

«ICOMOS, a Quarter of a Century, Achievements and Future Prospects»

GENERAL SYNTHESIS

This paper is a non-exhaustive summary of the National Committees' reports. Individual contributions have not been taken into consideration, and the proposals for new charters have been mentioned only on the side.

Most papers originate from the Western cultural context, North America, Western and Eastern Europe as far as the USSR. A great deal of Mediterranean countries have remained silent, from Africa to Turkey, as have all but two developing countries. This is indeed a major problem of ICOMOS' «past and future», as the Venice Charter is generally viewed outside Europe as characteristically European in spirit and ill adapted to «younger peoples» as the US Committee calls them. Thus the discussion at the General Assembly will have to tackle the problems of ICOMOS' relationships with developing countries.

Achievements and prospects

Making reference to their achievements in the past, National Committees mention generally activities related to the «Experience and Education» sub-theme. A number of National working parties have been set up, based upon specialised interests such as wood, planning, legislation, documentation, gardens, cultural tourism, photogrammetry, etc. Norway, for instance emphasizes her international seminars on the conservation of wood. As far as basic and advanced education is concerned various examples are given, from scholarships offered by Norway to degree courses existing almost everywhere between the Soviet Union and the USA. International contacts and the support of projects in developing countries (e.g. Norway's schemes in Yemen) are particularly valued by the National Committees. However in this respect, reference is made first and foremost to the role of specialised International Committees as well as to the possibility of exchanging expertise between countries.

The US National Committee has raised two of the most crucial questions today in ICOMOS: that of the European preponderance and that of the inefficiency of the Paris Centre. An inefficiency which it kindly excuses by the lack of funds...

As far as the future tasks of ICOMOS are concerned, most National Committees who have responded think that they should be:

1. To favour professional exchanges between specialists.
2. To collect and spread information about conservation principles, techniques and policies.
3. To develop international co-operation in order to foster a world-wide documentation centre.
4. To promote international conventions.
5. To organise courses and seminars for specialists.
6. To encourage international expertise.

Of these aims, 1, 2, 4 and 5 appear to have been put forward as priorities by most National Committees while points 3 and 6 would seem to have been neglected. A number of recommendations are thus made:

- A. To support National Committees taking into account the fact that only 60 of the possible 106 countries have signed the World Heritage Convention, a UNESCO convention which is usually quoted correctly alongside ICOMOS, itself a non-governmental «product» of UNESCO. In the same perspective, it is recommended to encourage specialised National Committees co-operating with International Committees. More generally a better organisation of collective and multidisciplinary work is hoped for.
- B. To complement the Venice Charter with specific theoretical texts, without betraying its original spirit but by enlarging the field of architectural heritages. In this respect, Bulgaria's demand is identical to the USA's, viz. that the Charter ought to encompass the entire cultural heritage. The logical implication of this appears in the next point.
- C. To work on concrete directives for the practice of conservation such as those, e.g., of the «Cultural Property Management Manual» being currently prepared in the USA.
- D. To encourage the improvement of education.
- E. To reorganise the Paris centre of ICOMOS.
- F. To develop international co-operation. More generally, to enhance the world cultural heritage (the Czechs insist upon this).
- G. To restructure ICOMOS' information periodical.

These objectives demand new financial resources, an increased membership, a rejuvenated direction, a much more precise and serious three-year planning between General Assemblies.

This is a vast program which should be implemented in detail. Among these projects, the following appear as important and urgent in some other papers:

- Elaboration of new charters.
- Intensification of the work of specialised committees at the international level.
- International exchanges of experts.
- Aid to developing countries in the field of cultural heritage preservation.
- And, proposed by Czechoslovakia, reexamination of all the questions concerning legislation, recording, technology, and doctrine.

With respect to these intentions yet another czechoslovak proposal is worth careful examination: the setting up in Eastern Europe of a regional organisation.

Thus the most important questions one would have to debate at the symposium would be the following:

- The «eurocentrism» of our organisation. This is an outcome of the history of monument preservation but probably coincides also with contemporary views such as those which advocate the extension of the notion of monument to that of its environment or, in a more general perspective, those which aim at bringing together in fundamental texts, questions of law, economics, management as well as democracy in conservation by way of public participation policies. All these are actually the expression of «european» ideas even if the «younger peoples» express themselves on these subjects by stressing the importance of the concept of cultural heritage rather than merely architectural heritage (Bulgaria). They wish indeed to redefine the field in order to raise it to the sociological, ethnic, and literary dimension of culture.

It is in this context that one must evaluate the czechoslovak proposal of creating a regional East-European group which would be supposed to act as an organisational model for the whole world. Such an initiative entails indeed the risk of dissolving or breaking up our already too weak forces.

