

# **A Diagnostic Policy Report: problems with the current UNESCO transborder heritage regimes**

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## **Introduction**

The following observations are based on a library of 83 distinct references, 53 of which were UNESCO or UNESCO adjacent sources, 19 academic papers and 11 ‘other’ sources including my own notes. This is already a rich repository, and though not exhaustive, reveals the main terrain of problems with the current regime of registration and management of transboundary and transnational heritage.

Acknowledging the limited number of academic sources consulted, I note that some of the points in this diagnostic report are present with varying degrees in the scholarship: the sovereignty deficit (Meskell and Brumann 2015); heritage as a proxy battlefield (Meskell 2016); or a means for state power projection (Meskell 2015; Wang 2019); the prioritisation of consensus over dissonance (Kisić 2016 and González-Ruibal & Hall 2015); and the epistemic divide or hierarchy (Meskell and Isakhan 2023). Other points — the interoperability issue and asymmetry in state capacities (Meskell 2013; Meskell and Brumann 2015) — are extended and sharpened, with added critical insights (taxonomic confusion; Vasilijević et al. 2015).

The core contribution of this diagnostic is, therefore, providing an overview of the issues, which point to systematic problems or deficits in the existing instruments and mechanisms. After identifying these deficits, I outline and discuss four working propositions addressing them, before brief concluding remarks. Due to the conceptual and practical significance of the idea of heritage corridors and their causal role in some of the deficits discussed here, the appendix covers their definitional problematics of this fundamental connectivity idea.

## **Problems in the Existing Transnational Regime**

The problems or deficits of the existing transnational regime could be classified into five interrelated clusters.

### **The Mismatch Between Sovereignty And Management**

This is likely to be the most fundamental systemic hurdle preventing the monitoring and enforcement of heritage conservation standards both across borders and when they come into conflict with national agendas. Paragraph 135 of the *Operational Guidelines* (2019) “highly recommends” joint management committees. However, these committees often function as consultative shells, lacking binding authority over sovereign entities.

A case in point is the Talgar component of the Silk Roads where a bridge was constructed through the site, sidestepping an intergovernmental coordinating committee. The ICOMOS mission reported that

the committee had agreements on cooperation ‘but without power of implementation’ to stop the state-sanctioned infrastructure project (ICOMOS 2016, 21).

A different manifestation of this mismatch relates to cross-border buffer zones. In such instances, a State Party rarely has the legal standing to enforce the requirements for maintaining ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ (OUV) attributes of its share of the common heritage if and when the neighbouring state chooses to violate them within its own territory. According to the German Commission for UNESCO, this is a ‘grey area’ where ‘neither the Convention nor the Operational Guidelines provide rules about which jurisdiction should be applicable for the protection of the buffer zone on neighbouring national territory’ (German Commission for UNESCO 2017, 18).

A different manifestation of this mismatch relates to security paradoxes in transboundary natural sites. In these contexts, the ‘sovereignty deficit’ is frequently compensated for by ‘green militarization’, where conservation enforcement becomes indistinguishable from border defence. Research on the W-Arly-Pendjari complex indicates that ‘insecurity is not merely an external threat but often stems from the breakdown of governance’ and the militarization of conservation, alienating border communities and rendering participatory governance impossible (Houehounha 2024).

Furthermore, the mismatch creates a jurisdictional void regarding the High Seas. The 1972 Convention is predicated on territorial sovereignty, making it currently legally impossible to manage transboundary marine ecosystems that extend into Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), despite their OUV (Freestone et al. 2016).

## 1. Taxonomic and Biophysical Misalignment

This deficit manifests as a **taxonomic drift** that generates a fundamental **conceptual slippage** regarding what constitutes transnational heritage in the first place. Particularly within linear heritage systems, the instability of definitions — oscillating between heritage routes, strategic units, and ecological spines (see Appendix) — destabilises the heritage itself. The regime is unclear whether the “transnational” value lies in the continuous flow (the corridor) or the discontinuous attributes (the sites, the dot points on the heritage map). This conceptual ambiguity acts as a structural constraint, forcing continuous systems to be legally processed as discontinuous “serial” properties. The result is a vicious circle: taxonomic slippage leads to conceptual fragmentation, which in turn prompts fragmented governance, overlooking the functional spaces between the designated sites. This vicious circle operates through three specific mechanisms.

