

## Opening Remarks of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage (ISC 20C). 20th-Century Architecture – Under-represented Heritage on the World Heritage List

As we are already far in the next millennium, there is hardly any doubt that the past century was a historical phenomenon of extreme importance. It brought to life new dimensions of form, space and tectonics in architecture, a different vision of urban patterns and types, of social organization. It brought innovative technical approaches and materials, infrastructure, transport and communication, not to speak of the impact of standardisation, which greatly influenced the built environment. Another extraordinary circumstance is that the building production of that period far exceeded in its mass everything built before, but at the same time it is rather vulnerable. As H. Henket, one of the founders of DO.CO.MO.MO, remarked: “buildings become functionally (and aesthetically) outdated faster than ever before. Both these aspects create great tensions with the ideology of sustainability”.<sup>1</sup> Inevitably, the preservation of 20th century heritage turned out to be among the most complex and contradictory problems the conservation and architectural communities have had to face.

The need to discuss the existing preservation experience, to accumulate knowledge, to work out a suitable conservation methodology and management for endangered heritage on a global scope gave birth to the *ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage (ISC20C)* in 2005. It turned out to be one of the youngest among the other 28 ICOMOS ISC. Its main goals are targeted at *identification* for promoting recognition and celebration of the recent past; *technical investigation* and conservation of specific construction technologies and materials; *recognition/study* of specific design and function requirements within the social context; and *adaptive reuse*, thus promoting sustainability and the continued survival of 20th-century heritage (<http://icomos-isc20c.org>). In 2011, the Committee issued Guidelines, the so-called *Madrid Document 2011* or “*Approaches for the Conservation of Twentieth-Century Architectural Heritage*”, which was one of the first extensive documents accumulating experience in this field, though the work on this synthesizing paper should be continued in the future (<http://icomos-isc20c.org/id13.html>). Another key project is the *Heritage Alerts Program* through which the Committee raises international public awareness of “Heritage at Risk” sites. The first Heritage Alert for the famous Stockholm City Library by G. Asplund (1928) was successfully launched by ISC20C in 2009 and followed by other expert protests, including the Melnikov House in Moscow, in collaboration with DO.CO.MO.MO and UIA. All this indicates fruitful activities, a clever scientific conference policy and the popularity of this international expert group.

As a result, the ICOMOS ISC 20C has been entrusted with a specific mission of giving expert advice and carrying out evaluation missions for the *World Heritage* sites of the 20th-century. Here the problem is evident – there is still a very low representation of 20th-century properties on the WH List. It does not seem to make sense to compare the rate and order of inscription with “traditional” monuments of past epochs. The heritage of the 19th-century as an important prelude to the next period is equally underrepresented. Today it is possible to reveal 26 World Heritage sites, with only 14 Modern Movement structures. The position of recent heritage proves to be in obvious disproportion and misrepresentation to this significant phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> Pioneering experimental structures in architecture, urban and landscape design, artistic and social innovative ideas, key names of the “outstanding masters” of Modernism are still not on the List. For instance, today only one work of Mies van der Rohe (Tugendhat Villa) is on the List, while Aalto’s Paimio Hospital was deferred in 2007 and the Le Corbusier cluster nomination was referred back several times.<sup>3</sup> This happens in a situation of constant reviewing of the existing problem on the international level since 1985.<sup>4</sup> The ICOMOS Gap Report repeatedly states this lack of balance<sup>5</sup> due to low appreciation by the public, including by official authorities. Thus, the process of evolution and continuity in the development of cultural heritage – one of the core aspects in the World Heritage philosophy – turns out to be incomplete and broken. Needless to say that there is not a single inscribed site representing the <Socialist heritage>, which is still marked by politicization, artistic devaluation and low public appreciation, including the official authorities.

