

PART 2

THE CHARTERS

2.1 Introduction

The activity in conservation practice throughout the world has ensured a continual stream of publications covering all aspects of its activities. Experiences stemming from Western nations have resulted in the production of various conservation charters, and the proliferation of technical books on conservation practice have propagated Western philosophy and methodologies. This is particularly so for urban conservation, where examples of conservation plans produced in Eastern countries show a strong affinity with Western models. Commenting on Muslim governments that do not have the financial, technical and managerial resources, James Steele writes:

Government planning is 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.¹

Sherban Cantacuzino gives another example in a well-written exercise on conservation in a local context, being a guide to area conservation aimed at Bangladesh, and including a number of examples from Eastern countries as well as Britain. The whole exercise is a European structural approach, with little guidance to local cultural concerns. His *raison d'être* for area conservation is "...far from being unaffordable, [it] can actually save money by making sensible use of existing resources." He then lists what area conservation consists of: establishing criteria for listing buildings and designating conservation areas to maintain their setting character and integrity; establishing design controls and guidelines; setting financial and other incentives; training building craftsmen; and establishing the mechanisms for operating an area conservation programme, including an advisory body, and training planners, architects and urban administrators.²

¹ James Steele, "Continuity, Relevance and Change: The Fifth Cycle of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture," in James Steele (ed.), *Architecture for a Changing World* (London: Academy Editions, 1992), 21

² Sherban Cantacuzino, "Conservation in a Local Context" in Abu H. Imamuddin and Karen R Longeteig (eds.), *Architectural and Urban Conservation in the Islamic World* (Geneva: The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 1990), 55

An examination of conservation charters highlights a curious irony. As the conservation movement has grown with the desire of nations to assert their individuality and cultural identity, this has happened hand-in-hand with the acceptance of international charters. These charters have been written to ensure that conservation principles should be agreed at an international level, resulting in the desire of individuality being controlled on a global basis. Since the inception of the World Heritage Convention in 1972, the focus has been that the “deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world.”³ This, and the necessity for the assessment of places for inclusion on the World Heritage Register to be determined on universal principles, has led to an expectation that conservation shall similarly be determined on universal principles. This in turn has led to a proliferation of charters.

Throughout the thesis the general use of the term “charters” is used to denote these documents, unless specifically referred by their correct names, such as Charters, Recommendations, Guidelines, or Declarations. When considered together, these documents can form a three-tiered system, similar to the planning system of aims/objectives/policies. (Appendix 6) The first tier is concerned with the philosophy and theory equalling the aims of conservation; the second tier centres on the objectives and principles of conservation being the methods of achieving the philosophical aims; and the third tier, the practical policies and guidelines for achieving the objectives. For example, in urban conservation this system is easily seen in first, the UNESCO *Recommendation concerning the safeguarding and contemporary rôle of historic areas*; the second in the ICOMOS *Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas (The Washington Charter)*, and the third, the various guidelines for practical application, and specifically written for particular projects, for example, the *Guidelines for the Restoration and Renovation of the old City of Aleppo*.

It will be seen during discussion that, given the potential of some overlap, there are many examples where steps in the system are in practice omitted, resulting in

³ UNESCO, *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (Paris, 1972), Preamble.

misunderstanding, misrepresentation or simply being overlooked. To this can be added the first misunderstanding of practitioners making reference to the wrong document at any part of the system, as, for example, when referring to the *Venice Charter*, a Tier two document (Appendix 7), for guidance at the practical application stage. Although the charters do distil generally agreed principles and methods, the understanding and detailed application in practice, if not specifically codified, will illustrate the personal approach and understanding of the practitioner. The philosophies, which underlie the charters' directives, if not clarified, remain a personal understanding. The literature produced from such diverse philosophical and practical approaches must necessarily be as varied as the experiences. If the intention of the conservation charters and guidelines is to achieve their objective, they must be clearly written and understood at all stages, and the practitioners fully aware of their message. Even then, the practical application will finally remain the personal understanding of the practitioner.

As early as 1931, the realisation of the unity of human values and the perception of ancient monuments throughout the world as a common heritage saw the *Athens Charter* produced as an agreed procedure of providing guidance for preservation and restoration.⁴ Architects and technicians of historic monuments drafted it at the Congress of Athens by as a measure to bring international standards to the practice of restoration. Following the destruction during the Second World War, and more alarmingly, the further destruction following that war in the guise of development, restoration and urban consolidation, it was considered necessary to reconfirm that conservation commitment.

In 1964, acknowledging the contribution of the Athens Charter, the *Venice Charter* was produced to meet the increasing problems arising from a greater awareness and critical study in answer to the ever growing conservation practice. As this practice has continued to grow, more charters have been drafted to meet the concomitant necessity for control and direction. The single most impelling guiding principle behind these charters, as taken from the *Venice Charter*, has

⁴ *Venice Charter: International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (Paris: International ICOMOS, 1964), Preamble.

been the common responsibility and duty to hand the world's patrimony on "in the full richness of their authenticity."⁵

While the charters were seen to be essential in Europe following the Second World War, the difficulty now lies in their universal acceptance. In spite of the exhortation of the drafting committee for the *Venice Charter* that the embodied principles "should be agreed and be laid down on an international basis, with each country being responsible for applying the plan within the framework of its own culture and traditions,"⁶ there are many examples of countries using the charter without qualification. The key words in the above quotation are "applying the plan," for there is no statement that each country should produce its own charter. For example, the *Objectives, Principles and Standards for Preservation and Conservation*, (a third-tier document) produced for Singapore refers to the *Venice Charter*, and reproduces it in full in its Appendix, with no qualification or explanation given regarding its adaptation to Singaporean cultural requirements.⁷ On the contrary it specifically refers to the *Venice Charter* as "the fundamental international point of reference for preservation and conservation."⁸ In addition it also acknowledges other sources from London, Washington DC, and Australia (the *Burra Charter*) but without cultural qualification.

The *Burra Charter*, another Tier two document (Appendix 8), was the first charter produced in acknowledgement of the *Venice Charter* exhortation, but now has become equally as successful in world usage as its progenitor. In October 1978, the Committee of Australia ICOMOS produced a working paper on the *Venice Charter*. By this time there had been "numerous intentions within ICOMOS (International) to amend or revise the *Venice Charter*."⁹ The necessity for the Working Paper was stated:

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Urban Redevelopment Authority Preservation of Monuments Board, *Objectives, Principles and Standards for Preservation and Conservation* (Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority, 1993).

⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁹ Australia ICOMOS, *Working Paper upon The Venice Charter* (OCTOBER 1978), Chairman's Introduction.

Australia ICOMOS is interested in interpreting the Charter and in suggesting revisions. The interest in revision is presumably for the same reasons as others have (terminology difficulties and inadequacies in regard to some kinds of work) and is especially interested in testing how well it serves Australian purposes. The Australian experience is always affected by the shortness of our “European era,” the bigness of our thinly populated (and thinly built) continent - two factors which lead away from the “ancient monument” mould in which the Charter seems to have been cast.¹⁰

Australia ICOMOS at Burra, South Australia, ratified, and so named, the *Burra Charter* in 1979. It remained in this form with several revisions until the adoption of a major revision on the 26th November 1999. This revised version, which continues as a tier two document, has superseded the former Charter, and is, for clarification, referred in this thesis as the *Burra Charter*, and the superseded charter is referred as the Burra Charter (1988). During its lifetime the Burra Charter (1988) has been recognised by overseas countries as a good example of the adaptation of the *Venice Charter* to suit specific cultural conditions, with the new charter destined to continue that recognition. For example, in addition to the Singapore *Objectives*, the *Declaration of San Antonio* of the ICOMOS National Committees of the Americas also makes reference to the Burra Charter (1988) together with the *Venice Charter* for its compilation. References were also made to the Burra Charter (1988), during the Nara Conference.¹¹ Michael Petzet was particularly complimentary when referring to the numerous principles that have been produced for late twentieth century conservation, when he stated “Other principles which were developed under specific conditions provide superb working tools, for example the too little-known Burra Charter developed from the situation on the continent of Australia.”

