

Faro Convention  
Places without People: the Stories left behind:  
Faro Convention approach and Rural Settlements  
Concluding memorandum<sup>1</sup>

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## Preamble

The Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 October 2005 and entered into force on 1 June 2011.

A second "Faro Lab" was held in Spain in May 2017 as part of the second Faro Action Plan (2016-2017), following on from the first in Marseille in 2013.

The first "Faro Lab" was held in the peri-urban context of a major Mediterranean city and focused on the "social" value of heritage for society, while the second took place in a rural setting under the heading of "*Places without People: the Stories left behind: Faro Convention approach and Rural Settlements*".

The outcomes report produced following the second "Faro Lab" recommended that a "thematic concluding memorandum" should be drawn up after each Faro Lab so as to keep a record of the discussions and share them with Faro network members who were not present.

This memorandum is accordingly the "concluding memorandum" for the second Faro Lab.

## Background

Four participants at the Faro Lab in Spain were "facilitators" in rural communities which are involved in implementing the Faro principles.

Place	Inhabitants	Classified heritage	Faro Network
San Millan, Spain	293	2 UNESCO sites	Applicant for Faro Network
Viscri, Romania	467	1 UNESCO site	Member of Faro Network + Assessment in 2014
Fontecchio, Italy	412	National monuments	Member of Faro Network
Taula del Sénia, Spain	27 municipalities	Millennium olive trees	Member of Faro Network + Assessment in 2016

Faro assessment visits have been made to Taula del Sénia and Viscri. Fontecchio will host a Faro workshop at the end of 2017. San Millan hosted the second Faro Lab.

Like many others in Europe, these four rural locations are all confronted with a major rural exodus which, in their case, was accelerated by various factors: flight from a totalitarian regime (Viscri), earthquake (Fontecchio) and the attractiveness of seaside resorts (Taula del Sénia).

The special feature of these locations is that they have seen the arrival of new residents at the same time. This trend has been fostered by strategies promoting the local heritage as a factor in economic development and people's quality of life and living environment.

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<sup>1</sup> The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

Each of the locations has classified and protected cultural heritage which in some cases is internationally recognised (UNESCO, Europa Nostra): Viscri Saxon Church, San Millan monasteries, Taula del Sénia millennium olive trees, historic buildings in the centre of Fontecchio.

Each of the relevant heritage assets is central to the process of revitalising these village communities so as to generate economic attractiveness and improve the living environment:

- The Saxon heritage and the Roma community in Viscri;
- The younger generations and the heritage of the millennium olive trees in Taula del Sénia;
- Calls for craft worker couples to move into the centre of the village ("Casa e Bottega");
- The twin monasteries in San Millan, the grotto and the figure of San Millan seem to be the shared heritage of all the village residents (San Millan has not had a Faro assessment visit and remains the least well known of the four).

## Findings

Several "decisive factors" may be identified from the four locations and the discussions at the second Faro Lab and the previous visits:

The establishment of a circular economy and/or short supply chains that foster solidarity between local economic activities. In Viscri, this approach is taken to the extreme and local production is systematically given preference. Nevertheless, it is being called into question by new residents who are mainly motivated by economic development.

The introduction of an accessibility strategy (routes, roads and car parks) that fosters the local economy and seeks not to have a negative impact on the environment: car sharing in Fontecchio to improve accessibility for residents, car park outside Viscri to reduce pollution, etc., and routes from the beaches to the mountains in Taula del Sénia to boost attractiveness. In San Millan, some residents are critical of the decision to locate the car park outside the village.

Networking and dissemination at regional level of best practices: the "Borghi attivi" network in Fontecchio to pool resources, the federation of municipalities in Taula del Sénia to jointly run the development strategy, the network of Saxon villages in Viscri to share out tourist flows more fairly, the European Heritage Days network in San Millan to exchange views about best practices.

The establishment of dialogue forums to regulate conflicts, for instance, the social contract in Viscri between new and old residents, the inter-councillor association in Taula del Sénia bringing together all local elected representatives and Fontecchio municipal council which unanimously adopted the Faro principles in 2013, or through sector-specific associations such as women's associations and farmers' co-operatives.

## Issues

The participation of the new residents in local democratic processes remains a challenge shared by the four locations. The new residents may be divided into two main categories:

- New residents with migrant backgrounds (Taula del Sénia, San Millan, Fontecchio) or Roma communities (Viscrist), who are economically weak and are poorly represented in democratic forums (municipal council, associations, etc.);
- New residents from urban areas, who are economically dominant (investment capacity) and integrate quickly at political level (at ease in democratic forums).

The mix of residents and hence of interests entails risks such as tourist speculation to the detriment of the environment (planned hotel in Viscrist) or opposition by existing residents to the arrival of new residents (refusal to sell land in San Millan, reluctance to take in refugees in Fontecchio).

This is combined with partial coverage of the various narratives: in these villages, the Faro processes such as walks scheduled for the European Heritage Days (Taula del Sénia, San Millan) include narratives other than those of classified heritage (mines in Taula del Sénia, Roma in Viscrí, nature in San Millan, etc.).

## Proposals

The success of the processes implemented in these rural settings which draw on and/or illustrate the principles of the Faro Convention reveals new challenges for areas whose small size makes them more vulnerable:

- A strategy and a narrative focused on a recognised protected heritage which would benefit from being extended to the many other narratives and cultural and natural heritages present;
- Strong leadership by the facilitators who seek to move towards more active co-operation by all civil society and enhanced collective governance;
- The need to anticipate the negative effects of tourist development and its impacts on the local economy and quality of life.

Given these challenges, each of these sites seems to have developed a practice that could be shared with the others:

- The dialogue between elected representatives in Taula del Sénia within the federation of municipalities;
- Short supply chains and the circular economy in Viscrí;
- The social contract in Fontecchio and, since 2016, in Viscrí;
- Regional dissemination strategies.

In addition, there is the possible input from the Faro Network concerning the experiences developed in urban settings with the promotion of narratives (heritage walks, hospitality tales, etc.), in particular those which are "invisible". Corresponding recommendations were made in the context of the two assessment visits to Viscrí and Taula del Sénia.