

Statement

*Dear Participants of this conference,
Distinguished Presidents of ICOMOS Bulgaria
and Germany,
Dear Colleagues,*

What is happening at this conference is part of the big and ongoing European debate on dissonant heritage. Germany, a country with a complex and ambiguous recent history, has a special role to play in this debate. I remember back in 1995, Prof. Michael Petzet, President of ICOMOS Germany and later President of ICOMOS International, organized an international conference in Berlin on the fate of „Stalinist architecture“ imported from the Soviet Union and with the participation of representatives of the former socialist countries. All participants agreed that it was already a kind of cultural heritage, but that its future was too uncertain due to its controversy. Symbolically, the conference took place on *Karl Marx Allee*, former Stalin Allee, in East Berlin. The location has a controversial fate itself: initially, after the unification of Germany, it had been scheduled for demolition, but, by 1995, was already protected as a „monument“. Today it figures as a World Heritage nominee, along with its former political antagonist, the *Hansa Viertel* in West Berlin. This is a remarkable evolution!

Later, in 1999, during my ICOMOS World Heritage *Museum Island* evaluation mission in Berlin, we talked at length about this evolution with Prof. Haspel, then Chief Conservator of Berlin. He explained to me the conservation strategy adopted after the unification in Berlin for the so-called „Critical Reconstruction“ meaning the preservation of all contradictory historical layers (modernist, Nazi, communist) by reconciling them. I remember his words: „We do not tear down anything, we only add to it“ (I have to note, however, that after all, the socialist *Palace of the Republic* in Berlin has been demolished...).

Later, further after the unification, a real architectural laboratory followed some impressive architectural interpretations of complex historical stratifications in Berlin: the *Berlin Wall*, the *Neues Museum* by David Chipperfield, Renzo Piano’s Shopping Center and Raphael Moneo’s Hotel on Potsdamer Platz, the reconstruction of the *Reichstag* by Norman Foster, and why not, even the “Wrapped Reichstag” by the Bulgarian artist Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

Bulgaria has not yet taken this path. The national protection system, at its origins far too amortized, yet cannot shake off the idea that the contested legacy of socialism is only a source of problems and conflicts. Therefore, a number of valuable buildings from this period have not been protected and often compromised or even destroyed.

Lately, there seems to be a spirit of change though. Young researchers, such as my students, whom I am proud of – Emilia Kaleva and Aneta Vasileva, have been modestly but convincingly presenting and defending the values of the cultural heritage of socialism for over 10 years now and have been working on possibilities for their preservation, including for that of the *Buzludzha Monument House*. I hope you have appreciated their contribution to this conference. The *Buzludzha Memorial House* itself will soon be protected as a cultural heritage site. I am confident that the *Buzludzha Project*, as well as the current conference, will contribute to the good fortune of this heritage. In my opinion, the recently presented draft recommendations have the qualities of a message from the conference that will have an impact on the real conservation policies and practices.

However, I think that the change in conservation behavior with regard to contested heritage also depends on changes in thinking in a broader context. What do I mean by this?

First, we should gradually realize that dissonance of heritage is not necessarily a defect. It is a natural result of the cultural heritage rights of different communities, especially in a multicultural society. The application of these rights inevitably creates contradictions between them. I remember the heated debate within ICOMOS in 1998, when we first proposed the draft Declaration of Stockholm together with Krzysztof Pawlowski from Poland and Dinu Bumbaru from Canada, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the UN. With this draft ICOMOS, for the first time, insisted on „the right to respect the authentic evidence contained in heritage as an expression of cultural identity“. Later, the *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (Faro, 2005) linked „the right of every community to enjoy cultural heritage“ to its „responsibility to respect the cultural heritage of others“, and hence „the common European heritage“. If we accept that human rights, including the right to heritage, are a democratic value, then we should accept that dissonant heritage is also a value, provided that it does not violate human rights and achievements. Therefore, its dissonance should not be neglected or neutralized, but rather integrated among the other values of the context. For example, we should not forget that *Buzludzha*, as mentioned in the morning, is part of an environment with a unique ancient culture – including one of universal value to humanity.

Second, we must also keep in mind the remarkable evolution in the notions of the value of the environment over the last half century. We see how quickly the notion of the environment as a collection of closed valuable enclaves is aging, each claiming to be a universal good. It gives way to the

idea of the value of an open global cultural environment, including authentic cultural and natural, material and spiritual values, different historical layers and places of collective memory – integrated cultural context, cultural landscape, carrier of a diversity of identities, pluralism of the spirit of place and of different communities. This cultural diversity, no less valuable to man than biodiversity, is a „development factor“ that ensures „a full intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual life“ (quoting the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001). Dissonant heritage undoubtedly creates part of this diversity.

Third, we must consider the evolution in the notions of the very preservation of cultural heritage. We see how the model of closed, elitist conservation systems inspires the idea of integrated conservation, based on the coordination between conservation, cultural, structural, social, educational and other policies seeking to strike the balance between preservation and development. A similar logic has been launched in one of the recent projects of the European Union, the *New European Bauhaus*. It relies on the symbiosis between culture, art, science and technology, based on sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion, in connection with the *European Green Deal*. Indeed, this basis makes it much easier to „harmonize interests“ according to the *ICOMOS Declaration of Stockholm* and to establish „conciliation procedures“ in accordance with the *Faro Convention*. Undoubtedly, in these procedures civil dialogue will play a key role to get to know each other and to understand the historical development of the values of different communities. But it is precisely the dissonant heritage that has valuable potential to stimulate this dialogue.

Fourth, all this sheds new light on architecture in synthesis with the arts, sciences and technologies. Architecture as a

hybrid system is able to interpret and represent the complex and contradictory cultural context, to preserve its authenticity, to reach agreement between historical layers and thus to unify ideas and appropriate functions. It can communicate between communities and disseminate knowledge about their values with all available artistic means, materials and technologies. All this creates opportunities for the dissonant heritage to send positive messages and to involve people. There is a key phrase in the *ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites* (Quebec, 2008): „Every act of conservation is also an act of communication.“ Architecture encompassing arts and technologies is able to provide this „heritage communication“, a notion put forth by the UNESCO Regional Summit on “Communication of Heritage: A New Vision of South East Europe” (Opatija, 2006). It thus plays an important role to achieve social cohesion and to support the fate of the dissonant heritage.

Finally, the immanent ability of society to resolve conflicts, accept differences, and harmonize interests should not be underestimated. What matters for this ability is the question on which of the two ethical systems the particular society is based on:

- on consent, pluralism, consensus, dialogue with the other, or
- on the violence of the majority against the minority, sanctioning any dissonant deviation from the established rigid political or cultural model.

I think we can look at dissonant heritage as one of the incentives to change our thinking about cultural heritage and its preservation.

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