The practical nature of the charters indicates their use by practitioners such as architects, engineers, builders and others in the building construction field. The general focus of the charters is to ensure the conservation of the built fabric as

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Knut Einar Larsen (ed), *Nara Conference on Authenticity* (Japan: Agency for Cultural Affairs UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1995), xxxiv.

evidence of history and cultural significance.¹² This emphasis has influenced the thinking of the practitioners and the drafters to focus specifically on the built fabric to the detriment of social and cultural issues. However, although in the *Venice Charter* the direction is given that “restoration in any case must be preceded and followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument,”¹³ no direction is given regarding the various other practitioners such as historians, sociologists, geographers, and economists, which may be required to satisfactorily complement these studies. The *Burra Charter* refers to studies that should precede conservation work, “drawing on appropriate knowledge, skills and disciplines.”¹⁴ Although the charters call for studies to be done, there are few documents produced to assist the practitioner in doing these studies. The *Burra Charter* has guidelines as part of its package for determining cultural significance, conservation policy, and technical direction for undertaking studies and reports (the appropriate guidelines have been included in Appendix 7). In addition, there are a number of books and documents giving the practitioner some guidance for conservation studies. These include the *Illustrated Burra Charter* by Peter Marquis-Kyle and Meredith Walker; *A Heritage Handbook* edited by Graeme Davison and Chris McConville; *The Conservation Plan* by James Semple Kerr; and Chris Johnston’s *What is Social Value?*¹⁵ These publications assist Australian practitioners, but as the *Burra Charter* does not refer to them, it is unlikely that overseas practitioners are aware of or have ready access to them.

The emphasis of the charters points squarely to those employed in the practical and physical work of conservation. Notwithstanding these criticisms of the charters, they codify conservation philosophy and the application of techniques into specific statements or rules, and hence represent the most succinct distillation

¹² For example, *Venice Charter*, Articles 3, 9, 12, 15; and *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter*, 1999, Preamble, and Articles 3, 6, 15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 27.

¹³ *Venice Charter*, Article 9.

¹⁴ *The Burra Charter, The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999*, Article 26.1. Chris Johnston discussing the assessment of social value in her paper *What is Social Value?* Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1992, points out that there are no professional experts in this field.

¹⁵ Peter Marquis-Kyle, & Meredith Walker, *The Illustrated Burra Charter*, (Sydney: Australia ICOMOS Incorporated, 1992). Graeme Davison, and Chris McConville, (eds), *A Heritage Handbook*, (North Sydney: Allen and Unwin Australia Pty Ltd., 1991). James Semple Kerr, *The Conservation Plan*, (Sydney: The National Trust of Australia (NSW), 2000). Chris Johnston, *What is Social Value?* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1992).

of conservation thinking and action. Their examination becomes a direct method for understanding current attitudes in the conservation field today at the international level.

This study begins with their Eurocentricity, a matter of some concern considering their use throughout the world. This approach is confined to their focus on the conservation of material factors as a means of securing authenticity. This factor played an important role in the discussions at the Nara Conference on Authenticity in 1994, with relation to the World Heritage Convention, where the differing cultural perceptions of authenticity were identified and discussed. The authenticity factor is thus tied to cultural factors, and shifts the focus from material aspects to social/cultural aspects. Social, cultural and economic factors play a significant role in conservation, particularly urban conservation, and the use and understanding of the charters highlights the differences that can be confronted in the cultural context and its relation to authenticity.

Historic buildings and areas are the reflection of the social and cultural life of their time, and their retention transmits this to the present and future generations as an essential element in the recognition of cultural identity. But as they reflect a dynamic society, so should they today be part of this continuing dynamism, otherwise their existence will be no more than a museum artifact – evidence of the past, but without a role in the social and economic present or future. Only when they achieve this role can they truly take their place in the continuing development of the society. Merely conserving the fabric will not achieve this desired long-term result. Social and cultural factors must be considered in the urban conservation process.

2.2 Building Conservation Charters

The Venice Charter

The most influential document produced in conservation discipline has been the *Venice Charter*. Drafted at the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in Venice, May 1964, it was intended to have international application. In the preamble, it states: “It is essential that the

principles guiding the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings should be agreed and be laid down on an international basis,” and refers to the *Athens Charter* of 1931 as having

contributed towards the development of an extensive international movement which has assumed concrete form in national documents, in the work of ICOM and UNESCO and in the establishment by the latter of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property.¹⁶

Although there was an “increasing awareness ... on problems which [had] continually become more complex and varied,” the attitude of the Congress members remained that the new charter would be, as stated in the heading, an “International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites.”¹⁷ To the credit of the members, the preamble indicates a concern for cultural difference with the reference regarding the application of the plan by each country within the framework of its own culture and traditions.¹⁸

It was the difficulty of satisfying the authenticity requirement of the World Heritage applications that brought attention to the universalisation of ICOMOS principles. Stovel commented that the growing desire to re-clarify universal principles

is a fairly new one and follows a period of about fifteen years during which ICOMOS has encouraged particularization of existing universal principles, by promoting efforts to accompany the Venice Charter with thematic, national and regional adaptations. Many of these adaptations such as the Florence Charter (for Historic Gardens), the Washington Charter (for Historic Towns) and the Burra Charter (Australia) have proved very successful; recently however their proliferation has become a source of confusion for some, and the desire to extract the essential from the wealth of

¹⁶ *Venice Charter*, Preamble.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

overlapping texts—that is, the desire to focus on the universal—has re-emerged for many as a highly desirable objective.¹⁹

He further commented that the Nara Document that codifies the findings of the Nara Conference on Authenticity reflects the efforts of its framers to give its ideas universal force and weight “to complement, in contemporary fashion, the considerations understood as universal when the Venice Charter was formulated.”²⁰ In the case of Syria, with the exception of the Aleppo *Guidelines*, no references are made to the *Venice Charter*.²¹

The use of terms in the *Venice Charter* illustrates two important aspects: its emphasis on the authenticity of and respect for the original building fabric, and its reflection of Eurocentric attitudes. The concept of the building fabric representing evidence of history is clearly indicated in Article 3 that states: “The intention in conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as works of art than as historical evidence.”²² From this stems the notion that as evidence, the retention of the original fabric is vital so that we may fulfil “our duty to hand [historic monuments] on in the full richness of their authenticity.”²³ Article 6 is concerned with preserving the setting of the monument, but states that new construction or modification that alters the relations of mass and colour should not be allowed. Article 12 concerns the replacement of missing parts but they should not “falsify the artistic or historic evidence.” Even in Article 5, where the reference is making use of the monument for “some socially useful purpose,” this desirable use is stated in physical limits: that no change should be made to the layout or decoration of the building. In Article 13, additions should not be allowed if they would “detract from the interesting parts of the building, its traditional setting, the balance of its composition and its relation with its surroundings.”²⁴

¹⁹ Herb Stovel, “Working Towards the Nara Document,” in Knut Einar Larsen (ed.), *Nara Conference on Authenticity* (Japan: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1995), xxxiv.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xxxvi.

²¹ Few architects in Syria when questioned knew of the *Venice Charter*.

²² *Venice Charter*, Article 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, Preamble.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Articles 6, 12, 5, 13.

Authenticity is mentioned in the preamble, and the insistence on material implies that only the original fabric can ensure authenticity. In addition, Article 9, stating the aim of restoration in terms of aesthetic and historic values, refers to the respect for original material and authentic documents. Notably, and as commented on at the Nara Conference, authenticity is not defined.²⁵ It can be assumed on the same argument that, as none of the terms used in the charter are defined, the understanding at the time of drafting, was that the members clearly understood the meaning of all the terms and assumed that all practitioners did likewise. This has proved to be a double stumbling block: first, that the concept of authenticity was not understood, even among the Western delegates, and secondly, the notion that the heritage significance of the monument lay in its fabric, which was a common Western understanding at that time. Stovel, when referring to the notion of “monument” in the Charter, states

A concern for the monumental had implicitly focused the attention of conservators on essentially static questions—on the ways in which elements of existing fabric could meaningfully express or carry valuable messages. A concern for the vernacular, or for cultural landscapes, or for the spiritual, has moved the focus toward the dynamic, away from questioning how best to maintain the integrity of fabric toward how best to maintain the integrity of the process (traditional, functional, technical, artisanal) which gave form and substance to the fabric.²⁶

Although Stovel has broadened the perception of heritage conservation to that of process, the Charter has not been amended to reflect this change.

