ICOMOS ACTION PLAN ON THE 20TH CENTURY HERITAGE / SURVEY

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1) Introduction

Originally, initiated as ICOMOS Action Plan on 20th C. Heritage, and named Montreal Action Plan (MAP20), this plan expresses the concern of ICOMOS members and committees about the protection, conservation, management and presentation of more recent forms of cultural heritage that demonstrate intellectual, social, technological or artistic evolution. MAP20 is the production of a global survey of the theme from the worldwide network of ICOMOS National and International Scientific Committees. It took place thanks to the financial support of Québec’s Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, the City of Montréal, ICOMOS Finland, US/ICOMOS, and private organizations. This initiative has been actual for nearly 20 years and had brought together ICOMOS to co-operate with organizations such as DOCOMOMO, ICCROM, UNESCO, TICCIH, Council of Europe, the US and Canadian National Parks Services. ICOMOS has also been cooperating closely with UNESCO’s World Heritage Center to promote the nomination of 20th century properties for the World Heritage List. Additionally, many national reports included in the Heritage at Risk 2000 Report, mentioned concern over the fate of various heritage types associated with 19th and 20th century that has been documented and identified in the 20th Century Heritage Survey project that was undertaken with the support of the US/ICOMOS Summer Intern Program 2002. At this moment, 19 countries have responded on the Survey Questionnaire to ICOMOS National and International Scientific Committees. The received responses in the Survey have been used as the basic nomenclature for this paper that addresses the issues of documentation and public awareness regarding the 20th century Heritage.

2) Documentation

Documentation of the 20th century heritage represents a particular problem, made more difficult by the quantity of information and its diversity. The number and diversity of properties and their territorial distribution are such that preliminary processing of the information and critical analysis is essential. In order to assemble systematic documentation on 20th century heritage it was essential to draw up list specific to 20th century heritage so as to take account of survey practices in the different world countries that promote mutual communication and understanding of these informative and analytical methods throughout the world.

The buildings of the 20th century are many in number and of varying in character; they reflect both traditional and modernist values. The architecture of the 20th century cannot be considered in the same way as that of earlier centuries. It differs in terms of quantity, typology, and diversity. Considering its character, the 20th century heritage is defined not only in relation to its architectural forms but also by taking into account the broad ecological, anthropological, economic and cultural framework. It is thus important for an understanding of 20th century architectural heritage to consider it within a broader social and cultural framework.

The process of the recognition of the 20th century architecture as a Heritage identifies heritage of outstanding universal value through new thematic approaches, such as the modes of occupation of land and space, industrial technology, urban ensembles, vernacular and reused buildings, environment and cultural landscape. These new thematic approaches formulated in the responses of the countries-participants given in 20th century heritage Survey underline the wealth of regional diversity within the 20th century heritage defining a ‘heritage’ as a point of convergence between location and culture. It should be also mentioned that the concept of the 20th century Heritage has been defined at the beginning of this project by:

- the international scope of the concept;
- the existence and importance of “permanence” and “continuity” in 20th century;
- the interrelationship between the concepts of “material” and “memory”;
- the influence of tradition on the international expression alongside the development of local or regional expressions. Such framework enabled to postulate the concept of the 20th century heritage from a regional perspective that starts at the local level and proceeds successively to the national and international perspectives.

The application of authenticity as a criterion for evaluating the 20th century Heritage, which is at least as subject to change as earlier heritage, is still one of the topic of on-going discussion in the heritage field and has also become actualized in this Survey. Since far more was built in the 20th century than in any other century, the sheer amount of buildings demands a certain selection that is critical in terms of the historic and artistic quality of what is to be preserved.

Most of the countries responded that there are no specific