**First**, the regime distinguishes two categories of contiguous and networked properties. Current UNESCO definitions enforce a distinction where “Transboundary” properties must be physically adjacent (Operational Guidelines Para 134), while non-adjacent sites are forced into the “Serial” category (Operational Guidelines Para 137). This impacts heritage corridors, such as the Silk Roads, which are conceptually linear and continuous but traverse vast distances without continuous legal protection. The result is that, driven by realities on the ground, the taxonomic regime superimposes the rhetoric of a continuous “corridor” over a collection of discontinuous “dot points”. This taxonomic choice contradicts the idea of a corridor and fragments its management, leaving the functional landscape between the dots legally exposed.

**Secondly**, and related to the first observation, in superimposing the rhetoric of continuity, taxonomic drift generates a schism between the realities on the ground and how a corridor is framed for diplomacy and how it is managed for protection. In the Silk Roads nomination, the “corridor” is used as a strategic unit to manage scale (China, Kazakhstan, & Kyrgyzstan 2014). However, because the site is taxonomically “serial”, legal protection applies only to the specific attributes (the 33 sites), not the route itself. This protection gap was exposed by the Talgar Bridge incident; despite the existence of a transnational coordinating committee, the “corridor” concept failed to stop construction because the legal entity was a series of dots, not a protected line.

**Thirdly**, especially in transnational natural heritage, there is a distinct “ecological misalignment” or a lag between administrative definitions and scientific reality. While the IUCN *Best Practice Guidelines* (2015) define corridors through “Functional Connectivity” that allow for non-contiguous areas like “stepping stones” to be managed as a single entity, the World Heritage system prioritises physical adjacency. Because the UNESCO regime has drifted away from (natural) conservation science, it lacks a mechanism to protect migratory corridors as unified entities. This rigidity mirrors the treatment of cultural routes, forcing both to be nominated using the “Serial” mechanism, which was designed for thematically linked sites (e.g., Frontiers of the Roman Empire), not for continuous ecological or cultural flows.

**Finally**, a critical manifestation of this misalignment is **biophysical insolvency**. This occurs when a transboundary Natural World Heritage site, under the pressure of external climate forces, loses its capacity for carbon storage, and instead, becomes a source of carbon emissions. Having lost its biological climate functions, the site nevertheless retains its legal status and associated boundaries. In such circumstances, preserving original boundaries would be insufficient to protect its ecological value (UNESCO, WRI & IUCN 2021). UNESCO data reveals that “10 World Heritage forests were net carbon sources between 2001 and 2020 due to anthropogenic stressors” (UNESCO, WRI & IUCN 2021). This creates a governance failure where the heritage asset effectively becomes an “ecological liability”, yet the management system lacks the taxonomic flexibility to address carbon flux, remaining fixated on static boundary preservation.

## **2. Operational Bottlenecks**

Operational bottlenecks also arise where administrative instruments designed to facilitate cooperation are constrained or strategically repurposed. A key example is rationed capacity (the ‘Upstream Cap’) within the World Heritage nomination process. The Upstream Process (Operational Guidelines, paragraph 122) was introduced to provide early-stage advisory support for complex files, yet the demand for such support exceeds the operational resources of the Advisory Bodies (ICOMOS/IUCN) and the World Heritage Centre. Decision 42 COM 9A (2018) explicitly acknowledges the “limited available capacity” of the Advisory Bodies and confirms that requests had exceeded a “set up cap of ten new Upstream Process requests per year”, thereby instituting a scarcity model (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2018). Once the cap is reached, the system applies a triage filter through the prioritisation hierarchy referenced through the Operational Guidelines (paragraph 61.c), which favours States Parties with no or few properties, and those in LDC/SIDS/post-conflict categories. The governance consequence is a mechanism of exclusion: technically demanding transnational serial nominations, precisely those requiring intensive upstream guidance to align cross-border management systems, are frequently pushed to the back of the queue because they often involve well-

represented, well-resourced States Parties. This reduces opportunities for rigorous pre-inscription governance stress-testing, enabling nominations to proceed on the basis of formalised but untested arrangements, and thereby contributing to downstream implementation failures, including the recurrent sovereignty—management mismatch.

