Changing World, Changing Views of Heritage: the impact of global change on cultural heritage

2009 theme:
Technological Change

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Background:

In Quebec City, Canada, on the occasion of the Scientific Council meeting in September 2008 at the 16th General Assembly, a task force of 14, representing 14 of 28 ISCs and two National Committee presidents, met to debate and propose the next two Advisory Committee meetings' scientific symposia themes. The themes selected evolve from the ongoing interdisciplinary research on Global Climate Change (GCC) and its effects on cultural heritage, and build on the 2007 Pretoria scientific symposium on this topic. They were presented to the Advisory Committee and adopted at the 16th General Assembly. The theme for 2009 is Technological Change and for 2010, Social Change. The three change elements will then be brought together to complement and enhance the 17th General Assembly theme of Natural Disasters.

Technological Change was also selected to coincide with the choice of ICOMOS to make 2009 the Year of Science, as well as UNESCO's adoption of 2009 as the Year of Astronomy.

Discussion:

Technological Change (TC) can cover a wide range of topics. How does TC relate to GCC? In terms of archaeology, we should look at how the use of TC to manage catchment areas has become part of many governments' policies, for instance in valley floors to control flooding through such things as river incision or flood channel transformation. How will this affect the wealth of unexcavated archaeological sites that are typical to these areas?

Through the Scientific Council's research on GCC, we have concluded that GCC is going to produce a heritage of loss. How does TC help us document sites so that we can monitor changes or cope with unavoidable loss? How does TC provide us with opportunities to make informed choices about risks and abandonment? How does TC assist or impede in archiving data?

How does TC affect industrial heritage? Does TC mean obsolescence resulting in industrial archaeology? Can we learn from industrial archaeology and revise our approaches to adapting to GCC?

The likely reduction to water supplies as a result of GCC, including potable, irrigation, industrial, energy, etc, is going to require major management efforts. How can we benefit from TC in this area? Should ancient technologies for coping with water scarcity inform TC?

How has TC altered materials and techniques that are used in cultural heritage? Have we moved towards an abandonment of traditional methodologies of construction? How compatible are new technologies and materials with traditional?

Does TC provide us with improved mechanisms for coping with natural disasters? Are traditional technologies better suited for use in developing countries to combat with the after-effects of natural disasters?

The greening of historic buildings is a new area of TC. Although historic structures were typically built in response to their environment, and therefore are imminently greener than later generations of buildings (excluding some of the most recent generation which have been purposely built with green as a goal), how do we respond to TC in this area if historic buildings are to be upgraded? How does the greening of cultural heritage engage society?

The management of shorelines is going to be a major issue as a result of GCC. We are expecting to have a greater number of underwater archaeological sites. How can TC help adapt to this situation?

How does the speed of TC affect cultural heritage? Does TC produce globalization with attendant losses to intangible heritage or the other way around? How does IT affect cultural heritage?

Does TC influence the significance of monuments and sites? Does the ease of travel and migration diminish or strengthen people's intangible heritage? Can developments in technology be used to transform intangible heritage into a tangible form?

In very general terms, what are the benefits of TC as opposed to the threats?

There are many questions posed in this discussion, primarily because Technological Change impacts on almost all aspects of society. As cultural heritage is created by people and valued by people, the changes in technology and the rise of the digital environment may have significant impacts on both the form and significance of heritage.

Schedule:

The Valletta symposium will be based on the Pretoria model. We will solicit papers through the Scientific Council listserv and National Committees, scheduled to be published possibly in *Heritage at Risk*, if funding is available, and otherwise on the ICOMOS website.

Deadline for submission of an abstract: **extended to 15 May 2009**
Deadline for submission of full paper: 31 July 2009

Submit abstracts and papers to pamela.jerome@icomos.org.

7 October 2009 Symposium:

Of the papers submitted, approximately five will be selected for presentation during the morning session of the Valletta symposium. The afternoon will be devoted to breakout sessions wherein working groups will be asked to reflect on a specific question and how it relates to their ISC. The morning session could be open to the general public (depending on space requirements), whereas the afternoon session would not. The breakout groups would return for a final plenary session to present each group's recommendations which will then be synthesized into formal recommendations to be distributed and published on the ICOMOS website.