

SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM CALL FOR PAPERS

Main theme of the Scientific Symposium “Monuments and sites in their setting - conserving cultural heritage in changing townscapes and landscapes”

In 2005, ICOMOS is marking the 40th anniversary of its foundation.

Since its inception, as an organisation created to foster and promote scientific and professional exchange related to the care and conservation of immovable cultural heritage, ICOMOS's focus has largely been on the conservation of individual heritage places, such as monuments, sites, ensembles or landscapes. Yet this focus has always been complemented by particular concern for the relationship between places and their setting, and the crucial role setting plays in the overall significance of cultural heritage.

The notion of *setting* is mentioned in the Venice Charter of 1964, the seminal text that underpinned the foundation of ICOMOS. Assessment of setting is also a key element in the process of evaluating the value and authenticity of potential cultural World Heritage sites, within the framework of the World Heritage Convention, for which ICOMOS acts as adviser to UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

Setting is also referred to in several ICOMOS Charters, Guidelines and Principles such as the *Charter on the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas* (1987), the *Charter for the Protection and Management of Underwater Archaeological Heritage* (1996), *Guidelines on Education and Training* (1993), *Principles for Recording* (1996), and the *International Charter on Cultural Tourism* (1999).

Many National Committee documents, such as the respected Burra Charter of Australian ICOMOS, include articles that encompass setting. Setting has also been addressed indirectly in several Scientific Symposia at previous ICOMOS General Assemblies, for example in Sofia (Bulgaria) in 1996, in the context of the impact of social change, and in Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe) in 2003, as part of an exploration into the relationship between intangible heritage and monuments and sites.

Yet, in spite of the persistent interest in this topic, examples from around the world indicate that progress made in the way monuments, sites and other types of heritage places are conserved and managed has not always been paralleled by similar progress in the way settings are defined, protected and sustained..

Settings seem to be in need of a better set of tools to help with their definition, documentation, protection and management. Setting is not just about physical protection; it may also have a cultural or social dimension. Tools need to acknowledge both the tangible and the intangible aspects of setting. They also need to reflect the complexity of ownership, legal structures, economic and social pressures that impinge on the physical and cultural settings of an immovable heritage assets, with which ICOMOS members are involved.

Moveable objects such as collections or archives can be conserved in special institutions that provide them with appropriately controlled environments. This option does not exist for historic buildings, ancient cities, gardens, archaeological sites or larger ensembles like landscapes or heritage routes that ICOMOS was created to focus on. In such places, settings often encompass dynamic social, economic and cultural communities that contribute to, or are part of, the value and significance of individual heritage places.

Increasing concerns over the impact of rapid development on our environment, is supporting the need to broaden attention from a narrow focus on individual sites or places to a more spatial approach which reflects, and works to engage with, wider cultural, social and economic forces.

What is also emerging is the need to go beyond a strictly aesthetic approach to both places and their settings, as this has often created confusion between long-term conservation and short-lived fashions and has failed to reflect the need for heritage sites to remain as dynamic entities.

All this is bringing into focus the expectation that we consider not only individual places but also their settings, in a less passive and more pro-active way and ensure that they are appraised with adequate understanding and respect for, not only their visual characteristics but also their historical, cultural or environmental dimensions. To achieve this will need a much more interdisciplinary approach and the expansion of current practice standards.

This wider approach to setting applies to wherever economic or social pressures are engaging change and transformation of setting, whether in the immediate surroundings of monuments or sites, in broader territory such as rural or urban landscapes, or even in meta landscapes such as heritage routes. It also applies when sudden events such as natural or man-made disasters call for rapid reconstruction.

The challenge of developing appropriate tools for a wider, interdisciplinary approach to setting, and the sharing of related experiences, must be part of the fundamental role of ICOMOS.

With an almost unprecedented rate of economic growth and development, the townscapes and landscapes of Asia and, in particular, China provide a most appropriate context within which to discuss such issues and approaches.

At the close of the 15th General Assembly of ICOMOS, a Xi'an Declaration will be produced, and hopefully adopted, which will embody recommendations and guidance on ways to appraise, manage and protect settings which reflect not only planning and legal perspectives but also cultural, social, and economic approaches, that allow wider community participation and benefit.

Reflecting discussions with colleagues in ICOMOS China, with National and International Committees, with President Michael Petzet, and with other members of the Executive Committee of ICOMOS, it is proposed that the International Scientific Symposium of Xi'an be organized in four themes – definition, threats, tools and a special focus on heritage routes. These themes will be treated in plenary sessions and by panels so as to optimize the exchange of experience and interdisciplinary approaches, both of which are fundamental to ICOMOS. In addition, poster sessions and professional fora will enable participants to address other related topics and share the lessons of their works in fields such as materials, technologies, methods, tools, and information management.