Regarding the Charter’s reflection of Eurocentric attitudes, the composition of the committee responsible for the *Venice Charter* was predominantly European. Nineteen members were from Europe, and one representative each from Mexico, Peru, and Tunisia. There was one member from Japan, as a representative of UNESCO. Britain was not specifically represented, although two of the European members were representatives of International Centres and their nationality not revealed. In recent years, there have been many criticisms of the Charter from

²⁵ Herb Stovel, “Working towards the Nara Document,” xxxiii.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, xxxiv.

numerous practitioners from non-European countries. Von Droste and Bertilsson during the Nara Conference referred to criticism aimed at the *Venice Charter* for being too Eurocentric and not sufficiently open and applicable to cultures in other regions of the world.²⁷ Michael Petzet, at the same conference, referred to "...the very European-oriented Venice Charter (1968 (*sic*)), already an historic document itself, appears not to be compatible with some traditions of non-European cultures especially if it is applied ascetically."²⁸ Again, Romi Khosla, writing in relation to Central Asia, makes the observation "the shifting ground realities in many parts of Asia make it very impractical to follow the directives of these [*the Venice Charter*] articles."²⁹ Further, in relation to the emphasis on the fabric, he continues:

the sanctity of a spot is more important than the building placed on it. The continuous additions and alterations that are carried out to a structure which houses actively worshipped deities [are] not perceived to be destructive in any way. On the contrary a stream of donations to a mosque or temple ensures that the structure is constantly being altered. Most actively used ancient places of worship have evolved continuously over the centuries and will continue to do so. The presence of a deity makes all the infrastructure around the image subservient to the divine presence.³⁰

It is notable that in 1962, the French *Malraux Act*, an Act for the "definition, protection and restoration of historic areas," was passed in Paris.³¹ The preamble to the Act refers to *Monuments Historiques et Sites*. This Act, which was "hailed by conservationists as one of the most important measures to be enacted in recent

²⁷ 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), 14.

²⁸ Michael Petzet, "'In the full richness of their authenticity'-The Test of Authenticity and the New Cult of Monuments," in Knut Einar Larsen (ed.), *Nara Conference on Authenticity* (Japan: Agency for Cultural Affairs UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1995), 95-96.

²⁹ Romi Kholsa, "The Persistence of Pre Modernism: The Search for Authenticity in Central Asia, Tibet, India, and Nepal," in Farooq Ameen (ed.), *Contemporary Architecture and City Form: the South Asian Paradigm* (Mumbai: Marg, 1997), 65.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

³¹ Parliamentary Act No. 62-903 of 4 August 1962, commonly known as The Malraux Act, named after André Malraux, Minister of Cultural Affairs, Paris, France. The full title of the Act is: "Act number 62-903 of 4 August 1962 which completes the legislation on the protection of France's historic and artistic heritage and which helps to facilitate the conservation of urban areas." It is reproduced (in French) in *Recueil Dalloz* – 1962, and discussed in Adrian Stungo. "The Malraux Act 1962-72," in *Journal of the Royal Town Planning Institute*, (Sept/Oct. 1972. vol. 58, no.8.) 357-362.

years for the conservation of historic areas,”³² preceded the *Venice Charter*. With the *Malraux Act* as a model and at least three members from France present on the *Venice Charter* committee, and ICOMOS itself based in Paris, the French influence is not surprising. The Act has clearly influenced the terminology used in the Charter, as indeed the emphasis on the physical focus on conservation action has also influenced the approach taken in drafting the Charter. This is not surprising as France has had several pieces of legislation for the protection of historic buildings since 1852, and the approach of each was concerned with the physical aspects of conservation.³³

In a Working Paper on the *Venice Charter* produced in October 1978, Australia ICOMOS declared its interest in interpreting the Charter and suggesting revisions. The members of Australia ICOMOS, even though substantially from a European cultural background, had difficulties with the Venice Charter, stating: “Presumably, we have the same reasons as others have - terminology and ineptness in regard to some kinds of restoration work.”³⁴ For example, comments in the Working Paper were concerned with the term “Historic Monument.” Article 1 of the *Venice Charter* states:

The concept of an historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or an historic event. This applies not only to great works of art but also to more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time.³⁵

The criticism by Australia ICOMOS aimed at “historic monument” suggested that a monumental example was implied, and that “a historic site which has no building is put out of peoples minds.”³⁶ Even though “more modest works” were specifically mentioned, the criticism considered this was an attempt to “modify the difficulty of the term ‘historic monument’, so clearly others have shared this

³² Adrian Stungo, 357.

³³ *Ibid.*, 358.

³⁴ *Australia ICOMOS Newsletter*, Summer 1978, vol. 1, no. 4, 1.

³⁵ *Venice Charter*, ICOMOS, Paris, 1964, Article 1.

³⁶ *Australia ICOMOS Newsletter*, Summer 1978, vol. 1, no. 4. Discussion points to Article 1 of the *Venice Charter*, 2.

misgiving.”³⁷ The use of the term “Monument,” seen in its use in the *Malraux Act, Monuments Historiques et Sites*, in 1962, in turn may have influenced the very name of ICOMOS and the full title of the Venice Charter - *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*. But given the misgivings expressed above, this terminology is not only specific to France, but also alien to the thinking of other nations, including even those of a European background.

Stungo, writing in hindsight in 1972, ten years after the enactment of the *Malraux Act*, stated: “The way in which the Act has been implemented has, in fact, resulted in a considerable amount of adverse comment.” The problems included the lack of social objectives, and “the failure to take into account social problems in the area when utilising restored buildings.”³⁸ Cultural aspects were never commented on, either by Stungo or the commentators he refers to, as these aspects had never been recognised and hence never considered. Similarly, the *Venice Charter* ignores social and cultural aspects. This is probably a combined result of following the pattern set by the *Malraux Act*, and the reflection of the thinking at that time.

The preamble of the charter commences with the statement: “the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses of age old traditions.”³⁹ The charter relates this to the international scene, with the preamble urging the application of the plan within the framework of each country’s culture and traditions.⁴⁰ Although this focuses the intention of the Charter on social and cultural factors, the articles relate mainly to material fabric. Article 5 refers to making use of the monument “for some socially useful purpose.”⁴¹ This is the only reference to social matters, and cultural and economic factors receive no comments at all. It could be questioned that the reference to “socially useful purpose” was included to distinguish social use from purely economic purposes, suggesting that historic buildings should be restricted to higher uses. It could be argued that the whole conservation exercise will in the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 361.

³⁹ *Venice Charter*, Preamble.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Preamble

⁴¹ *Venice Charter*, Article 5.

end achieve some social good, in that the retention of the society's heritage is a positive move for cultural credibility. This may be so, but without social consideration the economic upheaval and disruption that conservation could cause, could produce social dislocation negating any resulting good.

As late as 1982, we find that the advice of the *Venice Charter*—that each country be responsible for applying the principles within the framework of its own culture and traditions—had not been widely applied by other countries, but rather had been taken as an all-encompassing document. This may have arisen from the statement that the principles guiding conservation *should be agreed and be laid down on an international basis* (my emphasis). Abdelaziz Daouletli *et al*, referring to the Medina of Tunis in *Monumentum*, wrote:

The widening of the area in which the principles and methods of the Venice Charter are applied has raised the question of how far it can be considered universally valid. Is it possible to apply this 'code', which derives from European culture, to the treatment of a settlement born of a different historical and economic context?⁴²

This article points to the general acceptance of the Charter without applying it within the cultural framework, and its acceptance for application in an urban context rather than the single monument. More of this will be said later when considering urban conservation.

The participants in the ICOMOS International Symposium held in Washington DC, as late as 1987, recommended a resolution calling upon “National Committees to develop and encourage the adoption of national charters, based on international principles, that are adapted to its special needs and circumstances.”⁴³ This again illustrates that even after 25 years, concerns regarding “the dynamics of contemporary mobility (immigration, tourism, industrialization and development) ...cultural values of natives and newcomers,” and that “international or national charters of some nations do not respond to the needs for the protection

⁴² Abdelaziz Daouletli, Jamila Binous, and Denis Lesage, “Les opérations intégrées de restructuration urbaine: l'exemple de la Médina de Tunis,” in *Monumentum* vol. 25, no. 4, December 1982 (London: Butterworth Scientific Limited, 1982), 272.

⁴³ *Australia ICOMOS Newsletter*, April 1989, vol. 9, no. 1, 5.

of the cultural heritage of some other nations⁴⁴ had not abated, but rather had escalated.

But even though the *Venice Charter* still ignores cultural difference and emphasises technical aspects that relate specifically to the building fabric, it still continues to be the standard for many countries. The decision to focus on the universal nature of the Charter was probably to simplify an already growing complex issue, and to consider new philosophical issues such as authenticity in its many and various understandings was to present an impossible task. With this ever-widening consideration of conservation practice and philosophy, the necessity for nation-specific charters is more relevant than ever before.

In the same manner as the *Venice Charter*, cultural and social problems were not considered an issue when, in 1978-9 Australia ICOMOS began to draft their version of the *Venice Charter* for Australian use. As the ratification of the charter took place in 1979, at Burra, South Australia, it took the name of *The Burra Charter*.

