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## PRESENTATION OF THE 2<sup>nd</sup> H&mH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, KOS (GREECE), 3-4-5 OCTOBER 2005

### The H&mH CICOP Conference “**VULNERABILITY OF 20th CENTURY CULTURAL HERITAGE TO HAZARDS AND PREVENTION MEASURES**”

examines a wide range of risks threatening cultural heritage. This from a viewpoint which encourages both the development of cultural policies intended to preserve cultural diversities and the setting up of areas of communication between public and private sectors.

The fundamental purpose of the Congress undertaking is to contribute to the formulation of policies and of strategies for the preservation of modern (tangible and intangible) cultural heritage by fostering synergisms between modern science and local knowledge.

**Aim of the congress** is to contribute for a greater human solidarity based upon recognition of cultural diversity, on awareness of the unity of humankind, and of the development of intercultural exchanges.

We believe that the respect of the cultural diversities, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security.

Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to every one; it is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence.

Physical vulnerability of built heritage combined with a lack of financial resources, insufficient knowledge and protection, makes architectural and town planning particularly vulnerable to various agents (climatic, economic, etc.). Apart from the need to document, evaluate and preserve our heritage we thus also have to create awareness and appreciation for all aspects (formal, cultural, historic, economic) amongst professionals and politicians, students and the general public.

Building in the twentieth century represents various aspects that have not been present in previous centuries. These are generally labeled under “modern movement” or modernity. Taking the notion of “modernity” as meaning what characterizes our recent, built heritage, it follows that to explore the various influences which have inspired particular forms of building and how far such influences have integrated ideas or techniques from the past as a form continuity is essential.

The roots of modernity and of the modern concepts of historicity and the conservation of cultural heritage, are referred to the Age of Reason, an era that established cultural paradigms that are deeply reflected in present-day society. Bruno Zevi, in his recent publication (2000) identifies early modernity in the growing use of industrial technology, in the Arts and Crafts movement, and in the various forms of Art Nouveau exploiting modern technologies and materials innovative shapes and spaces. After the first World War, the international modern movement emphasized rationalization of production, aiming at the new use of materials and spaces. Nowadays, we are requested to give our judgment concerning this production and the way to preserve or to adapt it to the new life standards and changes in technological innovations.

**The following principal aspects will be treated in the papers that will be presented and discussed at the Koos Conference.**

- Innovative materials and technologies applied to the field of building restoration and renewal
- Tourism development
- Modern architectural Protection, from different points of view: technological, administrative, managerial, etc.
- Industrial Heritage

The papers will be circulated before the Conference for critical review and discussion by the scientific committee of Conference.

Particular emphasis will be given to certain categories of heritage, and in particular to the *shared heritage* (or colonial) one.

In order to arrive at a rational study and appreciation of nineteenth and twentieth century architectural and town planning, we must change our views about shared heritage; architecture and town planning set up under colonial polity have a position of their own and require and deserve a special attention. Attributing a particular relevance to colonial architectural heritage within the framework of world heritage is not only artificial, it also does not do justice to the fact that its significance, like any other heritage, is determined by the same factors (circumstantial, formal, technical) as the rest. Just because these circumstances in general differ from those we are familiar with, does not create a convincing argument to set colonial heritage in a class apart. On the contrary, it underlines the need to formulate new criteria to assess heritage worldwide and include it within the general context of world heritage.

As the nomenclature suggests colonial heritage is inextricably linked with political and economic circumstances peculiar to colonial society (political, economic, social, cultural). When evaluating position and meaning, quality and merits of colonial heritage within the realm of architectural and town planning of the modern era (and of all those involved in the design process: administrators, , architects, engineers) these circumstances will have to be taken into account.

The label “colonial heritage” hints at specific differences between this and “other” heritage. Because attachment of the denouncing adjective “colonial” to artefacts often frequently calls up connotations of inferior quality (formal, aesthetic, technical), it is a precondition within the framework of the Unesco-project to determine where does this notion comes from, and whether it is valid

and tenable. Is the colonial/mutual heritage different from other heritage? Are there any distinctive characteristics that make architecture and town planning different from other heritage? And if so, are these characteristics really inferior to those elsewhere do they lent this heritage a rationale to exist?

To arrive at a better evaluation and understanding of the position, meaning, quality and merits of the colonial architecture , such as innovations in the use of materials, technologies, concepts of production, transport, communication and labour, organisation of space can applied as long as one keeps an open mind to context and circumstances.

A new approach should include questions and criteria about:

- Circumstances: political, economic, social, cultural
- Assignments and objectives: nature (social, political) volume and scale of the assignments
- Point of departure: availability of materials, institutions, legislations
- Local conditions: climate, building and construction methods, styles and ornaments
- Application of local materials, styles, and decorations
- Adjustments and adaptations: mutual integration of vernacular/local constructions, materials, styles, decorations
- Contemporary references and examples in other colonies
- Characteristics of emerged colonial architecture and town planning: distinguish and determining distinct and shared characteristics according to motherland, region, and period.

Answers to these questions will eventually enable us to draw conclusions about the degree in which architectural and town planning in the colonies were innovative and round breaking, produced a distinguished style particular to a region and period, its merits and demerits, generated a cross-culture mixtures, etc. Only based on a description of these characteristics we can make a statement about the intrinsic significant and quality of this heritage...

It will be necessary to supplement and review the different categories of built and planned cultural expressions of the colonial heritage and to select priorities for the attention in the Research and Documentation Programs.

Assessing the significance of such a patrimony takes time and the distance is still short and thus not easy to judge. Such efforts may not always been successful, but there are certainly many masterpieces in our time as there have been in past. It is for us to learn and identify them and appreciate their quality.

I should like also to remark that the geographic position of the Dodecanese in the Mediterranean area held and still maintains the function of a crossroads of cultures, between East and West, North and South. The future enlargement of the European union shall enhance and strengthen this function in a new role of “transborde” entity. As far as, the “shared heritage of the Italian period (1912-43) in Kos and the other islands of Dodecanese – as well as the French architecture in North Africa or the British Architecture in India – is part of a long history of exchanges, started from more ancient times . The stratification of more than 25 centuries of history left clearly identifiable testimonies; this peculiarity implies the research of solutions ensuring the “diffused recovery” of shared heritage.

I will sincerely hope that the Conference will be successful and will provide a forum for the dissemination of expert knowledge from around the world that will contribute to the preservation of our cultural heritage.

Prof. Arch. Nina Avramidou  
Chairperson of the **2<sup>nd</sup> H&mH**