and the civilization “that jeopardizes cultural and natural heritage and threatens the livelihoods and wellbeing of people across the world” (Ibid: 12), Principle 7 focuses on reducing climate change impacts of tourism and to support the implementation of the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals dealing with tourism and cultural and natural heritage. This is a “shared responsibility of governments, tour operators, tourism businesses, destination managers and marketing organizations, site management authorities, land-use planners, heritage and tourism professionals, civil society and visitors”. Consequently “tourism and visitor management must contribute to effective carbon and greenhouse gas reduction, waste management, reuse, recycling, energy and water conservation, green transport and infrastructures” (Ibid). Other interesting and still scarcely implemented proposal is to including messages about climate impacts on cultural heritage preservation within the presentation and interpretation of heritage places open to the public, making use of innovative technologies if appropriate (Ibid).

4 Conclusions

The main conceptual shifts and contributions of the [Draft] ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism 2021 are based on an aspirational desire of placing cultural heritage at the center of tourism activity, regarding it from the perspective of heritage commons and responsible management. Also on the reorientation from sustainable development towards responsible tourism management and collective and individual wellbeing, all of which depends highly of the humanity’s ability to urgently stop climate change. These changes imply going beyond the purely economic dimension of development to base the assessment of cultural heritage tourism success in its effects on life quality, cultural heritage preservation and environmental awareness.

The Draft Charter demands the participatory governance of cultural heritage used by tourism considering ICOMOS itself as a community that defends a more humanistic, fair, solidary and sensible approach to tourism. Overall, it calls and provide principles “for transformative change towards a regenerative development paradigm that recalibrates the perpetual economic growth-based approach to cultural tourism” (Ibid: 4). As the background of the 2021 Charter notes “Any cultural tourism strategy must accept that cultural heritage protection, social responsibility and ‘sustainability’ are not merely options or brand attributes, but rather necessary commitments and, in fact, a competitiveness asset. In order to remain successful and sustainable in the long term, cultural tourism proponents must put this commitment into practice and become a force that supports community resilience, responsible consumption and production, human rights, gender equality, climate action, and environmental and cultural heritage conservation” (Ibid: 3).

COVID-19 has had a great influence on the Draft Charter, emphasising these conceptual changes that were on progress before the tourism collapse and accelerating the need to deal with them. As stressed by the principle 6 of the Charter, the massive decline in tourist activities due to the Covid 19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of many heritage places and the communities hosting cultural tourism, demonstrating that tourism must actively contribute to recovery, resilience, heritage conservation and life

quality, and that heritage places and host communities must consider adaptation options (Ibid: 10). In fact, the pandemic suggested the advent of a new world and a regenerative and responsible tourism, which was contradicted by the first postCOVID-19 recovery and increasing numbers of visitors in the always same and unchanged most famous cultural destinations, and in rural and natural landscapes too. This apparent return to mass visits to the always crowded heritage sites, together with the restrictions, obstacles and uncertainty that the new variants could impose again, show that the disease and/or other disasters could continue affecting tourism, the ideas behind this document and its implementation.

We hope that, once is approved, the Charter can be operationalised globally and supported by regional guidelines and that its adoption and implementation will contribute to addressing the global issues that are affecting and will continue to affect cultural heritage, the environment, people and tourism in the years to come.

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