

THE CHARTER OF MACHU PICHU,

TESTIMONY TO THE ADVOCACY AND PURSUIT OF ENLIGHTENED PRINCIPLES OF PLANNING AND DESIGN IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND PRACTICE.

by Silvia Sterental



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IN THE CONGRESS held in 1981 in Warsaw by the International Union of Architects (UIA), the Machu Picchu document was made part of the basic theme of the Congress. In 1978, when the 13th World Congress was held in Mexico City, the authors of the Charter were awarded the Jean Tschumi Prize in recognition of their interest in the manifestation of their ideas.

In December of 1977, forty-four years after the CIAM issued its historic document on the 'Functional City', a group of architects, educators, and planners travelled from several countries to meet in Lima and Cuzco, Peru, convened by the *Universidad Nacional Federico Villarreal*. Architect Manuel Ungaro Zevallos and his colleagues at this university considered that the document, the Charter of Athens, which had served as a guide in the development of contemporary architecture and urban planning, had to be updated. Hence, an international conference dedicated

to revising and reconsidering the principles expounded in this Charter was sponsored by the institution.

After a full week of lively debate and conferences organized by and for the Peruvian architectural students, the group travelled to the ancient ruins of Machu Picchu, where they offered formulations for the approach to contemporary architectural problems that were unknown in 1933. The resulting document is the Charter of Machu Picchu.

The objectives of the Charter are mainly to project some sane notions for the design of the man-made environment that might maintain some validity for the next few decades. Even though most of the ninety-five points of the Athens Charter were still reaffirmed as valid, its division into four major categories (habitation, leisure, work and traffic) was considered too simplified to actually cover the full range of human functions and environmental concerns. The essential and updated features

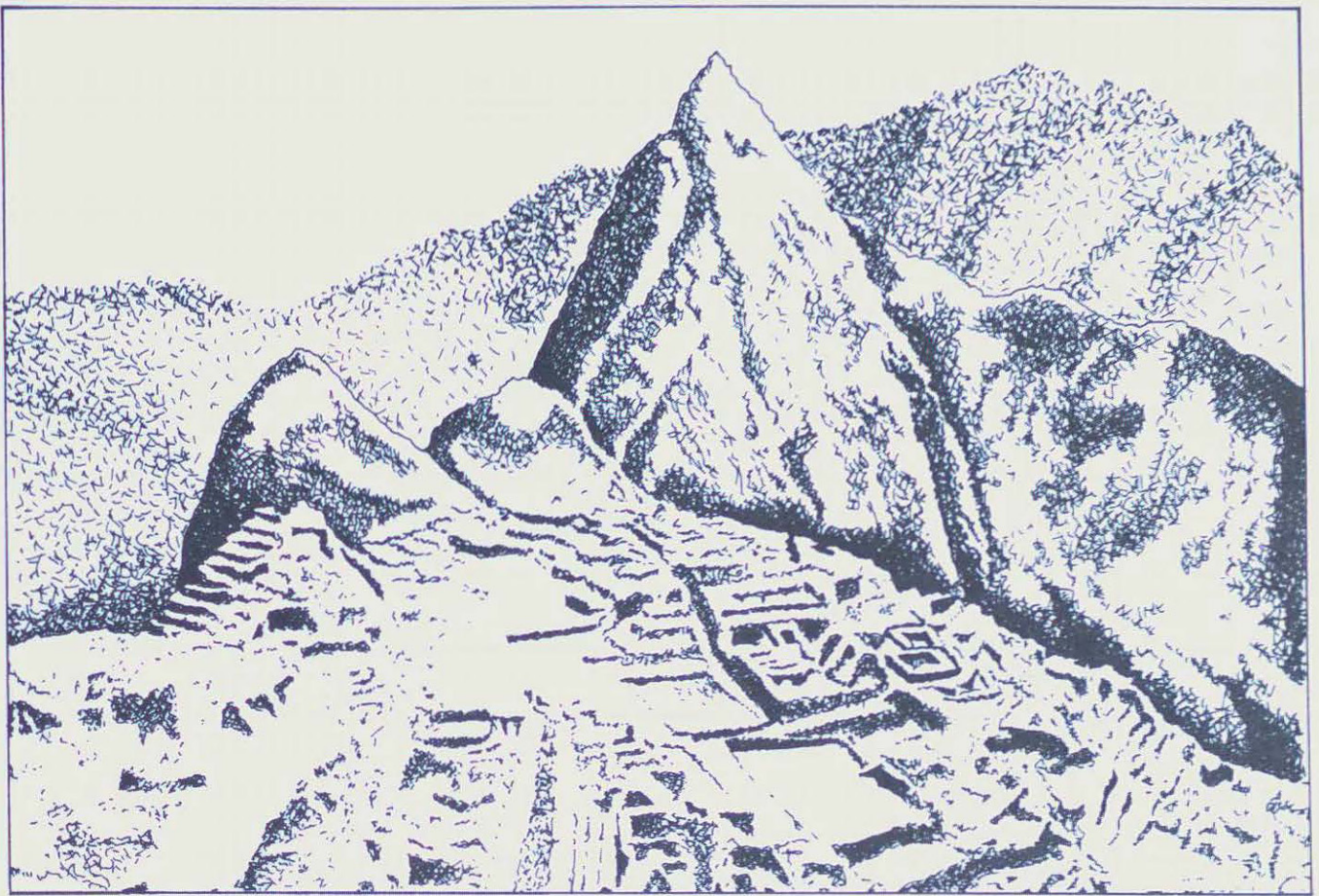
suggested in the Peruvian document are the following:

City and Region: Due to the explosive increase in urbanization all over the world, the Charter calls for a more effective use of human and natural resources. "Planning must reflect...the essential dynamic unity between the city and its surrounding regions and establish functional relationships between neighbourhoods, districts, and other elements in the urban structure."

Urban Growth: The world population has doubled since the Charter of Athens, with consequent impact on ecology, energy resources, food supply, and available land.

Housing: "Housing must no longer be regarded merely as a utilitarian commodity, but as a powerful tool for fostering social development."

Urban Transport: The new Charter advocates public transportation as "a basic element of urban development,



A PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE RUINS OF MACHU PICHU, CUZCO-PERU

planning, and growth." This concept antagonizes the Athens Charter approach to individual transport as the definitive solution.

Pollution: The worsening contamination of our environment "is a direct consequence of unplanned, explosive urbanization and excessive exploitation of the earth's natural resources."

Preservation: It is extremely important to "conserve, restore and recycle existing historic areas, and architectural monuments are to be integrated with the process of urban development in order to assure their proper financial support and continued viability."

Technology: For the last forty-seven years the world has undergone extreme technological development which affected cities as well as their architecture and urbanism. "...architecture should be a process of creating spaces and environments capable of functioning under natural

conditions. It should be clearly understood that technology is a means and not an end."

Urban and Architectural Design: While in 1933 the effort was directed toward dividing the city and its architectural artifacts into their component parts, now "the objective must be to integrate these components which, having lost their independence and inter-relationships, also have lost their vitality and significance.... The new concept of urbanization seeks a continuity of the built environment, implying that each building is no longer an isolated object, but an element of the continuum, requiring a dialogue with the other elements to complete its own image."

The Charter of Machu Picchu insists on a more organic growth of human settlements, a continuity of the built environment which reflects essential dynamic unity between all elements of the urban structure. Therefore, it rejects the high-rise housing set in open areas - as in the 'Ville Radieuse'

- and proposes a shift from the dominant technological approach that characterized the Charter of Athens.

The Peruvian document stresses the importance of citizen participation, historic continuity, conservation of natural resources, and the adaptation of the man-made environment to the natural ecology. In its present form, it is a sketchy outline of what could be a detailed agenda adapted to more specific contexts in the fields of architecture, planning, and urban growth.

The Charter has been discussed and referred to in nearly all of the working sessions of the UIA Congresses, therefore its effects as a stimulus for the review of the professional objectives and public debate is starting to be observed.

As students of architecture, we should evaluate these principles, considering that the role of the architect in the future will depend on the formulation of our own ideals. □