



DECLARATON OF FOZ DO IGUAÇU

The Presidents and Members of the National Committees of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, México and Paraguay, met jointly with the ICOMOS Vice President for the Americas in the city of Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, on May 29, 30 y 31, 2008, with the objective of reflecting on the concept of the “Spirit of Place”, the main theme of XVIth General Assembly of ICOMOS to be held in Québec in October of 2008.

The participants express their appreciation to ICOMOS Brasil and to ITAIPU Binacional for organizing this forum, and based on the discussins held, we approve the following conclusions:

1. On the concept of “Spirit of Place”.

The concept of Spirit of Place is linked to the interaction between the material and intagible components of natural settings and/or of those built by humans. This is an essential notion, since by its very definition, a “place” is not just any space, but a space characterized by a singular identity. In this sense, the “spirit” is the vital breath that expresses such identity, resulting from the relationship between a specific culture and the location in which it exists. Among the elements that constitute or have an impact on the “Spirit of Place,” the following have been identified:

- a) The characteristics of the geographic setting and the natural environment.
- b) The natural heritage that has been deemed sacred through the meanings attributed to it by stakeholding communities.
- c) The particular way in which, through time, the relationship between communities and their natural environments has evolved, as expressed in cultural landscapes, cities, and in urban and rural spaces.
- d) The places appropriated by human beings, such as the urban and rural open spaces, and the stages where community life and its spiritual manifestations are enacted.
- e) The built spaces that in a particulr way express the solutions given to the needs of human life.
- f) The material components that are part of of the special identity of urban spaces, such as pavements, landscaping, signs, lighting and street furniture.
- g) Thge various functions and uses which in time have evolved in spaces configured by human beings.



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- h) The social processes that are an inherent part of the production and reproduction of cultural property.
 - i) The successive contributions from various cultures, which are characteristic of Latin America.
2. The importance of understanding the “Spirit of Place”.

The identification of the material and the intangible components that define the “Spirit of Place” is essential for the preservation of the identity of communities that have created spaces of cultural and historical significance, and that have transmitted them from one generation to the next.

The study, analysis and understanding of the components of a place are appropriate resources in identifying the actions needed for preservation, understood as actions that allow the expression of the spirit.

3. Threats to the “Spirit of Place”.

The participants in this Forum have identified a number of threats to the “Spirit of Place” among which the following are worth stating:

- a) Real estate pressures and land use speculation, particularly in urban areas, which endanger areas of cultural and historic significance, as well as their setting and their essential values.
- b) The encroachment by new uses that are incompatible with the character or the traditional meaning of a place, including the informal commercialization of public spaces.
- c) The insertion in areas of cultural and historic significance and in their settings, of buildings, groups of buildings and other elements that have no consideration for the character of the place nor for its cultural and historic values.
- d) The removal or demolition of buildings, open spaces and elements that characterize the “Spirit of Place.”
- e) The insertion and use of infrastructure, equipment or urban furniture that because of their design or construction, are alien to the character of the place.

In this context, a number of concrete cases of threats to the “Spirit of Place” in various Latin American cities were mentioned during our proceedings, some being worthy of stating here:

- a) The real estate speculation that generates increases in construction density and high-rise building in the city of Salvador, Barzil, and in the setting of this World Heritage Site
- b) The real estate and vehicular traffic pressures in Brasilia, which affect the integrity of the Master Plan of this World Heritage Site.



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- c) The proposed project for a Cultural Center in Valparaíso, Chile, that gives no consideration to the pre-existing values of the site and to the setting of this World Heritage Site .
- d) The proposed Exhibit and Convention Center in Puebla< Mexico, in a an area of great significance, and within the World Heritage district.
- e) The temporary construction of structures and an ice skating rink in the Zócalo of México City a World Heritage Site
- f) The alterations to the Sancturaries of Chalma, in the State of México, and San Juan de los Lagos in Jalisco, as well as in the Bracho District of the City of Zacatecas, México, a World Heritage Site.
- g) The lack of control on buildings, traffic and signage in the vicinity of the Manzana Jesuítica in Córdoba, Argentina, a World Heritage Site.
- h) The proposed enlargement of the football stadium in the Paseo del Bosque in La Plata, Argentina, which threatens the historic and environmental values of the place.
- i) The inappropriate construction of a regional jail within the setting of the tourism and cultural circuit known as the Caminho de Pedra en Bento Gonçalves, in Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil.

4. Recommendations.

The participant of this Forum agree on the following recommendations:

- a) That the concept of “Spirit of Place be integrated in the processes of urban and territorial planning as the means to comprehensively preserve natural and cultural landscapes, as well as cities and urban areas of historic and cultural significance.
- b) That urban legislation, plans and new development projects in natural and man-made settings take into consideration their possible impact on the “Spirit of Place.”
- c) That the value systems and the social practices of communities be understood and respected as part of the “Spirit of Place.”

In consideration of all of the above, all relevant competent authorities are urged to take the necessary precautions to avoid actions and processes that could affect the “Spirit of Place” in these locations

Foz do Iguaçu, Parana, Brazil, May 31, 2008