The Burra Charter

The growing interest in conservation during the 1970s on the government, professional and public levels, saw the formation of Australia ICOMOS as a Member State of the International body. This focused interest on the standards applicable for conservation practice in Australia. In the summer of 1978, The Australia ICOMOS Newsletter published an article “The Venice Charter Annotated” calling for comments from all Australian members.

A brief description of the formation of the *Venice Charter* was given, and arguments for the writing of a new charter for use in Australia were made in the Article’s Introduction. The main arguments were that Australia presented different cultural conditions to that of Europe requiring different approaches to the conservation of Australian heritage. This was not intended to denigrate the value of the *Venice Charter*, but the intention was clearly stated:

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Presumably we have the same reasons as others have – terminology difficulties, and ineptness in regard to some kinds of restoration work. We are especially interested in testing how well it serves Australian purposes. The Australian experience is always affected by the shortness of our ‘European era’, and by the bigness of our thinly populated, and thinly built, continent – two factors which lead away from the ‘ancient monument’ mould in which the Charter seems to have been cast.⁴⁵

The article reproduced the *Venice Charter* with accompanying annotations, calling for comment but not making suggestions at this stage. The actual rewording that would lead to the Burra Charter in 1979, would be the result of discussions and comments by members of Australia ICOMOS over the following months. The authors of the article were all foundation members of Australia ICOMOS: Peter Bridges, David Saunders, with a previous paper on Definition of Conservation Terms having been given by Colin Pearson. The opportunity to present an Australian conservation document was taken up enthusiastically by the members of Australia ICOMOS, and following several intense debates at ICOMOS conferences, the first Burra Charter was ratified on the 18 August 1979, at the conference at Burra Burra, South Australia, thus giving it its notable name.

The revision of the Charter in 1999, resulting in the current *Burra Charter*, arose from changing attitudes in conservation theory and philosophy, both in Australia and Internationally. The purpose of this examination is to test its success in achieving the recognition of cultural factors, the lack of which was highlighted during the 20 years use of the original charter and its subsequent revisions - Burra Charter (1988). A further purpose is to indicate its Eurocentric background, and show its emphasis on technical matters, both of which being to an even greater extent than that of the *Venice Charter*. This is important, as practitioners in Australia are considerably involved with conservation projects in overseas countries, particularly in Asia and the Western Pacific, and most work is carried out under the influence of the guidelines of the Charter.

⁴⁵ Australia ICOMOS Newsletter, “The Venice Charter Annotated” (Canberra: Australia ICOMOS, vol. 1, no.4, 1978), 1-4.

Further to this examination of the *Burra Charter* is reference to the July 1997 draft of the charter that was first produced for discussions that led to the new Charter. (Appendix 9) This draft had many good points, some of which were lost in the final revision, but are reviewed here as an indication of the changing ideals of conservation within Australia.

Although adapted from the *Venice Charter*, the *Burra Charter* (1988) has been accepted by overseas countries as a good example in its own right, taking its place alongside the *Venice Charter*. It may be because it had been drafted with the intention to suit a particular national context that it has been considered as having a more stringent focus and clarification of its meaning in contrast to the *Venice Charter*. Its acceptance is one illustration of the way Western thinking can influence conservation philosophy and action in non-European countries. But the lack of insistence to take into account cultural factors has resulted in the widening of Eurocentric conservation theory, putting greater emphasis on the retention of the physical fabric rather than examining the significance of ephemeral cultural factors. It is the *Burra Charter* (1988) that has been so influential, and the *Burra Charter*, with its greater consideration of Australian social and cultural factors, has to date had little influence. For example, the references in the Singaporean *Objectives* and *The Declaration of San Antonio*, refer to the old charter. The several references in the Nara Conference also relate to the old charter.⁴⁶

The *Burra Charter* is more successful than the *Venice Charter* in considering social and cultural factors. As it has been revised to address multicultural issues, the emphasis on social concerns is quite marked. The definition of cultural significance includes, as well as material matters, “associations” and “meanings.”⁴⁷ The explanatory note to Article 1.16 states that meanings relate to symbolic qualities and memories.⁴⁸ These associations and meanings are referred to in nine further Articles.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ For example, Herb Stovel, “Appendix I: Nara Document on Authenticity” in Knut Einar Larsen, (ed.), (*Nara Conference on Authenticity*)(Japan: Agency for Cultural Affairs UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1995). xxxiv.

⁴⁷ *The Burra Charter*, Article 1.2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Article 1.16.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Articles 1.15, 1.16, 3.1, 12, 14, 24.1, 24.2, 26.3, and 27.2.

The *Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance* that form part of the Charter's package are a notable step in the social/cultural direction. The *Venice Charter* has nothing like this to help the practitioner. Even so, within the *Guidelines* four sets of "values" are given: aesthetic value, historic value, scientific value, and social value. Article 2.5 defines Social Value as "the qualities for which a place has become a focus of spiritual, political, national or other cultural sentiment."⁵⁰ There is one short paragraph given to each of these values - little to guide the practitioner. Historic value has a second paragraph that refers succinctly to the various aspects of historic research, historic figure, phase or activity, and a site of an important event. It then refers to the importance of the physical evidence still surviving as forming part of the historic significance.

It then lists eleven points considered important when collecting information regarding a place, of which, including some overlaps, six relate directly to fabric, three to use, two to the setting, and one each to social, historic and scientific factors. The last two points are general in nature, including any other factor relevant to the understanding of the place.⁵¹ However, the actual *Burra Charter* is the focus of interest to Australian practitioners and overseas practitioners, and is the part generally quoted in conservation documents. The attached Guidelines are rarely, if ever, quoted. This is probably due to the Burra Charter 1988, that did not have the Guidelines attached, being the one that has had the influence. In time this may be corrected.

This is not only important when applying the Charter's principles to overseas work, but is equally important for work within Australia when other cultural groups are involved. Aboriginal cultures are easily the first recognised cultural group, as Aboriginal sites of significance comprise a major component of Australia's National Estate.⁵² But thought must be given to the other numerous multicultural societies within Australia, and the cultural differences they may have regarding their places of significance. The problem of conflicting cultural

⁵⁰ Ibid., Article 2.5.

⁵¹ *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999. Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance.* Article 3.2.

⁵² The term "National Estate" has been succinctly defined as "things that you keep," and refers to the full spectrum of Australia's natural, built and Aboriginal heritage.

values has been recognised in the *Burra Charter*,⁵³ and although it could be argued that the various references to ephemeral cultural values could be applied to all cultural groups, much of this recognition reads specifically in relation to Aboriginal cultures.

The July 1997 draft of the Charter included a philosophical statement in which some emphasis was given to the wider understanding of culture: “Cultural heritage is expressed through history, traditions, customs, values, language, documents, objects, and through places of cultural or natural significance.”⁵⁴ It further defined cultural heritage places as “a tangible expression of Australian history and cultures.”⁵⁵ It is notable that in this definition “cultures” were given in the plural, and throughout the philosophical statement recognition was given to various aspects of culture including “continuing customs and traditions” and “traditional practices.”⁵⁶ As to the importance of these cultural factors in the implementation of conservation, the Charter recognised that “different cultures within Australia may have specific cultural protocols dealing with the care of heritage places.”⁵⁷ One paragraph was given specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and stated that they have a “moral right to exercise responsibility for their significant places.”⁵⁸ No specific mention was made regarding the European and other multicultural peoples throughout Australia.

Surprisingly, this philosophical statement has been omitted in the adopted charter. There is no explanation of cultural heritage, but it has been included with cultural significance, and is referred to in the explanatory notes as being “synonymous with heritage significance.”⁵⁹ The emphasis, as in the *Burra Charter* (1988) is once more on the physical fabric or *place*, and its role as evidence. Under the heading

⁵³ For example see *Burra Charter*, 1999, Article 13.

⁵⁴ *The Burra charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter on caring for Places of Cultural significance* Draft, 1997 revised version (Australia ICOMOS Incorporated:1997), Issued for comment. 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *The Burra Charter*, Article 1.2, Explanatory Notes.

