

PART 4

CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

Change is inevitable. Heritage buildings and historic areas, over time, cannot remain in their original condition, and retaining their original use without some change would be extremely rare. Societies are dynamic and their necessity for continuing economic development requires changes that will be reflected in the building fabric. In a single building this may be achieved with a minimum of alteration, but in an historic area, the problem is considerably compounded. Conservation as the balanced art of retaining significant fabric as historical evidence whilst allowing new uses to occur must also ensure the continued economic life of the buildings within the area for survival. But further to this is the understanding that all conservation will change the place. The built environment, like society and culture, is constantly changing, and this will be so whether it is being conserved, developed, or simply left alone. Whether anything or nothing is done, the place, over time, *will* change. The question then is how does change affect the authenticity?

Active societies and their cultures are forever changing. Concomitantly, the physical expression of their built environments is also constantly changing. Development as a positive action reflects the positive development of the society. But if there is no development, in western terms generally referred to as decline, this too will change the place, generally considered as deterioration. It is a common argument that historic buildings should be allowed to deteriorate naturally—as a natural process in their life. In this argument, development is regarded as the removal of the old. New buildings are then seen to be an illustration of social and economic development. In similar fashion, the non-Western world has seen modern development in terms of western standards and styles. This attitude generally arises from a Western commercial based focus, and the desire to acquire the luxuries and the perceived opulence of the Western world.

Authenticity and change

The discussions of authenticity focussed on the six aspects, all of which could be affected by change. The terms generally applied to change to heritage places are

either *restoration* or *development*. In practice, a commonly encountered statement is “we are restoring the building—we are not changing it!”¹ Restoration, or indeed any activity covered by the term conservation, implies positive action, the expectation being that the place will be restored to its former glory. Development on the other hand, as understood by conservationists with bitter experience, usually denotes a negative action—that change will undermine heritage significance. At the urban scale, developing nations are perceived as those that are improving their economic condition and general lifestyle in accordance with Western aspirations. James Steele, writing of change and its relevance to Muslim societies, refers to government planning being “usually based on conventional models adopted from the first world which, apart from being capital intensive, do not make use of the considerable skills, vitality, and ingenuity that poor communities possess.” He continues that as a result “communities are being denied access to decent shelter, physical infrastructure, and social services.”² This results not only to social and cultural losses, but also, together with the inevitable loss of traditional and historic fabric, the loss of identity.

Development can and has been used as a positive argument for the conservation of old and historic buildings and areas. But it can be seen to spell destruction to the historical significance in the form of the fabric, and is therefore to be avoided at all costs. Examples of both positive and negative development can be recalled at will, and used in the constant battle of differing conservation perceptions. The important attributes, which are often overlooked in these battles is the cultural context of the development, and how it will affect the society and the built environment, so that cultural identity can be assured and correctly presented and acknowledged. Only when these factors are achieved can authenticity be assured.

A further problem in this argument is the speed of change. Time is important in both the study and practice of conservation. Buildings are seen in a timeframe that places them in an historical context. Change also has to be seen in context with time. Although age need not be a criterion for heritage significance, the context of

¹ Personal comments received during my experience as a conservation architect.

² James Steele, “Continuity, Relevance and Change,” in James Steele (ed.), *Architecture for a Changing World* (London: Academy Editions, 1992), 21.

time and place can form an important factor. Slow change has taken place over the past several millennia, but has accelerated to an alarming degree during twentieth and into the twenty first century. The constant bond between time and change has alerted nations to the fragility of their built heritage in the wake of new technologies and desires for modernisation. This has resulted in the desire to slow the time process down or even to turn the clock back in a vain attempt to recapture the lost comfort and security of a former peaceful time.

Italo Calvino, in describing his imaginary city Maurilia in his book *Invisible Cities*, provides a succinct insight into urban change and time. The delightful description is short enough to reproduce in full:

In Maurilia, the traveller is invited to visit the city and, at the same time, to examine some old postcards that show it as it used to be: the same identical square with a hen in the place of the bus station, a bandstand in the place of the overpass, two young ladies with white parasols in the place of the munitions factory. If the traveller does not wish to disappoint the inhabitants, he must praise the postcard city and prefer it to the present one, though he must be careful to contain his regret at the changes within definite limits: admitting that the magnificence and prosperity of the metropolis Maurilia, when compared to the old, provincial Maurilia, cannot compensate for a certain lost grace, which, however, can be appreciated only now in the old postcards, whereas before, when that provincial Maurilia was before one's eyes, one saw absolutely nothing graceful and would see it even less today, if Maurilia had remained unchanged; and in any case the metropolis has the added attraction that, through what is has become, one can look back with nostalgia at what it was.

Beware of saying to them that sometimes different cities follow one another on the same site and under the same name, born and dying without knowing one another, without communication among themselves. At times even the name of the inhabitants remain the same, and their voices accent, and also the features of the faces; but the gods that live beneath names and above places have gone off without a word and outsiders have settled in their place. It is pointless to ask if the new ones are better or worse than

the old, since there is no connection between them, just as the old postcards do not depict Maurilia as it was, but a different city which, by chance, was called Maurilia, like this one.³

This description illustrates the problem of a continuing city that has lost its roots. Even though vestiges of an old city remain, it does not necessarily mean that the identity of that earlier city and its inhabitants has continued. Postcards can give clues, but mainly for the appreciation of the changes that have taken place, and a comparison and understanding of whom we were, who we are, and who we want to be. Italo's reference to there being no connection between the old city and the present one justifies the very *raison d'être* of urban conservation. Whilst this may justify restoration, it also has the potential for cultural façadism: the replication of a perceived former condition to present a particular identity. Mohammed Arkoun writes of tradition in "deteriorating societies" that "cannot be restored or reactivated in all its integrating functions in societies not yet fragmented by modern economic systems of production and exchange."⁴ He refers to the mosques built by the London-based Egyptian architect Abdel Wahed El Wakil, also criticised by other writers, for his use of traditional architectural elements isolated in landscapes without their semiological environment.⁵ He calls this practice "traditionalisation," that applies to manipulation of tradition and the built environment, and extends to law, economics, education and politics.

Neither is it desirable to attempt to nostalgically reproduce a former ideal period, as more may be lost than could ever be reclaimed. Compare this to Italo's poetic reference of features that remain the same, but the "gods" are gone. This in turn justifies the necessity of conserving the original physical evidence in order to ensure that the previous built environment, which reflected the society of that time, is correctly retained and understood. Change must be accepted, but more importantly, the comparison between then and now should be correctly appreciated and used as a directive for future change.

³ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (London: Picador, 1982), 27.

⁴ Mohammed Arkoun, "Architectural Alternatives in Deteriorating Societies," in James Steele (ed.), *Architecture for a Changing World*, 46.

⁵ Ibid. See also Mohammed Al-Asad, "The Mosques of Abdel Wahed El-Wakil," in Hassan-Uddin Khan (ed.), *Mimar: Architecture in Development* (London: Concept Media, 1992), vol. 12, no. 42. 36.

We look again at Martyr's Square in Damascus, situated just outside the walls of the Old City. (Fig.17) It is a significant part of the development that has taken place from the nineteenth century. The German Archaeological Institute has conducted urban studies in Damascus since 1989, and includes the area around Martyr's Square. The basis of the studies is a survey of late Ottoman building history of 1808 – 1918, the series title being "Damascus – Testimony of a City in Change."⁶ The study begins that even as this city stood for continuity, it was, since the earliest chapter of its long history, subjected to rash change. It continues that in the nineteenth century there began an era in which the picture of the city would fundamentally change, within Islam's well-known history of wide reaching reforms, on a quest for a new way of life. The aim of the survey is to offer the fullest possible overview of the urban development of the city and its buildings in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷

The development of Martyr's Square during the nineteenth century is a physical manifestation of new influences to the city of Damascus. (Figs.50 and 51) These include the extended administrative system of the Ottoman state. Although this was centred in Istanbul, the architecture shows distinct elements of Anatolian residential architecture, in both the ground plan and façade design. The buildings arose in quick succession: administrative buildings (Police and Parliament buildings and Law Courts); public buildings (theatres, hotels cafes and public gardens); as well as infrastructure (trams, bridges and streets). The physical changes also reflect the administrative changes, as issues that were formerly only dealt with from a central government "palace" (or Turkish Saray) were now the responsibility of a local independent authority occupying their own administrative building.⁸ The comparison of the old photograph with more recent photographs (Figs. 52 and 53) illustrates the physical changes that have taken place since 1918. The speed of the changes can be appreciated from the illustrations, for example the Council "Rathaus" of 1894 still remains circa 1960. All this has now changed

⁶ Stefan Weber, "Damaskus:Zeudnisse einer Stadt im Wandel. Ein Survey zur spätosmanischen Baugeschichte (1808-1918)," in Klaus Stefan Freyberger and Stephan Westphalen (eds.), *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Damaskus, Zehn Jahre Ausgrabungen und Forschungen in Syrien, 1989-1998* (Damaskus: 1999), 94.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 96-98.

dramatically, the greatest changes taking place in the last twenty years. (Fig. 54)
In this important centre a whole slice of recent and maybe significant historical evidence has been obliterated.

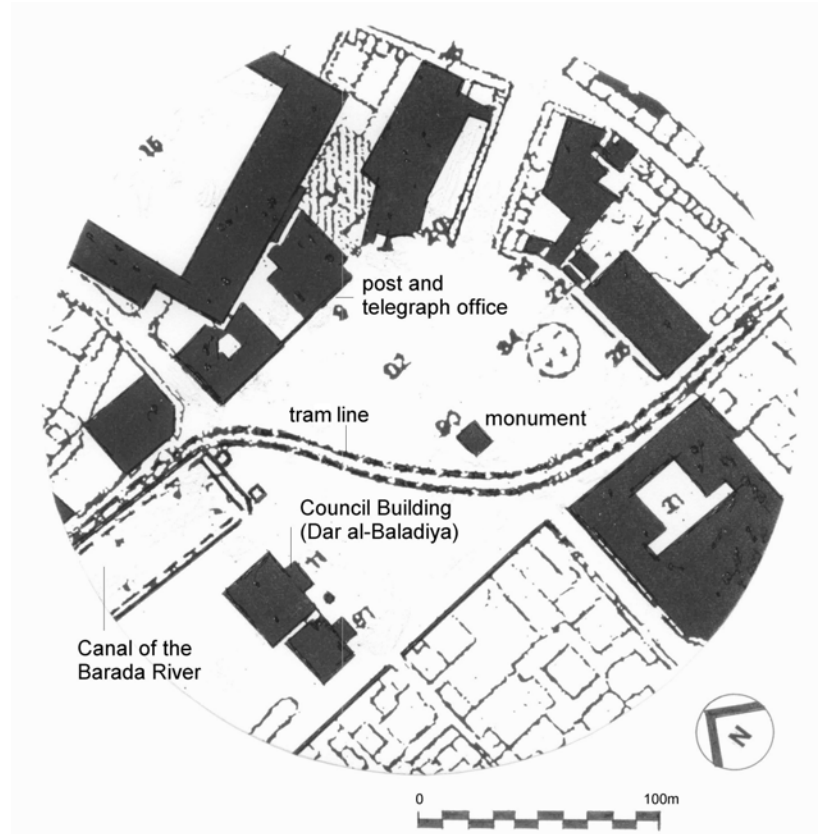


Fig.50. Damascus: Martyr's Square, 1918. An enlargement of the square shown in Fig. 17.



Fig.51. Damascus: Martyr's Square, 1922. The photograph equates with the plan. The notable Martyr's Monument is to the right. The Post and Telegraph Office is in the centre of the picture. The trams follow the tramline configuration of the plan. Historical postcard, Damascus.