A different manifestation of operational bottlenecks is administrative and fiscal asynchrony. Even where political will exists, the misalignment of fiscal years, funding approvals, and election cycles between partner States Parties creates a structural inability to execute joint management plans simultaneously. Evidence from the *Frontiers of the Roman Empire* indicates that “the main difficulty resides in the fact that each States Party operates at different sets of timescales”, reducing “transnational” management to a series of disjointed national actions that rarely align in time (ICOMOS Europe 2021).

A different manifestation of operational bottlenecks is procedural arbitrage, where States Parties instrumentalise multinational nominations less as a vehicle for genuine cooperation than as a technique to bypass the “one nomination per year” national quota (*Operational Guidelines*, paragraph 61). Empirical analysis of French heritage administration indicates that multinational files can be used pragmatically to bypass the ceiling applied to single-state nominations (Debarbieux et al. 2021, 9). In combination, rationed upstream capacity and quota-avoidance tactics create an uneven administrative field: cooperation is rhetorically encouraged, yet the very files most dependent on upstream support and sustained multi-state coordination are either delayed by triage or folded into strategic nomination behaviour that prioritises inscription over robust governance design.

### **3. Instrumentalisation: From the Geopolitical to the Local (Sub-National)**

Transnational heritage is increasingly instrumentalised for diplomatic signalling, territorial positioning, and soft-power projection. The underlying cause is not a new form of sovereignty generated by UNESCO, but the persistence of conventional sovereign agendas and national interest calculations that pre-exist the UNESCO regime. What changes is the mode of operation: States Parties adapt the cooperative format of transnational nominations into a strategic framework for advancing those interests. In this sense, “relational sovereignty” is best treated as a mechanism, that is, the means through which state power is reconfigured and projected within a multilateral heritage setting, rather than the cause of weaponisation (Debarbieux et al. 2021, 12; cf. Wang 2019). This strategic adaptation manifests in four primary ways.

**First**, the Silk Roads nomination, badged as a tool for cooperation and shared responsibility, is analysed as a project of “relational heritage sovereignty” (Debarbieux et al. 2021, Wang 2019), where the assemblage of sites legitimises an “imaginary territory” of connectivity aligned with China’s Belt and Road Initiative (Debarbieux et al. 2021, 12). The nomination dossier explicitly links the ancient route to the “Revival of the Historical Function”, citing modern infrastructure projects like international highways as the continuation of the heritage value. This frames modern economic penetration as a revival of World Heritage values rather than raw economic expansion and its corollary regional and global power projections (China, Kazakhstan, & Kyrgyzstan 2014). The reality could be closer to the latter.

**Secondly**, transnational nominations may be instrumentalised as a tool for coercive territorial and communal governance at sub-national scales. This may be described as “technocratic colonialism”, where a group of trained technocrats transform an international project into a “national state policy”, coercing local communities to fall in line with their decisions. In the case of the *Qhapaq Ñan* (Andean Road System), the corridor is diagnosed as a tool for central governments to re-assert control over indigenous territories under the guise of heritage management. Critical analysis reveals that the project demands indigenous communities “re-shape themselves as suitable citizens” or perform stereotypes for export, while the heritage designation often serves as a “cover-up for new ways of real estate advance on their lands” (Korstanje & García Azcárate 2007, 49). Perhaps framed differently, similar technocratic colonialism may be adduced from the Chinese nomination dossier about the Taklamakan region (Xinjiang) regarding “[t]ensions between Han (Chinese) authorities and the dozen or so Hui (Muslim) minority peoples” (China, Kazakhstan, & Kyrgyzstan 2014, Annex).

**Thirdly**, heritage nomination may be weaponised for or against irredentist claims, resulting in the reassertion or hardening of borders. This is a case of a conflict between “universal values” and state (national) sovereignty. For example, China’s nomination of *Koguryo* sites — series of UNESCO World Heritage sites related to an ancient Korean kingdom (37 BC—AD 668) across China’s Jilin/Liaoning provinces and North Korea — was interpreted by both Koreas as a pre-emptive move to secure the border region politically and prevent future irredentist claims by a unified Korea over Manchuria (Galis 2009). Similarly, although not a corridor, the listing of the Temple of Preah Vihear demonstrates how heritage boundaries can trigger military aggression when they intersect with disputed sovereignty. While the temple itself is recognised by the International Court of Justice as Cambodian, its surrounding territories remain disputed between Cambodia and Thailand.

