

The Declaration of Amsterdam - 1975

CONGRESS ON THE EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE 21 - 25 October 1975

The Congress of Amsterdam, the crowning event of European architectural heritage Year 1975, and composed of delegates from all parts of Europe, wholeheartedly welcomes the Charter promulgated by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which recognizes that Europe's unique architecture is the common heritage of all her peoples and which declared the intention of the Member States to work with one another and with other European governments for its protection.

The Congress likewise affirms that Europe's architectural heritage is an integral part of the cultural heritage of the whole world and has noted with great satisfaction the mutual undertaking to promote co-operation and exchanges in the field of culture contained in the Final Act of the Congress on Security and Co-operation in Europe adopted at Helsinki in July of this year.

In so doing, the Congress emphasized the following basic considerations:

- a. Apart from its priceless cultural value, Europe's architectural heritage gives to her peoples the consciousness of their common history and common future. Its preservation is, therefore, a matter of vital importance.
- b. The architectural heritage includes not only individual buildings of exceptional quality and their surroundings, but also all areas of towns or villages of historic or cultural interest.
- c. Since these treasures are the joint possession of all the peoples of Europe, they have a joint responsibility to protect them against the growing dangers with which they are threatened - neglect and decay, deliberate demolition, incongruous new construction and excessive traffic.
- d. Architectural conservation must be considered, not as a marginal issue, but as a major objective of town and country planning.
- e. Local authorities, which whom most of the important planning decisions rest, have a special responsibility for the protection of the architectural heritage and should assist one another by the exchange of ideas and information.
- f. The rehabilitation of old areas should be conceived and carried out in such a way as to ensure that, where possible, this does not necessitate a major change in the social composition of the residents, all sections of society should share in the benefits of restoration financed by public funds.
- g. The legislative and administrative measures required should be strengthened and made more effective in all countries,
- h. To help meet the cost of restoration, adaptation and maintenance of buildings and areas of architectural or historic interest, adequate financial assistance should be made available to local authorities and financial support and fiscal relief should likewise be made available to private owners.
- i. The architectural heritage will survive only if it is appreciated by the public and in particular by the younger generation. Educational programmes for all ages should, therefore, give increased attention to this subject.
- j. Encouragement should be given to independent organizations - international, national and local - which help to awake public interest.

- k. Since the new buildings of today will be the heritage of tomorrow, every effort must be made to ensure that contemporary architecture is of a high quality.

In view of the recognition by the Committee of Ministers in the European Charter of the architectural heritage that it is the duty of the Council of Europe to ensure that the Member States pursue coherent policies in a spirit of solidarity, it is essential that periodic reports should be made on the progress of architectural conservation in all European countries in a way which will promote an exchange of experience.

The Congress calls upon governments, parliaments, spiritual and cultural institutions, professional institutes, commerce, industry, independent associations and all individual citizens to give their full support to the objectives of this Declaration and to do all in their power to secure their implementation.

Only in this way can Europe's irreplaceable architectural heritage be preserved, for the enrichment of the lives of all her peoples now and in the future.

Arising from its deliberations, the Congress submits its conclusions and recommendations, as set out below.

Unless a new policy of protection and integrated conservation is urgently implemented, our society will shortly find itself obliged to give up the heritage of buildings and sites which form its traditional environment. Protection is needed today for historic towns, the old quarters of cities, and towns and villages with a traditional character as well as historic parks and gardens. The conservation of these architectural complexes can only be conceived in a wide perspective, embracing all buildings of cultural value, from the greatest to the humblest - not forgetting those of our own day together with their surroundings. This overall protection will complement the piecemeal protection of individual and isolated monuments and sites.