As for national *Tentative Lists*, they also demonstrate quite a mosaic and incomplete picture. Only some countries (for instance Belgium, Brazil, Israel, India, France, Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands, and the USA) more or less placed their recent heritage on the Tentative Lists, thus making them correspond to the values created during the past century. At the same time, such countries as Austria, Algeria, Russia, Sweden, UK, Japan and others being regionally and internationally important in the development of this heritage layer, are not represented on the lists. The “Socialist World” is represented only by Belarus, the Czech Republic and Cuba. When one looks through these documents (with a total amount of 1575 properties belonging to all periods), it is possible to state that of 172 countries which have submitted their Tentative Lists, the majority of countries have no heritage of the 19th and 20th centuries on these lists at all. To some extent, this is an objective process connected with different national World Heritage strate-

gies and established priorities as well as with different age requirements<sup>6</sup> for inscription within the national legislations. However, this fact also proves indirectly a significant misunderstanding of the value of this period, the lack of an adequate heritage policy and legislation in the countries, poor preservation conditions of 20th-century monuments and sites and, in fact an insufficiently effective international campaign.

Against this general background, every national nomination, which could potentially add to the representation of

20th-century heritage, should be welcomed. The international campaign for assessing “Socialist heritage” and evaluating its World Heritage potential, which started several years ago in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, has become one of the most interesting intellectual processes and conservation challenges.

**Prof. Dr. Natalia Dushkina**  
**Vice-President of ICOMOS International Scientific**  
**Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage (ISC 20C)**

<sup>1</sup> Henket, H. A. J.; Tummers, N., Authenticity of the Modern Movement, in: Larsen, K. E. (ed.): Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention. Nara/Japan 1–6 November 1994. Proceedings with an Editorial Group consisting of Jukka Jokilehto, Raymond Lemaire, Kanefusa Masuda, Nils Marstein and Herb Stovel. Published by UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Agency of Cultural Affairs Japan, ICCROM, ICOMOS. Trondheim 1995, pp. 327–329, here p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> As of August 2013; compare with full number of cultural properties being currently on the WHL – 759 cultural, 29 mixed properties; the 20th century structures represent 3.29% only. Modern Movement architecture and urban planning WH sites: Brasilia (1987), Brazil; Woodland Cemetery (1994), Sweden; Bauhaus and its Sites in Weimar and Dessau (1996), Germany; Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas (2000), Venezuela; Tugendhat Villa in Brno (2001), Czech Republic; White City of Tel-Aviv – the Modern Movement (2003), Israel; Rietveld Schröder House (2000), Netherlands; Luis Barragán House and Studio (2004), Mexico; Le Havre, the city rebuilt by August Perret (2005), France; Centennial Hall in Wrocław (2006), Poland; Sydney Opera House (2007), Australia; Central University City Campus in Mexico (2007), Mexico; Berlin Modernism Housing Estates (2008), Germany; Fagus

Factory, Alfeld, (2010), Germany. See also the list of 20th century properties for “Symbolic monuments” and “Technical and utilitarian ensembles” of the 20th century as systematised by: Jokilehto, J. World Heritage of the 20th Century – Having in mind the Gaps and Risks!, in: World Heritage Sites of the 20th century – Gaps and Risk from a European Point of View (ICOMOS Journals of the German National Committee XLVI), Petersberg 2008, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Poisson, O.; Tournoux, M.-N., The Notion of Oeuvre: Le Corbusier’s Inscription on the World Heritage List? DO.CO.MO.MO. Journal no. 41, September 2009, pp. 12–25.

<sup>4</sup> Dushkina, N., World Heritage List: Evaluating the 20th Century Heritage. Values and Criteria in Heritage Conservation. Proceedings of the International Conference of ICOMOS, ICCROM, Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco. Florence 2008, pp. 417–423.

<sup>5</sup> The World Heritage List. Filling the Gaps – an Action Plan for the Future. An ICOMOS study compiled by J. Jokilehto et. al. (Monuments and Sites XII), München 2005, pp. 36–46.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, the Netherlands and USA have a 50-year limit in their legislation, Russia 40 years; France, Finland and Germany no time limit.