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Conference Report

Continuity and Authenticity – On the Cultural Significance of Rebuilt Monuments /
Kontinuität und Authentizität – Zum Denkmalwert von Wiederaufbauten

Mainz, 17.04.2018–18.04.2018

Generaldirektion Kulturelles Erbe Rheinland-Pfalz, in cooperation with ICOMOS
Germany

The ShUM cities of Speyer, Worms, and Mainz formed a centre of Jewish life of outstanding significance for the European Middle Ages. Basic contributions towards the cultural profile of Ashkenazi Judaism came from here. Until today, a unique set of monuments and sites has been preserved, surviving historical ruptures and acts of destruction. Religious tradition, too, has maintained continuity. The conference was aimed at discussing the authenticity of the monuments in view of the UNESCO World Heritage Nomination for the 'ShUM Cities'. In particular, those aspects of authenticity had to be explored which relate to material objects that have a history full of changes and disruptions like the synagogue of Worms. More generally, it was discussed in

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Kernarbeitszeiten
09.00-12.00 Uhr
14.00-15.30 Uhr
Fr.: 09.00-13.00 Uhr

Verkehrsanbindung
Ab Hbf. Mainz Buslinie 61/62 oder
Straßenbahn Linie 51/52 jeweils
Hst. Münsterplatz oder Schillerplatz

Parkmöglichkeiten
Parkhaus Proviantmagazin,
öffentliche Parkplätze
Schillerstr.



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what ways intangible and tangible items of cultural heritage can be conceived of as authentic.

Following the opening addresses by the organizers and by Secretary of State Barbaro, the first session laid out the essential information on the World Heritage nomination and on the monuments and sites of the ShUM cities.

STEFANIE HAHN (Mainz) presented the ShUM cities and their monuments, the nomination process and the criteria for justifying the World Heritage nomination. She underlined the crucial importance of the condition of authenticity in terms of the nomination.

THOMAS METZ (Mainz) and ROSWITHA KAISER (Mainz) highlighted the general and conservationist legal frameworks for protecting World Heritage sites. They focused in particular on how the heritage is treated and on the challenges towards their preservation and public presentation. Thomas Metz presented past experiences and solutions developed by the *Generaldirektion Kulturelles Erbe* in dealing with UNESCO World Heritage sites and the challenges they present, by referring to the example of the 'Imperial Baths' (*Kaiserthermen*) of Trier. Roswitha Kaiser discussed the particular problems and challenges of conservation in connection with the ShUM cities.

MATTHIAS UNTERMANN (Heidelberg) presented the history of the synagogue building in Worms and of its research, considering that an outstanding universal value had already been attributed to this building in the past. Following a survey of propositions relating to the criteria of 'outstanding universal value' (OUV), he focused on the question of authenticity. Untermann referred to the constant changes of this concept and suggested that it should be discussed anew in view of the synagogue of Worms. At the same time, he argued that the synagogue also meets current standards of authenticity: The foundations are genuine; the original components and the



reconstructed ones are distinguished by means of material and surface; the rebuilding of the ruin is carefully and accountably documented. Untermann concluded that the destruction during the Shoah was not glossed over but legibly included, and argued that therefore, the act rebuilding should be considered as an element of authenticity in this monument.

During the ensuing discussion, conference participants described the rebuilding of Worms Synagogue as a very lucky chance: On the one hand, it established a continuity with previous centuries; on the other, the monuments could thus be preserved as markers of the historical site until today. In a way, rebuilding these monuments made them even more valuable.

A field trip enabled participants to visit the monuments in Worms. Following a welcome by MICHAEL KISSEL (Worms) and ANNA KISCHNER (Mainz), MATTHIAS UNTERMANN (Heidelberg) guided the tour of the synagogue. His explanations expanded on his previous paper and highlighted details concerning the building history, such as the visible lines of division and the changes made as part of the rebuilding. The Old Jewish Cemetery of Worms, known as 'Holy Sands' (*Heiliger Sand*), was also visited, following a short introduction by SUSANNE URBAN (SchUM-Städte e.V.).