Why conserve? places of cultural significance are described as “historical records, that are important as tangible expressions of Australian identity and experience.”⁶⁰

The technical emphasis of the *Burra Charter* is even stronger than that of the *Venice Charter*. This arises from the *Burra Charter*'s insistence on the fabric's role as historical evidence. Although not specifically named, the Charter's emphasis on the retention of the fabric as historical evidence illustrates the importance of *authenticity* in the conservation process. Article 3.1 of the Charter states: “Conservation is based on a respect for the existing fabric, use, associations and meanings.”⁶¹ Although this points to a wider cultural understanding than merely the fabric, the explanatory note which accompanies this Article—“the traces of additions, alterations and earlier treatments to the fabric of a place are evidence of its history and uses which may be part of its significance. Conservation action should assist and not impede their understanding”—lays emphasis on the fabric as evidence. The cautionary note in the Article, “changing as much as necessary but as little as possible,”⁶² emphasises further this insistence on the original fabric, thus strengthening the focus to the retention of the fabric, but increasing the chance of the social and cultural aspects being overlooked.

2.3 Urban Conservation Charters

Both the *Venice* and *Burra Charters* are considered by their authors to apply equally to wider urban areas as well as single buildings. The *Venice Charter* states, “The concept of an historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization.”⁶³ The term “urban or rural setting” is left, perhaps deliberately, a little ambiguous, and could be taken as merely the setting for a specific monument, the small and immediate surroundings, or as an historic area in its own right. The *Burra Charter* is less ambiguous, and clearly defines *place* as “site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Preamble.

⁶¹ Quotations from the *Burra Charter* omit the italics, as these only indicate words that are defined in Article 1.

⁶² *The Burra Charter*, Article 3.1.

⁶³ *Venice Charter*, Article 1.

other works.” In addition, the explanatory note expands this definition to include urban areas and towns.⁶⁴

Conservation related to single buildings is complex enough, but when related to whole urban areas the problems are formidable indeed. Here the conservator is dealing not with one interested owner but with a whole society of people, both interested and not. The complexities of the society, its interest groups within it, their varied objectives in the future of their area, their economic interests which may contrast sharply with those of the conservator’s and other groups, and their varying opinions of the heritage values that the area holds, all point to a most complex field of survey, collation and future conservation action. In addition, if an urban settlement is to continue to prosper it is essential that it takes its place in the economic development of the country. It then follows that if area conservation is to be a success, the social, cultural and economic factors must be identified and addressed.

If the social and cultural context is ignored, a potentially unrealistic picture of both the past and the present could be presented. While the newly conserved urban areas feature a pleasant environment for present day living, the historical message of the past, and more importantly, the cultural image of the society upon which its identity relies, must be paramount. And it needs not necessarily be a pleasant historical message. It could be argued that in some areas a depressing image would present a poor background for the cultural history of a society who should be proud of their heritage. Lowenthal discusses this aspect, particularly as it relates to the old mill towns of Victorian Britain. He concludes that people can accept “bad” history, that it validates memory, and that there is a willingness to accept the bitter times with the good, as being part of the whole and complete story of life.⁶⁵ Without the bad, how do we know that the good is good? And in the case of distressing social history, it can engender the feeling of having overcome the times of trial, times that validate the strong and enduring fortitude of a nation’s character. In this way a society can be proud of its survival and

⁶⁴ *The Burra Charter*, Article 1.1, and Explanatory Note.

⁶⁵ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 403-4.

position in the collective patrimony of the world. So we turn to the various urban charters to examine their efficiency in handling social, cultural and economic values in urban conservation.

UNESCO Recommendation

In 1976, the General Conference of UNESCO met in Nairobi, and among the resolutions of that conference was the *Recommendation concerning the safeguarding and contemporary role of historic areas*. (Appendix 10) In contrast to the focus of the *Venice Charter* on single monuments and sites, the *UNESCO Recommendation* centred on area conservation. The justification for this approach formed the subject of the preamble. The wide reaching scope of these concerns illustrates the necessity for social, cultural and economic factors in area conservation as opposed to that of the single monument approach. In addition to social/cultural concerns, the preamble refers to the evidence of the historic urban fabric and its relation to cultural identity, and the responsibilities of both the public authorities and citizens for the place's protection and continuing management. A notable feature is the recognition, as expressed in the heading of the document, for the necessity for an historic area to have a contemporary role in today's world. The *Recommendation* commences by stating that

historic areas are part of the daily environment of human beings everywhere, that they represent the living presence of the past which formed them, that they provide the variety in life's background needed to match the diversity of society, and that by so doing they gain in value and acquire an additional human dimension.⁶⁶

To this is added their historical value, as they afford "the most tangible evidence of the wealth and diversity of cultural, religious and social activities."⁶⁷ But even here the historical concerns are focused on the social consequences, for example, "historic areas are an immovable heritage whose destruction may often lead to social disturbance, even where it does not lead to economic loss."⁶⁸ Again, the perceived dangers of globalisation, are seen in terms of "a growing universality of

⁶⁶ UNESCO, *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas* (Paris: UNESCO, 1976), Preamble.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

building techniques and architectural forms [that] may create a uniform environment throughout the world.”⁶⁹ The answers are seen in recognising historic areas that make “an outstanding contribution to maintaining and developing the cultural and social values of each nation.”⁷⁰ Further to the globalisation approach, and the “dangers of stereotyping and depersonalization,” historic areas are seen not only as living evidence of days gone by, but also as being “of vital importance for humanity and for nations who find in [them] both the expression of their way of life and one of the cornerstones of their identity.”⁷¹

The intention of the *Recommendation* is that each ‘State’ (the term used for each nation or country) is responsible for its own heritage. It is only at the end of the document that assistance in the form of international co-operation is mentioned. Examples of the form of measures are given, being in summary, the exchange of information, organization of seminars, the provision of fellowships and the dispatch of scientific, technical and administrative staff, action to combat pollution, the implementation of large scale projects, co-ordination where projects affect adjoining States or there is a common interest.⁷² The implication is that each State understands its own cultural mores and hence knows what is best for the conservation of its heritage. This combined emphasis on the involvement of the society and the understanding of its culture ensures that conservation projects would more likely to be an authentic presentation of that State’s social and cultural values.

Understanding that the *Recommendation* was only a recommendation, it remained for committed nations to translate this document into workable charters. With such an outstanding document providing wide ranging and yet specifically focused directions for area conservation, how successful has been this translation?

The Washington Charter

The ICOMOS *Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas* was adopted in 1987 at the ICOMOS General Assembly in Washington DC, and is

⁶⁹ Ibid., Article 6.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., Preamble.

⁷² Ibid., Part VI. International Co-operation, Article 54.

known as the *Washington Charter*. (Appendix 11) The Charter has been produced in two formats. The first was that published in *ICOMOS Information* No.2 – 1987, and the second being that produced on the Website. The latter version has a short explanatory statement that comes before the preamble, and does not form part of the Charter proper. It states “the terms of the charter are purposely broad; internationally, there are many methods of planning and protection for historic urban areas, many ways that urban development may impact on the patterns of post-industrial societies, and this diversity is addressed in the Charter.”⁷³ This statement may have been included as a result of experiences encountered following the first publication. However, the current Website version (April 2004) omits this opening statement.

This later version also omits the preface to the original Charter (1987) by the ICOMOS President, Michel Parent. This contains some insights that have now been lost with its omission. (Appendix 12) His statement that its publication “offers a solution to a question which has concerned the founders of ICOMOS since 1964,”⁷⁴ and that it was to complement the *Venice Charter*, indicates that the *Venice Charter* was not considered at that time applicable for area conservation. This is supported by his further comments that the document had to be sufficiently general to accommodate the diverse situations and the various demographic, economic, cultural and legal contexts, and to meet the universal scale of the problem.⁷⁵ He concludes that the text is “true to the goals laid out in the 1976 UNESCO Recommendation... but far from merely repeating this document, the articles of the new charter combine a philosophical approach and practical goals.”⁷⁶

The 16-point *Charter* codifies some of the practical requirements of the *UNESCO Recommendation* to a set of broad principles for conservation. It refers to social, cultural and economic issues, but only in the most general terms in the preamble (Articles 1 – 4). It refers to embodying the values of traditional urban cultures,

⁷³ *The ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas*, Explanatory note preceding the text of the Charter. <www.international.icomos.org/publications>

⁷⁴ Michel Parent, “Preface to the Charter” in *The ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas* (ICOMOS/Information, 1987) April/June n.2/.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

and “irreversible cultural, social and even economic losses.”⁷⁷ The first article, under *Principles and Objectives*, points to social and economic concerns as being an integral part of urban and regional planning for the effective conservation of historic towns.⁷⁸ Although Article 2 refers to qualities to be preserved including spiritual elements, the qualities specifically listed are all of a material nature:

Qualities to be preserved include the historic character of the town or urban area and all those material and spiritual elements that express this character, especially:

- a) urban patterns as defined by lots and streets;
- b) relationships between buildings and green and open spaces;
- c) the formal appearance, interior and exterior, of buildings as defined by scale, size, style, construction, materials, colour and decoration;
- d) the relationship between the town or urban area and its surrounding setting, both natural and man-made; and
- e) the various functions that the town or urban area has acquired over time.