The significance of the architectural heritage and justification for conserving it are now more clearly perceived. It is known that historical continuity must be preserved in the environment if we are to maintain or create surroundings which enable individuals to find their identity and feel secure despite abrupt social changes. A new type of town-planning is seeking to recover the enclosed spaces, the human dimensions, the inter-penetration of functions and the social and cultural diversity that characterized the urban fabric of old towns. But it is also being realized that the conservation of ancient buildings helps to economise resources and combat waste, one of the major preoccupations of present-day society. It has been proved that historic buildings can be given new functions which correspond to the needs of contemporary life. Furthermore, conservation calls for artists and highly-qualified craftsmen whose talents and know-how have to be kept alive and passed on. Lastly, the rehabilitation of existing housing helps to check encroachments on agricultural land and to obviate, or appreciably diminish, movements of population - a very important advantage of conservation policy.

Although, for all these reasons, there seems a stronger justification than ever today for the conservation of the architectural heritage, it must be placed on firm and lasting foundations. It must accordingly be made the subject of basic research and a feature of all educational courses **and cultural** development programmes.

The conservation of the architectural heritage : one of the major objectives of urban and regional planning

The conservation of the architectural heritage should become an integral part of urban and regional planning, instead of being treated as a secondary consideration or one requiring action

here and there as has so often been the case in the recent past. A permanent dialogue between conservationists and those responsible for planning is thus indispensable.

Planners should recognize that not all areas are the same and that they should therefore be dealt with according to their individual characteristics. The recognition of the claims of the aesthetic and cultural values of the architectural heritage should lead to the adoption of specific aims and planning rules for old architectural complexes.

It is not enough to simply superimpose, although co-ordinating them, ordinary planning regulations and specific rules for protecting historic buildings.

To make the necessary integration possible, an inventory of buildings, architectural complexes and sites demarcating protected zones around them is required. It should be widely circulated, particularly among regional and local authorities and officials in charge of town and country planning, in order to draw their attention to the buildings and areas worthy of protection. Such an inventory will furnish a realistic basis for conservation as a fundamental qualitative factor in the management of space.

Regional planning policy must take account of the conservation of the architectural heritage and contribute to it. In particular it can induce new activities to establish themselves in economically declining areas in order to check depopulation and thereby prevent the deterioration of old buildings. In addition, decisions on the development of peripheral urban areas can be orientated in such a way as to reduce pressure on the older neighbourhoods; here transport and employment policies and a better distribution of the focal points of urban activity may have an important impact on the conservation of the architectural heritage.

The full development of a continuous policy of conservation requires a large measure of decentralization as well as a regard for local cultures. This means that there must be people responsible for conservation at all levels (central, regional and local) at which planning decisions are taken. The conservation of the architectural heritage, however, should not merely be a matter for experts. The support of public opinion is essential. The population, on the basis of full and objective information, should take a real part in every stage of the work, from the drawing up of inventories to the preparation of decisions,

Lastly, the conservation of the architectural heritage should become a feature of a new long-term approach which pays due attention to criteria of quality and just proportions and which should make it possible henceforth to reject options and aims which are too often governed by short-term considerations, narrow view of technology and, in short, an obsolete outlook.

Integrated conservation involves the responsibility of local authorities and calls for citizens' participation.

Local authorities should have specific and extensive responsibilities in the protection of the architectural heritage. In applying the principles of integrated conservation, they should take account of the continuity of existing social and physical realities in urban and rural communities. The future cannot and should not be built at the expense of the past.

To implement such a policy, which respects the man-made environment intelligently, sensitively and with economy, local authorities should :

- use as a basis the study of the texture of urban and rural areas, notably their structure, their complex functions, and the architectural and volumetric characteristics of their built-up and open spaces;
- afford functions to buildings which, whilst corresponding to the needs of contemporary life, respect their character and ensure their survival;

- be aware that long-term studies on the development of public services (educational, administrative, medical) indicate that excessive size impairs their quality and effectiveness;
- devote an appropriate part of their budget to such a policy. In this context, they should seek from governments the creation of funds specifically earmarked for such purposes. Local authority grants and loans made to private individuals and various associations should be aimed at stimulating their involvement and financial commitment:
- appoint representatives to deal with all matters concerning the architectural heritage and sites;
- set up special agencies to provide direct links between potential users of buildings and their owners;
- facilitate the formation and efficient functioning of voluntary associations for restoration and rehabilitation.

