CHANGING ROLE AND RELEVANCE OF URBAN CONSERVATION CHARTERS

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Since “The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments” of 1931, numerous documents: charters, conventions, declarations, guidelines, recommendations and the like have been adopted by variety of assemblies of professionals, politicians and dilettantes. These documents embody the ambition of their initiators to guide the conservation of monuments and sites in different countries, regions, and in the whole world. Each of them reflects the thinking of its creators at a given time. Changing times, new people and evolving collective experience give birth to new paradigms. They result in more documents, and sometimes in the efforts to revise the existing documents.

This and the next issue of City&Time discuss the importance of these documents to the current conservation process of urban heritage areas. The charters and other documents are explored by the authors to answer three questions:

1. Are these collectively produced documents effective and productive? Do they influence the practice of urban conservation, and how?

2. Do these documents reflect the state of theory of urban conservation at their time? Do they drive the development of the theory? Do they respond to new ideas of philosophy and epistemology?

3. Are such documents and the principles expressed in them universally applicable? Do they need to be interpreted differently in different cultural settings?

The papers presented in these issues present some answers to the above questions. They were selected from a set of more than eighty papers submitted to the 5th International Seminar on Urban Conservation ‘Changing role and relevance of urban conservation charters’, organized by CECI, that took place in Recife between 19 – 21 November 2007.