The first day was closed by an evening lecture on 'Continuity and Ruptures – Authenticity in a World Heritage Context', by TINO MAGER (Delft). Mager presented historical and current tendencies in dealing with this concept by referring to the example of the Thüngen Fort/Dräi Eichelen site in Luxembourg and the New Museum in Berlin. This gave him occasion to discuss the meaning of authenticity in World Heritage nomination procedures. In particular, he referred to the different ways in which the concept is adopted in different cultural surroundings – for example, regarding those wooden temples in Japan that constantly need to be deconstructed and rebuilt and where this process is part of the monuments' character. Mager



emphasized that the global application of a single maxim would bear risks of discrimination. In view of current political events and natural disasters, instances of post-traumatic reconstruction are appreciated as part of the World Heritage. In these cases it is important to focus on the initiators and agents as well as on their motivation.

The first panel of the second conference day was also devoted to the changing interpretation of the authenticity concept. ALEXANDER STUMM (Berlin) and MICHAEL JANSEN (Aachen/Muscat) presented the historical development from different points of view. Stumm argued that authenticity should be understood as resulting from discourses. He began his survey by presenting different professional approaches: Historical reconstruction (as in Carcassonne) with Viollet-le-Duc; archaeological reconstruction according to John Ruskin's conception of authenticity; reconstruction by interpretation, defined by a dialectics of contrast and continuity; simulating reconstruction as a means to reconstruct according to the original. Stumm concluded by placing the discourse of authenticity, as part of the discourse of monument values, in the broader context of 'disputed values' (Dolff-Bonekämper) and of instruments of power (according to Foucault). He called for investigating the ways in which the production of discourse is related to the mechanisms and institutions of power.

JANSEN placed the current considerations on the meaning of authenticity in a broader political frame, referring *inter alia* to the wars of the last decades. The destruction of the Buddhas of the Bamiyan valley was one of the occasions for entering in the debate over 'post-trauma reconstruction'. Part of this discussion concerns the parameters of reconstruction (documentation, intangible values attached, involvement of the local population). The debate also shows, however, that UNESCO itself has a major issue with reconstruction. Dealing with all these questions and discussing them in light of case studies is the aim of the 'ICOMOS Global Case Study Project on Reconstruction'.



In the ensuing discussion, some participants suggested that it would be worthwhile reflecting on why the concept of authenticity was changing. If authenticity can constantly be redefined, then new deliberations may be useful. Moreover, past reconstructions showed a tendency to become 'real'. A historical survey would show that there is a broad range of reconstructions that are now regarded as part of the heritage and whose authenticity is beyond doubt. Others pointed out that new technical means of reproduction make it all the more necessary to arrive at a precise definition of the term. The value of cultural heritage as witness is endangered, since it cannot be endlessly extended on reconstructions. Participants also underlined the importance of local populations backing a reconstruction. In cases when intangible values are very strong, this can be extremely helpful for reconstruction. At stake is the survival of intangible values following the destruction of tangible heritage. In the case of the synagogue of Worms a 'post-traumatic' situation could not be denied.

The third section of the conference focused on the connections between loss, continuity, and authenticity. The paper by NICOLAS DETRY (Lyon) highlighted how people deal with losses and *lacunae*, basing his investigation on the Dolf-Bonekämper's parameters, 'place', 'substance', and 'form'. He distinguished between cultural heritage as 'subject' or 'hostage' in armed conflict, and 'martyred heritage', explicitly targeted for destruction. Detry referred to the history of reconstruction after the Second World War, when Cesare Brandi, one of the founders of the *Istituto di Restauro*, reflected on *lacunae*. He pointed out the various dimensions (including ethical or moral ones) and problems (such as the time and money needed for replacing architecture in original techniques and materials), referring to examples such as the Library of Sarajevo and the Glyptothek in Munich.

