CONGRESO MEGALOPOLIS: RESILIENCIA EN LA GRAN URBE

The Congress took place from July 24 to 27 in Puebla, Mexico. See below a synthesis of the program:

Conferences:

Joan Clos (Former Director UN Habitat): “Resilience and governance in XXI century megalopolis”.

Alfonso Iracheta Cenecorta (Colegio Mexiquense): “Metropolitan Governance”.

José Luis Samaniego (Director. Sustainable Development and Human Settlements, CEPAL): “Urban challenges in Latin America”.

Edgar E. Ramírez de la Cruz (Public Administration CIDE): “Social Network for Metropolitan Governance”.

Panels:

“Capacity Building for Resilience”

Kepa Korta (Spain), Beatriz García (University of Liverpool), Arnoldo Matus Kramer (Mexico).

“Resilience in Megalopolis”

Jorge Melguizo (Colombia), Félix Manito (Spain), Juan Merín (Spain).

Dialogue Tables:

“Approaches to Resilience”

“Governance for Resilience”

“Resilient Territories”

Each table was divided in four themes: Persons, Planet, Prosperity and Peace.

My presentation took place at the dialogue table “Governance for Resilience”, with the title: “Patrimonio y resiliencia urbana” (Heritage and urban resilience). See below a brief synthesis in English.

1- ICOMOS: “What we do”, aims, resources.

2- Thinking platforms:

Brief explanation of scientific committees (CIVVIH, Risk Preparedness), projects, programs (Heritage & Risk) doctrinal texts (Valetta Principles), activities, task forces, groups (CCHWG) documents and other resources related to cities, climate change, sustainability, resilience:

Commented ICOMOS documents:

- *Paris Declaration*, 2011.

- *Statement by ICOMOS on the Adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*, 2015.

Theophil & CIVVIH, *Bangalore Note on Conserving Living Urban Heritage*, Bangalore, 2015.

- *Recommendations from the Scientific Council Symposium Cultural Heritage and Global Climate Change (GCC)*. ICOMOS Scientific Council. Pretoria, 2007.

- *Cultural Heritage, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the New Urban Agenda (ICOMOS Concept Note for the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the Third United* *Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (HABITAT III)*, 2016.

- “The View from ICOMOS”, in UNESCO, *Culture: Urban Future, Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development*, Paris, 2016, p. 194.

- *Urban Heritage and Sustainability*, ICOMOS CIVVIH, Seoul, 2017.

- *ICOMOS Guidance on Post Trauma Recovery and Reconstruction for World Heritage Cultural Properties*, Paris, 2017.

- *ICOMOS Methodology for Building Assessment and Mitigation following the January 12, 2010 Haiti Earthquake*, 11 Abril 2010.

3. - Significant concepts:

- Cultural value is not restricted to monuments, sites and ensembles. It includes territory, landscapes, cities, underwater sites, the sky and polar sites…

- Intangible and material heritage are tied between them and with natural heritage and settings.

- Acceptance of the HUL approach as a key for understanding metropolis and megalopolis heritage.

- All times produce heritage.

- Discussion of controversial issues as loss of integrity and “recovering” by unauthentic reconstructions.

- Importance of understanding that there are values not only in the traditional city but also in the megalopolis.

- Traditional architectural and urban solutions are significant answers to climate change, energetic saving and resilience.

- Heritage as an engine for positive development.

- Conservation of heritage contributes to sustainability and resilience.

- Understanding the indivisibility of material-intangible-natural heritage allow proposing measures to protect communities’ identities. This is of the utmost importance in megalopolis due to their characteristics as territories with multiple communities.

- Big cities are more fragile in terms of identity than traditional mono-centric cities. Every analysis has to start with recognition of multicultural layers, possible loss of place attachment and solastalgia.

- In addition, stressing agents as development and tourism can be more damaging in megalopolis than in cities with a clear sense of place.

- To recognize culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability.

- To recognize all heritage, not only the one protected by law.

- Recognizing its values and enhancing urban landscape contributes to the orientation of inhabitants and visitors in the city.

- The sense of being anonymous is greater in big cities than in small-traditional ones. Hence, diffusion of values is imperative in communication programs.

- Big cities are migrations’ destinies. This fact generates a more complex identity problem than in traditional cities.

Urban resilience in metropolis and megalopolis requires recognizing significance of cultural and natural heritage, that means:

- Tourism is not the only economic value of heritage.

- Cultural tourism is affected when heritage is damaged in terms of authenticity and integrity.

- Sustainable and authentic tourism, when managed by communities, increases jobs and contributes to local industries and crafts.

- Preserving traditional places helps to promote local industries and small investments that contribute to economy and vitality of the city.

- Preserving and adapting heritage places contributes to reduce expenses in energy and building materials.

- Several traditional architectural and urban typologies have proved to be effective from a climatological point of view, saving energy.

- Putting a limit to urban expansion reduces transportation costs.

- Preserving place attachment makes cities livable and contribute to create a sense of wellness, this way acting to diminish conflicts. Those cities are safer and easier to govern.

-Inventories and diffusion are significant. Inhabitants and visitors have to know and understand the city in order to love it.

- Last but not least: to avoid contradictions based on short term economy as well as approached based on just one subject that could affect understanding the significance of heritage.

Other issues:

I was also asked to participate with a presentation at the parallel meeting *Cómo construir Gobernanza en un Gobierno Metropolitano* (How to build Governance in a Metropolitan Government), organized by IMEPLAN – Puebla. My presentation was *Patrimonio Cultural y Gobernanza Urbana* (Cultural Heritage and Urban Governance), in which I explained ICOMOS role as an important part of a governance structure. In this presentation, I stressed the significance of cultural diversity and different social groups regarding their heritage, both material and immaterial.

In addition, I had the honor and the pleasure to be asked to make the closing speech on behalf of participants in the Congress.

Congreso Megalopolis has been a great experience. I was the only one representing the cultural heritage point of view, but the rest of the participants were very interested and welcomed this different approach. Moreover, the possibility to learn about such complex urban structures as the case of Mexico-Puebla-Tlaxcala megalopolis opened a new research theme.

The first morning I opened my room window and saw the Popocatepetl and the Iztaxihuatl. In between, Cholula pyramid with Remedios church at the top. I will never forget that view: natural and cultural heritage together, full of symbolism.

Angela Rojas

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