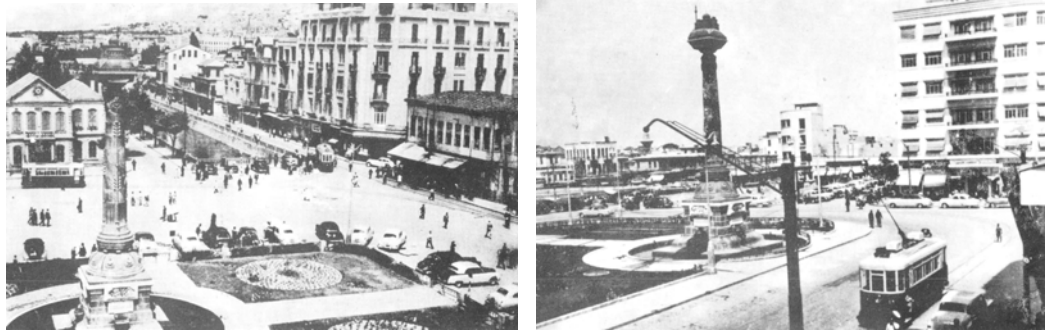


Fig.52. Damascus: Martyr's Square, c1960. Looking NW, a garden setting now surrounds the monument. The building adjacent to the Post and Telegraph Office remains, but the surrounding area is becoming compact. The tramline has been relocated nearer to the Council "Rathaus." Historical postcard, Damascus.

Fig.53. Damascus: Martyr's Square, c1960. Looking NE. Historical postcard, Damascus.



Fig. 54. Damascus: Martyr's Square, 2002. Compare with Figs. 51 and 53. The once predominating monument is now becoming dwarfed by the surrounding development. (Author: 2002)

From this we can be thankful that the Old City, in comparison, has been left virtually intact. But even though major changes have taken place outside the Old City, the evidence of this significant two-century period surrounding Martyr's Square has been lost. We see "history" in the Old City, but even though untouched, it does not represent this important period of social, administrative and physical changes that affected Damascus so vitally. The identity of Damascene society lies equally with this small area as it does with the Old City. Vital gaps in the appreciation of historical development exist, which, if not recognised could be lost forever. The answer lies in the recognition of the significance of the

immediate past together with that of the earlier past, a responsibility that, in this case, has been taken up by the German Archaeological Institute with their studies.

But having identified the potential of recent and earlier history, what guidance is given for the retention and conservation of the evidence of this history, whilst allowing the place to continue with its economic and social changes that inevitably involve physical changes? The charters have been written for the guidance of conservation, but what do they say about change and development? Does authenticity only apply to the past ages and not to the present age?

4.2 The Charters and the Question of Change

As both the Venice and Burra Charters have previously been cited as applying equally to urban conservation as well as single buildings, we turn to these Charters to determine how appropriate is the direction given for conservators to manage change within the continuing heritage context. Allowing for the intention of the Charters to retain a place's cultural significance and to present this, we are confronted with a dilemma: retaining the fabric as evidence of the place's significance; presenting this significance through its fabric; and allowing changes to the fabric to ensure the place's continuing economic use. Where in this scenario of often-conflicting objectives lies authenticity?

The focus of the *Venice Charter* is towards restoration of the historic fabric, and guidance for change receives little direction. This points to an emphasis on "top" monuments, those which are considered should remain in their historical form, and if possible, in their traditional use. This is confirmed in the stated aim of the Charter: "conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as works of art than as historical evidence."⁹ This requirement may cause some disquiet in the more recent recognition of vernacular urban settlements, where heritage values are not necessarily based on artistic or classical architectural design and technical achievements. In these cases the understanding of the culture of the inhabitants is paramount, but not always forthcoming. The historical evidence of the monuments is of no use if they are not linked to the society and

⁹ *Venice Charter*, (Paris: International ICOMOS, 1964). Article 3.

culture that produced them. Although “preserving in aspic” may not be the intention of the Charter, it is this sort of directive that may steer the lesser thinking conservator to restrict the development of the conservation area, and by extension the society, in order to achieve the Charter’s perceived aims.

Articles 6,7, 8 and 9 are each governed by the retention and restoration of original fabric with little or no change. Articles 10 and 12 allow the use of modern techniques and replacements, but imply little or no change to the fabric. In article 11, the changes in the fabric are geared to removing fabric of lesser heritage significance to reveal fabric of greater significance. These changes are motivated to remove previous developments that are now considered to be detrimental to the understanding of the place’s cultural significance, even though portions of the building’s developmental history will be obliterated. The basis for such decisions can only be made with a full understanding of the cultural significance, and the charters have been drafted with such decisions and outcomes in mind. It is notable that the Charter recognises that the vital decisions “cannot rest solely on the individual in charge of the work.”¹⁰ There is no direction given who should be included in the decision-making process, but as this requirement is preceded by reference to “historical, archaeological or aesthetic value,”¹¹ it can be assumed that such experts are the ones intended to be involved. No reference is made to the necessity to involve the local people in making such decisions, and illustrates that the understanding of the cultural context may rest solely with professionals.

The *Burra Charter* is much more prescriptive. Whilst the stated aim of conservation is to retain the cultural significance of a place,¹² the Charter tackles the inevitability of change. Stating that such places are historical records and are important as tangible expressions of Australian identity and experience, the Charter begins by advocating “ a cautious approach to change: do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained.”¹³ Cultural significance is considered to be embodied in the fabric, but then the Charter

¹⁰ Ibid., Article 11.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter*, 1999, Article 2.2.

¹³ Ibid., Preamble.

continues: “cultural significance may change as a result of the continuing history of the place.”¹⁴ It is notable that preservation is defined as “maintaining the fabric of a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration.” The explanatory note to this article states, “it is recognised that all places and their components change over time at varying rates.”¹⁵ This is not explained further, but points to the recognition of time being a significant factor in determining significance, and that this needs to be taken into account when considering conservation action. As with the *Venice Charter*, reconstruction allows for the removal of previous changes to return the place to a more culturally significant state. The argument above regarding the *Venice Charter* and the possible loss of a building’s developmental history holds equally for the *Burra Charter*.

Australian conservators when drafting the new *Burra Charter* were aware of change, when reconsidering the five conservation processes listed in the Charter—“Preservation, Restoration, Reconstruction, Adaptation, and Maintenance”—as covered under the umbrella term “Conservation.” Although the *Burra Charter* (1988) had stated that “Conservation means all the processes of looking after a place,” specifically defining the five processes confirmed the impression that these five were the *only* processes,¹⁶ and that by implication, any other work not included in these five, for example completion of an unfinished building, did not constitute conservation. The first draft of the new Charter addressed this problem by omitting references to any specific conservation action, and referring only to *Change*. Change was undefined but the opening statement to the section “Managing Change” stated, “Caring for a place almost always involves managing change at the place.”¹⁷ This was a legitimate and intended alteration that would have focussed the problem of conservation action on this most important aspect, that whatever action is done to a place change is inevitable. However, the final new *Burra Charter* reverted to the original meaning of conservation with its five processes, bringing it more in line with the former

¹⁴ Ibid., Article 1.2 and accompanying Explanatory Note.

¹⁵ Ibid., Article 1.6 and accompanying Explanatory Note.

¹⁶ Duncan Marshall, “Australian Conservation Practice, Cultural Diversity and Conflict Resolution,” in Joan Domicelj and Duncan Marshall, *Diversity, Place and the Ethics of Conservation* (Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission, 1994), 5.

¹⁷ The *Burra Charter* – Draft 1997 revised version, (being an unpublished draft for discussion), 10.

Charter. This reversion considerably diluted the impact that the new Charter could have had.¹⁸

Change in the terms of the *Burra Charter* is related to function as well as to the material aspects resulting from change. In Article 15, headed “Change,” emphasis is given to fabric, but uses, associations and meanings, and factors regarding their interpretation are also considered. In the first draft of the new Charter, the section covering the physical application of conservation action was headed “Managing Change.” All conservation action was seen as a change to the fabric, whether arising from changes in use, associations, meanings or their interpretation. The new Charter still retains the philosophy that the least amount of change is better, and that the amount of change should be guided by the place’s cultural significance and its appropriate interpretation. But again we see the emphasis is on the retention of the fabric as the evidence of history, and the changes to use, associations and meanings are merely implied.

The Charter recognises the significance of use as well as fabric. This is indicated in the articles relating to adaptation and new uses. Articles 7.2 and 21.2 both refer to adaptation and minimal change to the fabric. This could be interpreted as the fabric being significant, and that new uses associated with adaptation should respect this significance. Articles 7.1 and 23 refer to the cultural significance of use, and in the case of Article 23 the use may be continued, modified or reinstated. Such actions, it is stated, may even constitute preferred forms of conservation. The accompanying explanatory note states: “These may require changes to significant fabric but they should be minimised. In some cases, continuing a significant use or practice may involve *substantial new work*.”¹⁹ This is slightly ambiguous, as it could be taken either as a recognition of the use being more significant than the fabric, or as a warning that, given the significance of the fabric, continuing the use no matter how significant, may result in unacceptable changes.

¹⁸ As the Charter had achieved International acceptance, this may have resulted (as the Charter itself recommends in its preamble) to change its content as much as necessary, but as little as possible!

¹⁹ *Burra Charter*, Article 23 and Explanatory Note (emphasis added).

There are, however, several articles where cultural significance remains a concept, disembodied from any specific attribute. The *Burra Charter* defines compatible use as “a use which respects the cultural significance of a place” and then exhorts that “such a use involves no, or minimal, impact on cultural significance.”²⁰ Article 24 recognises associations, meanings and spiritual values, all ephemeral values that should be retained and not obscured. It notes that for many places associations would be linked to the use of the place, and although not specifically stated, this flags possible problems that could arise from changes of use where such associations would suffer more than the fabric. This leads to Article 27 “Managing Change,” which calls for the analysis of the place to thoroughly determine cultural significance before any physical changes are enacted. Change forms a greater role in the *Burra Charter* than it does in the *Venice Charter*, but its identification and application are still largely the responsibility of the practitioner.

A criticism of the *Burra Charter* (1988) stated that four of the conservation processes—preservation, restoration, reconstruction, and maintenance—related to fabric, and that the exception was adaptation.²¹ The argument was based on the concern for the conservation of the fabric over that of other factors for a place’s significance such as historic or social associations. Whilst this concern is appreciated, the implication was that adaptation, by its definition being related to use, was therefore not concerned with the historical fabric. This notion is quite misleading, as generally adaptation, as the most commonly employed form of conservation action, invariably involves alterations to the fabric. Although the charters sound warnings regarding the extent and manner of these alterations, in an attempt to retain cultural significance and allow reuse, considerable change to the internal fabric often occurs. Even though the exterior of the building may suffer little change, seemingly “non-fabric” adaptation has the potential of causing the greatest physical change within the building. The desire to affect a functional change in the name of development can result in the historic evidence being

²⁰ *Burra Charter*, 1999, Article 1.11.

²¹ Duncan Marshall, “Australian Conservation Practice, Cultural Diversity and Conflict Resolution,” in *Diversity, Place and the Ethics of Conservation*, 26 - 27.

compromised, often to an unacceptable extent.²² In the case of historic areas, new uses on an urban scale can easily result in developmental pressure being applied for the demolition of lesser significant buildings, resulting in new buildings and other structural elements for essential new infrastructure being inserted into the historical fabric.

Problems associated with new uses in relation to authenticity arose at the first session of the World Heritage Committee in 1977. von Droste and Bertilsson relate that several members of the committee “did not consider that [the interpretation of authenticity] necessarily entailed maintaining the original function of the property which, to ensure its preservation, often had to be adapted to other functions.”²³ These members considered “progressive authenticity,” being buildings and constructions, “in which, although having been modified throughout time, some of the original intention still were retained.”²⁴ The confusion that arises from such interpretations cannot be met by the meaning of adaptation in the sense of the *Burra Charter* or *Venice Charter* if applied to urban areas.