Any threat to these qualities would compromise the authenticity of the historic town or urban area.⁷⁹

Several points need to be considered here. First, there is mention of spiritual elements along with the material. This promises to fulfil some of the aims of the *UNESCO Recommendation*. But the qualities in a) to d) are of a material nature concerned with urban patterns, building and spatial relationships, and formal appearance. Part e) refers to functions, the most ephemeral of the list, and is the only one which comes closest to social and economic concerns. Social and cultural values are not mentioned, which leaves the impression that the “spiritual elements” underlie all of the above actions, and will, in a deterministic fashion, be automatically achieved. This is a troublesome assumption, as without specific reference, there is the risk that social and cultural values will pass by unheeded. This assumption is of greater concern when taken with the final statement that

⁷⁷ Ibid., Preamble and definitions, Articles 2 and 3.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Principles and objectives, Article 1.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Article 2.

implies that these stated qualities comprise “the authenticity of the town or urban area.” This is the only mention of authenticity in the document, which indicates that, like the *Venice Charter*, authenticity is an ideal to be attained. This authenticity is apparently seen to reside in the fabric, and to a lesser extent, in the function of the place.

To the Charter’s credit, Articles 3 and 15 are concerned with the participation, involvement and education of residents, and in Article 5 that the residents should support the conservation plan.⁸⁰ But beyond these very general concerns regarding the residents there are no other social, cultural or economic references. The well-meaning concerns of the *UNESCO Recommendation* are lost in this practical Charter. It is almost impossible to see how this Charter can claim, as stated by Parent, to be “true to the goals” of the *UNESCO Recommendation*, and exactly where they “combine a philosophical approach [with] practical goals.”⁸¹ Where the *UNESCO Recommendation* took the broad global approach, and specifically referred to policies being “based on principles which are valid for the whole of each country,”⁸² the Charter has considerably narrowed this approach, which continues to promulgate material attributes and, given the lack of direction in its 16 short Articles, risks the probability of specific social and cultural values being overlooked.

It could be argued that social, cultural and spiritual qualities are embodied in the fabric, and that conservation is concerned with safeguarding that fabric, and hence safeguarding the evidence of those qualities. This may be true, but it is here argued that unless these qualities, because they are so ephemeral, are kept to the fore, there is a great danger that the conservator will focus alone on the material aspects and overlook the ephemeral ones. Further, the argument that preserving the material heritage will automatically preserve the social and cultural heritage may not be necessarily true. This could be considered as a form of heritage

⁸⁰ Ibid., Articles 3 and 5.

⁸¹ Ibid., the President’s Preface to the Charter.

⁸² Ibid. Safeguarding Measures, Article 9

determinism, and is as baseless as that of mid-twentieth century architectural determinism that did not ensure the improvement of society as it was expected.⁸³

Australia ICOMOS Urban Conservation Charter

Following the first adoption of the Australian ICOMOS Burra Charter in 1979, thoughts were turned to the production of an urban charter. In March 1982, (notably five years before the adoption of the *Washington Charter*), Australia ICOMOS produced a draft *Charter for the Conservation of Urban Areas*. (Appendix 13) Largely based on the definitions and structure of the Burra Charter (as amended in 1981), the draft set out conservation directives that echoed those of the charter, but including specific definitions and articles for enhancement, infill, and redevelopment. No reference was made to the *UNESCO Recommendation* having been consulted.

Acknowledging that the *Urban Charter* was only a draft, and there was little or no discussion from conservation practitioners on its contents, it at least indicated the first thoughts of those who drafted it. Like the other charters, the draft considered mainly physical factors and referred only slightly to social and cultural factors. Almost all of the directives centred on “Basic Character” and/or “Cultural Significance.” Basic character was defined as “the distinctive combination of development pattern and people’s activities in an area.”⁸⁴ The development pattern was seen as a purely physical attribute, such as the street layout and pattern and density of buildings. Nothing relating to social or economic issues was defined. Policies relating to social qualities were related to potential social change. Economic and social changes were both considered in terms of cultural significance, which in turn was defined as “aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for the past, present or future generations.”⁸⁵ The potential social change most likely referred to gentrification that has long been associated with the increased amenity and aesthetic desirability arising from urban conservation.

⁸³ Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1977), p. 9. Jencks describes the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe as the death of modern architecture, which, in its Purist style “was meant to instil, by good example, corresponding virtues in the inhabitants.”

⁸⁴ *The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Urban Areas*, an unpublished draft, March 1982

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Articles 9 and 10.

Apart from drawing attention to these few social factors, there was little else in the draft that indicated that social, cultural and economic factors had been considered.

The draft, however, was never ratified. The opinion was held that the articles reflected those of the *Burra Charter* and that it was unnecessary to produce a new charter, the former being sufficient for the urban context. As the draft had been clearly based on the charter the similarities were obvious, and from the definitions to general application the articles closely reflected the same approach and language. Further to this, the fact that the draft gave little consideration to real urban matters but merely expanded on the *Burra Charter* (1988), points to the shallowness of the exercise. It is not surprising that the respondents saw little reason to produce a new urban charter. The definition of “place” in the *Burra Charter* (1988) was given as “site, area, building or other work, group of buildings or other works together with associated contents and surroundings.” The explanatory note to the article included “structures, ruins, archaeological sites and landscapes modified by human activity.”⁸⁶ The *Illustrated Burra Charter* defined this further giving the scope of the principles and procedures as including “a whole district or a region.”⁸⁷ This understanding of the scope of the *Burra Charter* continues to this day. The definition of “place” in the current *Burra Charter* is similar to that above and the explanatory note clarifies this further by stating: “The elements described ...may include ...urban areas, towns, industrial places, archaeological sites and spiritual and religious places.”⁸⁸

This would not be such a problem if conservation practitioners and administrators were aware of the various charters available for the various tasks. It is true that the charters are pointers for practitioners as signposts on the conservation path, and directives for more detailed guidelines. But unless the social, cultural and economic objectives of urban conservation are brought to the attention of the

⁸⁶ *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance* (Australia ICOMOS Incorporated, Revised 1988), Article 1 and accompanying Explanatory Note.

⁸⁷ Peter Marquis-Kyle and Meredith Walker, *The Illustrated Burra Charter* (Sydney: Australia ICOMOS, 1992), Introduction, 8.

⁸⁸ *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter*, 1999, Article 1.1 and Explanatory Note.

conservators, it is too easy to become so embroiled in the practical machinations of the material conservation processes, that the finer objectives may be lost.

Other charters

To this can be added the proliferation of charters that point to a growing awareness of the complexity of urban conservation, that each type of historic urban settlement requires its own particular directives. These show in the headings of each charter.

The Resolutions of Bruges: Principles Governing the Rehabilitation of Historic Towns (1975) is a tier 1 document that acknowledges the value of towns as mirrors of society, history, traditions and identity. It stresses the necessity for their preservation for cultural, aesthetic, and social reasons, and that this preservation can only be considered in planning terms and social and economic objectives, tailored to the exigencies of conservation.⁸⁹ The ICOMOS – UNESCO Recommendation *A New Life for Historic Towns* (1976), another tier 1 document, acknowledges historic sites as “the most authentic evolution in the history of society.”⁹⁰ It stresses the problems and social and cultural potential of historic towns and villages in terms of function, development and planning.⁹¹ The ICOMOS – UIA, following a seminar, adopted resolutions on the *Integration of Modern Architecture on Old Surroundings* on 19 October 1974,⁹² a tier one document.

As the name suggests, the ICOMOS *Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage* (October 2000)⁹³ concentrates on a specific type of built environment, in the recognition that vernacular buildings and villages require a particular form of conservation, and that the charters for larger towns and urban centres do not meet

⁸⁹ ICOMOS, *The Resolutions of Bruges: Principles Governing the Rehabilitation of Historic Towns*, (Bruges, May 1975). www.international.icomos.org/publications

⁹⁰ ICOMOS – UNESCO, *A New Life for Historic Towns* Recommendation adopted at the International Symposium at Prague/Bratislava, September – October, 1976. www.international.icomos.org/publications

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Article 10.

⁹² ICOMOS – UIA, *Seminar on the Integration of Modern Architecture in Old Surroundings*, (Kazimierz Dolny, Poland: 1974). www.international.icomos.org/publications.

