1. THE SÃO PAULO MANIFEST

At the 11th GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF ICOMOS/BRAZIL held in São Paulo at the Brazilian Museum of Sculpture, between March 10 and 12, 2006, the Brazilian members and guests of the National Committees of Argentina, Spain, Italy, Mexico and Portugal, discussed the proposals expressed in the XI’AN Declaration whose considerations are recommended to the Bureau and the Executive Committee:

2. Introduction

The city of São Paulo, founded by the Jesuits in 1554, was the initial landmark of the Portuguese colonization away from the coastal region, whose urban land for centuries belonged to the religious orders that followed the Company of Jesus, building their convents and adjacent living quarters: São Francisco, São Bento, Carmelites and approximately one hundred parishes directed by secular fathers. The colonial village was the starting point of the Entries and Expeditions organized by the Paulistas, first Brazilians and pioneers in the conquest of the vast national territory. Until the coffee plantations that began in 1830 – in large properties – farms, it was a small town in which the only activity was due to the LAW students of the College at the São Francisco Plaza. The accumulation of wealth resulting from the foreign coffee trade, together with the thriftiness of the Paulistas was responsible for the industrialization in the beginning of the century that transformed São Paulo into the most important industrial center of Latin America. In the XXth century some “developmental” ideas of progress, at all costs, resulted in the destruction of the historic, social and urban testimonies originating the contemporary megalopolis. Located in a geographical area of steep hills, cut by three rivers\(^1\), its tributaries and hundreds of rivulets started the current violent contrasts, polarizing the reflection and concern of professionals in the Cultural Heritage area on the themes of wealth and extreme misery. The periphery which today has 7,100,000 inhabitants represents 48% of a total of 16,383,000 inhabitants, of which some live in approximately 1,900,000 precarious housing (barracos) in defiled and dangerous agglomerations (favelas). Only 13% live in properly urbanized neighborhoods, some of notable quality, increasing the difference between the social classes that go from great wealth to extreme poverty. In transferring the XIth General Assembly and the Election of ICOMOS/Brazil to the city of São Paulo together with the International Round Table, SUGGESTIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE CURRENT MATERIAL AND IMMATERIAL HERITAGE: ACTION OF GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, the intention was to unify the activity of ICOMOS members with the institutional action of the City, State and Nation governments since the defense bodies with strict legislation on land use and environmental protection are insufficient to punish transgressors, representatives of real estate speculation whose power is global and absolute. Therefore, the law does not save history. The weapon to safeguard the cultural chattel has denouncement, together with the heroic work in universities, in the community associations and in the Protection Councils, above all those in the São Paulo capital, listing and revealing studies on the testimonies of the extraordinary Historic and Artistic Heritage of São Paulo, both material and immaterial that demand action and devotion of specialists all over the world.

3. Justification and Aims

The backdrop of the International Round Table which took place in this meeting was the document titled “Xi’an Declaration”, related to the Conservation of the Settings of Cultural Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas, which was approved at the XVth General Assembly of ICOMOS held in said city of China in October 2005.

In the light of the communications and contributions by specialists of the Brazilian ICOMOS Committee, as well as of the international guests belonging to the Committees of Portugal, Spain, Argentina, Italy and Mexico, analyses and proposals were carried out on the existing doctrinal postulates and the operational aspects that could contribute to ensure the adequate preservation, management and care of the cultural chattel, not only in Brazil, but within a universal perspective, supportive and respectful towards the cultural diversity of the different nations and cultures of the world.

I. Doctrinal Aspects

I.1. The “Xi’an Declaration” constitutes an up to date instrument that recalls and highlights the importance to respect the settings and to reveal the meaning of the heritage in its genuine context. This document also proves that
throughout the years, ICOMOS has been developing doctrinal aspects whose basic postulates are found in the brilliant document that inspired its existence and that was adopted as fundamental text for this worldwide organization: the 1964 Venice Chart[2].

I.2. Consonant with the entire doctrinal list prepared by ICOMOS and based on this Chart, the importance that spiritual or immaterial human values represent was highlighted at this meeting. The secular traditions of the different nations for the conservation of the heritage were also brought up, since these values constitute the ethical basis for its protection[3] beyond technical, esthetic, economic or any other reasons.

II. Operational Aspects

II.A. ACTION OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ICOMOS AND ITS RELATION WITH UNESCO IN THE SAFEGUARD OF THE HERITAGE.

II.A.1. In spite of the theoretical advances in the doctrinal field carried out by ICOMOS, as well as the existence of international regulations expressed in the 1972 UNESCO Worldwide Heritage Convention and in the Guidelines for their application, these achievements do not necessarily come together nowadays with a practical efficiency in the protection and conservation of the heritage at local, national and universal level, not even with regard to those properties that should make up an exemplary model as those registered in the Worldwide Heritage List.