**Fourthly**, and related to the previous item, a distinct manifestation of instrumentalising nominations arises from the statism (or state-centrism) underpinning the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Unlike the 1972 Convention, the Intangible Cultural Heritage regime lacks a mechanism for communities to nominate shared heritage without State Party sponsorship. This allows states to instrumentalise shared culture, blocking nominations to assert territorial dominance. In the case of *Sowa-Rigpa*, China blocked India’s nomination by asserting “sovereignty over some regions mentioned in the Indian file”, demonstrating how the nomination process can become a proxy battlefield for border conflict (Debarbieux et al. 2021, 14).

#### **4. The Technocratic-Epistemic Divide**

Finally, uneven distribution of technical resources, which leads to a technocratic—epistemic divide, causes another structural deficit in transnational heritage. The push for “technical quality” in transnational governance is often framed as a neutral need for harmonising monitoring and preventing the fragmentation of national inventories along transnational corridors. Explicit references to “data interoperability”— found primarily in the context of the Silk Roads CHRIS and European serial nominations — diagnose this not merely as a technical specification but as a *governance necessity* (Vileikis et al. 2013). Without interoperability, national inventories using different “working methodologies, languages, [and] types of data” make cross-border monitoring technically impossible.

A case in point is the Silk Roads CHRIS (Cultural Heritage Resource Information System), which was explicitly predicated on “open standards” to integrate disparate national datasets from Central Asian

states into a single nomination platform. Designed to be “open for other applications to connect to”, the system aims to allow future corridors to connect to baseline data without re-engineering (Vileikis et al. 2012, 2). However, this requirement acts as a gatekeeping mechanism. In practice, the requirement for interoperable data assumes a shared baseline of digital capacity (GIS, databases, common protocols) that does not exist. Vileikis et al. report that decision-makers in Central Asian partner states were ‘hardly acquainted with digital technology’, which in effect necessitated external management of the data layer and limited local ability to operate or sustain the system (Vileikis et al. 2013, 323). Consequently, ‘interoperability’ tends to default to the systems of the most technically advanced partner, creating a structural capacity asymmetry where less-resourced States Parties become dependent on external platforms.

UNESCO’s Administrative requirements for standards of monitoring listed heritage may also drive a desire for standardisation and interoperability, and therefore broaden the epistemic divide. The ICOMOS Europe study identifies “interoperability” as a byproduct of the Periodic Reporting exercise, where the administrative burden of reporting forces States Parties to align internal data structures (ICOMOS Europe 2021, 34). While this acts as a catalyst for harmonising incompatible national systems, it privileges technical expertise and procedural capacities over local participation. In multi-state nominations, this evolves into gate-keeping, where expert positioning defines what counts as a site in order to satisfy UNESCO’s data requirements. As noted in the *Qhapaq Ñan* analysis, technical directives from central governments positioned experts as the ‘first ones to evaluate and choose’, marginalising community priorities that do not translate cleanly into the technocratic formats through which ‘interoperability’ is achieved (Korstanje & García Azcárate 2007, 2). The result is an epistemic hierarchy: official heritage is stabilised through maps, inventories, and expert categories, while lived heritage and community priorities are marginalised because they do not translate cleanly into the technocratic formats.

### **Preliminary Strategic Propositions: A Basis for Future Inquiry**

The above diagnostic analysis identifies a clear schism between normative ambitions and operational realities. Based on this evidence, four strategic propositions emerge. These are offered as provisional entry points for policy reform, acknowledging that every governance adjustment entails trade-offs and some routes may contradict others.

#### **Proposition 1: Institutionalising Binding Authority**

To address the mismatch between sovereignty and management as the most fundamental systemic hurdle to conservation, the framework must evolve beyond the Operational Guidelines’ current status of “highly recommending” joint committees. As the Talgar case illustrates, committees functioning as “consultative shells” are easily sidestepped by “state-sanctioned infrastructure projects”. To prevent such outcomes, these bodies require the “power of implementation” to enforce agreements on cooperation; otherwise, they remain unable to assert binding authority over sovereign entities when conservation comes into conflict with national agendas.

