



# WARSAW RECOMMENDATION ON RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

RECOMMANDATION DE VARSOVIE SUR LE  
RELEVEMENT ET LA RECONSTRUCTION  
DU PATRIMOINE CULTUREL

REKOMENDACJA WARSZAWSKA  
W SPRAWIE ODBUDOWY I REKONSTRUKCJI  
DZIEDZICTWA KULTUROWEGO



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RECONSTRUCTION  
THE ROYAL CASTLE / WARSAW / POLAND 6-8<sup>th</sup> MAY 2018

## WARSAW RECOMMENDATION ON RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

1. We, the 200 participants from more than 30 countries, representing different regions of the world, including institutions from Poland, the Global Alliance for Urban Crises, ICOMOS, ICCROM, the World Bank, UNISDR and UNESCO, gathered at the Royal Castle of Warsaw, on the occasion of the International Conference on Reconstruction “The Challenges of World Heritage Recovery” (6-8 May 2018), wish to express our gratitude and acknowledge the generous hospitality and intellectual leadership of the Polish authorities and of the City of Warsaw for providing a forum to reflect on the principles that should govern the recovery and reconstruction of World Heritage properties following armed conflict or disasters caused by natural hazards, as requested by the World Heritage Committee in its Decision 41 COM 7, adopted in Krakow in July 2017.
2. Recognizing the City of Warsaw, which provided the venue for the Conference, as being the most relevant and inspiring context to our deliberations, considering the tragedy of deliberate destruction it has suffered during World War II and the subsequent exemplary reconstruction of its historic centre, evidence of the strength of the spirit and determination of the Polish people to recover their cultural identity, as recognized through the inscription of the “Historic Centre of Warsaw” on the World Heritage List in 1980 and the inclusion of the “Archive of Warsaw Reconstruction Office” (BOS Archive) on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2011.

3. Being deeply concerned by the growing impact of armed conflicts and disasters on important cultural and natural heritage places, including World Heritage properties, which in recent years have resulted in their widespread destruction on a scale similar to that of World War II, notably within historic urban areas and archaeological sites.
4. Condemning in the strongest terms, the numerous intentional attacks on cultural properties and in general the perpetration of all policies of ‘cultural cleansing’ aimed at erasing diversity, inciting sectarian violence and preventing the affected population from realizing their human rights, including cultural rights.
5. Being cognizant of the relevant international legal instruments and established doctrine in the field of cultural heritage and, within the context of the World Heritage Convention<sup>1</sup>, of the need to ensure that any reconstruction be undertaken only in exceptional circumstances, while protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the concerned properties and meeting the test of authenticity and conditions of integrity.
6. Recognizing, at the same time, the legitimate aspiration of concerned communities to overcome the trauma of conflicts, war and disasters by reconstructing as soon as possible their cities and villages – and particularly their affected cultural heritage – as a means to reaffirm their identity, restore their dignity and lay the conditions for a sustainable social and economic recovery.
7. Considering, moreover, that the recovery of the cultural heritage lost or damaged as a result of armed conflict offers unique opportunities, notably within the context of stabilization processes, to foster mutual recognition, promote dialogue and lay the ground for reconciliation among all components of society, particularly in areas characterized by a strong cultural diversity and/or hosting important numbers of refugees and/or internally displaced people, which will lead to new approaches to recovery and reconstruction in the future.

---

<sup>1</sup> The English and French versions of the Convention are available on the website: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/> (8.08.2018).