II.A.2. The afore-mentioned lack of efficiency is, unfortunately, evident in the ICOMOS international aspect and shows how defenseless the National Committees are and their lack of the necessary support from the International Board to carry out actions to protect and defend said heritage within their respective countries.

II.A.3. Within ICOMOS there are no two different and overlapping entities as has been wrongly advocated in recent years, i.e., a wrongly called “International ICOMOS” on the one hand, and the National Committees on the other. The National Committees are the necessary and irreplaceable pillars of ICOMOS in all the countries worldwide, without whose existence and common will of collaboration ICOMOS would not exist on an international scale. Both the International Board of Directors and the International Scientific Committees are encouraged by them and their professionals, all of whom allow for the existence of said International Board which they elect.

II.A.4. The lack of encouragement, isolation and marginalization of the National Committees to investigate, identify, safeguard and follow-up the chattel within their respective countries and the insufficient attention and coverage for their work by the International Board of Directors is causing a chronic delay and a growing disappointment in the National Committees which are the live cells and the hotbed of professionals that ensure the presence and the mission of ICOMOS throughout the world.

II.A.5. The excessive accumulation of responsibilities and functions in the reduced core of the ICOMOS International Board of Directors, as well as its frequently complicated and slow internal procedure that prevents decision taking with the necessary agility and opportunity, together with the imposed channeling of all the institutional contacts of ICOMOS with the UNESCO Worldwide Heritage Center through the poorly called “International ICOMOS”, results in an inexcusable exclusion of the National Committees that, loyal to their mission and their Statutes, work for the safeguarding and defense of the “in situ” heritage. The excessively centralized and minimized dynamics prevents specialists of each country to address their knowledge, experience and criteria to each case, which they are more qualified to manage than others, often unaware of their historic, cultural and sociological realities and unable to adequately interpret them.

II.A.6. In accordance with the afore-mentioned, it is noteworthy that the quoted UNESCO Center of the World Heritage, created in 1992 to act as the Secretariat of the Committee of the same name, according to the provisions in Article 14 of the Convention, with clearly managerial functions, seems lately being has lately been exceeding and confusing its commitments with attitudes and actions that invade and supersede the function of scientific and impartial consultancy that UNESCO has commissioned to ICOMOS.

II.A.7. On the other hand, such apparently overlapping and mystifying signs in the performance of tasks and commitments give the impression to be with the direct contacts with which those officially responsible for some World Heritage sites and chattel seek to find protection, understanding and support in the mentioned Center. Their intention is to obtain consent to justify actions and projects contrary to or hardly compatible with the internal and international regulations (Convention and Guidelines) applicable to said chattel and sites, often in evident contradiction to the
reports issued by the National Committees of ICOMOS and other highly prominent institutions of the corresponding countries.

II.A.8. Therefore, certain official authorities hoping to find an understanding to their expositions on managerial matters in the referred Center, seem to boast about having found a direct advisory contact on their projects and interventions. This desire would be in contradiction with the procedure established by the World Heritage Convention to ensure its fulfillment and, to carry it out would endanger the international guarantee derived from these regulations consisting in the tutorship exercised by the World Heritage Committee with the advice of a scientific and impartial institution such as ICOMOS.

II.A.9. The participation of the population of the centers that guard heritage assets has repeatedly been cited by ICOMOS in numerous documents and meetings, as a decisive element for their protection and preservation. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention and the Guidelines for their application also consider crucial that the population become involved and express their support according to the chattel candidate to be registered in the World Heritage List. Nevertheless, it is both surprising and contradictory that when the social awareness on heritage assets expresses a substantial rejection to certain projects and interventions in areas and chattel registered in said List, neither the World Heritage Center seem to pay enough attention to such social demands. Particularly the World Heritage Center should take special care not to recommend certain experts to perform ‘reactive monitoring’ missions whose opinions are as controversial in the specialized sectors of affected countries as apparently not impartial and that not only provoke astonishment and alarm among the population concerned but also generate an irreparable deterioration of the image of ICOMOS and UNESCO.

II.A.10. The role attributed to ICOMOS by the Convention should be respected and should prevail, allowing this organization to act as a linkage between the principles that should govern protection of the heritage and the different requests by the public Administration in charge of its custody. This necessarily requires that the ICOMOS International Board of Directors acknowledge and strengthen the fundamental and continued role played by the National Committees in their respective countries.

