

Charter for Socially Responsible Schools of Architecture

Adopted by the participants of the
Forum IV Conference
in Kazimierz Dolny October 1995.



Preamble

Sustainable development was highlighted by the Rio Conference (UNCED) in 1992 and a programme for action is set out in AGENDA 21. Exploitation of the biosphere and pressures on the global environment are universally recognised as endangering future generations. Action to reverse these trends leads to *the ecological imperative*.

The World Summit on Social Development (WSSD) in Copenhagen 1995 focused on profound social problems as poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. Societies were asked to respond more effectively to the needs of individuals, families and communities. This is *the social imperative*.

Habitat II, the UN Conference on Human Settlements, to take place in Istanbul in 1996, will contribute to raising world consciousness of the global shelter crisis and the need for a plan of action for settlements, urban renewal and city development within a socially just framework. This is *the human settlement imperative*.

It is commonly accepted that all attempts at regeneration will ultimately fail if people have no power to influence solutions. The freedom to participate at every level - local, regional, national and global - is a basic human right. This is *the democratic imperative*.

The responsibility of architects and planners

Whilst two thirds of the world's population lacks shelter or lives in sub-standard houses - a fact which is closely related to lack of educational, health and social facilities and to unemployment - development cannot take place. Housing is a key element in glaring environmental injustice, but not the only one. Public buildings, and urban and rural space, are also implicated.

Architects play a crucial role in promoting such values and need a professional capacity to address social, environmental and democratic issues. This is a question of responsibility both for the cultural heritage in the built environment, and for its development in accord with human needs

and expectations. Architects are not only ethically involved in the creation of a sustainable environment but this challenge involves the sustainability of their profession too.

Role of schools of architecture and planning

If architects are to face this challenge, then their formation in Schools of Architecture has to be based on a new definition of professional ethics. The teaching and learning processes need to enhance the necessary social, scientific, artistic and technological skills to cope with these crises. Students must be free to develop the knowledge, design skill and strategies for intervention needed to cope with ecological and environmental degradation within the context of social deprivation and a democratic deficit. They must be able to acquire the skill to act locally but think globally to ensure that their interventions contribute to both sustainability and justice.

To achieve these aims and to fulfil their basic mission, Schools of Architecture are urged to make every effort to subscribe to and implement the principles of action set out below.

Principles of action

1. Institutional commitment

Schools of Architecture should demonstrate real commitment to responsible architecture deriving from the ecological, social and democratic imperatives. Evidence of this commitment should be visible not only in their curricula, but in the democratic nature of their own management and internal government.

2. Ethics of responsibility

Schools of Architecture should promote among the teaching staff, the students and the public sustainable lifestyles and solidarity with deprived people. These should be regarded as both professional and individual responsibilities. This will also involve a redefinition of professional responsibility such that the primary duty is towards building users and their empowerment.

3. External relations

Schools of Architecture should develop their students' skills to orientate the profession, the local community, commissioning clients and building users towards ecologically sound, socially just and democratic processes and solutions. This involves training for local, national and international political action.

4. Interdisciplinarity

Schools of Architecture should encourage interdisciplinary and collaborative education and research targeted on responsible architecture, design and planning. They should seek to overcome interdisciplinary rivalries and competitive instincts and encourage co-operation between disciplines and departments. Such co-operation should be extended to national and international networks of research and design projects.

5. Creation and dissemination of knowledge

Schools of Architecture should give a high priority to developing the theoretical frameworks needed to understand the complex links between these issues, including the role of international capital. They should help in filling the gaps in literature available to students, practitioners and decision-makers, and, at the same time, make such knowledge available to the general public through didactic material, and the media .

6. Global issues

Schools of Architecture should help students to acquire a global perspective on all issues which affect design activity. These include: poverty, gender, ethnicity, exploitation of raw materials and labour in developing countries, and war including the continuing nuclear threat.

7. Continuing education programmes

Schools of Architecture should devise educational programmes on responsible architecture for architects in practice, planners, the media, enterprises and official institutions.

The Charter overleaf is inspired by "The University Charter for Sustainable Development", already adopted by more than 200 university vice-chancellors. The participants of the Kazimierz Dolny Seminar in October 1995 (organised by Polish and Swedish architects) decided to develop a "Charter for Socially Responsible Schools of Architecture". A draft was adopted in principle and an editorial group appointed to complete the Charter. Here it is. We, members of ARC•PEACE, present it at the UN conference Habitat II in Istanbul, June 1996.

All schools of architecture and planning of the world are expected to discuss this Charter, allow themselves to be inspired by it and hopefully adopt it as guidelines for their curriculum and education. If adopted, in any form, please inform us (Björn Klarqvist, associate professor, School of Architecture, Chalmers University of Technology, S-41296 Göteborg, Sweden. E-mail: klarq@arch.chalmers.se).

Social responsibility is an important issue for the development of our professions. We thus hope that this Charter will be well known among students, teachers and practicing architects. You are encouraged to distribute the Charter to your colleagues and friends by posting this card to them. If you need more copies you are free to duplicate the card.

ARC•PEACE is an international association among architects, designers and planners all over the world. We encourage all to contribute to better and just living conditions for everybody. ARC•PEACE is a Non-Governmental Organisation in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.