Development can be seen as potentially destroying the fabric as the evidence of history, and therefore destroying cultural significance. Whilst for major heritage monuments restricting adaptation can be argued, in most historic areas the society will continue with its economic duties, and the area will change with the changing requirements. This means that the cultural significance of the fabric will be a continuing process, and the resulting built environment will show as a vital and authentic realisation of that changing society. If the identity of the society and its culture resides and can be recognised in the built fabric, then the changing society, culture and fabric together will be a truly authentic representation of that identity.

This argument points to two “authentic” approaches: firstly, as historical evidence pointing back to and confirming past identity; and secondly, identifying the current culture and the society’s identity, and pointing to the future. The key to

²² Regrettably experienced during my period as a conservation architect administering the South Australian Heritage Act through a Government Department.

²³ Bernd von Droste and Ulf Bertilsson, “Authenticity and World Heritage,” in Knut Einar Larsen (ed.), *Nara Conference on Authenticity* (Japan: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1995), 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

this is not that these two options are necessarily opposing, but rather that they both are legitimate and need to correspond together in order to present a balanced and credible environment. Essential to this notion is that in order to see this as a continuing process, the present cultural identity should be recognised in an historical context, and that the retention of heritage buildings is essential for this recognition. If society and its culture are constantly changing, the necessity to keep the evidence of the historical context becomes all the more vital. It is *because* of this need for the culture and the built environment to develop, that the argument for the retention of the historical evidence becomes so compelling. Time again plays an important role. Sherban Cantacuzino, an acknowledged expert on the reuse of old buildings, recalls a paradox stated by the great historian and philosopher, Sir Ernst Gombrige, “rapidity of change ... increases the psychological need for permanence.”²⁵ The task of conservators, urban planners and architects, is to balance the conservation of the historic environment within the developing built environment, thus maintaining the continuing identity of the developing society.

The desire to keep historical evidence has led to the insistence of retaining the entire historic environment as it is, as in the previously stated case of Al-Qasr, or returning it to what it was. This could be interpreted as the only way to assure authenticity, and forming one *raison d'être* for the charters. This may be a popular decision with visitors, who prefer the “authentic” experience of historic areas, but if this is not in keeping with the desire of the local populace, where then is the authenticity? Only in the built fabric, and even then, some may argue, the reconstructed fabric, or if not properly conserved, the ruinous fabric. As this is not the representation of the present developing society, it will, over time, change to fit the society, and will be a different built environment than the intended historic representation. It would be better if the changes in the society and its culture were presented along with and in contrast to the historic environment, so that their development to the present day could be appreciated as a continuing authentic

²⁵ Sherban Cantacuzino, “Continuity and Change: Architecture and Development in the Islamic World – an Introduction,” in Sherban Cantacuzino (ed.), *Architecture in Continuity: Building in the Islamic World Today*, (New York: Islamic Publications, 1985), 21.

experience. This would, however, require a major shift in the thinking and presentation of historic areas, both on the part of the presenters and the viewers.

As with the *Venice Charter*, the *Burra Charter* is specifically aimed at places of cultural significance, but again the emphasis is pointing to those places that have a physical value that new development should not compromise. Article 15 of the *Burra Charter* cautions the amount of change that may be acceptable, and covers the possibility of mistakes by requiring that if the cultural significance is likely to be reduced, such change should be reversible. Again the decision on what level of significance will adversely affect a place remains with the conservator. Over-caution would result in *all* change being reversible. Although future generations may see conservators of the turn-of-the-twentieth/twenty-first century as cautious with little self-confidence, it may also be seen as a reaction to the excesses of early nineteenth century “restoration,” and the over-zealous restoration following the destruction of the Second World War.

4.3 Urban Conservation and the Challenge of Development

If an urban settlement is to continue to prosper it is essential that it take its place in the economic development of the country. This will inevitably require changes to the function and fabric of the settlement. Change on an urban scale has the potential to bring massive alterations to an historic urban area to the point where the aesthetic character and historical evidence that substantiates the physical manifestation of the society’s cultural identity could be eroded beyond recognition. This could be the prelude to a specifically focused restoration program leading to the presentation of the place becoming a self-conscious attempt to present an image of its former heritage significance through an imposed performance in a purposely-constructed backdrop.²⁶

²⁶ Lowenthal extensively covers this topic throughout his book, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). For example, Williamsburg, 50 and 347. In the same book Ada Louise Huxtable is quoted, referring to present day interior restoration, “they are all... Williamsburged,” 351. Lowenthal continues his arguments through his book, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Group, 1996). Priscilla Boniface and Peter Fowler also refer throughout their book, *Heritage and Tourism in ‘the global village’* (London: Routledge, 1993).

Lowenthal expresses a misconception of the conservation and development of urban areas when he refers to places being “pickled in aspic” and sees this as being already socially dead or dying. He continues:

when much survives from any particular epoch, not much can have happened since; otherwise most of those old things would have been replaced. Early Pompeii endured in complete detail only because there was no later Pompeii. ...time does not stand still, and to see it so misconceives the past.”²⁷

There is an element of truth in this statement if it is applied to major urban centres where the pace of development is faster and the scope and intensity more concentrated. It does not apply so easily in the cases of vernacular villages where the pace of development is much slower, and the intensity far less concentrated. The continuation of traditional values and customs also plays an important role, and the village inhabitant reaches a level of nearly total self-sufficiency.²⁸ Here development is slow to the point of being seemingly static, which to Western eyes is a sure sign of stagnation. But the fact that a historic area and its society still exist must point to it as being at least alive to some extent and active. The delegates at the UNESCO Nairobi conference (1976) showed an early appreciation of differences in the scope and economic viability of historic areas, first in the title: *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas*, with the inclusion of “contemporary role;” and secondly with the specific reference in the definitions to the “Historic and architectural (*including vernacular*) areas.”²⁹

The delegates further showed appreciation for the immensity of the loss of historic evidence and the subsequent loss of cultural identity. The preamble of the UNESCO *Recommendation* highlights the significance of historic areas as

the most tangible evidence of the wealth and diversity of cultural, religious and social activities ... and that they ...represent the living presence of the

²⁷ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 244.

²⁸ Teodor Shanin, *Peasants and Peasant Societies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Education, 1973), 244.

²⁹ UNESCO, *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas*, adopted at the General Conference at Nairobi, 26 November 1976, Article 1 Definitions. (emphasis added)

past which formed them ... and ... this living evidence of days gone by is of vital importance for humanity and for nations who find in it both the expression of their way of life and one of the corner stones of their identity³⁰

The problem of conservation is here seen as tampering with historical evidence perceived on a major scale. This could be equally true of necessary changes of use and its consequent effect on changes to the fabric. However, the traditional city centres, such as those of Damascus and Aleppo, have developed over the ages at a speed conducive to the society and economic necessities, and this is reflected in their current built environments that gives them their special significance. Although disappointment may be expressed at the spoiling of the historic settings by modern high-rise buildings surrounding the old quarters, the problem may be revealed as largely aesthetic. Certainly the twentieth century could have been more sympathetic with its development, and the case of Martyr's Square shows how significant fabric can be lost in a seemingly non-historic area. But the evidence of the progress of the changing society through its architecture cannot be denied; it is the loss of specific historical context that is regretted by concerned local people.³¹

The Old City of Damascus is remarkable in that it still retains considerable and convincing areas of its complex history reaching down through the ages. Although the city's history reaches back 4000 years, its earliest history has now been lost, but some of the general layout of the Hellenistic city can still be discerned from the physical evidence. Straight Street (the Street called Straight) formed the major road of the Hellenistic town that was built following the incursion by Alexander the Great in 333 BCE, and remains today in almost its original place and configuration.³² Most of the great monuments range from the Arab-Islamic

³⁰ Ibid., Preamble.

³¹ Personal comment from Dr. Nadia Khost, an historian, author and a founding member of a resident's action group in Damascus, with a passion for the conservation of the city outside the Old City walls.

³² Ross Burns, *Monuments of Syria* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1999), 95-96. Burns refers to Mark Twain's account of the Street: "The street called Straight is straighter than a corkscrew, but not as straight as a rainbow." Burns comments on this: "Twain does exaggerate a bit. Along its 1.35km length, Straight Street makes two slight changes of alignment, both originally marked by

periods, the Umayyad, Abbasid, Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman periods, and evidence of all these later periods can still be found. Development is not new to Damascus. Yet, given the increasing speed of social, cultural and physical change over the last two centuries, the old city retains a remarkable unity of style, scale and detail, which projects the adjective “timeless.”



Fig. 55. Damascus: a street in the Old City. The Ottoman building on the right sits comfortably with later buildings in the rest of the street. (Author: 2002)

Remnants of the old walls of Aleppo remain, but not to the same extent as those of Damascus, but evidence of the five gates remain in various degrees of completeness. (Fig. 25) As with Damascus, a number of old buildings and small areas display the various periods of the city’s history, as well as those areas that have a happy amalgam of mixed periods. (Fig.55) The present architecture within the old centres of Damascus and Aleppo illustrates the ability of these cities to absorb new styles over the centuries, and maintain some overall unity. The resulting environment can be accepted as historic without necessarily discriminating between the subtle differences of the various periods that make up the total fabric.

an arch placed at a major intersection.” One of these arches still remains, and the slight realignment still exists.

The architecture of the twentieth century however is another story. Since the mid nineteenth century, new philosophies of architecture, the evidence of which can be seen in new materials, new forms and designs, new scale both in density and height, and new transport systems and functions, have brought unprecedented new approaches to twentieth century urban planning. Trystan Edwards noted the disruption to older established environments as early as 1924, in a curious book *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture*.³³ His approach to the built environment can be summed up in his statement,

architecture must have a human quality and this quality cannot be better displayed than by the kind of good manners such as is expressed in a society of buildings having an interdependence and mutual regard similar to that which must distinguish a society of people.³⁴

Edwards does not decry modern architecture, on the contrary he refers to “what is called the “modernist” movement which has given birth to a number of experiments of great interest and value.”³⁵ In similar fashion, the majority of charters relating to the historic built environment rarely, if ever, criticise twentieth century architecture. Rather, references are made towards the value of the historic buildings and areas, and why and how these should be kept and reutilised. The strongest criticism from the UNESCO *Recommendation* is that “a growing universality of building techniques and architectural forms may create a uniform environment throughout the world.”³⁶ The qualifying statement that follows expresses the type of argument that is used by other charters, being a positive justification for conservation rather than a criticism of the existing growing problem: “The preservation of historic areas can make an outstanding contribution to maintaining and developing the cultural and social values of each nation.”³⁷

The *Washington Charter*, speaking of historic urban areas states, “Today many such areas are being threatened, physically degraded, damaged or even destroyed,

³³ Trystan Edwards, *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture* (London: John Tiranti, 1946). The first edition was published in 1924. The text of this second edition “with the exception of a few short passages which have been omitted, is identical with that of the first edition,” xii.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, x.

³⁶ UNESCO, *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas*, Article 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

by the impact of urban development that follows industrialization in societies everywhere.”³⁸ Again the focus is on the threats to the historic fabric, and points rather to the context of twentieth century architecture rather than the form and design of the architecture itself. Regarding the built vernacular heritage, the statement that “The survival of this tradition is threatened worldwide by the forces of economic, cultural and architectural homogenisation”³⁹ again points to the application of twentieth century economical initiatives. *The Resolutions of Bruges: Principles Governing the Rehabilitation of Historic Towns* acknowledges technical, economic and social upheavals contributing to the rise of huge modern towns “stifling, bruising, if not destroying, [the] ancient fabric”⁴⁰ The style of the modern towns is not mentioned, but again the blame is levelled at the planning context. *The Resolutions of the International Symposium on the Conservation of Smaller Historic Towns* lays no blame, but defines the specific dangers that smaller towns may be subject to, and then lists strategies and measures to counteract these dangers.⁴¹

The message arising from the charters is that there is nothing inherently wrong with the form, materials, scale or style of twentieth century architecture, but rather its *application* in a historic urban context. In contrast, the Countess of Dartmouth, in her introduction to a book produced for European Architectural Heritage Year, 1975, stepped into the subjective world of aesthetics when she wrote, “The work of conservationists to save an historic building or even an entire terrace of houses can be completely nullified if hideous offices or supermarkets are built alongside.”⁴² But it is not merely aesthetic preferences but rather the loss of architectural character epitomising national identity that forms the concern of the charters.