- The role of *International Committees* will also have to be questioned. A lot of work is being done by them but its results are not accessible enough. One may guess that there are other problems inherent to the activities of International Committees; e.g. the

relationships with countries launching large scale scientific projects (such as the Federal Republic of Germany's schemes on stone and wall paintings' degradation). Other problems one might have to consider include the International Committees' relationships with conferences taking place outside ICOMOS; with the information centre in Paris (which needs badly to be enlarged and supported); and with other data banks or institutions such as the IIC (International Institute of Conservation) in London.

— Under the heading «Achievements and future prospects» the problem of *charters* is to be scrutinised. The Venice Charter is an exposition of fundamental principles. The Charters on historic gardens, on historic cities (Charter of Toledo) as well as the newly proposed charter on archaeological management concern rather methodological questions. Should we elaborate yet more new charters related to specialised fields? Would it not be preferable to envisage the formulation of directives applicable either at international, regional or national level rather than charters? In the words of the US Committee, the Venice Charter is a philosophical text which is not supposed to consider the practical aspects of conservation but which has to be complemented with concrete methodological guidelines.

— The need to envisage the architectural heritage as *part of the global cultural heritage* has also been stressed as we have seen. This in itself is nothing new. The only question is whether it is at all possible to keep the «particularism» of the architectural heritage within the practice of monuments conservation. This, not only because of the overlapping of conservation with other disciplines such as town and country planning, or with culture in general, but also because of the specificity of those «younger peoples» in developing countries for whom sociological, ethnic and spiritual dimensions are likely to determine very different types of relationships with the cultural object from what one experiences in Europe, particularly considering the ephemeral character of the materials in which monuments are often built in these countries. Such thoughts could pave the way towards a better adaptation of the texts and a better integration of these countries in ICOMOS.

— In addition the question of the involvement of the «first world» into the «third» one ought to be debated.

— A number of committees asks for a more rigorous internal organisation of ICOMOS, irrespective of the problem of the Paris centre's need for reinforcement. The USSR wishes a consolidation of the influence each National Committee may have in its own country, and a better co-operation between National Committees. The proposal to create an ICOMOS council overlooking and checking upon the organisation's activities does not seem entirely inappropriate. Similarly the appeals for each participant in the General Assembly to engage in a reflexion about how to develop the theory of monument conservation should be heard.

Experience and Education

Most reports have tackled the subject from the standpoint of the different statuses of conservation education in each country. I have already mentioned their contents. There is no need to analyse them in greater detail here. This theme is however always qualified as of the utmost importance to the point that the Canadian Committee, e.g., suggests to place greater emphasis upon the organisation of further education courses than upon the drawing up of new legislation.

The Venice Charter and others

In general, The Venice Charter is considered a respectable document, correct on the whole, but incomplete. It is seen by the Netherlands, as resulting essentially from post-second world war preoccupations with reconstruction problems. It would therefore appear as outdated today due to the difficulties generated by recent industrial development, the increased mobility of people (USA) or mass tourism. Too little attention is supposed to be given to architectural ensembles, and the criteria for quality would appear to have shifted towards historical arguments (Czechoslovakia). The charters are also said to be typically products of highly favourable economic circumstances. As we have noted, «younger peoples» do not restrain their definition of heritage to architecture alone but understand it as a totality from ethnology to cultural landscapes. They also demand to take the political aspects of conservation and public participation structures into account (USA), as was stated in some of the most recent charters and committees, e.g. in the Amsterdam declaration of 1975 and in the 1987 ICOMOS charter of Toledo (Historic Towns).

for all these reasons a number of authors think it difficult to follow the Venice Charter to the letter. Which is why the wish is often expressed to draw up charters which would complement it (USA). The USSR actually sees in the publication of charters one of the major tasks of ICOMOS. In this respect the USA's observation that the Venice Charter is a philosophical reference rather than a text book of practical recipes is of paramount importance. The publication of directives such as the 1978 Secretary Standards, defining methods and aims, represents a logical outcome of this view of the Venice Charter.

Thus the will to found every aspect of monument conservation upon a few basic texts is felt throughout National Committees. The first steps were taken with the charters on Historic Gardens (Florence 1981) and on Historic Towns of 1987. One may add to these the project on archaeological heritage management and the British proposal for a Research and Recording Charter. The US example could also stimulate the fostering of regional standards. The remark by the US Committee that the Venice Charter is biased towards stone constructions and neglects wooden structures characteristic of the North American heritage goes in the same direction.

If one adds to that the problem, noted by the US, of the subordination of the conservation practice to state political structures; the role of legal institutions (France) and the consequences of regionalisation (France and Netherlands), one will be entitled to ponder over the real urgency to complement the Charter by regional texts.