However, enforcing this authority confronts a significant legal “grey area”. Much like the issue with cross-border buffer zones, where a State Party lacks the legal standing to enforce OUV requirements on a neighbouring state, the Convention currently provides no rules regarding “which jurisdiction



should be applicable.” Without resolving this jurisdictional void, attempts to override a state's territory management may simply be ignored, as the system currently lacks the mechanisms to police the common heritage against sovereign violation.

A potential remedy is to require that transnational decisions be legally anchored within the domestic planning laws of each State Party, granting them the “power of implementation” currently lacking in cooperative agreements.

### **Proposition 2: Replace Legal Harmonisation with “Technocratic Interoperability”**

Proposition 1 requires a significant degree of harmonisation and interstate legislative cooperation, which may come into conflict with state sovereignty. A different approach, sidestepping the sovereignty problem, would be to focus instead on technical infrastructure and capacity. In practice, this could mean mandating Interoperable Information Management Systems, which require shared data standards. As seen in the Silk Roads CHRIS, the system can create transparency mechanisms where threats are visible across borders without requiring legislative uniformity. This emphasises the transparency of heritage data over the harmonisation of heritage law across borders.

Yet, this proposition is not neutral. As noted, interoperability often exacerbates existing disparities because capacity asymmetries privilege the more technically-advanced partners. The risk is a deepening of the technocratic-epistemic divide, as less-resourced States Parties become dependent on external platforms and expertise to manage their own heritage data. Without explicit safeguards, this reinforces an epistemic divide where official, digital (or digitally-promoted) heritage becomes canonical at the expense of marginalising local, lived heritage.

### **Proposition 3: Recalibrate the Upstream Process for Governance Stress-Testing**

To address “operational bottlenecks” in transnational governance, the Preliminary Assessment (PA) mechanism requires recalibration. The current “scarcity model” (capped at ten requests per year) applies a triage filter. In practice, this model can disadvantage transnational files, which often involve well-resourced States Parties, by relegating them to the back of the queue. The PA should be repurposed to explicitly prioritise files based on “governance complexity” rather than geographic representation. This will facilitate access for transnational files that require “intensive upstream guidance” and encourage the alignment of cross-border systems. Such repurposing will convert the mechanism from a barrier into a “governance stress-test” for complex shared heritage.

The risk with such repurposing is that it may reinforce the existing “uneven administrative field” discussed above. Shifting priority toward “governance complexity” inevitably privileges well-resourced States Parties capable of funding sustained multi-state coordination. It comes with the risk of increasing the exclusion of less-resourced states who depend on “upstream support” for stress-testing as well as basic capacity building. This is likely to further the existing epistemic divide: contrary to the rhetoric of the present heritage regime, the considerable administrative burden of managing such complex files will result in powerful, better-resourced States Parties (for example, Western states and China) being over-represented at the expense of poorer, lesser developed ones. This converts transnational heritage into a luxury “good” ripe for appropriation into divergent narratives.

### **Proposition 4: Resolve Taxonomic Frictions via “Functional Connectivity”**

The regime currently enforces an arbitrary distinction between “contiguous” (transboundary) and “non-contiguous” (serial) properties, resulting in “taxonomic confusion” that fragments “functional landscapes”. A potential solution is to align with the IUCN concept of “Transboundary Migration Conservation Areas” (TBMCA), permitting properties that are ecologically linked but not physically adjacent. This would theoretically resolve the “ecological misalignment” between cultural and natural heritage instruments.

However, adopting “connectivity” as the management paradigm introduces an important risk: it extends governance over vast geopolitical spaces, such as the entirety of the Eurasian landmass for the Silk Roads. As the report identifies under Instrumentalisation, such “connectivity thinking” legitimises an “imaginary territory” that serves state power projection rather than conservation. Therefore, resolving the taxonomic friction by institutionalising “corridors” may inadvertently fuel “relational sovereignty”, validating narratives of control over areas where the Convention lacks jurisdiction.

## Conclusion

These propositions are diagnostic, not prescriptive. They highlight that the current reliance on diplomatic consensus and technocratic standardisation is insufficient to protect complex transborder landscapes or mitigate their geopolitical weaponisation. As the analysis suggests, mechanisms designed to foster connectivity—such as “heritage corridors” and “interoperable systems” — are increasingly susceptible to “relational sovereignty,” functioning as tools for power projection rather than shared stewardship. Moreover, the report identifies a “recursive trap” where “taxonomic drift” fragments the very landscapes the regime seeks to connect, while the “technocratic-epistemic divide” ensures that the burden of participation falls disproportionately on the “administrative elite.”

