REPORT: The work of the ICOMOS Advisory Committee, Delhi 2017

Sheridan Burke
Introduction

When I stood for election in 2015 as a candidate for the post of President of the Advisory Committee (AdCom), I had been an active Australia ICOMOS member for almost four decades and had participated internationally for twenty years. By 2015 I saw an ICOMOS that needed to use new ways of working, conferencing and networking with different, emerging players participating in interdisciplinary discourses; an organisation which needed to change its communications and financial platforms. I hoped that the AdCom could be an essential participant in evolving those changes. Working as one of the six newly elected Advisory Committee Officers (ACOs), together we set out objectives in three specific areas for the triennium 2015-18.

Objective 1: Deepening ICOMOS Scientific Dialogue

The ACOs agreed that facilitating more discussion at meetings and reducing time spent in committee administration would allow a focus on current scientific and emerging conservation issues that need international engagement and interdisciplinary work between committees, and sharing benchmark practices, research and experience. The AdCom meeting in Delhi was the first designed around these opportunities. Working documents were issued well in advance, so that meeting times were used for discussion rather than information transfer. Five major items of ICOMOS doctrine were approved and endorsed, and three more were presented as works in progress. New ICOMOS initiatives were reviewed and sent to the Board for activation, and more than a dozen updates on ICOMOS programs were shared.

Objective 2: Improving ICOMOS Communications with Members

Between the annual meetings, the AdCom works via list serves and digital meetings so that the National Committees (NCs) and International Scientific Committees (ISCs) have regular avenues of communications available, to hear about Board decisions and to offer suggestions for action. By revising the annual report format, we scan the ICOMOS horizon to identify emerging issues for discussion. There was a need to look at how remote participation could be facilitated for members unable to travel, by using new media platforms. The first remote-participation AdCom meeting segment was held in Delhi – an exciting breakthrough made by the Emerging Professionals Working Group (EPWG). Based on this experience, a recommendation was made to the Board to establish a Working Group to develop an ICOMOS Communications Plan.

The idea of holding an annual meeting of the National Committees at the AdCom meeting had been resisted in the past, but we felt that there was new interest in developing inter-regional dialogue and mutual support for emerging or struggling committees. The first such meeting
was held in Istanbul in 2016, and the second was held in Delhi, both ably chaired by AdCom Vice President Deirdre McDermott (Ireland), providing time and space for a global discussion.

**Objective 3: ICOMOS Leadership and Succession Planning**

The ACOs strongly support the promotion of meaningful engagement of younger professionals within ICOMOS committees and projects, not by creating a separate organisation but by sharing experiences and providing opportunities for professional development in ICOMOS programmes and projects. We wanted to infuse new heritage discourses in our work and sustain a lively ICOMOS ahead through actively engaging all NCs and ISCs in this aim. I was enthused by my experiences with the successful mentoring program developed by Australia ICOMOS and was keen to see how we could apply it internationally. It was exciting to see the Emerging Professionals Working Group take shape in late 2017, and make their first presentation at the Delhi AdCom meeting. The discussion was Facebook-streamed with young professionals actively participating on screen in Delhi.

**What does the Advisory Committee do?**

The work of the Advisory Committee is led by six elected Advisory Committee Officers (ACOs). Together, they are the advisory link between ICOMOS NCs and ISCs and the ICOMOS Board. The ACOs also monitor and support the health and vibrancy of committees, especially through annual reports, helping new doctrine through the labyrinth of ICOMOS process, preparing the new Scientific Plan, and supporting the ongoing ICOMOS work across many issues. The ACOs tasks include facilitating wide member engagement in these projects, coordinating across multiple languages, cultural traditions and high expectations, but without administrative or financial support. I have previously said that ICOMOS has been the third child in our family, and the AdCom President’s role sometimes felt like adding twins – but an educational and inspiring experience too!