8. Appreciating as well, through recent experiences of heritage recovery in countries affected by armed conflict and disasters, the review of numerous past case studies and the outcomes of several meetings and workshops on the topic held in many parts of the world, how closely connected cultural heritage is with humanitarian, security and peacebuilding concerns and why it should not be considered in isolation from other broader social, economic and environmental issues in the context of post-conflict or post-disaster recovery and reconstruction policies and plans.
9. Mindful of Art. 5 of the World Heritage Convention, calling on States Parties “to adopt a general policy, which aims to give cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community”, and of the 2015 Policy on the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective in the Processes of the World Heritage Convention<sup>2</sup>, are convinced that each generation has the right to contribute to human legacy and to the wellbeing of present and future generations, including through adaptation to natural and historic processes of change and transformation.
10. Conscious also of the new possibilities offered by evolving technologies, in particular for very high-definition 3D digital recording and reproduction of material attributes of cultural heritage properties, and of the ethical challenges that this poses in relation to their possible reconstruction.
11. Considering that further guidance is required to assist States Parties, site managers, practitioners and communities through the multi-faceted challenges that reconstruction brings, with due consideration given to its social and economic context, the short- and long-term needs of properties, and the notion of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

---

<sup>2</sup> The English and French versions of the document are available on the website: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabledevelopment/> (8.08.2018).

To this end, and based on the discussions at the Conference, **we propose the following non-exhaustive set of principles:**

## TERMINOLOGY

In post conflict and post disaster situations, the overall goal is the recovery of the society. This aims at the consolidation of peace and security and at restoring or improving the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets, systems and activities of an affected community or society, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and “build back better”. An essential part of this process is the recovery of a place’s heritage, which may include reconstruction.

The term “reconstruction”, in the World Heritage context, is understood as a technical process for the restitution of destroyed or severely damaged physical assets and infrastructure following an armed conflict or a disaster. It is important to stress, in this regard, that such reconstruction of physical assets must give due consideration to their associated intangible practices, beliefs and traditional knowledge which are essential for sustaining cultural values among local communities.

## VALUES

Prior to taking any decision on a proposal for recovery and reconstruction of a heritage place, it is essential to understand the values, which justified its inscription on the World Heritage List and the related attributes. It is equally essential, at the same time, to understand – and integrate in the reconstruction process – the values identified in the heritage property by local communities, including new values resulting from the traumatic events associated with the destruction, together with the corresponding physical attributes and related intangible cultural practices and traditional knowledge. Assessment of authenticity should take account of the recognized values of the property in accordance with the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity<sup>3</sup>, emphasizing both material and other aspects.

---

<sup>3</sup> The Nara Document is a part of Operational Guidelines – Annex 4: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/> (8.08.2018).

## CONSERVATION DOCTRINE

Decisions on recovery and reconstruction should take into consideration conservation doctrine that aims to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of properties. Since the 1990s, there has been a doctrinal shift towards intangible dimensions as a result of the introduction of the concept of cultural landscapes and the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity. The emergence of these intangible associations needs to be consolidated within existing conservation doctrine.

## COMMUNITIES

Decisions on recovery and reconstruction should follow people-centred approaches and fully engage local communities and, where appropriate, indigenous peoples, as well as other relevant stakeholders. Recovery and reconstruction should enable people to connect to their heritage, identity and history. In reconstructing heritage, consideration should be given to social justice and property titles and a rights-based approach should be applied, which would ensure full participation in cultural life, freedom of expression and access to cultural heritage for all individuals and groups, including refugees and internally displaced people, where relevant. In this regard, it is important to identify cultural rights and their holders in every reconstruction programme, and to ensure their prior and informed consent to key decisions, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention<sup>4</sup> and the 2015 Policy on the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective in the Processes of the World Heritage Convention.

---

<sup>4</sup> The English and French versions of the document are available on the website: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/> (8.08.2018).

## ALLOWING TIME FOR REFLECTION

While recognizing people's need to return at the earliest opportunity, sufficient time should be allowed for reflection before decisions are made within a gradual and additive approach, taking into consideration the evolving nature of values post-trauma, the challenges of ensuring a fully inclusive and participatory process of consultation and the complex interrelations between heritage and other societal needs in the context of post-conflict and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction.