II.A.11. The cultural diversity, recognized and praised in several documents of international coverage, and called upon as a fundamental basis in the expositions of ICOMOS, should not consist in a merely rhetorical presentation. In spite of the doctrinal statements and the public manifestations by ICOMOS, the truth is that currently in terms of fairness neither the participation nor the leadership that corresponds to the different cultures, regions and countries is given.

II.A.12. The above stated results in lack of internal democracy in the current scenario of ICOMOS in which many cultures do not feel duly represented. With reference to recent times, this lack of internal democracy and freedom for genuine and fair participation became clear as from the XIVth General Assembly, held in Zimbabwe and consolidated at the XVth Assembly of Xi’an. Thus a distribution of strengths was imposed that, in fact, expresses a hierarchy between cultures supposedly superior and assimilated or similar, and others relegated to play an inferior or marginal role. In view of this, those who precisely do not feel represented and refuse to be directed and interpreted by others in their cultural expressions, are aware that such unbalance is an affront against the principles of ICOMOS and those of UNESCO, since what really exists and should be backed with respect is a universal mosaic of different cultures. This is what cultural diversity consists of and not of subjugation.

II.B. PUBLIC ACTION. CONSIDERATIONS OF GENERAL AND PRIVATE NATURE.

II.B.1. After pondering on the ICOMOS doctrinal texts and, particularly, the “Xi’an Declaration”, a question arises on the difficulties presented, in the practical operational capability and the efficiency of these documents in face of the destructive powers of the heritage and its settings and the responsibility of the Administration in charge. This obliges both the ICOMOS and the UNESCO to very seriously reconsider the demands of their respective tasks and to reinforce their international performances and commitments facing the responsible authorities and the professionals whose interventions affect the preservation of the heritage chattel.

II.B.2. Protection and conservation of the settings of the Cultural Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas, whatever their nature and scale, implies a planning in a coordinated and complementary action should involve the different governmental divisions in accordance with the legal organization of the countries. Within the framework of a sustainable development, the management must ensure the conservation of the essential features of the settings and their role with regard to the cultural chattel. That is why the principles of the Xi’an Declaration will act as theoretical guide and should be adjusted to the reality of different countries or cultural regions.
II.B.3. Heritage education must be given priority. The heritage incorporates symbolic values of social, political and economic attributes. As such in this aspect the importance that heritage education has on the characteristic principles of each society has also been highlighted. The social awareness of the different social and political sections must be expanded, without being imposed, but based upon the reasoning and need of the individual and the different social and cultural groups. If the education comes from outside, it can seem commanding towards the local community; therefore a balance of methods and contents must be sought to ensure that the opinion of such communities be included. In this aspect, for example, it is clear that in certain societies the indigenous or native population has not always produced or participated in the production of the heritage created as from the colonial period or that which some minorities defend. That is why they should be made to understand that it has belonged to them for the last five hundred years, as in the case of Brazil, or since a specific moment in history.

II.B.4. The course of the preservation is undergoing a delicate moment. The technical identification and protection stages were overcome. The revitalization of the heritage today faces the increasing strength of economic power. It is necessary to seek for environmental and cultural balance, considering the intrinsic values of heritage and also the need for profitability of its economic value, by expanding the awareness of heritage, above all, to increase the awareness of politicians, both of the executive and the legislative powers aiming to contest destruction of the heritage collection and thus ensure the expression of diversity.

II.B.5. The profitability of heritage is desirable, as long as it is protected by technical criteria. Tourism must incorporate concepts of sustainability and preservation. The successful experiences of revitalization of the heritage must be encouraged and disseminated.

II.B.6. It is necessary to imbue policies of urban development with an outlook encompassing the objectives of preservation and conservation of the material and immaterial heritage as sustainable part of such development, as well as necessarily counting on the people’s participation. In this respect, it must be acknowledged that the immaterial heritage reflects the people’s traditions and redesigns itself in the tangible or material creations.

II.B.7. In Brazil or in any other country, a heritage register[^4] should not be made without clearly defining the protected area, with a clear demarcation of its limits and precisely establishing what one wants to do in it, what must and can be done, and what should not be done, nor, therefore, what can be done[^5]. This consideration is equally and, also particularly applicable to the property registered in the UNESCO World Heritage List. This registration rarely goes together with the necessary commitments and guarantees for its adequate conservation and management.

II.B.8. In Brazil there are 52 urban groups, most of which are without definition of their settings. An articulation between the preservation agencies and the municipal governments is required to define the legislation in these areas, the development of practices for management of the environment which would include local community participation and define the role of ICOMOS/BRAZIL in management of the heritage.