Local authorities should improve their techniques of consultation for ascertaining the opinions of interested parties on conservation plans and should take these opinions into account from the earliest stages of planning. As part of their efforts to inform the public the decisions of local authorities should be taken in the public eye, using a clear and universally understood language, so that the local inhabitants may learn, discuss and assess the grounds for them. Meeting places should be provided, in order to enable members of the public to consult together.

In this respect, methods such as public meetings, exhibitions, opinion polls, the use of the mass media and all other appropriate methods should become common practice.

The education of young people in environmental issues and their involvement with conservation tasks is one of the most important communal requirements.

Proposals or alternatives put forward by groups or individuals should be considered as an important contribution to planning.

Local authorities can benefit greatly from each other's experience. They should therefore establish a continuing exchange of information and ideas through all available channels.

The success of any policy of integrated conservation depends on taking social factors into consideration.

A policy of conservation also means the integration of the architectural heritage into social life.

The conservation effort to be made must be measured not only against the cultural value of the buildings but also against their use-value. The social problems of integrated conservation can be properly posed only by simultaneous reference to both those scales of values.

The rehabilitation of an architectural complex forming part of the heritage is not necessarily more costly than new building on an existing infrastructure or even than building a new complex on a previously undeveloped site. When therefore comparing the cost of these three solutions, whose social consequences are quite different, it is important not to overlook the social costs. These concern not only owners and tenants but also the craftsmen, tradespeople and building contractors on the spot who keep the district alive.

To avoid the laws of the market having free play in restored and rehabilitated districts, resulting in inhabitants who are unable to pay the increased rents being forced out, public authorities should intervene to reduce the effect of economic factors as they always do when it is a case of low-cost housing. Financial interventions should aim to strike a balance between restoration grants to owners, combined with the fixing of maximum rent, and housing allowances to tenants to cover, in part or in whole, the difference between the old and new rents.

In order to enable the population to participate in the drawing up of programmes they must be given the facts necessary to understand the situation, on the one hand through explaining the historic and architectural value of the buildings to be conserved and on the other hand by being given full details about permanent and temporary rehousing.

This participation is all the more important because it is a matter not only of restoring a few privileged buildings but of rehabilitating whole areas.

This practical way of interesting people in culture would be of considerable social benefit.

Integrated conservation necessitates the adaptation of legislative and administrative measures.

Because the concept of the architectural heritage has been gradually extended from the individual historic building to urban and rural architectural complexes, and to the built testimonies of recent periods, far-reaching legislative reform, in conjunction with an increase in administrative resources, is a pre-requisite to effective action.

This reform must be guided by the need to co-ordinate regional planning legislation with legislation on the protection of the architectural heritage.

This latter must give a new definition of the architectural heritage and the aims of integrated conservation.

In addition it must make special provision for special procedures with regard to :

- the designation and delineation of architectural complexes;
- the mapping out of protective peripheral zones and the limitations on use to be imposed therein in the public interest;
- the preparation of integrated conservation schemes and the inclusion of their provisions in regional planning policies;
- the approval of projects and authorization to carry out work.

In addition the necessary legislation should be enacted in order to :

- ensure a balanced allocation of budgetary resources between rehabilitation and redevelopment respectively;
- grant citizens who decide to rehabilitate an old building at least the same financial advantages as those which they enjoy for new construction;
- revise the system of state financial aid in the light of the new policy of integrated conservation.

As far as possible, the application of building codes, regulations and requirements should be relaxed to meet the needs of integrated conservation.