³⁸ *The ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas, (the Washington Charter)*, (Paris: ICOMOS Information , April/June no.2, 1987), Preamble.

³⁹ ICOMOS, *Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage* (Mexico: 2000), Introduction.

⁴⁰ ICOMOS, *The Resolutions of Bruges: Principles Governing the Rehabilitation of Historic Towns*, (Bruges: May, 1975), Article 4.

⁴¹ ICOMOS, *Resolutions of the International Symposium on the Conservation of Smaller Historic Towns* (Rothenburg ob der Tauber: 1975), Article 3 for the dangers, and 5 for the strategies and measures.

⁴² The Countess of Dartmouth, “Foreword,” in Sherban Cantacuzino (ed.), *Architectural Conservation in Europe* (London: Architectural Press, 1975), 1.

The UNESCO *Recommendation* further sees the place of urban conservation from its broadest context to the most intimate. It recognises that “historic areas and their surroundings should be regarded as forming an irreplaceable universal heritage,” and calls on governments and citizens alike to “safeguard this heritage and integrate it into the social life of our times.”⁴³ It continues that historic areas should be considered in their totality, depending on the fusion of their many parts that include human activities, buildings, spatial organisation and the surroundings. Of human activities, it appends “however modest,” and these, together with “all valid elements... have a significance in relation to the whole which must not be disregarded.”⁴⁴

Articles 5 and 6 succinctly sum up the whole argument regarding conservation and development. The problem of development is seen in terms of the increase in scale and density, being the danger that threatens to ruin the environment and character of historic areas. This not only refers to the immediate juxtaposition of new development and the older buildings, but also refers specifically to the views from and to historic buildings and areas, and hence takes in the wider perspective.⁴⁵ This can be experienced in the two cities, Damascus and Aleppo. In the case of Damascus, the containment of the old city is compact, and little if anything can be seen of the sprawling and dense modern development outside the walls. Aleppo on the other hand is not so compact, and has several wide streets that intrude towards the heart of the old city. Views of the new multi-storey developments can be easily seen from within the old city from certain aspects. These views, coupled with the wide and compromising streets, weaken the total unity of the historic centre.

Aware of this problem, the UNESCO *Recommendation*, with reference to the threat of producing a uniform environment throughout the world, refers to the preservation of historic areas as making “an outstanding contribution to maintaining and developing the cultural and social values of each nation. This can

⁴³ UNESCO, *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas*, Article 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Article 3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Article 5

contribute to the architectural enrichment of the cultural heritage of the world.”⁴⁶ The notable statement here is that development is seen first in terms of cultural and social values, and that this contributes to the historic built environment as a consequence.

Change of use and function

Some consolation may be had in that the traditional city centres of Aleppo and Damascus have reached their present condition with their historical character remarkably intact. Twentieth-century development has, in Damascus, taken place outside the city walls. The areas surrounding the old city were largely built during the French occupation, and the scale and the materials of these areas were relatively sympathetic to the old city. It is these areas that have borne the greatest changes over the latter part of the century, (Fig. 49) and some historians and architects lament the destruction of the French quarters, seeing in them a valid and important section of the continuing history of the city.⁴⁷ The reason given for this change is the necessity of the major cities to embrace new functions necessary for continuing economic development in an increasingly Westernised global market. Where, in the past, the constant change of uses and functions within the cities’ centres had been absorbed within their historic fabric in a sympathetic way, it was at a speed relative to the society and its economic necessities. Today it is the speed of western influences that currently poses the greatest threat, and signals that the time for a critical approach to development is vital.

Regarding use and change, the UNESCO *Recommendation* refers to active protection against “damage of all kinds, particularly that resulting from unsuitable use, unnecessary additions and misguided or insensitive changes such as will impair their authenticity.”⁴⁸ References to restoration work being based on scientific principles, and the harmonic and aesthetic linking or contrasting of the various parts or groups of buildings are not made with any further reference to authenticity.⁴⁹ The implications that can be drawn from this are that these actions

⁴⁶ Ibid., Article 6

⁴⁷ Personal Comments by Nazih Kawakibi (architect) and Koutaiba Shihabi (historian).

⁴⁸ UNESCO, *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas*, Article 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

are legitimate and if sensitively done will not impair the place's authenticity. It is unlikely that authenticity was considered any further than that of the originality of the fabric, and the emphasis seems to rely on conservation in relation to sensitive change, aesthetic relationships and scientific principles ensuring the maintenance of a place's authenticity.

The notable strength of the UNESCO *Recommendation* is the constant reference to social, cultural, and particularly at this point, the economic factors related to new uses in historic areas. Again we turn to the *Washington Charter* to determine how successfully these recommendations have been translated into conservation directives for change.

Urban charters and change

The Preamble of the *Washington Charter* refers to development over time and its part in the creation of a place's specific character. It also sees the physical degradation, damage and even destruction "by the impact of urban development that follows industrialization in societies everywhere."⁵⁰ Referring to this "dramatic situation," it continues that the conservation of these areas includes their "development and harmonious adaptation to contemporary life."⁵¹ Reference is made to conservation forming an integral part of coherent policies of economic and social development and of urban and regional planning at every level. It further acknowledges the various functions that the town or urban area has acquired over time, but sees these in terms of material and spiritual elements, and that any threat to these would compromise their authenticity. This is the only mention of authenticity in the charter. This implies a desire to retain those historic functions, but also requires that new functions and activities should be compatible. As the uses should be compatible, so also new buildings and the adaptation of existing buildings be compatible

So the Charter allows for some change and new uses, but not surprisingly, these are generally referred in relation to the aesthetic and historic character of the built environment. With the growing change in industrial and commercial processes,

⁵⁰ *The Washington Charter*, Preamble, Articles 1 and 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Articles 3 and 4.

this approach, whilst certainly retaining the historic character of the area, may result in isolating the industrial and commercial activities, disassociating them from forming an integral part of the life of the place.

Other charters exist, as listed in Appendix 5, but as they are rarely referred in publications, it is difficult to assess their influence in conservation practice. Nevertheless, they give some indication of conservation thinking throughout the various regions of the world. For example, *The Norms of Quito* was produced in Quito, Ecuador, in 1967, and is a report on the *Preservation and Utilization of Monuments and Sites of Artistic and Historical Value*. Representatives from Spain, Brazil, Mexico, Ecuador, and Venezuela formed the participating experts for its production. The document briefly refers to the *Venice Charter*, and does not refer specifically to change, except that new work should be “in keeping.” The approach of the document is from an economic position, in which heritage buildings can and should play a part. It leaves the conservation of heritage buildings wide open to manipulation in order to achieve economic goals, the greatest of these being tourism. The introduction states, “cultural resources are an economic asset and can be made into instruments of progress.”⁵² It continues

The rapid rate of impoverishment of most of the American countries as a result of the neglect and lack of protection of their monumental and artistic wealth requires both national and international emergency measures. But in the last analysis, the practical efficacy of these measures will depend upon the value of the cultural heritage in the cause of economic and social development.⁵³

There is no mistaking the direction of this charter. The final statement reads “The enhancement of an urban centre of historic or environmental significance ...should be carried out progressively in accordance with the needs of the tourist industry.”⁵⁴ One can sympathise with the necessity of South American nations to ensure their economic survival, but although it refers briefly to social and cultural factors (in relation to economic needs), its strong emphasis on economic

⁵² Final Report of the Meeting on the Preservation and Utilization of Monuments and Sites of Artistic and Historical Value, *The Norms of Quito* (Ecuador: Quito, 1967), Introduction.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Technical Measures, Article 10.

requirements signals that as a heritage document it should be used with caution for conservation purposes. Such purely economic considerations could result in a nation being more impoverished through the loss of social and cultural identity than the original economic impoverishment. *The Norms of Quito* was referred to in the *Declaration of San Antonio* together with the *Venice* and *Burra Charters*, and hence has some credence in South America. This economic approach also has a parallel in the North American main street programs that apply building conservation initiatives but from economic rather than cultural significance objectives.

Another South American document is the *First Brazilian Seminar about the Preservation and Revitalization of Historic Centers* of 1987. This is a short document setting out basic principles for urban historical sites, and makes reference to social and cultural factors. Regarding use, Article V states,

Considering that one of the characteristics of urban historical sites is their manifold functions, their preservation should not take place at the expense of severe use limitations, even when the allowed uses are of a kind referred to as cultural. They should, in fact, necessarily shelter both the universes of work and of everyday life, through which the more authentic expressions of society's heterogeneity and plurality are brought out.⁵⁵

This clearly acknowledges the significance of use and its importance to authenticity rather than that of the physical environment. In similar manner it sees urban historical sites in terms of their operational value as "critical areas" rather than in opposition to the city's non-historical places, thus acknowledging the city as a total historic entity.⁵⁶ The stated main purpose of preservation is "the maintenance and enhancement of reference patterns needed for the expression and consolidation of citizenship."⁵⁷ This approach apparently does not see the inclusion of new buildings into an historical area as a problem, but rather as a historical fact, and hence, there is no comment on the physical concerns of change, nor even of the historical buildings within these historical areas.

⁵⁵ *First Brazilian Seminar About the Preservation and Revitalization of Historic Centers* (Itaipava: ICOMOS Brazilian Committee, July 1987), Article V.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Article I.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Article IV.

In 1974, an international seminar of the combined ICOMOS and International Union of architects (UIA), was held on the integration of modern architecture in old surroundings. It was recorded that adaptation to changing circumstances was at the same time a continuous evolution that determined the identity of human settlements but also posed a threat. This dichotomy justified conservation, “by the preservation and enhancement of the spatial arrangements inherited from earlier generations.”⁵⁸ It clearly saw the introduction of new elements into old surroundings as feasible, and desirable for enriching the social identity and the functional and aesthetic character of the historical fabric.⁵⁹ The principles enunciated in this document reflect the concern regarding old and modern integration. They call for the systematic analysis of spatial relationships and between the society and the architecture; that any change of function or new use must not destroy the physical structure; that the modern architecture must respect the old structures, aesthetics, and social qualities of the old; and that the new designs must proceed in an integrated way, including the infrastructure and traffic. They also require that interdisciplinary teams of experts be responsible for the planning schemes, which should acknowledge the existing fabric as the framework for future development.⁶⁰ It specifically refers to architects playing a leading role. This is not surprising, as the whole thrust of the document points to the physical attributes of historic areas, hence the emphasis on the physical “fitting in.” Although social concerns receive some reference, the physical emphasis and the requirement for interdisciplinary teams of experts tends to underplay the importance of social issues and participation.

One year later, *The Resolutions of Bruges: Principles Governing the Rehabilitation of Historic Towns* was submitted to the International Symposium on the Conservation of Historic Towns in Bruges, 1975. This considered the physical juxtaposition of new and old buildings, but was also aware of social and cultural needs. The document acknowledges the cultural and aesthetic value of historic towns, but finds a stronger justification in their social function. As a

⁵⁸ ICOMOS–UIA (International Union of Architects), *Seminar on the Integration of Modern Architecture in Old Surroundings*, (Poland: Kazimierz Dolny, 1974), Article 1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Article 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Articles 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

consequence of this, rehabilitation and adaptation to present day needs “form an essential part of any genuine policy for the human habitat.”⁶¹ It is required that this adaptation should be done in such a way that the historic fabric, its structure and its history are not destroyed. Its chief concern is to preserve the character of the place, stating that “one of the basic objectives of its conservation must be the preservation of the authenticity of its monuments”⁶² To achieve this, it states that the work should be done in accordance with the principles laid down in the *Venice Charter*, and concludes that “Respect for authenticity implies the integration of modern architecture in an old town.”⁶³ This is quite illuminating, as it not only accepts new architecture but also sees it as complementing the perceived authenticity of the place. As the *Resolutions of Bruges* was made before the production of both the UNESCO *Recommendation*, 1976, and the *Washington Charter*, (1987), the reference to authenticity may have arisen through its reference to the *Venice Charter*. At this stage concern for area conservation was being discussed, but little had been done in producing written principles.

