

VIENNA MEMORANDUM on

**“World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture –
Managing the Historic Urban Landscape”**

**DRAFT REVISION
ICOMOS Working Group, Altaussee, 5-7 July 2007**

PREAMBLE

1. Recalling that the Vienna Memorandum is the result of an international conference on the subject of “World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture”, which was requested by the World Heritage Committee at its 27th session (Paris, 30 June-5 July 2003, Decision 27COM 7B.108) and held from 12 to 14 May 2005 in Vienna, Austria, under the patronage of UNESCO;
2. Bearing in mind the scope of UNESCO’s *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (World Heritage Convention, 1972), and recalling its Articles 4 and 5, striving for global collaboration and the need for global discussions on the subject of the strong economic dynamic and the recent structural changes in cities inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List;
3. Further recalling that sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and that the preservation of this value should be at the centre of any conservation policy and management strategy;
4. Considering in particular the 1964 “International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites” (Venice Charter), the 1968 “UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property endangered by Public or Private works”, the 1976 “UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas”, the 1982 ICOMOS-IFLA “International Charter for Historic Gardens” (Florence Charter), the 1987 ICOMOS “Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas” (Washington Charter), the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity, as well as the HABITAT II Conference and Agenda 21, which was ratified by Member States in Istanbul (Turkey) in June 1996;
5. Desiring that the *Vienna Memorandum* be seen, within the continuum of these aforementioned documents and the current debate on the sustainable conservation of monuments and sites, a non-renewable resource, as a key statement for an integrated approach linking contemporary architecture, sustainable urban development and landscape integrity based on existing historic patterns, building stock and context.

DEFINITIONS

6. The present Memorandum refers to historic cities already inscribed or to be proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List of UNESCO, as well as to cities that have World Heritage monuments and sites within their urban territories. The term “city” stands for all types of urban communities, including cities, towns and historic centres or quarters, together with their natural and man-made environments.

7. The historic urban landscape, building on the 1976 “UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas”, is here taken to refer to groups of buildings (ensembles), sites, structures, and open spaces, in their natural and ecological context, including archaeological sites, constituting human settlements in an urban environment over a relevant period of time, the cohesion and value of which are recognized from the historic, aesthetic, scientific, socio-cultural or ecological point of view. These phenomena have shaped modern society and have great value for our understanding of how we live today.

8. The meaning of the historic urban landscape is embedded in current and past social expressions and developments that are place-based. It is composed of character-defining elements that include land uses and patterns, the spatial organization, visual relationships, topography, soils, and vegetation, as well as all elements of the technical infrastructures, including small-scale objects and details of construction (curbs, paving, drain gutters, lights, etc.).

9. Contemporary architecture in the context of this document refers to all major planned and designed interventions in the historic urban landscape, including open spaces, new constructions, additions to or extensions of historic buildings and sites, conversions, traffic and technical infrastructures.

10. The expanding notion of the cultural heritage over the last decades includes a broader interpretation of monuments, groups of buildings (ensembles) and sites, which requires new and more holistic approaches to and methodologies for urban conservation and development. This evolution has not yet been fully integrated in international charters and recommendations.

11. The notion of the historic urban landscape goes beyond the traditional terms of “historic centres”, “ensembles” or “surroundings”, as used in charters and protection laws, to comprise the broader territorial and landscape context.

12. The historic urban landscape acquires its exceptional and universal significance from a gradual evolutionary and planned territorial development, over relevant periods of time, through processes of urbanization, incorporating environmental and topographic conditions and expressing economic and socio-cultural values pertaining to societies. As such, protection and conservation of the historic urban landscape comprises the individual monuments, as well as ensembles and their significant connections, physical, functional and visual, material and associative, with historically evolved typologies and morphologies.