⁹³ ICOMOS, *Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage*, (Mexico, October 2000). www.international.icomos.org/vernac-eng.htm.

these particular requirements. Similarly the ICOMOS resolutions on the *Conservation of Smaller Historic Towns*, (May 1975),⁹⁴ acknowledges the *Bruges Resolutions* and focuses on smaller towns that have not expanded beyond their historic core. Both of these documents are tier 1, indicating the concern of ICOMOS practitioners during the 1970s for urban conservation and the recognition of the complexities arising from the diverse conditions of each type.

Each of these charters vary in the degree to which they refer to social and cultural factors, relying mostly on the physical aspects, even to the integration of modern architecture and functions, serving both socio/economic and physical concerns. If it was hoped that these documents would lead to the next tier of succinct objectives, the drafters must now be very disappointed. The UNESCO *Recommendation concerning the safeguarding and contemporary role of historic areas* followed several of these documents. It attempted to be the coverall document encapsulating all of the types of historic areas. The definition says it all:

“historic and architectural (including vernacular) areas” shall be taken to mean any groups of buildings, structures and open spaces including archaeological and palaeontological sites,...[and]... among these “areas”, which are very varied in nature, it is possible to distinguish the following in particular: prehistoric sites, historic towns, old urban quarters, villages and hamlets as well as homogeneous monumental groups.⁹⁵

The specificity of the requirements for each type of settlement and their conservation is diluted in this otherwise excellent document, and in turn is further diluted in the *Washington Charter*. It is the social, cultural and economic requirements that suffer from this dilution, with the physical aspects of conservation receiving greater recognition.

In contrast, both the *Burra Charter* and the *Venice Charter* are referred for urban conservation as well as single monument conservation. For example, as cited

⁹⁴ ICOMOS, *Resolutions of the International Symposium on the Conservation of Smaller Historic Towns*, (Rothenburg ob der Tauber, May, 1975, revised 1996).
www.icomos.org/docs/small_towns.html

⁹⁵ UNESCO, *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas* (Paris: UNESCO, 1976), Article I. 1(a).

above, the *Objectives, Principles and Standards for Preservation and Conservation* for Singapore (1993) are based largely on the *Venice Charter*, with reference to the Burra Charter (1988). The *Objectives* concentrate almost entirely on fabric conservation; the only reference to social matters is the definition “Social Value” that reads almost word for word like the definition in the *Burra Charter Guidelines*.⁹⁶ Reinforcing the single building approach, the U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service *Standards for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, and Feilden’s book, *Conservation of Historic Buildings*, are also cited.⁹⁷ The only reference to urban conservation is the Circular *Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas – Policy and Procedures*.⁹⁸ But it is the *Venice Charter* that is reproduced in full at the back of the document, indicating the urban significance assigned to the *Venice Charter* in formulating the Singaporean *Objectives*.

The *Guidelines for the Restoration and Renovation of the old City of Aleppo* in its “Preface - Importance of guidelines” and with reference to the need to develop its own conservation strategy, states: “This strategy should fulfil national needs, traditions and international conservation standards such as the Venice Charter and the World Heritage Convention.”⁹⁹ The Preface continues: “In these guidelines a detailed catalogue of restoration standards, developed on the basis of the Venice Charter is formulated.”¹⁰⁰ Here again is a specific case of urban conservation taking its lead only from the *Venice Charter*, and having no other reference to any urban conservation charter. The reference to the *World Heritage Convention* is not explained. It is a first tier document, and is concerned primarily with the responsibility and administration of International assistance in conservation programs throughout the world. It has no guidance for social, cultural, nor indeed any practical matters relating to conservation other than International assistance

⁹⁶ Urban Redevelopment Authority Preservation of Monuments Board, *Objectives, Principles and Standards for Preservation and Conservation*, (Singapore, Urban Redevelopment Authority, August 1993). 16. The definition of Social Value reads: “Social value embraces the qualities for which a building has become a focus for spiritual, political or national cultural sentiment for the nation as a whole or for each cultural group.”

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Introduction, 12.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Circular 8/87 from the Department of Environment, London, 25 March 1987. Cited in the Introduction. 12

⁹⁹ *Guidelines for the Restoration and Renovation of the old City of Aleppo*, Preface, p.2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

for funding, technical expertise, and training. In the case of Aleppo this forms the legal justification for the German Government to assist in this Syrian project. As neither the *Venice Charter* nor the *World Heritage Convention* give directives for social, cultural or economic planning, the *Aleppo Guidelines*, although intentionally aimed at preserving the fabric of the Old City and promoting economic and social development whilst purporting to fulfil national needs and traditions, have the potential to slip into single building conservation, and falter as a comprehensive urban conservation project.

The Chairman of Australia ICOMOS referred in the Working Paper (October 1978) to numerous intentions within ICOMOS International to amend or revise the *Venice Charter*, and cited discussions in England and Moscow as examples. These revisions were never forthcoming. At the 9th General Assembly of ICOMOS held in Lausanne in 1990, Australia ICOMOS again attempted to introduce changes to the *Venice Charter*. This proposal was discussed by 150 participants, but it was agreed that the Charter had “stood the tests of time and experience,” and recorded in the proceedings in terms that recalled the Charter itself, even if in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek manner, that the “Venice Charter is an historic monument that must be protected and conserved and that it needs no restoration, no renewal and no reconstruction.” But the participants also noted that it failed to address fully a number of general issues. These were of a technical and physical nature:

the problems of sites and ensembles, urban conservation, the vernacular architecture of primitive buildings, industrial archaeological sites, 20th century architecture and its building materials, works of art that decorate the interior as well as the exterior of monuments, the setting of buildings and their physical context, and the problems of monuments and ensembles that have been destroyed or seriously damaged by earthquakes and other natural disasters. ICOMOS International Committee members in particular seemed to feel that their concerns were insufficiently addressed by the Charter.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ ICOMOS News vol.1, no.1, (March 1991), 8.

Some of these issues have already been addressed in subsequent charters for example, the ICOMOS *Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage*, and *The Declaration of Dresden*. It is notable that the “problems of ... urban conservation” was included even though UNESCO had already addressed urban conservation in 1976, followed by the ICOMOS *Washington Charter* in 1987. Even with these documents, the participants were of the opinion that the *Venice Charter* was the charter that should be used for urban conservation even though specific documents had been prepared for this purpose. In addition to these misunderstandings, social and cultural concerns were not considered, their only reference in this respect being that “among the social, economic, and political changes that have occurred since the Charter’s adoption that affect its applicability today are society’s increased mobility; mass tourism; [and] industrial development.”¹⁰² It can be seen from this that any genuine concerns regarding cultural or other social matters have been the cause of some concern to many representatives of cultural heritage agencies throughout the world, but given the conservative nature of the ICOMOS Committees these concerns have been passed on unheeded.

Other conservation charters make reference to social and cultural factors in varying degrees. The *ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value*, adopted in 1993, pays particular concern to the indigenous heritage of Maori and Moriori cultures and their relationship to “family, hapu and tribal groups and associations. It is inseparable from identity and well-being and has particular cultural meanings.”¹⁰³

Further to this specific reference to indigenous cultures, the charter refers to general social and cultural issues in the same manner as the *Burra Charter*. This tends to place the indigenous cultures in a special category, whereas the non-indigenous cultures receive usual consideration. The impression is that the concerns of the indigenous cultural values are only highlighted where they are markedly different to non-indigenous issues, and that the multicultural nature of non-indigenous cultures is of no concern.

¹⁰² Ibid., 9.

¹⁰³ ICOMOS New Zealand, *Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value*. Article 2.

Turning to Syria, the Damascus Parliamentary Act No.826 *Method of Restoration and Reconstruction/Rebuilding of the Old City within the Walls* has no social or cultural concerns, the briefest reference relating only to the amalgamation and ownership of property titles. Its enactment in 1995 was to bring some control to conservation of single buildings in the Old City, and practical conservation issues were only addressed, social concerns seeming not to be part of this consideration. Similarly, the *Régime Des Antiquités En Syrie*, although drafted with the intention to include conservation to all antique sites and present day historic urban centres, does not consider social and cultural concerns.