The Declaration of San Antonio (Appendix 15) drafted specifically for authenticity, acknowledges the problems of changes of use and the subsequent changes to the fabric. Showing concern for social values, and “aiming to enrich human spirituality beyond the material aspect,”⁶⁴ it considers the connections between authenticity and dynamic and static sites. Dynamic cultural sites are seen to be the constant adaptation to human need, and actively contribute to maintaining a continuum between past, present and future life. It continues

Through them our traditions are maintained as they evolve to respond to the needs of society. This evolution is normal and forms an intrinsic part of our heritage. Some physical changes associated with maintaining the traditional patterns of communal use of the heritage site do not necessarily diminish its significance and may actually enhance it. Therefore, such material changes may be acceptable as part of on-going evolution.⁶⁵

⁶¹ ICOMOS, *The Resolutions of Bruges: Principles Governing the Rehabilitation of Historic Towns* (Bruges: 1975), Article 6.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Article 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ ICOMOS National Committees of the Americas, *The Declaration of San Antonio* (San Antonio, Texas: 1996), Section B4.2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Section B5.2.

The general recommendations of the *Declaration* referred to the proofs of authenticity expressed in the *Nara Document*, and recommended that further consideration be given so that indicators may be identified to ensure that all significant values have been acknowledged. As an example, one such indicator was suggested: use and function, given as “the traditional patterns of use that have characterized the site.”⁶⁶ This is essential if the use and functions that have given the place its specific built character are to be retained as the evidence of its history. But to this must be added the new uses and functions that are essential for the place to continue to be dynamic and viable. The balance of these two sides of use and function, and their concomitant effect on the built fabric is not given in the *Declaration*, but would need to be considered along with other indicators to ensure that the correct balance was given to the hierarchy of heritage values. This places the responsibility on the practitioner to justify the decisions regarding this issue.

As historic urban districts and towns were considered a type of cultural landscape, the *Declaration* recommendation “that the process of determining and protecting authenticity be sufficiently flexible to incorporate this dynamic quality” is applicable.⁶⁷ But within this flexibility the *Declaration* is still concerned for the effect that material changes may have on the character of the site. It states that contemporary treatments must “rescue the character of all cultural resources without transforming their essence and balance”, and it concludes, “New elements must be harmonious with the character of the whole.”⁶⁸

Authenticity and dynamic urban change

In Article 10 of the attachment to the *Declaration*, concern was expressed with the comment that the *Nara Document* did not directly state “that in the understanding of authenticity it was crucial to acknowledge the dynamic nature of cultural values, and that to gain such understanding static and inflexible criteria must be

⁶⁶ Ibid., General Recommendations 1.c.v.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Recommendations of the Architecture and Urbanism Group: 2.e, and Cultural Landscapes Group: 4.b.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Section B5.6.

avoided.”⁶⁹ This statement points to the problem of criteria as applied to single monuments, that is, places of World Heritage Listing values, where the concern of change to the monumental and aesthetic image would be paramount. In the case of urban conservation, even when applied to major sites such as Damascus and Aleppo, as expressed above, the nature of physical change associated with dynamic change of use, should be acknowledged as an essential part of the site’s on-going legacy. Concern should be aimed at the way that this change is reflected in the fabric, and the effect that it will have on the character and historic significance of the site.

Although the Syrian *Régime* is intended to cover, through its category “immovable antiquities,” ancient towns and historical structures,⁷⁰ the present conservation action in both the old city centres of Damascus and Aleppo has not come under this legislation. Aleppo has its own system of controls set up as part of the project, except for the major listed monuments such as the Great Mosque, and in Damascus conservation to the separate buildings is the responsibility of the Damascus City Council through its *Damascus Act*, with the Syrian *Régime* again applicable only to the major monuments.

The *Damascus Act* (Appendix 4) attempts to retain or regain the original built character, even to the point of removing previous alterations and additions that do not fit the expected aesthetic form. These alterations are referred to as “unlawful,” but there is no reference to those laws that form the controls that have been broken.⁷¹ Further physical constrictions apply, for example, maintaining original external boundaries, and maintaining heights, dimensions, internal spaces and external spaces (courtyards).⁷² For maintaining the character of the old city, these requirements are commendable, but are related only to physical properties and do not take into account the function of the buildings or social requirements. The use of buildings is referred to, but not necessarily related to the physical requirements. The first article relates to specific non-permitted uses, being industrial purposes

⁶⁹ Ibid., Attachment to the *Declaration of San Antonio*, Article 10.

⁷⁰ Ministère de la Culture et de l’Orientation Nationale, *Régime Des Antiquités En Syrie*, DECRET – LOI No.222. (Damascus: 1963), Article 3.

⁷¹ Parliamentary Act No. 826 [Damascus], *Method of Restoration and Reconstruction/Rebuilding of the Old City within the Walls* (Syrian Conservation Policy: 27 August 1996), Article 2.4.1.

⁷² Ibid., Articles 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.

and the storage for dangerous materials. For the safety and the general retention of the character of the city, these non-permitted uses are understandable. The second article gives permitted uses, being generally residential, cultural, educational, health and tourist related purposes. Traditional crafts and commercial purposes and the like are only permitted through the approval of the Protection Committee.⁷³ The list of cultural and educational, tourist related purposes and intellectual and health related purposes is given, and are all uses that could pose no threat to the building fabric. The tourist related uses again might not cause problems to the built environment. Although their requirements are based on popular tourist expectations, such as hotels of an oriental heritage character, and coffee houses with a Damascene character, or the selling of popular tourist items, these are matters that affect the presentation of the heritage message, and are discussed later. Nonetheless, they are functions that can be easily contained in historic buildings without necessarily causing undue harm.

These restrictions have the potential to work, as the centre of the old city is self-contained, and can be supported by the more recent surrounding commercial development. One danger to this arrangement is the possibility of the old centre becoming too precious and hence presenting itself as a museum, losing its integration with present-day life, and being fit only for tourist visitation, set within a bustling and active setting where the real Damascus lives and works. Authenticity then would not be seen to be a part of the dynamic life of the Old City, but only as something in the past.

Turning to Aleppo, the *Guidelines* have been drafted for area conservation, and to achieve the major objective—to stop the long lasting process of deterioration and social decline—the document starts out with a planning strategy. Acknowledging that the Old City during the twentieth century has lost its original economic functions, with the concomitant social loss and deteriorating buildings, the stated aim of the Rehabilitation Project is to “develop methods and solutions to stop the social decline and the deterioration of the historic fabric.”⁷⁴ The social loss

⁷³ Ibid., Articles 2.5.1 and 2.5.2.

⁷⁴ Jens Windelberg, (ed.), *Guidelines for the Restoration and Renovation of the old City of Aleppo* (Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) 1997) Article 1.1

referred to here can easily be appreciated when visiting old city, and certainly needs to be addressed for its revitalisation. However, the statement that it is the original economic functions that have been lost is questionable. The collection of *suqs* in the city centre continues their functions in a centuries-old pattern, and their facilities for present-day activities have been upgraded only as necessary to continue the trade in relative comfort and ease. For example, electric lighting, the use of electronic equipment, and the use of new metal-framed plate glass display cases for gold and silver items are obvious but not intrusive. The social decline is more likely to be associated with modern activities that are more suited to present day settings, and hence have relocated outside the old city to the more suitable modern centres. Improved housing conditions in the new areas would also attract residents away from the deteriorating traditional homes within the old city.

Although the first requirement refers to the *Guidelines*' compatibility with the existing planning system (Decision 39: Building Code for the Old City), and is considered to formulate the framework of principles for building activities in the Old City,⁷⁵ little more regarding urban conservation is given. Throughout the *Guidelines* the presentation follows a set pattern: setting out in parallel the problems, and the principles to correct or improve them. (Appendix 16) Discussions regarding the project⁷⁶ revealed a much broader consideration than that evidenced in the *Guidelines*. Strategies include loans for house improvement, with 25% non-refundable grants, and environmental evaluation studies being considered, including a pilot project for maintaining air quality control. These strategies also intend to include detailed traffic plans for the *Suq* areas that could lead to a reduction of trading hours in the *Suqs*. There appears to be nothing in writing confirming these strategies. Of the three Action Areas that have been chosen on the "principle of learning by example," (Fig. 25) Action Area-1 is designated "as a test area for the various tools of rehabilitation;" Action Area-2 is a "test field for economic and social improvement in general;" with Action Area-3 analysing "the potential of tourism as a contributor to the rehabilitation efforts."⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ibid., Articles 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 2.1.

⁷⁶ Omar Abdulaziz Hallaj, the Syrian senior architect attached to the German Technical Cooperation for the Project for the Rehabilitation of the old City of Aleppo.

⁷⁷ Jens Windelberg, (ed.), *Old City of Aleppo – a Changing Process Influenced* (Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), 1997), 15 and 18.

No document parallel to the *Guidelines* with directions for implementing these objectives had been produced to date.

The approach of the *Guidelines* to the issues of change or development centres first on the stated building categories. These are classified in the document into buildings of historic and artistic importance (Appendix 16: Chapter 3 Principles) The first three categories are ranked according to their historical and architectural features: (I) registered and important monuments, (II) historically important residential buildings, (III) buildings with historical valuable architectural features. The fourth category listed as (D) but later as (IV), is buildings without historical importance (new buildings). This gives an indication to the thinking towards new buildings, and a concern that the intention is towards buildings only of historical styles.

The allowable changes are given under the headings of “Exchange of original substance” and “Changes of floor plan”. It is notable that the only stated change is that to the floor plan, perhaps with a tacit expectation that the rest of the *Guidelines* will control the material alterations to the elevations. Although under category (I) changes to the floor plan requires a case study, it is perhaps expected that the changes will not exceed those permitted for category (II). How far “harmful to the original substance” may go is not clear. However, in category (III) floor plan changes are permitted, but only if the valuable historic architectural elements are preserved in accordance with the guidelines. This, and the requirement that the façade of category (IV) buildings shall be in harmony with the historic pattern should ensure some degree of sympathetic architectural unity is maintained to retain the city’s historic character.

“Changes of floor plan” are given further discussion in Appendix 16 (Chapter 4 Floorplans). The first principle looks at several floor plans and the changes that have taken place, listed under problems, and under principles the guide to conservation. There are only two principles that relate to the urban context: preserve and use the original entrance, and no new door openings to the public street are permitted. The rest of the principles relate to the interior of the buildings. Appendix 16 continuing in Chapter 5 (Building Elements) has some

relevance to the urban context. Clause 5.1.1 deals with outside walls, and refers to those attributes that contribute to the urban character. These include the windowless and simple appearance, the simple decorations of the doors, and the “Ablak” stone, being the alternate yellow and black stone courses. Conservation to these elements only refers to their preservation or restoration. No comment is made regarding how new elements, if required, and new buildings, should be introduced to ensure the continuation of the surrounding character.