PRINCIPLES and AIMS

13. The principal aim in safeguarding historic cities, as defined in article 6 of this Memorandum, is to preserve the relevant historic urban landscape and associated values for future generations. All interventions therefore have to conform to these values. Special care should be taken to ensure that the introduction and development of contemporary buildings or structures in World Heritage cities harmonizes with the qualities of the historic urban landscape and does not compromise the historic nature of the city. There are many different types of cities, and every city should be treated according to its individual character and values. Some cities or areas within cities have reached such a level of completeness in development that further large-scale changes would have negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Values protected by the Convention.

14. Taking into account the emotions and feelings that human beings associate with their environment, their sense of place, it is fundamental to guarantee that the historic urban environment retain its quality of living and that its rehabilitation be undertaken in a sensitive manner. Furthermore, this is a vital resource for the social and cultural vitality and the economic success of the city.

15. A crucial concern regarding physical and functional interventions in historic cities is to enhance the quality of life by improving their living, working and recreational conditions, and adapting uses without compromising existing values associated with the character and significance of the historic urban fabric and form. Consequently, improving technical standards and rehabilitation of the historic environment must be based upon a proper inventory and an assessment of its values, as well as on the principles of appropriate maintenance and reversibility. Any additions should also conform to the existing character of the area and be of adequate quality.

16. The future of historic urban landscapes calls for mutual understanding between citizens, decision-makers, conservationists, ecologists, urban planners, property owners, developers, investors, architects and other stakeholders, who should be working together to preserve the urban heritage while considering modernization and development in a culturally and historically sensitive manner, strengthening the identity and the social cohesion of the community.

17. The central challenge regarding the introduction of contemporary architecture in the historic urban landscape is to respect the values associated with its history and its visual integrity while at the same time responding to current development dynamics related to socio-economic changes and growth. Development of living historic cities requires a policy in city planning and management which takes conservation as a key reference point. The historic city's authenticity and integrity, which are determined by various factors, must not be compromised in this process.

*Here a new heading is needed: **BASIC KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING**, to make it clearer (what the Memorandum already says) that the basis must be a good documentation/ analysis/ understanding and presentation of the particular heritage values of the individual city. Texts should be cut out from other paragraphs and clarified and elaborated.*

It should include wordings on what sort of knowledge is needed (structural, overall knowledge, contexts, as well as more detailed, etc.), and the need for inventories, studies, and research.

It should stress that this is the starting-point and basis for management, the planning process, projects for new developments, Impact Assessment Studies, public participation, architectural competitions and so on, and that it is vital to have all this clear before proposals for large interventions come up.

GUIDELINES for CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

18. Decision-making regarding new interventions and contemporary architecture in an historic urban landscape demands careful consideration and a culturally and historically sensitive approach, as well as stakeholder consultations and expert know-how. Such a process should allow for adequate and proper actions in individual cases, examining the contexts and spatial relationships of old and new, while respecting the authenticity and integrity of the historic fabric.

19. Instead of considering the historic buildings merely as independent objects it is crucial for the development of urban conservation management to have a profound understanding of the history, culture and architecture of the city in its local context. Individual architectural commissions should always be based on the analysis of relevant typologies and morphologies.

20. The basis for the planning process and for all structural interventions is a comprehensive survey and analysis of the historic urban landscape aiming at the recognition of its significance and associated values. Another essential factor in the planning process is the recognition and formulation of opportunities and risks at an early stage, in order to guarantee a well-balanced development and design process. Investigating the long-term impacts and sustainability of any planned interventions is an integral part of the planning process, the aim of which is to protect the historic fabric, building stock and context.

21. As a general rule, new developments should favour modern design that is sympathetic to the historic context. The design should be of high quality, simple, and unpretentious, showing excellence without dominating, as well as allowing for appropriate forms of traditional continuity in architecture. In exceptional cases, reconstruction and the removal of inappropriate elements can be justified.