Indeed if few people doubt the necessity of new texts, the form one immediately thinks of is that of a charter. However the proposals state that such charters, like the Venice «model» should not be mere statements of principles but also deal with methods. This conception is generally common to ICOMOS, the UNESCO, and the Council of Europe.

We also have to take note of a number of observations about the Venice Charter, exhibiting varying points of view. The Bulgarian Committee finds the Charter too strict. It demands greater freedom for «sites» than is allowed in art. 6. But above all they stress the fact that, in their view, the requirements of the Charter are wholly justified for exceptional monuments but that they are too constringent for lesser architectures. Such views reflect a misunderstanding of the role of the Venice Charter which certainly does not contain

prescriptions but offers fundamental concepts. Bulgaria's demand of an extension of the field covered by the Charter, in order to include all cultural objects, raises as we have seen the question of the peculiar position of architecture within the global cultural heritage landscape.

On the other hand, Bulgaria, as well as the USA and France demand the clarification of the notions contained in the Charter, precise evaluation criteria, or explanatory texts which would complement the original doctrine.

The point stressed by the French upon «sites», upon the environment of building ensembles as well as upon monuments' immediate surroundings seem also very important. The French engage in a reevaluation of conservation objects. (Although the notion of listed building has preserved its previous meaning, the monument appears today more in the light of its environmental and historical contexts than before. It must therefore be treated with the appropriate juridical and planning means.

We have noted the Netherlands' view of the Charter as a typically post-war document. Its validity today is however still recognised but with the criticism that the Charter is more preoccupied by the outward appearance of buildings than by their internal structure. Doubts have also been voiced about the appropriateness of the Venice Charter for modern architecture, particularly considering the technical problems of reuse and of the restoration of modern building materials.

The theme of reuse has also been envisaged with respect to the problems generated by the often heavy transformation or extension works needed in such cases. The question of the value of the monument after important reconstructions may well be asked. That in turn implies the question of how far one may tolerate such interventions.

As the symposium will be essentially based upon National Committees papers, we have hardly taken personal contributions into account in this overview and little more specialised International Committees' reports. However we would like to note the following about the proposals regarding the Charter of Venice: the Archaeology Charter which apparently has been examined by ICOMOS and has gone through the Organisation's internal scrutiny is but a purely methodological proposal, still limited essentially to ground

exploration and devoid of any global concept of archaeology. One has to criticise it for the absence of a relationship with History as foundation and spiritual background. The Research and Recording Charter offers an orientation, given the complexity of the subject. But it is not a charter. As such, it ought to be placed in a broader context of the science involved in preserving the cultural heritage.

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«ICOMOS, un quart de siècle d'existence: bilan et avenir»

SYNTHESE GENERALE

Ce texte est un résumé non exhaustif des rapports de Comités Nationaux. Les communications personnelles n'ont pas été prises en compte. Les propositions de nouvelles chartes ne sont qu'esquissées.

Les textes proviennent pour l'essentiel de l'environnement culturel occidental — Amérique, Europe de l'Ouest et de l'Est jusqu'en Russie. Il manque une partie du bassin méditerranéen, de l'Afrique à la Turquie, et, à de rares exceptions près, les voix des pays en voie de développement. Ceci est bien un problème majeur de «passé et d'avenir» pour l'ICOMOS car hors d'Europe la Charte de Venise est généralement considérée comme une création de la culture européenne, mal adaptée aux «peuples plus jeunes», comme les appellent les USA. Lors de l'Assemblée Générale, la discussion devra donc porter sur les problèmes des rapports de l'ICOMOS avec les pays en voie de développement.

Bilan et avenir

Dans l'évocation de leurs actions passées, les Comités Nationaux parlent en règle générale d'activités qui coïncident avec le thème «formation/information». On dénombre des groupes nationaux de travail selon certaines spécialisations, par exemple le bois, l'urbanisme, les questions juridiques, la documentation, les jardins, le tourisme culturel, la photogrammétrie, etc. La Norvège porte son attention sur les séminaires internationaux consacrés au bois. Au sujet de la formation de base et avancée, mentionnons les bourses d'étude en Norvège ou les diplômes instaurés partout depuis la Russie jusqu'aux USA. Les contacts internationaux et le soutien de projets dans des pays en voie de développement (comme par ex. le soutien de la Norvège au Yémen) sont particulièrement appréciés. Cependant, sur ce sujet, on fait référence avant tout aux comités internationaux spécialisés, et à la possibilité d'échanges d'experts.

Les Etats-Unis d'Amérique ont soulevé deux questions brûlantes qui se posent aujourd'hui à l'ICOMOS: celle de la prépondérance de l'idéologie européenne et celle de l'inefficacité du centre parisien, inefficacité qu'elle explique généreusement par le manque d'argent.