Principle 3.1.3 (Appendix 16: Chapter 3 Principles) requires that for the implementation of the *Guidelines*, every building of category (I) should first have a “profound historic study” and that all interventions “should be studied very carefully in accordance with the principles of Venice Charter and the guidelines.” The other three categories apparently do not require the *Venice Charter* guidance as no reference is made in their requirements. Again we see the *Venice Charter* being used as the major standard, but not urban charters. Regarding uses for the old buildings, it stated that the “conservation of monuments is facilitated by an adequate use.” (Principle 3.2) Regarding new buildings in historic surrounds, “Compatible use for a property which requires minimal alteration and/or addition to the building shall not be discouraged when such interventions do not destroy significant historical and/or architectural substance.” And it continues, “Modern addition design has to be compatible with the size, scale colour, material, appearance and character of the property and/or neighbourhood.” As we have seen before, the controls on function and use are configured in terms of the fabric. This is fair enough, as this document is intended for use by members of the building industry. But again, although one of the originally stated objectives, the *leitmotif*, is the promotion of its economic and social development,⁷⁸ there is no document available to ascertain the economic action that is being taken to facilitate the *Guidelines*. There is a great danger that the “slowing down of the deterioration of its residential zones”⁷⁹ will merely remain as the practical attempt at the improvement of the housing and living conditions, albeit a genuine attempt to retain the character of the old city, but at the cost of vital economic and social strategies to ensure the city’s stability.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 8.

As the *Guidelines* progress, they become entirely focused on single buildings and their building elements, and little is directed towards planning problems of the city's social concerns or infrastructure. Section 6 (Appendix 16) headed "Streets and Public Space" is the only portion of the document that specifically considers the urban context. The six subheadings are: Pavement, Drainage Installations, Electric Installations, Lighting System, Advertising and Signs, and Shades. The example "6.3 Electric Installations" shows an extensive problem of the city's electrical installation, and the simplistic directions for amendment. Admittedly this is a tier three document, and the actual work will no doubt be detailed in architect's plans and specifications. However, the *Guidelines* give little direction to the practitioner, and no directions regarding social/cultural issues. It is to be hoped that these will be transmitted to the practitioners for implementation. The rest of the document has few allusions to urban issues, mainly concentrating on the issues applicable to the internal layout and details of single buildings. The early statements aimed at the involvement of "all relevant social, economic, technical, and institutional aspects into one comprehensive planning and implementation process."⁸⁰ Although the intention was urban conservation, the impact of the *Guidelines* is in danger of becoming similar to that of the Damascus approach of single building conservation, only achieving urban conservation as a collection of conserved pieces, rather than an integrated urban project.

This approach may have achieved its stated aims had urban charters that had been specifically drafted to avoid overlooking the essential requirements for urban conservation been accessed. However, such requirements do not adequately appear in urban charters, and certainly do not appear in the *Venice Charter*, the only such document to be cited. Regarding change, the objective of restoring and renovating the houses seems to have set the conservators on a strict restoration path, and have not used the social and economic requirements as an appropriate guide for the introduction of new development in order to ascertain whether these elements need restoration before the building fabric. It is hoped that the lessons learnt through the three Action Areas will prove beneficial to the remainder of the

⁸⁰ Ibid., 6.

project. In the meantime we can ask the question, if only the fabric of the Old City is retained or restored, and the economic and social life of the city is not sustained, how then will we perceive its authenticity?

Change and the vernacular

This problem is accentuated when applied to vernacular urban centres, and smaller towns, where the character and physical evidence is of a far more sensitive nature. The influence of new uses and functions will have greater impact in the village setting than in traditional city centres. A village structure presents features that are unique to a specific country and period.⁸¹ The characteristics of village life make the highly traditional and conformist culture peculiar to that particular village. The village is the inhabitant's world, and their social structure is a product of their close dependence on each other. This social structure changes over time, but this is always at the speed dictated by the culture. Conservatism and slow change are just some reasons why a village may present an "unspoilt" aspect and appear to be "more authentic" than the major centres. This may make urban conservation coupled with economic development much more difficult to achieve, not necessarily because of the material and aesthetic preciousness of the village, but rather because of the more conservative nature of the inhabitants. But the increase in technological advances, coming with the increasing ease of communication and transportation, brings the threat of extermination of the special qualities that these places have to offer, both to the resident population and to the mosaic of the world's collective patrimony.

When considering the two examples of Maalula and Bosra, the *Régime Des Antiquités En Syrie* (Appendix 1) is the document that is applicable to towns of this size in Syria. Article 9 states that regarding the urbanisation of villages their "laying out and improvement" must respect the constraints and restrictions as stated in Articles 3 and 14.⁸² Article 3 merely sets out the definitions of "immovable antiquities," listing as examples various building types and their specific building elements. Article 14 refers briefly to restrictions for the

⁸¹ Teodor Shanin (ed.), "Peasantry as a Political Factor," in *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, 244.
⁸² Ministère de la Culture et de l'Orientation Nationale, *Régime Des Antiquités En Syrie*, DECRET – LOI No.222 (Damascus, 1963), Article 9.

surroundings of archaeological sites and historical monuments. The restrictions also “will determine the style of new or restored constructions, their height, their colours and the materials used in their construction, so that these may be in harmony with the original ones.”⁸³ The article refers to restrictions, but no clue is given to the manner of these restrictions, but linking this with the previous article it can be assumed that the Antiquities Department has the authority and hence would administer the restrictions as the officers of the Department saw fit. Apart from the quote above, there are no positive directions given.

To provide such direction two international charters exist in regard to small towns and the vernacular built heritage. The first is the ICOMOS *Resolutions of the International Symposium on the Conservation of Smaller Historic Towns*, originally drafted in 1975, and revised in 1996. (Appendix 17) The other is the ICOMOS *Charter on the Vernacular Built Heritage*, ratified in October 2000. (Appendix 18) Both are succinct documents produced by International ICOMOS, and make specific reference to social, cultural and economic concerns.

The *Smaller Historic Towns* charter is concerned with the physical environment, but refers to the implementation of the resolutions taking into account “the specific social, economic and political problems of the different regions of the world.”⁸⁴ Little reference is made to social and economic factors other than in descriptive terms, or in relation to physical properties. For example, it states,

As a rule, such towns’ economic role is as the center of an agricultural area which gives them characteristics which distinguish them from larger cities: - the smaller town has not expanded beyond its historic core (which is still visually dominant) and has sometimes kept its walls.⁸⁵

The Charter points to economic activities as specific dangers, one being the lack of such activities resulting in the abandonment and decay of the old centres, and the other as too much activity causing “disruption of the old structure, and the

⁸³ Ibid., Articles 3 and 14.

⁸⁴ ICOMOS, *Resolutions of the International Symposium on the Conservation of Smaller Historic Towns* (Rothenburg ob der Tauber: 1975, revised 1996), Article 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid., Article 2.

insertion of new elements which upset the harmony of the urban environment.”⁸⁶ Although it does not specifically refer to new development, its concern with new functions is equated in terms of the built environment. For example “the economic function of smaller towns should be selected so as to imply neither disruption nor dereliction of the historic substance and structure.”⁸⁷ Again we see the drafters thinking in terms of material conservation in the context of economic function.

In contrast, the *Vernacular Charter* is concerned with economic, social and cultural factors, and in addition, sees change and adaptation as a necessary continuing process:

Vernacular building is the traditional and natural way by which communities house themselves. It is a continuing process including necessary changes and continuous adaptation as a response to social and environmental constraints. The survival of this tradition is threatened worldwide by the forces of economic, cultural and architectural homogenisation. How these forces can be met is a fundamental problem that must be addressed by communities and also by governments, planners, architects, conservationists and by a multidisciplinary group of specialists.⁸⁸

The reference to the threats of modern forces raises two concerns. The first relates to the speed of change rather than change itself. The gradual spread of change through our modern communication facilities will eventually affect all communities, and must be accepted as inevitable. The second principle of conservation in the charter recognises this inevitability of change and development, together with the need to respect the community’s established cultural identity.⁸⁹ The second concern relates to the “fundamental problem” of how these forces can be met, and perhaps is tacitly referring to the familiar response of attempting to keep the village in its present form, and not allowing any change to occur, the village of al-Qasr in Egypt being one such example. To

⁸⁶ Ibid., Article 3.

⁸⁷ Ibid., Article 5 (i).

⁸⁸ ICOMOS, *Charter on the Vernacular Built Heritage* (Mexico: General Assembly, 2000). Introduction.

⁸⁹ Ibid., Principles of Conservation, Article 2.

counter this problem the charter addresses the issues in its following articles. The most significant of these requirements is Article 6, which states, “Changes over time should be appreciated and understood as important aspects of vernacular architecture.” It further supports this when considering physical changes by continuing, “Conformity of all parts of a building to a single period will not normally be the goal of work on vernacular structures.”⁹⁰ As part of these attitudes to change, adaptation and reuse are specifically referred to, and the concern for the character of the building is related to the necessity to provide acceptable standards for living.

The example of Maalula highlights the factors that are missing from the Syrian *Régime* in contrast to the *Vernacular Charter*. The Charter focuses on social and cultural concerns and the involvement of the community, the maintenance of living traditions, the respect of the community’s established cultural identity, the intangible associations attached to the physical form and fabric of the buildings, and the recognition of craft skills required for the repair, restoration and maintenance of the structures and living traditions.⁹¹ This places the Charter in the tier two category, and its emphasis is stronger in social/cultural terms than the *Venice Charter*. Its emphasis on change and continuous adaptation make this Charter a vital document for the conservation of the vernacular built environment.

The significance of Maalula has been misunderstood, not only by the officials in Syria, but also by those who had the opportunity to see and report this significance. The two notable authors of travel guides in Syria, Ross Burns and Warwick Ball, both archaeologists, and whose books carry far more genuine historical and archaeological information than the more popular tourist guides, fail to appreciate the significance of Maalula. Both refer to the extraordinary survival of the Aramaic language, but make no mention of the village’s equally extraordinary cliff-based housing reaching as far back in history as the language, nor the intrusion of the modern high-rise housing that has impacted on the

⁹⁰ Ibid., Article 6.

⁹¹ Ibid., General Issues 2, 3; Principles of Conservation 2, 4, 10; and Guidelines in Practice 3.

village's built heritage.⁹² Both writers however, refer to the Greek Catholic church of Mar Sarkis (St. Sergius), and the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Mar Taqla (St. Thecla). This focus reflects that of the Department of Antiquities, which, through the Director confirmed that Maalula was indeed covered by the Syrian *Régime*.⁹³ The thinking here points to the monumental approach to heritage, where the grand monasteries, significant though they may be, are seen in a greater light than that of the humbler but more significant cliff housing. This can be seen as an example of the non-recognition of those areas that should be subject to detailed surveys, but lose out to the more obvious monuments. The *Vernacular Charter* is aware of this misplacement of importance, when it states that "the vernacular is only seldom represented by single structures, and it is best conserved by maintaining and preserving groups and settlements of a representative character."⁹⁴ Although the scope of development has now diluted the historic core of vernacular houses, this core still retains enough cohesion to demonstrate the former significance of this unique Syrian village. It is essential that this core be retained as physical evidence of the identity of the inhabitants. As the vernacular charter states "The built vernacular heritage is important; it is the fundamental expression of the culture of a community, of its relationship with its territory and, at the same time, the expression of the world's cultural diversity."⁹⁵ The loss of this built heritage is not the only concern. It is also notable that the expansion of the modern town that is diluting the architectural character of the old village is concomitant with the demise of the Aramaic language.

The unchecked cheek by jowl progression of unrelated building forms could have been controlled to produce the desired visual separation that would have given meaning to both the old vernacular village and the new development. But this could only have worked had the culture of the place had been identified, the inhabitants been informed of the special qualities that their remarkable village held, and decisions regarding the form and placing of the development approved. A presentation of the special qualities to the inhabitants may be all that is required

⁹² Ross Burns, *Monuments of Syria*, (London: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 1999), 152, and Warwick Ball, *Syria: a Historical and Architectural Guide* (New York: Interlink Books, 1998), 6 and 66.

⁹³ Pers. Com. Dr. Sultan Muhesen, Director of Antiquities, Damascus National Museum.

⁹⁴ ICOMOS, *Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage*, Principles of Conservation, Article 3.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Introduction.

to awaken a positive social response and cultural pride. The society should be given the chance to make its own decision on the outcome of the village structure, both culturally and aesthetically.