**The Delhi AdCom meetings 2017**

The Delhi General Assembly (GA) was the half-way point of my term as AdCom President (2015-2018) and my involvement in its preparation and the outcomes for Delhi was intense and rewarding, culminating in ten crazy days of meetings, presentations and negotiations in December 2017.

**Delhi Scientific Symposium**

My work for the Advisory Committee meeting at the Delhi General Assembly began with my appointment as the international co-chair for the Scientific Symposium, working with the wonderful Indian co-chair Nupur Prothi Khanna (see Prothi Khanna, *this volume*) and a great team in Delhi. We worked with the ICOMOS India Scientific Symposium sub-committee, prepared new reference guidelines for ICOMOS Scientific Symposia, evolved the four symposium themes and began to engage with the development of the Delhi Declaration. Having attended nine ICOMOS General Assemblies myself, I felt I appreciated how much organisation and time would be involved, but what is visible to participants is the tip of the iceberg of such collaborations. Hundreds of emails and paper/poster reviews and tens of late night Skype calls with a dedicated group of chairs, co-chairs and sub-committees produced a fantastic symposium program.
The four Symposium sub-themes were drafted to reflect major ICOMOS programmes and emerging heritage conservation issues, as well as the central theme selected by ICOMOS India: *Heritage and Democracy*, on which the Delhi Declaration was to be based. The Culture-Nature Journey theme of the symposium was inspired by one of the dedicated tracks of the IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Hawaii in 2016, where ICOMOS jointly with IUCN initiated discussion focusing on connecting natural and cultural heritage practice (see McIntyre-Tamwoy, this volume). Susan McIntyre-Tamwoy (ICOMOS) and Tim Badman (IUCN) successfully adapted an innovative conference format of talks, knowledge cafes and events for the Culture-Nature Journey in Delhi, which I hope will become the format of ICOMOS conferences ahead, engaging and inspiring participants.

**The Delhi Declaration**

My second role in Delhi was chairing the working group which drafted the final Delhi Declaration. A draft had been initiated in ICOMOS India in the lead-up to the General Assembly, and a small working group consisting of myself, Pamela Jerome (USA), Nils Ahlberg (Sweden) and Smita Datta Makhija (India) were tasked to finalise the Declaration. Working long into most nights and with Smita referring back to the Indian drafting group, the *Delhi Declaration on Heritage and Democracy* (included in this volume) was developed during the General Assembly, and represents the commitment by ICOMOS to Heritage and Democracy as key ingredients in a people-based approach to sustainable development.

**Young/Emerging Professionals Working Group**

My third role – and most pleasing accomplishment in Delhi – was the mentoring of the Young/Emerging Professionals Working Group to launch during the AdCom meeting, working with a great group of young professionals led by: Stacy Vallis (New Zealand), Clara Villa Alba (Spain) and Audrey Farrell (Ireland) who co-ordinated the energies of 42 members, supported by mentors Toshiyuki Kono and Gideon Koren and myself. This brought together so much of what I had hoped to achieve through my role as AdCom President – the prominent commitment of the organisation to ensure the engagement of Young/Emerging Professionals in everything ICOMOS does.

The EPWG bought ten resolutions to the AdCom meeting which were unanimously passed, most importantly, the need to continue expanding this group by encouraging all NCs and ISCIs to nominate EPWG members and to engage with emerging professionals in all projects. The work of the EPWG will be a standing item for future Advisory Committee meetings and engagement with emerging professionals is now a compliance pillar for all committees (see Harrington, this volume). The EPWG continues to meet monthly and is growing rapidly.