GUIDELINES for URBAN DEVELOPMENT

22. Architecture of quality in historic areas should give proper consideration to the given scales, particularly with reference to building volumes and heights. In the case of new development, it is important to minimize impacts on historic structures and elements, including significant land-use and other patterns and archaeological deposits. Interventions which are not sensitive to the cultural-historical context cannot be excused by claiming high-quality of design and execution.

23. Preservation of World Heritage sites involves the care for public space. In any new design particular attention should be paid to issues such as appropriate functionality, scale, materials, lighting, paving and other surfaces, vegetation, street furniture, and advertising just to name a few. Planning of urban infrastructures in heritage zones must consider all measures that are necessary to respect the historic fabric, building stock and context, as well as to mitigate the negative effects of traffic circulation and parking.

24. Townscapes, roofscapes, main visual axes, building plots and building types are integral parts of the identity of the historic urban landscape. In the case of infill buildings, the original building plots and historic roofscape should serve as a basic reference for planning and design.

25. Removing the core of a building and just keeping the façade (“façadism”) or totally clearing its interior structures does not constitute an appropriate means of intervention.

WAYS and MEANS

26. Management of developments in World Heritage historic urban landscapes encompasses precise knowledge of the territory and the elements of heritage significance identified through scientific methods of inventory, relevant laws, regulations, tools and procedures, which are formalized in a Management Plan, as required in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

27. The development and implementation of a Management Plan for World Heritage historic urban landscapes requires the participation of an interdisciplinary team of experts and professionals, whose core qualification should consist in conservation and historical expertise. The process should also include a timely initiation of comprehensive public consultations.

28. Quality management of the historic urban landscape aims at the permanent preservation of spatial, functional and design-related values. In this respect, special emphasis is to be placed on the contextualization of contemporary architecture in the historic urban landscape. Cultural and/or Visual Impact Assessment studies should accompany proposals for interventions.

29. Historic buildings and environments contribute significantly to the value of the city by branding its character. So can contemporary architecture in the right circumstances. Traditional and modern architecture can represent strong competitive assets for cities as they attract residents, visitors, and capital investments. For an historic city, which already has a strong identity, poorly located or designed new constructions can however have the opposite impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following considerations are directed to the World Heritage Committee and UNESCO:

- A) With regard to historic urban areas already inscribed on the World Heritage List, the concept of the historic urban landscape and the recommendations expressed in this Memorandum need to be taken into account when reviewing any potential or ascertained impact on the integrity of a World Heritage property. These principles should be enhanced by plans which delineate the specific measures to be taken for the protection of the historic urban landscape.
- B) When considering the inscription of new properties and sites of historic urban areas on the World Heritage List, it is recommended that the concept of the historic urban landscape be included in the nomination and evaluation process.
- C) UNESCO is invited to study the possibility for formulating a new recommendation to complement and update the existing ones on the subject of historic urban landscapes, with special reference to the contextualization of contemporary architecture which should be submitted, at a future date, to the General Conference of UNESCO.

This draft revision has been elaborated by an ICOMOS working-group with members from ICOMOS International Committee on Historic Towns and Villages and ICOMOS International Committee on Theory and Philosophy of Conservation. It has taken into account intensive discussions by e-mail and at a number of meetings. This includes specialist meetings in Jerusalem and St Petersburg and the Annual Meeting of ICOMOS International Committee on Historic Towns and Villages in Helsinki. Discussion groups with world-wide representation are being coordinated by Michal Firestone for the Historic Towns Committee, by Gustavo Araoz for US/ICOMOS, and a hispanophone group is being moderated by Pedro de Manuel who is also assisted by a multidisciplinary team of experts. Possible consequences of the Vienna Memorandum have increasingly become apparent and are being discussed by different world-wide groups of experts, National and International Committees of ICOMOS.

*Draft revision coordinated by Nils Ahlberg, Wilfried Lipp, Michael Petzet and Josef Štulc 7 July 2007
Reviewed by Jukka Jokilehto 15 July 2007*