The case for Bosra is far different from that of Maalula. Change would seem to have been the norm in Bosra, with its former resident population living among the ruins. The Syrian *Régime* could not allow this to continue; indeed it was used to evacuate the population, the *Régime* justified the expulsion. To allow the population to continue living in the ruins would have required a complete change of attitude to the retention and presentation of ancient sites. But with this change of attitude, the application of the *Smaller Historic Towns* charter could have easily allowed the occupation to continue. Paraphrasing the *Smaller Historic Towns* charter shows how Bosra could have fitted the distinguishing characteristics admirably:

- The revitalization of the town would have respected the rights, customs and aspirations of the inhabitants;⁹⁶
- The town has not expanded beyond its historic core;
- The historic core still marked the centre of social life;
- The surrounding landscape was still very largely unspoilt and an integral part of the image of the town;
- The town retained its balanced and diversified community structure in terms of population and employment;⁹⁷

The dangers attributed to small towns as listed by the Charter applied just as equally to Bosra as for other examples. The greatest problem, however, was the loss of a significant and unique part of the national and cultural identity of Syria. The Charter states:

The national and cultural identities of [countries of the developing world] will be irremediably impoverished if the surviving links with their past are allowed to atrophy. None of these links is of greater importance than the indigenous architectural environment which has evolved over centuries in

⁹⁶ ICOMOS, *Resolutions of the International Symposium on the Conservation of Smaller Historic Towns*, Article 1.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 2.

response to local physical and climatic conditions, in terms of settlement structure, house form, building technique and the use of local materials.⁹⁸

The *Vernacular Charter* would be of less effect for Bosra except for its stronger focus on social and cultural factors. Also, the Charter's strong focus on change could be more appropriate, as change seemed to be a normal action for Bosra. Referring to the vernacular tradition as a natural way that communities house themselves, its principles of conservation state that the built environment is an integral part of the cultural landscape, and specific recognition given to the ways the environment is used and understood, and the traditions and intangible associations attached to them.⁹⁹

It is notable that both these Charters have been drafted for the conservation of the built environment, but they recognise that the success of such conservation resides in the conservation of the society and its culture, and these factors stand out as vital in their requirements. Retaining the occupation of the site would have been a bold step in contrast to usual conservation procedures, but would certainly have continued a remarkable social trait, which in turn could have been as advantageous to the inhabitants as well as visitors to the site. The loss of a pure site of ancient ruins would not be a great loss in either Syrian or world terms. Syria has Palmyra, probably the most extensive ruins of the Roman world, and Apamea another very extensive Roman site, as well as numerous Byzantine, Islamic, and Arabic sites. But each of these sites, like the numerous Roman sites throughout the Middle East, are presented as pure sites. Whilst many of these are in good condition and worthy of visitation, there are no other sites where the ruins form a basis of occupation in which the spaces can still provide for the shelter necessary for present day living. The procedure to allow continued occupation would not have been easy to administer, and of course would have had to include the understanding and acceptance of the people.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Article 4.

⁹⁹ ICOMOS *Charter on the Vernacular Built Heritage*, Introduction, and Principles of Conservation 8 and 10.

As a final postscript, the opportunity to present Bosra as an unusual timeless site would have been difficult to either envisage or achieve using the *Burra*, *Venice* or *Washington Charters*. It has been difficult to ascertain whether in fact any charters were consulted, but even if they were, with their emphasis on the material and historical evidence, they would have required conservation in the stereotyped “Monument” fashion.

4 4 Change and Archaeological Sites

The consideration of Bosra brings us through urban conservation back to archaeology. The question could be asked what changes could be associated with archaeological sites that would require specific attention?

The *Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage* (1990) states that development projects constitute one of the greatest threats to archaeological heritage, and calls for appropriate legislation for controls to minimise impact to be enacted.¹⁰⁰ The form of development is not specified but the statement that archaeological heritage impact studies be carried out before development schemes are implemented points to sites in established built areas. This perception of development is rarely seen in conjunction with the classical archaeological sites such as the far-flung *tells* in Syria. In traditional urban areas, the chances of archaeological deposits being encountered during building or rebuilding projects are much higher, and it is probably these examples that have prompted the above statement. But nonetheless, whilst development may be seen in conjunction with archaeological sites, change always is.

While the purpose of archaeology is to gain information, change to the site is encountered first in excavation. This factor is discussed below as it involves more than just physical change to the site. The current discussion focuses on the control of change in the attempt to keep them in their excavated condition with the intention of presentation to the public in their role of major sources of revenue to

¹⁰⁰ International Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM), *Charter for the Protection and Management of Archaeological Heritage (1990)*, (Lausanne: ICOMOS, 1990), Article 3.

the tourist industry. Attempts at conservation after the completion of excavation have often been to hold the site with little or no change. But change it will. The use of sites for tourism purposes constitutes a form of change of use that in turn can lead to a change in the fabric. This is either by direct intention in response to the requirements of the tourist industry, for example walkways, steps, kiosks, and fences, or the erosion of the fabric from the continual visitation. At Ebla, attempts are made to conserve the mud-brick walls, but the visitor's feet are wearing the steps and paving.¹⁰¹

In addition to this are the unintentional results of deterioration of the fabric due to the exposure of a site after being shielded from the elements for several millennia. The example of Mari shows what happens when no conservation is carried out at the appropriate time, leading to destruction of the fabric. This site now has little to offer either the tourist or the serious scholar in the pursuit of further cultural knowledge. Ain Dara presents the worst case, following the deterioration of the basalt plinth, the well meaning but misguided attempts at conservation have not been successful, and the ineffectual results have had a deleterious effect on the ancient fabric

In Dura Europos, saving the synagogue by shifting it to the Damascus museum has had the desired conservation effect (even though this was not the original intention), but has lessened its full appreciation and understanding in terms of site context. Although interpretation could attempt to place it in some context, its removal has made proper understanding extremely difficult. It is significant now only as an artefact that, like many other museum artefacts, is unrelated in any way to its social and cultural context. In each of these examples the fabric fails to convey any understanding of the inherent cultural values, thus presenting a curiosity of an artefact but with no real message.

Both the *Venice Charter* and the *Burra Charter* are used for the conservation of archaeological sites. This is intentional. The implicit definition of site in the *Venice Charter* includes archaeological sites, and Article 15 refers specifically to

¹⁰¹ My observation during a visit in 1999.

“excavations.” First it is required that excavations be carried out in accordance with scientific standards, and refers to the UNESCO international principles of 1956. The Charter then requires ruins to be maintained, and that measures for permanent conservation and protection be carried out. It continues “every means must be taken to facilitate the understanding of the monument and to reveal it without ever distorting its meaning.”¹⁰² There are several matters of interest here: as the site is to be understood, the implication is that it will be visited, thus pointing to presentation. Although the previous sentence refers to permanent conservation and protection, backfilling is not specifically stated as a protective measure. The reference to non-distortion indicates the importance of the authenticity of the fabric and its correct presentation.

The *Burra Charter* is more explicit. The explanatory note to the definition of Place includes “archaeological site.”¹⁰³ Article 28 is headed “Disturbance of Fabric,” which refers directly to the problem of intervention to the fabric, and leading to the statement that this disturbance should only be undertaken to provide data or important evidence. The lack of conservation at Mari has certainly changed the appearance and understanding of the site. The remaining portion fails to express the total expansiveness or significance of the original palace, and such appreciation requires a leap of imagination not always attendant in the viewer’s mind. As previously stated, the attempts at Ebla to preserve the mud brick walls confuse some viewers, or are just accepted without question or understanding.

Dura Europos by its sheer size and continuing deterioration is becoming increasingly difficult to appreciate. Burns refers to a joint Franco-Syrian re-examination of the site with the task of arresting the damage that has occurred since its exposure from the 1920s.¹⁰⁴ Burns’ account of the site refers to the major monuments: the Temples, Citadels and the Palace. No information is given to the ordinary building groups from which an understanding of the everyday lifestyle of the people can be appreciated. The baths, khan, agora, and extensive remains of the houses receive no attention. It is hoped that the conservation action will focus

¹⁰² *Venice Charter*, Article 15.

¹⁰³ *Burra Charter*, 1999, Article 1.1.

¹⁰⁴ Ross Burns, *Monuments of Syria*, 118.

equally on this portion of the ruins as well as on the grander structures. This is essential if the site is to convey the message of this former settlement of its place in the history of the country and as an important link in the continuing identity of the common people. This relies on the manner in which the site has been interpreted and presented.

4.5 Presentation, Cultural Tourism and Identity

Presentation can arise from and steer the direction of the conservation process. The interpretation that evolved from the research may generate the conservation plan and control the work to be revealed through presentation. The finished result is for the enjoyment, education, and understanding of the public as an authentic representation of the history of the place, and its role in the cultural development and identity of the society.

The issues involved in presentation rely first on identifying what is considered to be significant. This is a matter of opinion residing in the attitude and approach of the assessor. Later, the presentation will be through the place itself, and through the various methods of presenting the facts and information not easily discerned from the physical fabric. On-site information boards, and pamphlets are just one method to convey the message.

Creative presentation can awaken the imagination of the viewer beyond the mere fabric, and broaden the scope of historical awareness. Starting perhaps with curiosity, tourists visit the actual site of a famous historical place or event, even if the tourist books, relying on the visual presentation, do not support visitation. Burns' one star rating for Ebla (worth a detour if time allows), does not encourage visitation, and although the rendered mud-brick walls may only be of technical interest to conservation practitioners, the real significance of the site, being the cuniform tablets, is totally indiscernible.

But the presentation process is only half the interpretation story. Viewers having visited a site will form an interpretation of their own based on what they see. So an imaginative presentation will awaken an imaginative interpretation from the

viewer, and an unimaginative presentation may leave the viewer unmoved, or worse, misinformed. This may not be deliberate but the result of desultory, or disinterested presentation of the facts, or a misunderstanding of the factual evidence and historical knowledge. That messages received may form a totally different interpretation in the mind of the viewer is common, and cannot be entirely eliminated. But the presenter should make every effort to ensure that the intended message is presented in an informative and unambiguous manner as possible. *Passive presentation* has the power to convey a much stronger message than on-site information boards.

All changes to the fabric will affect the passive presentation of the place. In spite of the informative tourist brochures, sensitive viewers will form an opinion based on the evidence before their eyes. It is here that the authenticity of the fabric should be uppermost, as there is usually no other documentary evidence contemporary with the fabric available for further understanding. If the visual passive presentation is providing misleading information, the results could lead to a misunderstanding of the cultural context, and fail to inspire the national and cultural understanding of the inhabitants.

The most significant component of presentation is the involvement of the tourism industry. Cultural tourism is concerned with travel to sites, monuments and cultural events, and presenting the tourist with an understanding of cultural life in exotic places. It therefore relies on authentic experiences for its credibility. But the interaction of tourism and conservation has been an uneasy alliance. The impact of tourism on fragile historic and traditional centres was cautioned as early as 1978, when ICOMOS initiated its International Specialised Committee on Tourism for action and the eventual production of its *Charter of Cultural Tourism*.¹⁰⁵ The concerns expressed at that time were that tourism, as “an irrefutable social, human, economic and cultural fact,” was likely to “exert significant influence on Man’s environment in general and on monuments and sites in particular,” and that “as a result of widespread uncontrolled misuse of monuments and sites, exploitative and destructive effects [could] not be

¹⁰⁵ International Specialised Committee on Tourism, “the Charter of Cultural Tourism,” in *ICOMOS Bulletin* (German Democratic Republic, 1978), 215.

disassociated from it.”¹⁰⁶ Further comments referred to “tourism’s anarchical growth which would result in the denial of its own objectives.”¹⁰⁷ The positive impact of tourism was conceded in so far as it contributed to the maintenance and protection of monuments and sites, even though it was thus seen to satisfy its own ends. The Charter concluded that the intention was to respect the authenticity and diversity of the cultural values in developing regions and countries.