**Twentieth Century Heritage ISC (ISC20C)**

My fourth role at Delhi was also a great personal pleasure. As outgoing President of ISC20C, we proposed the endorsement of the revised ‘Approaches for the Conservation of Twentieth Century Cultural Heritage Places (Madrid-New Delhi Document)’ which had been expanded and revised in collaboration with other ISCs. The review was greatly assisted by Susan Macdonald (Australia) and Kyle Normandin (USA), and we were happy with the unanimous support for the General Assembly resolution for its endorsement and promotion. ISC20C is a well-established and growing ISC now with an excellent best practice guidance document.³
Delhi Advisory Committee Meeting

The AdCom meetings held in New Delhi in December 2017 were the largest and best attended in ICOMOS history with more than 200 participants from 113 countries, including representation from 65 National Committees and 20 Scientific Committees. The AdCom meeting was preceded by meetings of Regional Groups, National Committees and the Scientific Council, each with their own agenda, and time for discussion.

Unexpectedly, a major grant to support attendance at the General Assembly was withdrawn, and for a time it seemed ICOMOS would be unable to honour travel grants made to assist members to come to Delhi. The development of an ICOMOS crowd funding campaign by the Secretariat inspired over 600 members, friends and supporters to generously donate to ‘Help ICOMOS remain an open non-political cultural heritage forum’. From this difficulty came an understanding that ICOMOS has a broader support base than its members alone, an indicator that we need to actively improve external and internal communications.

The meetings were held in the India International Centre, a mid-20th Century building complex designed by American architect and environmentalist Joseph Allen Stein. The idea of the India International Centre arose from discussions between Dr S. Radhakrishnan, Vice President of India, and John D. Rockefeller III about setting up a centre for the ‘quickening and deepening of true and thoughtful understanding between peoples of nations’ (Ansari 2012). Completed in 1960, with ongoing support by numerous Universities, this institution, set in beautiful grounds, was an exceptionally appropriate location to host the ICOMOS meetings.

My President’s report to the Advisory Committee submitted on behalf of the six Advisory Committee Officers (ACOs), outlined our work over the past year on the 8 key tasks that had been agreed at the Istanbul Annual Assembly in 2016:

- Facilitating younger member engagement with ICOMOS
- Revising the ICOMOS Annual Reporting process
- Supporting and monitoring the development of NCs and ISCs
- Clarifying new World Heritage roles for ISCs and NCs
- Improving member communications within ICOMOS and developing the use of social media
- Developing and promoting a timely and pertinent Scientific Program for the next triennium
- Providing for meaningful input from members to the ICOMOS triennial plan and budget
- Engaging members in major ICOMOS initiatives

The ensuing discussion at the AdCom meeting highlighted a number of common issues: the increasing use of interdisciplinary approaches in ICOMOS initiatives; acceptance of new ways of meeting, conferencing and networking; and the need to fully utilise new communication platforms to facilitate remote access for ICOMOS participants. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook increasingly provide communication opportunities for ICOMOS, and new financial strategies such as crowd funding campaigns demonstrate the wide a range of stakeholders ICOMOS can reach with agile communication planning.

The urgency for ICOMOS to take action and a leadership role around issues of climate change and heritage, and the practical implementation
of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were recurring concerns during all the Delhi meetings. Ege Yildirim’s (SDG Focal Point, Turkey) presentation on the work of the Sustainable Development Goals Working Group (SDGWG) stimulated significant discussion around how the ISCs and NCs could participate in the localisation of the SDGs. Ege challenged participants to consider how to measure the success of the implementation of SDG 11 in particular, and all were encouraged to take relevant actions and develop projects within the framework of the ICOMOS SDG Action Plan for Cultural Heritage, 2016.

The Climate Change and Heritage Working Group (CCHWG), formed by the Secretariat, led by Andrew Potts (USA) is developing a roadmap for ICOMOS for work on climate change, including responding to specific requests to ICOMOS from the World Heritage Committee. Its work will be augmented by input from NCs and ISCs. The Scientific Council decided to add a climate change reporting question to the next annual report template to measure effective engagement of all committees with this critical issue. A General Assembly resolution ‘Mobilising ICOMOS and the Cultural Heritage Community to Help Meet the Challenge of Climate Change’ was later adopted, giving priority to a programme for ICOMOS on global climate change, including an action plan and communication strategy. Since then, the Working Group has been requested to develop an ICOMOS Charter on Climate Change and Heritage, aiming for adoption at the 20th ICOMOS Triennial General Assembly in Sydney (2020).