Consequently, a “more radical approach” may be required, one that moves beyond operational remedies to address the systemic deficits of the current regime. Future inquiry could usefully interrogate whether the “sovereignty-management mismatch” can be resolved through these proposed adjustments, or if it requires a fundamental rethinking of the World Heritage registration mechanism itself. Specifically, further research is needed to determine if “functional connectivity” can be legally institutionalised without validating the “imaginary territories” of expansive state agendas, and whether the regime can demand “technical interoperability” without further marginalising the lived heritage of less-resourced States Parties.

## Appendix: The Definitional Problematic of Corridors

Based on the official sources consulted, “Heritage Corridors” are not defined by a single, static definition but rather through three distinct conceptual frameworks: as *Heritage Routes* (a normative category focused on exchange and movement), as *Strategic Nomination Units* (a methodological tool to manage vast serial properties like the Silk Roads), and as *Ecological/Landscape Corridors* (focused on biological connectivity).

The following summary outlines these definitions and substantiates the taxonomic frictions discussed above.

### 1. The Heritage Route (Normative Definition)



The *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* provide the foundational definition for linear heritage under the category of “Heritage Routes”. This definition moves beyond the physical track to emphasise the process of exchange.

“A heritage route is composed of tangible elements of which the cultural significance comes from exchanges and a multi-dimensional dialogue across countries or regions, and that illustrate the interaction of movement, along the route, in space and time... The concept of heritage routes: is based on the dynamics of movement and the idea of exchanges, with continuity in space and time; refers to a whole, where the route has a worth over and above the sum of the elements making it up and through which it gains its cultural significance.” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2019, 86).

A concrete example is the *Qhapaq Ñan* (Andean Road System), described as a “cultural itinerary” and “extraordinary road network” that provided a “rich fabric for all kinds of relationships throughout the territory and was an integral part of the power system, which unified the empire both physically and organically” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2008, 15).

## **2. The Corridor as a Strategic Nomination Unit**

In the context of the Silk Roads, the term “Corridor” is defined as a methodological strategy. Because nominating the entire 35,000 km network at once was administratively impossible, the network was “compartmentalised” into specific corridors based on distinct geographical and historical themes.

“In practical terms, some way of compartmentalising the Silk Roads into a number of World Heritage properties, linked by an overall concept, could be seen as highly desirable. It would produce more manageable serial nominations and would enable these to progress at differing paces, within an overall framework, and still maintain the concept of trans-national cooperation that lies at the core of this endeavour.” (China, Kazakhstan, & Kyrgyzstan 2014, 22).

A concrete example is the *Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor*. This corridor was selected because it “reflects long distance trade and the complex socio-cultural-political systems that supported the trade” specifically between the capitals of the Han/Tang dynasties and the Zhetysay region of Central Asia (ICOMOS 2014, 154).

## **3. Ecological and Landscape Corridors**

The IUCN provides a definition focused on biological connectivity, distinguishing between physical linearity and functional connectivity. This definition often applies to “Transboundary Conservation Areas” (TBCAs).

“Corridors can be of several kinds. A continuous linear corridor could be made up of a narrow forest strip or of a river with its riverside habitat. Landscape corridors consist of a mosaic of interlinked landscapes. Corridors made up of stepping stones represent small patches of habitats that enable species to move: they can be critical habitats for bird migration, for example, as feeding or resting grounds.” (Vasiljević et al. 2015, 30).

## **4. The Linear Cultural Landscape**

Within the World Heritage “Cultural Landscape” category, corridors are defined as “linear areas” representing transport networks.

“The extent of a cultural landscape for inscription on the World Heritage List is relative to its functionality and intelligibility. In any case, the sample selected must be substantial enough to adequately represent the totality of the cultural landscape that it illustrates. The possibility of designating long linear areas which represent culturally significant transport and communication networks should not be excluded.” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2019, 84).

Concrete examples include canals and railways, such as the *Semmering Railway* and *Canal du Midi*, cited as linear properties where the route itself creates a cultural landscape through the insertion of “high and consistent architectural quality into a natural landscape” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre 2003, 12).

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