Referring to the *Hurva* Synagogue in Jerusalem and the Great Synagogue in Vilnius, JON SELIGMAN (Jerusalem) presented concrete case studies of dealing with *lacunae*. Both synagogues functioned as the respective main synagogues of cities



whose historical centres are inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites. Seligman discussed their building history and the archival records used towards their reconstruction. For Vilnius there is, inter alia, a photo collection and documentary images by Marc Chagall. However, there is as yet no reconstruction, and various ideas have been proposed for making the synagogue visible in the cityscape. In the case of the *Hurva* Synagogue, a decision was reached in 2000 to rebuild the synaogue in its original nineteenth-century style. Reconstruction was aided by photographs, plans, and a model of 1922. The building today shows the different layers; old walls were preserved, new parts painted in a reticent way reminiscent of the old paintings. In Vilnius, meanwhile, there is no more than a plaque to inform of the previous existence of a synagogue. Thus, Seligman concluded, the existence of *lacunae* can distort the historical image, and a contemporary visitor of Vilnius will not be aware of the fact that Jews once lived here in great numbers.

JULIA RÖTTJER (Darmstadt) finally asked: 'Broken continuity: Whose World Heritage Site is It?' Referring to World Heritage sites in Poland, Röttjer discussed which agents and groups are using world heritage sites, who claims authoritative interpretation, and what problems arise in connection with tourism. In light of the idea of cultural heritage one should ask how a Jewish quarter without a local Jewish population ought to be understood. She discussed some of the monuments in the Kasimierz district of Kraków in light of their national context of interpretation, and emphasized the need to develop a sophisticated narrative about the history of the place and its significance for today.

The closing round-table discussion, chaired by STEFANIE HAHN (Mainz) and MARTIN BREDENBECK (Köln), brought together the various perspectives on the UNESCO World Heritage nomination for the ShUM cities and on the question of authenticity in the case of the Old Synagogue of Worms. PETER WALDMANN (Mainz) pointed out the various chances inherent in this project, offering a view of the many facets of Jewish life and the possibility of presenting Jewish history beyond the



Shoah. The different perspectives on the objects themselves (as places of religious service and parts of the cultural heritage) can be used to enrich the discussion. If remembrance is largely characterized by conservation, the nature of Judaism as a living spiritual phenomenon should not be neglected. This is a perspective that can only be provided by the Jewish community, which should therefore be included in all of the process. MICHAEL TURNER (Jerusalem) underlined the relevance of values for the question of authenticity in connection with the synagogue of Worms. Authenticity depends on the values, which must be discussed and clearly defined: 'Authenticity is to authenticate the value.' GABI DOLFF-BONEKÄMPER (Berlin) reminded the audience that the circumstances of loss, including their moral dimensions, are relevant. Loss should be fully elucidated, as it is experienced and coped with in various ways. Moralizing loss is a process that is changing over time, with various attributions. Options for recompensation and return and the behaviour of agents also change, revealing reconstruction as a historical process. These considerations were taken up by MICHAEL JANSEN (Muscat), who addressed the issue whether the intentions behind reconstructing an object are relevant. He reminded the panel of the fact that at the time when the World Heritage Convention was drawn up this question was not yet asked. Today, by contrast, the destruction of cultural heritage objects is almost commonplace and it would certainly make sense to test the flexibility of the concept. There is a need of scientific discussion, and that discussion has already begun.

Asked about tangible results of the conference and their impact on the nomination process, MATTHIAS UNTERMANN (Heidelberg) concluded that it had brought up helpful points of reference that deserved further thought. For example, one could ask whether rebuilding the synagogue of Worms was the reconstruction of a medieval monument or a 'constituting' act of reconstruction. Also, one could ask whether the cultural heritage was essentially defined by its continuity or by its medieval substance. It seemed plausible to him that both could be maintained. JÖRG HASPEL (Berlin) also underlined the importance of identifying the values and attributes and how they were



authenticated by the present monument. The fact that the ruin was carefully secured after 1945 and rebuilt by 1961 could be taken as strong evidence for continuity, thus revealing a value of universal relevance. Authenticity is not only in the material substance but in the values associated with it.

A summary of the conference was offered by MARTIN BREDENBECK (Köln), who concluded that the conference and its results were in effect one more step on the way towards World Heritage status. The discussion had maintained a good balance between general considerations and questions of detail from a local perspective. It had shown that authenticity was an auxiliary concept, likely to be shaped by socio-historical circumstances. Clear distinctions between its various meanings were helpful, and authenticity should not be discussed in isolation. The discussion, in Bredenbeck's eyes, is by no means at an end.

Dr. Christoph Cluse, Stefanie Fuchs, Nadine Hoffmann