The AdCom meeting also considered a range of “ICOMOS at Work” projects, including:

- Development of a new disaster recovery tool kit by ICORP (ICOMOS Committee on Risk Preparedness), presented by Chris Marrion (Canada) to enthusiastic acclaim;
- Google Arts and Culture collaboration pilot, spearheaded by Mario Santana (Canada) on behalf of the ICOMOS ISC on Heritage Documentation (CIPA), with a test underway focusing on hidden heritage with several committees;

The AdCom meeting received a detailed report from the Scientific Council meeting identifying issues which were incorporated into the AdCom resolutions including: the need for a credible scientific journal, podcast lectures and the publication of annual Scientific Symposium papers; and consideration of proposals for new ISCs on industrial heritage, water and heritage; and noted the continuing work on a review of the International Cultural Tourism Charter and a draft charter on Fortifications and Related Heritage. The Scientific Council also invited member participation in a working group looking at gaps and overlaps in the existing ISCs.

The National Committee meeting report was verbally received by the AdCom, and ICOMOS Vice-President Peter Phillips (Australia) presented a report on the statutes and rules of procedure, indicating that new bylaws would be made available for ISCs soon and advising that a series of statutory issues that would be later discussed at the Extraordinary General Assembly. Reports were also provided by the Director-General of the International Secretariat, Marie Laure Lavennier; and the outgoing Secretary-General Kirsti Kovanen reported on the triennial ICOMOS work plan 2018-2020.

The Scientific Symposium programme for ICOMOS for the next three years was finalised: sustainability (Argentina, 2018); rural landscape heritage (2019); and shared heritage (Australia,
Similarly, the themes for International Monuments and Sites Day for the next three years were adopted: intergenerational heritage, to be organised by the EPWG (2018); rural landscape heritage (2019); and shared heritage (2020). Bids for hosting the 2019 annual General Assembly were received from Morocco and Peru.

The AdCom meeting closed with an opportunity for members to ask questions of the ICOMOS President, Treasurer and Secretary-General concluded with unanimous thanks to all, and in particular to outgoing President Gustavo Araoz, who responded that such applause should be shared with all of the Bureau and with all ICOMOS members.

After the AdCom meetings closed, it was off to the extraordinary India Habitat Centre (also designed and built by Joseph Allen Stein, with Doshi and Bhalla, in 1993) for the General Assembly and the Scientific Symposium, concluding with the exciting announcement of Sydney as the location for the next General Assembly in 2020 (see Mackay, *this volume*). For me, the AdCom duties finished ten days after they started, by attending the first meeting of the newly elected ICOMOS Board in Delhi. A new Board of elected volunteers to work with, many new priorities and old ones to pursue. It was an utterly exhausting and yet exhilarating ten days. Another ICOMOS chapter opens.

Figure 5: The first meeting of the newly elected ICOMOS Board in Delhi. (Photo by author)
References
Ansari, SMH 2012, ‘Vice President’s address at Golden Jubilee Celebrations of India International Centre’, 22 January 2012, Press Information Bureau Government of India, Vice President’s Secretariat: retrieved 22 January 2019, <http://pib.nic.i0

Endnotes

2 The Advisory Committee Officers (ACOs) representing National Committees were: Prof Hae Un Rii (Korea), Ofelia Sanou (Costa Rica) and Deirdre Mc Dermott (Ireland). The ACOs representing the Scientific Committees were: James Reap (ICLAFl, USA), Susan McIntyre-Tamwoy (Intangible Heritage, Australia) and myself (ISC20C, Australia).

3 The document can be found online at: http://www.icomos-isc20c.org/madrid-document/