ICOMOS TheoPhilos ISC Conference

“Public spaces in historic cities - conservation principles and good practices”
14th edition in Florence, Italy

Florence (Italy), 9 - 10 March, 2023
Palazzo Coppini (Via del Giglio 10)
Sala Komech Room

The Conference promoters:

ICOMOS
International Committee on Theory and Philosophy of Conservation and Restoration

In collaboration with:

Luoagli Parlanti

Palazzo Coppini
Centre Studi e Ricercare Internazionali
Firenze
1. Topic of the conference

Protection of historic cities is a most complex conservation issue. This is determined by a combination of many factors – such as the large scale of the operation, the diversity of historic elements and their values, the multitude of stakeholders, the complexity of urban functions, radical changes in the standards of use of objects and spaces as well as the fact that cities are, by definition, subject to constant change.

The complex structure of the historic city cannot be protected as a whole. On a practical level, conservation activities must include the individual components of the historic elements of the city. At the theoretical level, however, it is possible to determine the principles and forms of dealing with entire typological or historical groups of monuments. However, principles and forms of conservation were first developed primarily for individual historic buildings or groups, and to a much lesser extent for public spaces and the historic urban fabric.

Public spaces – squares, streets, courtyards, public gardens and playgrounds – are intensively used; they co-create the value of a given historic city, and to a large extent determine its image and ‘spirit of place’. Their conservation must take into account technical, communication, urban and ecological aspects, acknowledging the central role of city governments in their management. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to analyze and evaluate the contemporary forms and principles that shape public spaces in historic cities and to manage how they change in response to changes of function and public need.

Broadly understood, environmental considerations have meant that in recent years the revitalization of many public spaces in historical cities has been critically reevaluated. In many countries, conservation services have developed regulations for the protection and development of public spaces. These policies and documents must be supported by a theoretical foundation and a catalogue of good practice. An international discussion on this subject is long overdue.

2. Objectives and thematic scope of the conference

The aim of the conference “Public spaces in historic cities – conservation principles and good practices” is to organize a discussion and exchange of experiences amongst architects, urban planners, landscape architects and conservators, on these key issues.
The issues of the conference will be divided into three sessions.

1. Principles for conservation of public spaces in historic cities – technical, ecological, urban, landscape and formal aspects;
2. Practices: forms and constraints for the conservation of public spaces – squares, streets, courtyards, public gardens, and playgrounds – inclusive of interventions and changes to public spaces such as the introduction of greenery;
3. Interdisciplinary processes and guidelines for the responsible conservation of public spaces in historic cities; local, national, and international.

The conference will include opportunity for discussion of projects for historic public spaces, both proposed and implemented. The presentation of positive and negative examples will help the conservation community to define the principles and program necessary to inform and shape public spaces in historical cities.

3. Organizational information

Proposals for papers should be sent by 10 January 2023, to theophilos@icomos.org

Proposals should include:

- a 300 word abstract (separate points will assist reviewers in assessing proposals);
- a brief biographical note on the author; and
- an indication of which session (1, 2, or 3) the paper is intended for.

The selection of papers to be presented at the conference will be made by reviewers appointed by the Organizing Committee. The authors of the papers will be informed about the decision of the reviewers by January 30, 2023.

The materials of the conference – after the reviewers’ assessment – will be published in the journal "Protection of Cultural Heritage". https://ph.pollub.pl/index.php/odk

We invite you to submit proposals for conference presentations.

We invite you to participate in the conference.
Scientific Committee

ICOMOS International Scientific Committee Theory and Philosophy of Conservation and Restoration

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Notes

Thanks to a Memorandum of Understanding signed originally in 2013 and renewed in 2019 all the ICOMOS ISCs have the possibility to hold their annual meetings in Florence, in collaboration with the Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco and its "Life Beyond Tourism" Movement, that prompt local communities in WHS to protect and enhance heritage for travelers inclusiveness and intercultural dialogue.

In 2014 Life Beyond Tourism has been endorsed by the ICOMOS GA Resolutions n. 1 and n. 42.