

**Workshop Paper (Attachment No. 1)**

**The University Forum: A New Frontier for ICOMOS**

**Leonardo Barci**

The UNIVERSITY FORUM derived from an idea launched by Gustavo Araoz at the FUKUOKA Advisory Meeting in October 2015, and it would aim to gather universities and other affinity cultural institutions that would collaborate in accomplishing the mission of ICOMOS. It would constitute a flexible operational forum that would address a “seriously weakening gap” in ICOMOS composition, namely the absence of the fourth sector of the international heritage community: the universities and academic institutions. At that time, it was also proposed to establish a Steering Committee composed of Prof. Bertocci (University of Florence), Prof. Conti (Universidad de la Plata), and Prof. Szmygin (Lublin Technical University), and the names of 29 representatives of universities from all regions of the world were appointed to be invited as members of the initiative. (Board 2015/10 2-1 Ver. 14/10/2015)

In February 2016, before the first Board meeting, a document on the Background of the ICOMOS International Forum of Universities was presented, stating that the ad hoc group proposed by the President should prepare recommendations at the next Advisory Committee meeting in Istanbul, with the proposal of the formal establishment of the University Forum at the General Assembly in New Delhi, 2017. The document also reported that the Steering Committee had sent a letter to the members of the ad hoc group and that the responses received would be presented at the next Board Meeting in March. (Board 2016/03 7-1 Ver. 27/02/2016)

Following that, the “Report on the ICOMOS Universities Forum Initiative” prepared by Alfredo Conti, then Vice President of ICOMOS, in October 2016, summarised the process of establishing the FORUM up to that moment and compiled the responses received from the ad hoc members to the following questions:

1. What topics do you consider priorities to be discussed by groups of scholars? What do you consider important from the point of view of universities?
2. How could we work to foster cooperation among universities and between them and ICOMOS? (ADCOM 2016/10 9-1-B. Ver. 07/10/2016)

In January 2017, another document presented an exciting proposal for a Road Map for Developing the ICOMOS Universities Forum Initiative, identifying four stages: preliminary preparations; identification of those willing to participate; identifying possible topics of discussion, as well as defining the UNIVERSITY FORUM procedure and intent; and the preparation of a set of recommendations to the ICOMOS Board for the establishment of the FORUM. (Board 2017/03 7-1 Ver. 28/01/2017)

In June 2017, Professor Cornelius Holtorf (Linnaeus University, Sweden) and Professor Rodney Harrison (University College London) prepared a document named “Proposal for Activities of the ICOMOS University Forum 2018-2020”, in which they linked the initiative to the ongoing Heritage Futures research programme. In their document, they stressed that the UNIVERSITY FORUM manifested the interest of ICOMOS in “academicizing” its work and also attracting young professionals “in a process of rejuvenating its membership and body of experts”. Later, they proposed organising two workshops on Heritage Futures in

2018 and 2019, which would be held either at ICOMOS in Paris or at the UCL in London, where their programme was administratively based.

Examining these documents carefully, although several papers were produced over the last three years, the final concept and framework for the Forum were never conclusively decided on, and the Forum never fully launched. In this respect, the only tangible event linked to the UNIVERSITY FORUM was the workshop, “*A Contemporary Provocation: Reconstruction as Tools of Future-making*” organised by Toshiyuki Kono and sponsored by Kyushu University (Japan) in 2017.

### **Reviewing the Road Map for Developing the ICOMOS Universities Forum Initiative**

One of the main challenges that ICOMOS faced at the beginning of the 21st century was to redefine heritage as a field, a discipline, a profession, or even as “a mode of post-disciplinary teaching and research”, as described by Tim Winter. As an Advisory Body of the World Heritage Committee for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention of UNESCO as well as an international advocacy group, ICOMOS has to face this new status of heritage in a globalised world, prospecting the theoretical, methodological, and practical consequences of this critical shift. And for this purpose, an initiative like the UNIVERSITY FORUM, which aims to strengthen the relationship between ICOMOS and universities/research centres in the field of heritage with joint programmes, publications, and events, among other strategies, is more than adequate.

Considering the difficulties posed by this initiative, which involves other stakeholders with their interests and timing, we propose to adopt a double strategy: on one side, work on the final concept and framework for the Forum; and simultaneously review the proposed Road Map, so that we could achieve some tangible goals in a foreseeable time. These two tasks should be pursued simultaneously, and the reviewed Road Map for developing the ICOMOS Universities Forum Initiative would have four stages:

#### **Stage 1 – Preliminary preparations**

In this stage, we should establish the leadership component, appoint a Steering Group, and prepare the working process.

#### **Stage 2 – Creation of an ICOMOS University Forum Directory**

In this stage, we should identify, globally, key universities with programmes directly or indirectly related to heritage. At the end of this stage, we would launch an ICOMOS Universities Forum Directory on the ICOMOS website.

#### **Stage 3 – Identifying topics of discussion / Working with existing initiatives**

In this stage, we should identify topics that we could use to challenge universities to partner with our working groups, NCs, and ISCs to come up with research projects (reconstruction, climate change, sustainability, etc.) and provide training with ICOMOS. Internally, we should work in close contact with the Emerging Professionals Initiative.

#### **Stage 4 – Preparing a set of recommendations to the ICOMOS Board for the establishment of the University Forum**

With regard to the identification of cross-cutting themes that could serve as catalysts for the UNIVERSITY FORUM initiative, we highlight the proposal of Ciudad del Saber, which has been developed by Prof. Graciela Mota at the Autonomous University of Mexico.