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Editorial

From Revitalization to Sustainability

The world is grappling with climatic, environmental, social, and civilizational crises. Conserving natural sources, ecosystems, and cultural legacy as a major cornerstone of sustainable development reinforces natural identity and cultural values and plays a key role in the management of nonrenewable resources. The conservation covers a wide range of elements such as mountains, forests, valleys, rivers, farms, historical monuments, archeological sites, places of common interest and contemporary heritage, industrial heritage, urban greenery areas, and cultural landscapes. These elements, as natural and cultural assets of societies, not only preserve their cultural-historical identity but also function as leverage in sustainability development and serve common interests.

The necessity of conservancy, restoration, and revival of places is well established. The major concern is why the principles of conservation and revival of historical places are confined to themselves and have not been generalized to modern developments. The shortened lifespan of new buildings, early expiration of new buildings, and excessive destruction of old and new buildings have inflicted a burden on the environment. The destruction of buildings means the loss of resources and saved energies, resumption of the cycle of resource extraction, and energy consumption, which results in more destruction. This means today's world needs maintenance, conservation, and restoration of historical heritage and man-made and natural environments more than ever. It also highlights reconsidering current approaches in architecture, house construction, and urban planning. It is time to have a guideline for planning and making policies for sustainable development in different areas such as architecture, urban planning, environmental planning, land use planning, and housing based on the principles of conservation, restoration, and revitalization in global conventions and national and international charters. Such principles highlight the respect for the environment, natural settings, and cultural and social contexts in which they have been shaped. They also encourage the least intervention and maximum efficiency. However, the principles require reversibility and flexibility of plans and place importance on sustainability, integrity, and comprehensiveness. They also underscore originality, simplicity, readability, and the use of vernacular materials and techniques compatible with the environment, respecting the structures and lived experiences of the past for the use of the present and future generations. Additionally, they stress the continuity and management of changes and protect public interests. With the implementation of such principles, it is likely to strike a stable balance between the needs of the present and future generations, preventing the loss of resources and hoping for the preservation of cultural identity, environment, and sustainable development.

It is expected the officials who are in charge of the protection of cultural and natural heritage consider this issue not just as a civil responsibility but as a strategic necessity and adopt suitable policies to protect cultural and natural heritage. To address this issue, several measures can be taken, for instance, establishing laws and regulations, allocating sufficient budgets for the restoration and maintenance of places and contemporary historical landscapes, considering assets with low efficiency and performance, raising the awareness of people, and encouraging them to participate in the protection of the heritage and natural as well as man-made environments.

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