On behalf of all the organisers of the 15th ICOMOS General Assembly and its International Scientific Symposium, I would like to encourage you to submit proposals for presentations on the above themes, according to the procedures described below. All proposals will be reviewed appropriately by the Scientific Committee of the Symposium. We hope that an inspiring overall programme will emerge for this landmark event. We would also like to invite you to come and take part in the Xi'an meeting and help mark the 40th anniversary of ICOMOS, in the company of many members of the diverse community of professional and institutions from the field of cultural heritage.

Dinu BUMBARU
Secretary General

SUB-THEMES OF THE SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM

Section I:

Defining the setting of monuments and sites: the significance of tangible and intangible cultural and natural qualities

Monuments and sites exist in both time and space as well as in a cultural context. Their presence, and their relation to the land that they stand on, or to the city or landscape they rest in, whether it is natural or shaped by human activities, is often part of their cultural, spiritual, historical or aesthetic significance. To complement the efforts invested in understanding the significance of monuments, sites and other forms of cultural heritage, equal attention is needed to the way we define and sustain settings, in order to improve the way we conserve and manage places in their settings.

- How can we define, document and assess the physical, historical and cultural settings of different types of monuments, sites and other heritage places?

- How can the appraisal of settings address the dynamic as well as the static nature of settings?
- Are settings culturally specific or can there be a shared understanding?
- Do ICOMOS Charters and Guidelines give sufficient guidance on settings?
- What are the special needs of World Heritage site settings?

**Section II:
Vulnerabilities within the settings of monuments and sites:
understanding the threats and defining appropriate responses**

Before protection can be considered, the nature and scope of threats and vulnerabilities needs to be identified. The factors affecting setting may be broader than those impacting on individual monuments and sites. Impact assessment processes, common in the field of environment and natural heritage, need to be tailored to meet the needs of cultural heritage in order that protection measures within heritage settings may provide appropriate responses to managing change and be complementary to those developed for the protection of individual sites and monuments.

- How do we assess the impact of economic and social pressures, rapid urbanisation and infrastructural developments on the setting of monuments, sites and other types of heritage places?
- How do we identify the actual or potential impacts of natural hazards and environmental factors, arising from human activities, such as pollution, deforestation, changes in the water table or intensive land management, on the settings of monuments, sites and other types of heritage places?
- How do we improve, develop and implement legislative, regulatory, administrative or management measures to address the needs for protection and adequate control of settings of monuments, sites and other types of heritage places?
- Do World Heritage Management Plans have wider application as a means of protecting setting?

**Section III:
Evolving townscapes and landscapes within their settings:
managing dynamic change**

By nature, living townscapes and landscapes are dynamic entities that involve communities, multiple ownership or interests. Pressures for reconstruction and densification have to be addressed through protection and management tools that aim at maintaining the heritage significance of these places. Exposed to rapid change and to forms of development like high-rises that are often excluded from heritage areas, their settings are at risk of being completely destroyed or transformed beyond recognition. The relation between neighbourhoods and parts of cities, even the traditional contrast between urban and rural setting, are being eroded as the edges of settlements and the boundaries of urbanisation are constantly shifting.

- How can we define, physically and otherwise, the settings of living townscapes or landscapes of heritage value?
- How could the management of protected townscapes and landscapes be extended to their setting, for example to sustain the distinctive character of the relation between town and country?
- How can we address the particular issues related to the management and protection of natural and rural landscapes and their setting?

- How can we respond to the influence of social or economic change in the management and protection of setting and how can settings contribute to the dynamics of protected townscapes or landscapes?
- Does the management of change in World Heritage townscapes and landscapes have wider relevance?

**Section IV:
Cultural routes:
the challenges of linear settings for monuments and sites:**

Taking advantage of the historical importance of Xi'an as a starting point for the famous system of transcontinental Silk Roads, this section will explore conservation and management of cultural routes as connecting systems of sites and settings. Shaped through time or as vast constructions, land or water routes connect in linear systems and within an overall setting many types of monuments, sites, and natural and cultural landscapes, which may be variously of local, national, international or even transcontinental extent. Cultural routes may also connect heritage of diverse historical and cultural origins.

- How can we define the setting and management protection measures for cultural routes?
- How can we manage settings along routes in relation to the specific character and needs of local sites, activities and communities in order to provide consistency while respecting diversity?
- How can we address the specific needs of settings for cultural routes defined in an international or transcontinental context and develop co-operation activities within these settings?
- How can lessons be drawn and shared from the way settings are defined in existing inscriptions of cultural routes as World Heritage sites?