By the mid 1990s, ICOMOS International had accepted that tourism was here to stay, and that a conservation/tourism alliance be approached with optimism. The ICOMOS *International Cultural Tourism Charter* was adopted in 1999 as a positive attempt to accept tourism for its obvious benefits, whilst recognizing the need for mutual co-operation. However, for such an approach to be successful it is imperative that conservation and tourism have mutually agreed aims and objectives. In the Charter the emphasis lies towards tourism to the extent that it almost reaffirms the notion that the reason for conservation is tourism. The principle that conservation should facilitate personal access and interpretation programmes engenders the feeling that conservation is only appropriate for tourism purposes.¹⁰⁸ The danger in this Charter is that tourism may become the justification for conservation. Although the Charter presents principles for the protection of cultural heritage characteristics,¹⁰⁹ the following warnings sounded at the Sofia Symposium, which gave rise to the new Charter, still give indications of expressed concern: “It is a truism that an excess of cultural tourism becomes a threat to the cultural heritage... Much of this heritage, especially the vernacular, is fragile and will not stand up to mass tourism over a long time. So tourism must be adapted to the heritage and not the other way round.”¹¹⁰

But the introduction of tourism into fragile vernacular settlements or traditional centres has the potential to compromise the authenticity of the fabric of the built environment, and hence parasitically destroy the very object of its purpose. This

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 216

¹⁰⁸ *International Cultural Tourism Charter: Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance* (Paris: ICOMOS International Secretariat, 1999).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., Principles 1.1 and 1.2.

¹¹⁰ Sherban Cantacuzino, “The Heritage and Social Changes”, in *ICOMOS NEWS* (Paris: ICOMOS, 1997), vol.7, no.1. 23.

has been known for many years, and the physical destruction of natural and cultural heritage due to the impact of tourism is still a matter of concern to cultural heritage administrators.¹¹¹ This concern initially focussed on the grand and monumental examples, but even in these cases some erosion could be accepted and even desirable, as it indicates the passage of time and history itself, and the viewer is aware of the antiquity of the scene.¹¹² But even if the image of natural decay and an associated quaint, curious and even third worldliness is expected and desired by the tourist, the practitioner must question whether this an honest way of portraying the true culture and identity of the society?

One problem that may arise includes the desire to present a heritage place at its highest point, the acme of its existence. Both the *Venice* and *Burra Charters* recognise this,¹¹³ and the desire to exploit grand periods at the expense of the lesser important periods is not unusual. Egypt promotes the Pharaonic period together with its Islamic monuments, but centuries of the Roman occupation are ignored.¹¹⁴ This extends to the majority of the art and travel books, which promote the Pharaonic period, and virtually ignore the pre-Pharaonic, Christian Coptic, Roman, and British and French mandate periods. The development of a place should be seen to be a continuing process, and some effort should be made to illustrate this. These lesser periods are just as important to the identity of the Egyptians as the Pharaonic and Islamic periods. There is a message in the lesser and non-aesthetic periods in history. Presentation can only increase the appreciation of the better periods against the lesser, and selecting the best may deny the viewer the opportunity for comparison and better understanding.

This relies on the interpretive approach of the practitioner. The notion of architecture being the mirror of society bears out the importance of seeing historic

¹¹¹ ICOMOS, "Sofia Declaration" and "Resolutions Committee Report," in *ICOMOS NEWS*, (Paris: ICOMOS, 1997), vol.7, no.1. 5, 6 and 9.

¹¹² Worn steps of Wells Cathedral could be cited as a potential danger to foot traffic, but their worn surfaces are the evidence of centuries of use. Lowenthal covers this topic extensively, e.g. "Decay demonstrates and secures antiquity," in *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 152.

¹¹³ *The Venice Charter*, Article 11, *The Burra Charter*, Article 15.4.

¹¹⁴ From my experience while working in Egypt. It can also be seen in the division of the Government's Supreme Council of Antiquities, the official department for the control of archaeological practice, into the Pharaonic and Islamic sections. There are no other sections representing any other period, so approvals for work on the Roman site have to be obtained from both sections.

buildings as the evidence of a society and its development. However, keeping the physical evidence is only part of the story if the cultural identity of the society is to be appreciated. Trinder points out that a better text of authenticity is perhaps the one that relates to interpretation.¹¹⁵ He continues: “Authentic interpretation of an industrial complex demands that it should be seen as a workplace, and as a source of products which had an impact on a wider world, as well as a place where particular technologies were employed, or an example of entrepreneurial skills.”¹¹⁶ This can be illustrated by the common understanding of urban centres built during Britain’s industrial revolution. How much of the story of the overcrowded living conditions, the unsanitary housing blocks, the unreasonable working hours, child labour, and the myriad of other deprivations experienced during early nineteenth century, can be readily appreciated through the conserved industrial buildings and historical town centres? To leave such places in their original condition would certainly give an honest impression of the period, but be totally unacceptable in practical development terms in meeting today’s standards. In this case, authenticity resides in more than the restored fabric, and should be correctly interpreted and presented to illustrate as much as possible, the full social and cultural history of the place and its people.

The presentation of the sites in tourist guides is formed by what the writers consider will be of interest to the tourist. The writers of the Syrian tourist books clearly show this in their coverage of Bosra and Maalula. In Bosra, the continuation of the occupation of the Roman site was reported by Ball, but ignored by Burns. Bahnassi also ignores it. In Maalula, Burns does not refer to the houses; Ball does not refer to Maalula at all, and Bahnassi comments enigmatically “The village houses seem to hang onto the rock in a chaotic order giving an impression of an improbable Garden of Delight.”¹¹⁷ This last statement may be of visual interest to the visitor, but tells nothing of the houses unique structural history.

¹¹⁵ Barrie Trinder, “Authenticity in the Industrial Age,” in Knut Einar Larsen (ed.), *Nara Conference on Authenticity* (Japan: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1995), 405.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Afif Bahnassi, *Guide to Syria* (Damascus: Al Salhani, 1989), 130.

The role of presentation, particularly in the tourism industry, opens the possibility of façadism. The arguments for and against this architectural practice are far beyond the scope of this thesis. It is enough to point out that façades are not exclusively the subject of architecture, but could, for example, be applied to the practice of cultural performances. Presenting folk dances and other such traditional folkloric activities can assist in presenting past cultures, but some distinction should be made regarding their relevance to today's culture.¹¹⁸ A heritage tour in Singapore finishes with a performance of traditional folk dancing in a theatre in Orchard Road.¹¹⁹ This is presented as the culture of Singapore, but how many people in Singapore today dance these folk dances as part of their living culture? Or have these dances disappeared from the continuing folk traditions, and now remain as cultural "artefacts" performed in the manner of a museum presentation? The gradual disappearance of cultural traditions is to be expected over time, but their presentation in a theatrical setting and out of context with modern society will quickly relegate their status to museum artefacts, divorced from living cultural traditions. Hobsbawm writes,

new traditions have not filled more than a small part of the space left by the secular decline of both old tradition and custom; as might indeed be expected in societies in which the past becomes increasingly less relevant as a model or precedent for most forms of human behaviour.¹²⁰

The loss of such traditions is to be regretted, but could be produced if properly acknowledged as former folk traditions and not presented as a living tradition.

The problem of façadism is closely coupled with that of infill architecture. The desire to maintain the character of old historic centres can easily lead to the reproduction of existing historic buildings. Referring to "authentic reproduction," Huxtable writes, "To equate a replica with the genuine artifact is the height of sophistry; it cheapens and renders meaningless its true age and

¹¹⁸ Lowenthal extensively covers this form of re-enactment in *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 295-301.

¹¹⁹ Personal experience of the author, 1990.

¹²⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 11.

provenance.”¹²¹ Like facadism, infill architecture and the dressing up of existing buildings in historical dress is a complex subject, and requires more consideration and argument than can be met in this thesis. They have been introduced here to point directly to the honest presentation of the development of the society, and that this should be discernable in the built environment.

Members of the architectural profession in Aleppo expressed their concern that some of the intended conservation of the old city was only concentrating on the façade of the buildings, and that the result would be an historical façade with no original substance behind it.¹²² The responsibility should be to ensure that not only the authenticity of the built fabric is achieved, but more importantly that this fabric correctly reflects the authenticity of the society and its culture. Maintaining the authenticity of the culture should be the first objective of conservation, and when this is achieved the long-term conservation of its built environment will be assured. The reverse is not necessarily true—that conserving the built environment will ensure the continuation of the culture—for unless the inhabitants are integrated into the decision making processes throughout the full course of the project, the built environment may not be the true reflection of the culture and hence not be authentic. Development in all its forms has produced the present-day society and its culture and is authentic, regardless of its quality. Authenticity does not apply only to some past age that may be seen to be better than the present condition. The recognition of identity should instil pride and a desire to continue to develop that identity. Society and culture must develop, and the built environment will develop with it. In this manner the identity of the society, its culture, and their place in the world’s collective patrimony, will be assured.

4.6 Summary

Change in all its forms, whether development, restoration, or slow deterioration, is natural, inevitable, and a constant part of life. Through history there has been constant change, but always at a slower pace than that experienced during the past

¹²¹ Ada Louise Huxtable, *The Unreal America: Architecture and Illusion* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 18.

¹²² Personal comments. As previously stated, the Arabic language has no word for “authenticity,” but the use of the word “original” conveyed the same concern.

century. The twentieth century has brought, principally through economic development as an essential requirement for national continuation, what are now considered unacceptable changes to the historic urban fabric. International acceptance of these changes in turn has prompted the desire to retain the historical and traditional urban fabric in an attempt to recapture those elements that signify cultural identity. The conservation movement is one method of retaining the evidence of history, and through the built environment, present the identity of the inhabitants and their culture

The conservation charters are unhelpful in giving directives for coping with the seemingly opposing forces of development and conservation. The desire for authenticity has led some charters to take the line of keeping as much of the original fabric and uses of historic buildings as possible, while giving little direction for the involvement of appropriate economic development. Other charters exist, such as the *Norms of Quito*, to give strong direction under the guise of historical conservation for specific forms of economic development that may run counter to conservation objectives. The various directions taken by the charters has seemingly resulted in providing justification to achieve whatever is desired by the practitioner, whether this be development at all costs or conservation at all costs. The charters rarely stress the social and cultural issues that should underline conservation actions, if the resulting objectives are to present the society's cultural identity.

Archaeological sites present the evidence of previous ages and assist in the recognition of cultural identity. This however, relies largely on the interpretation of the archaeologists, and the manner in which this information is presented to the public. Not only is the personal and professional interpretation of the archaeologist paramount, but also passive presentation; information transmitted to the viewer through the condition of the site as a result of action or in-action. But this presents only past identity. Urban fabric presents current identity together with the past, and there is great responsibility placed on the practitioner to ensure that the conservation of the urban fabric will continue to represent the true identity of the inhabitants and their culture. The built environment is a reflection of society and culture. Restoring it to a "timeless" and supposedly historic period will not

necessarily represent identity, but rather stand as a truthful example of an attempt to “pickle in aspic” a historic area in an aesthetic form.

The role of the inhabitants now becomes crucial and inextricably linked with that of the practitioner. The social requirements signalled as essential by the UNESCO *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Centres* and virtually ignored by the major charters become a vital prerequisite for the success of a conservation project. This applies to their necessity to ensure the identity of the inhabitants through the resulting urban environment, as well as the continuation of economic development to assure that the identity of past generations can be successfully continued into the future. The proofs of identity will be gradually lost as the historic environment is diminished. The society should be made aware of the necessity to develop in a way that shows who they were, who they are, and where they are going. This points to the recognition of the society and its culture as the first essential requirement to ensure that the authenticity of their identity will be presented through the urban environment.

The responsibility for the success of urban conservation rests with both the conservation practitioners and inhabitants. This begins with the ethical commitment of the practitioners that goes beyond the practical issues of urban conservation as required in the charters. We pass on to the next chapter to examine this aspect.