In order to increase the operational capacity of the authorities, it is necessary to review the structure of the administration to ensure that the departments responsible for the cultural heritage are organized at the appropriate levels and that sufficient qualified personnel and essential scientific, technical and financial resources are put at their disposal.

These departments should assist local authorities, co-operate with regional planning offices and keep in constant touch with public and private bodies.

Integrated conservation necessitates appropriate financial means.

It is difficult to define a financial policy applicable to all countries or to evaluate the consequences of the different measures involved in the planning process, because of their mutual repercussions.

Moreover, this process is itself governed by external factors resulting from the present structure of society.

It is accordingly for every state to devise its own financing methods and instruments.

It can be established with certainty however, that there is scarcely any country in Europe where the financial means allocated to conservation are sufficient.

It is further apparent that no European country has yet devised the ideal administrative machinery to meet the economic requirements of an integrated conservation policy. In order to solve the economic problems of integrated conservation, it is important - and this is a decisive factor - to draw up legislation subjecting new building to certain restrictions with regard to their volume and dimensions (height, coefficient of utilization etc.) that will make for harmony with its surroundings.

Planning regulations should discourage increased density and promote rehabilitation rather than redevelopment.

Methods must be devised to assess the extra cost occasioned by the constraints of conservation programmes. Where possible, sufficient funds should be available to help owners who are obliged to carry out this restoration work to meet the extra cost - no more and no less.

If the criteria of extra cost were accepted, care would need to be taken of course, to see that the benefit was not diminished by taxation.

The same principle should be applied to the rehabilitation of dilapidated complexes of historic or architectural interest. This would tend to restore the social balance.

The financial advantages and tax concessions available for new building should be accorded in the same proportion for the upkeep and conservation of old buildings, less, of course, any compensation for extra cost that may have been paid.

Authorities should set up Revolving Funds, or encourage them to be established, by providing local authorities or non-profit making associations with the necessary capital. This is particularly applicable to areas where such programmes can become self-financing in the short or the long term because of the rise in value accruing from the high demand for such attractive property.

It is vital, however, to encourage all private sources of finance, particularly coming from industry. Numerous private initiatives have shown the viable part that they can play in association with the authorities at either national or local level.

Integrated conservation requires the promotion of methods, techniques and skills for restoration and rehabilitation.

Methods and techniques of the restoration and rehabilitation of historic complexes should be better exploited and their range developed.

Specialized techniques which have been developed for the restoration of important historic complexes should be henceforth applied to the wide range of buildings and complexes of less outstanding artistic merit.

Steps should be taken to ensure that traditional building materials remain available and that traditional crafts and techniques continue to be used.

Permanent maintenance of the architectural heritage, will, in the long run, obviate costly rehabilitation operations.

Every rehabilitation scheme should be studied thoroughly before it is carried out. Comprehensive documentation should be assembled about materials and techniques and an analysis of costs should be made. This documentation should be collected and housed in appropriate centres.

New materials and techniques should be used only after approval by independent scientific institutions.

Research should be undertaken to compile a catalogue of methods and techniques used for conservation and for this purpose scientific institutions should be created and should co-operate closely with each other. This catalogue should be made readily available and distributed to everyone concerned, thus stimulating the reform of restoration and rehabilitation practices.

There is a fundamental need for better training programme to produce qualified personnel. These programmes should be flexible, multi-disciplinary and should include courses where on-site practical experience can be gained.

International exchange of knowledge, experience and trainees an essential element in the training of all personnel concerned.

This should help to create the required pool of qualified planners, architects, technicians and craftsmen to prepare conservation programmes and help to ensure that particular crafts for restoration work, that are in danger of dying out, will be fostered.

The opportunity for qualifications, conditions of work, salary, employment security and social status should be sufficiently attractive to induce young people to take up and stay in disciplines connected with restoration and rehabilitation work.

Furthermore, the authorities responsible for educational programmes at all levels should endeavour to promote the interest of young people in conservation disciplines.