One notable charter is the *The Deschambault Charter – the Charter for the Preservation of Quebec’s Heritage* adopted by the ICOMOS Canada French-Speaking Committee in April 1982. This charter belongs to the tier 1 (aims/philosophy) in the system, as the articles are general in nature, referring to desirable aims rather than specific objectives such as those of the *Burra Charter*. Socio-cultural concerns are present, with considerable emphasis given to community participation, and both collective and individual commitment arising from a common community desire to preserve the heritage of Quebec.¹⁰⁴ In the definition of heritage and preservation, it notes finally “that the people in their environment, who have their own customs and traditions, whose memory is furnished with a particular folklore, and whose way of living is adapted to this specific setting, are a human and social treasure that also requires protection.”¹⁰⁵ Article 1 is headed “The Citizens of Quebec are the Foremost Protectors of the National Heritage,”¹⁰⁶ but little direction is given in the charter for the citizens to implement the aims. “Specialized expertise” and “interdisciplinary teams” are referred to, and “those who may become involved in actions to preserve our heritage” are required to disseminate information and documents to the public in such a way that non-specialists can understand them.¹⁰⁷ This implies that specialised professionals are to be employed, but although this is not specified in

¹⁰⁴ ICOMOS Canada French-Speaking Committee, *Charter for the Preservation of Quebec’s Heritage – The Deschambault Charter*, April 1982. (Preamble) Why the Charter?

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Definition of Heritage and Preservation.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Article 1.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Articles III-A, IV-A, VII-A, and VII-B.

this document, it indicates the necessity that should be addressed in a second tier document.

Regarding archaeological charters, the social and cultural concerns receive greater emphasis. These are of a more serious nature, and are discussed in detail in the ethics section of the thesis. In more general terms, the social values relate to public participation, the practice and promotion of stewardship, and the promotion of public understanding and support. The long-term maintenance of heritage is considered to be a community responsibility, and hence the involvement of the community becomes paramount.

2.4 Social and Cultural Factors

The opportunity to produce meaningful charters for area conservation has to date been bypassed. The requirements of the *Burra Charter* and more so those of the *Venice Charter* ring hollowly when compared with the concerns expressed by the *Recommendation*. How can these two charters hope to achieve the recommendations of UNESCO when their Articles are but a shadow of the ideals and aims of the *Recommendation*? This has created a loss of understanding of the essential social, economic and cultural factors so vital for the real success of area conservation. In place of vital developing historic centres that can continue their role in an ever expanding world economic climate, we may have nothing more than merely pleasant looking collections of old buildings, gradually losing economic and social context, eventually threatening to sap the economic life from the city.

Referring again to the “Technical, economic and social measures” of the *UNESCO Recommendation*, the requirements that, in addition to architectural surveys of the area,

thorough surveys of social, economic, cultural and technical data and structures and of the wider urban or regional context are necessary. Studies should include, if possible, demographic data and an analysis of economic social and cultural activities, ways of life and social relationships, land tenure problems, the urban infrastructure, the state of the road system,

communication networks and the reciprocal links between protected areas and surrounding zones. The authorities concerned should attach the greatest importance to these studies and should bear in mind that valid safeguarding plans cannot be prepared without them.¹⁰⁸

The last sentence emphasises the importance given to these studies, and the whole Article illustrates the wide scope and complexity of urban conservation. The references to land tenure problems and urban infrastructure, together with road systems and communication networks, indicate the much wider impact of urban conservation on a place than merely conserving the aesthetic qualities of an historic area. This is further reinforced by the reference to the reciprocal links to areas beyond the main protected areas. How much more wide reaching is this vision than that reflected in the *Burra Charter's* expected coverage. Although stating that “work on a place should be preceded by studies to understand the place which should include analysis of physical, documentary, oral and other evidence, drawing on appropriate knowledge, skills and disciplines.”¹⁰⁹ The focus is only on the place itself, in this context, the historic area. Whilst acceptable for single buildings, when applied to urban conservation, the wider context in all its social, cultural and economic complexities could easily be overlooked. In similar fashion,

groups and individuals with associations with a place as well as those involved in its management should be provided with opportunities to contribute to and participate in understanding the cultural significance of the place. Where appropriate they should also have opportunities to participate in its conservation and management.¹¹⁰

This may be well intentioned, but has a patronising ring. How much less are the “opportunities to contribute to and participate in understanding the cultural significance,” than those exhorted by the *Recommendation* of thorough surveys of social, economic and cultural data, demographic data, economic, social and cultural activities, ways of life, and social relationships? This is not to say that the

¹⁰⁸ UNESCO, *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas* (Paris: UNESCO, 1976), Article 20, 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999*, Article 26.1.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Article 26.3

Recommendation only calls for surveys and does not allow for the proper implementation without consultation. The Articles require that

Safeguarding activities should couple the public authorities' contribution made by the individual or collective owners and the inhabitants and users, separately or together, who should be encouraged to put forward suggestions and generally play an active part. Constant co-operation between the community and the individual should thus be established at all levels particularly through methods such as: information adapted to the types of persons concerned; surveys adapted to the persons questioned; establishment of advisory groups attached to planning teams; representation of owners, inhabitants and users in an advisory function on bodies responsible for decision making, management and the organization of operations connected with plans for safeguarding, or the creation of public corporations to play a part in the plan's implementation.¹¹¹

And not only for the participation of the community, but also for the desirable balance of the residential density and social stability:

After the survey described above has been completed and before the safeguarding plans and specifications are drawn up, there should in principle be a programming operation [which] should aim at bringing the density of settlement to the desired level and should provide for the work to be carried out in stages as well as for the temporary accommodation needed while it is proceeding, and premises for the permanent rehousing of those inhabitants who cannot return to their previous dwellings. This programming operation should be undertaken with the closest possible participation of the communities and groups of people concerned. Because the social, economic and physical context of historic areas and their surroundings may be expected to change over time, survey and analysis should be a continuing process.¹¹²

¹¹¹ UNESCO, *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas* (Paris: UNESCO, 1976), Article 35, 7.

¹¹² *Ibid.* Article 21, 5.

Administrative measures in the *Burra Charter* refer to the practical means of conducting professional work in order to achieve the best conservation objectives. Grouped under the heading *Conservation Practice*, the Articles direct that work should be preceded by studies to fully understand the place's cultural significance; the methods of presentation of the findings and recommendations for conservation action; responsibility for decisions; direction, supervision and implementation; documenting the evidence and decisions; and keeping the records for future reference.¹¹³ With the emphasis on the material factors in the conservation process, the administrative aspect takes on particular importance. The application of these measures includes the recognition of the ephemeral and functional aspects, the evaluation of their significance, and the identification of the fabric as the physical evidence of this significance.

On this aspect hangs the success of the whole conservation process, for if this process does not fully recognise the social/cultural significance, then the conservation of the fabric alone may be futile. Article 26.3 requires that groups and individuals with associations with a place should be allowed to participate in the collection of information and to participate in the conservation process. The mechanism for success is incorporated in the Charter, but again the insistence of the fabric takes precedence over the ephemeral qualities. And if the fabric alone is conserved over the loss of the true cultural significance, then how authentic can the resulting heritage place be considered? The squatter population in Bosra could have brought a further understanding of a present-day culture in the context of the ancient Roman ruins and the continuity of successive cultures, but the opportunity has been lost over the conservation of yet another set of Roman ruins not even unusual in Syria.

2.5 Summary

Examining the charters in the three-tiered system reveals that important factors for urban conservation are lost in the transference, even from the first to the second tier. It should be the responsibility of the drafters of charters that these factors are at least referred in subsequent documents. Even then it cannot be assumed that

¹¹³ *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter: 1999*, Articles 26, 29, 30, 31, and 32.

practitioners will be aware of the philosophical background to the charters' directives, particularly in relation to social and cultural factors. This points to the need for a stronger understanding and commitment on the part of the practitioner to appreciate the social/cultural/economic factors together with the historic fabric for successful urban conservation.

The insistence by the charters on conserving the fabric is understandable as they were prepared for the purpose of building practitioners to save the fabric. But given the charters' emphases on this practical implementation, the intangible cultural and social factors are in danger of being overlooked. These factors may be the very reason for conservation in the first place, and certainly can have a profound effect on the success or otherwise of the conservation project. The retention of the fabric may be achieved, but if significant ephemeral cultural heritage is lost during this process the resulting conserved place, no matter how original the fabric may be, cannot be considered totally authentic. Practitioners would no doubt agree with this statement, but the problem still remains – that the emphasis on the authenticity of the fabric generally satisfies the conservation intention, even if the process has destroyed the more significant ephemeral qualities.

One of the consequences of this “overlooking” aspect may arise from the misunderstanding of what constitutes authenticity in relation to cultural significance. This in turn will affect the presentation of the place, and the part it plays in supporting cultural identity. So we turn to the consideration of authenticity.