II.B.9. The redistribution and use of the higher level fiscal resources (state, federal etc.) by the jurisdiction of the Local Administration of the State of Minas Gerais for the protection of the heritage on its territorial scale is an example that could be followed by the local communities of other Brazilian States and act as model for other countries[^6].

II.B.10. With regard to the current urban features of the city of Sao Paulo, which was very well explained at this meeting[^7], one should not forget to take into account that in the interpretation of its current design and meaning its history was based on the ecclesiastic organization that originated the city, as well as on the great variety of social classes that live together and disclose major contrasts between the downtown and prosperous neighborhoods and the fringe population secluded in other peripheral sectors.

**Final considerations**

For reasons which became self-evident for all those who came to the city of São Paulo, the proposals which emerged during this meeting constitute a challenge to the current directors of the Bureau and Executive Committee of ICOMOS. How should professionals set about their work on cultural Conservation when faced with the social and economic disparities of Third World countries? One such idea, among others compelling criticisms seems to gained ground, namely why should we remain in ICOMOS?

It was observed that there is no such thing as democratic representation not even in the triennial General Assemblies,
where only 700 e 800 out of the 6,200 members can actually afford to attend them because the high prices prevent members of developing countries from turning up at such events, so that the decisions are always made by the virtually same small minority of wealthier members turning ICOMOS into something of an Elite Club which renders the magnificent heritage of economically weaker nations all but visible.

It is therefore imperative that a statutory reform take place to change the current electoral system, introducing postal votes which are inherently more wide ranging and democratic. The invited members of the National Committees from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Argentina and Mexico had the opportunity to assist an Election where the postal vote, allowed 75.67% members of the Brazilian Committee of ICOMOS to express freely their opinion. Brazil is a Continent and the problem to travel is in its all aspects similar to the one presented above.

On the other hand, the linguistic hegemony as it presently stands, relegates various national languages to a secondary role, and must be tackled: all national languages deserve unrestricted respect since they constitute the single most important aspect of Intangible Heritage of all the peoples in the Universe.

Signed by Brazilian members.

NOTES

[1] Tietê, Pinheiros e Tamanduateí rivers and their channeled tributaries: Anhangabaú, Pacaembu and among the innumerous rivulets, Aricanduva, Piratáçuara and Ipiranga that flow under the open sky, flooding in the rainy seasons, the old low and flat lands, today chaotically built and inhabited.

[2] “Conservation of a monument implies a framework to its scale. When the traditional framework remains, it will be conserved and the entire new construction, all destruction and any repair that could change the relations between the volume and the colors, will be discarded”. (Environment in the Venice Chart).

[3] “Charged with a spiritual message of the past, the monumental works of the nations continue to bear witness of their secular traditions. Humanity that at each day becomes aware of the unity of human values, considers them as a common heritage, and looking at future generations acknowledges its responsibility to support its safeguard. It must transmit them in all their authentic richness”. (The Spiritual Meaning of the Secular Traditions, Human Values, World Solidarity and the authenticity of the Venice Chart).

[4] “The assets to be conserved are the historic character of the people or of the urban area and all those material and spiritual elements that determine its image, particularly:

• the urban design defined by the plot and the parceling;
• the relation between the different urban spaces, buildings, green and free spaces;
• the shape and the aspect of the buildings (interior and exterior), defined through their structure, volume, style, scale, materials, color and decoration;
• the relations between the people or urban area and its environment, whether natural or created by man;
• the different functions acquired by the people and the urban area throughout history.” (Letter of Cities and Historic Nations. Article 2).

[5] The decentralization of the material and immaterial heritage administration in Minas Gerais: the ICMS. The cultural heritage criterion was presented through presentation of panels: 1. local cultural policy/heritage education; 2. inventory for protection of the cultural collection; dossiers of chattel placed under municipal trust and special reports on state of conservation of chattel placed under municipal trust; 3. reports of investments in manifestations and cultural assets. Annual presentation with deadline on April 15; 4. the material is analyzed and rated. This rating is transformed into resources that are transferred to the municipalities the following year. Each rating has represented close to twenty thousand reais per year, distributed in monthly installments according to the collection of the ICMS (Value-added tax on Sales and Services).

[6] To emphasize the geographical aspects and land use, the city of São Paulo was presented as seen from a helicopter. The sights of the rivers Tietê, Pinheiros and Tamanduatei were privileged for the understanding of foreign visitors about the occupation of the areas of the low and flat lands and the breakwaters that were the first centers of the small colonial and imperial city and the transfer of the new centers to the Paulista and Berrini Avenues. Finally it showed the presence of the Italian culture at the beginning of the XIXth century, the English presence with the railway line and the transformation of the Sé Square.