## RESILIENCE, CAPACITIES AND SUSTAINABILITY

Building resilience is essential to address destruction and disasters. In reconstructing heritage following an armed conflict or a disaster, it is critical to reduce existing structural and social vulnerabilities, including by building back better, and to improve quality of life, while retaining cultural values as much as possible. It is also essential to invest in long term capacity building in disaster risk management and conservation techniques, notably for craftspeople, in order to provide for a sustainable future of the heritage places.

## MEMORY AND RECONCILIATION

Memorialization of the destruction should be considered for communities and stakeholders; this could be done through site interpretation or presentation, keeping selected remains of destruction for remembrance, education and tourist information, as appropriate. In the context of post-conflict recovery and reconstruction, such places should integrate as much as possible a shared narrative of the traumatic events that led to the destruction, reflecting the views of all components of the society, so as to foster mutual recognition and social cohesion, and establish conditions for reconciliation.

## DOCUMENTATION

Proper documentation and inventories, including documentation of building methods, is key for a successful reconstruction of cultural heritage and for ensuring that it protects the Outstanding Universal Value and meets the test of authenticity and conditions of integrity. Documentation and its regular updating, making the most of the possibilities offered by new



technologies, are essential features of all site management so that in the event of disaster, the records are available as a basis for response post-trauma. It is important also to document activities during and after reconstruction. This process should not limit itself to the physical aspects of buildings, sites and collections, but capture as well the social and economic relations between these and the associated communities. In cases where no technical documentation is available, traditional knowledge and communal memories associated with the site, as appropriate, could also be used to guide reconstruction. It is important also to document the decision-making process during reconstruction, for future record.

## GOVERNANCE

The key to a successful reconstruction of cultural heritage is the establishment of a strong governance that allows for a fully participatory process, is based on a comprehensive analysis of the context and on a clear operational strategy, including mechanisms for the coordination of national and international actors, and is supported by an effective public communication policy. In this process, it is essential that concern for cultural heritage is integrated in policies and plans of other sectors involved in the recovery and reconstruction effort, including housing, infrastructure, economic development, education and communication, amongst others, through the appropriate inter-institutional coordination mechanisms.

## PLANNING

It is critical to develop heritage recovery and reconstruction projects within the larger urban planning context, giving consideration both to physical attributes and to the web of relations and uses with which they are associated. There are a variety of planning tools available for the development of special plans and projects for the recovery and reconstruction of heritage. Particularly useful, in the urban context, is the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL)<sup>5</sup> approach. Authorities should use such tools to develop guidance for local owners on matters such as materials, typologies and colours, in order to set out an overall approach to recovery and reconstruction of

---

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape in English and French version is available on the website: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/hul> (8.08.2018).



cultural heritage, while allowing for flexibility in the process. Planning strategies for heritage reconstruction should also give consideration to investing as a priority in the rehabilitation of public open spaces, as anchors around which communities can be engaged in decisions about the future of their cities. It is also important that any planning framework should pay full attention to issues of ownership and legislation.

## **EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING**

One important way to prevent the destruction of cultural heritage and support its recovery post-conflict and disaster is to promote the knowledge and appreciation of – and respect for – the diversity of cultures and heritage, notably through educational programmes at all levels and awareness raising initiatives.

## **WE ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **To the World Heritage Committee**

Develop guidance for reconstruction and recovery at World Heritage sites, including Resource Manuals, further development of case studies and best practice examples, taking into account the principles listed above.

### **To the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention**

Use the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) and integrated management approaches to achieve a holistic approach to reconstruction for post disaster recovery.

### **To the Advisory Bodies**

Consider the clarification of conservation doctrine as it applies to reconstruction by reviewing the substantial body of charters, declarations and recommendations, further development of case studies as well as by providing specific advice to States Parties, as necessary.

### **To UNESCO, the World Bank, and other UN and International Bodies**

Reaffirm that cultural and natural heritage, including World Heritage, is an essential and integral part of recovery and the growth of sustainable communities towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and ensure accordingly the necessary international coordination mechanisms.

*Warsaw, 8 May 2018*