

## WHAT AUTHENTICITY OF RECONSTRUCTION ?

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**Destruction of cities and monuments has always been part of the history of mankind**, but the twentieth century was characterized by conflicts that gave way to destruction of an unprecedented scale. These acts of mass destruction, including destruction of cultural heritage, were carried out to weaken the very essence of the attacked nations, by aiming to wipe out the « readable » and material elements of their history and heritage.

**More recently, deliberate destruction of World Heritage sites was taken one step further.** Destructions are carried out by terrorist groups as a political weapon aiming at driving conflict into the hearts of peaceful nations, and fragmenting peoples and societies.

The immediate social responses to such destruction is to reconstruct « identically » as a remedy for treating the trauma. Therefore, the issue of reconstruction in a post-conflict society today, takes on a dimension of a new scope concerned with « absorbing » the trauma experienced by affected peoples.

**Rebuilding « identically » : is this an option to consider ?** What meaning does it give to the authenticity of this reconstruction ? The idea of rebuilding is tempting and meets the need of people to take action and rise from the ruins of these fanatical and brutal attacks. However, is this notion shared by the majority and what meaning does it give to the term « authenticity » ?

**The practice of reconstruction is not new.** It was implemented by a number of nations after WW I and WW II. We also are aware of many significant examples dating from the 18th, the 19th and the early 20th century in Europe. These projects were an opportunity to question the principle of authenticity. Authenticity is a concept frequently revisited in the most famous examples of reconstruction.

Another option is **to stop time and monumentalize destruction**. This was implemented by nations after WW II, in particular in France and Japan. The authenticity takes, in that case, another dimension, in which we are forced to question the material and spiritual authenticity of the site in question.

Monument for peace, remembrance place, symbol of unity of identity, of peaceful coexistence, **the legitimacy of authenticity as a concept stands on specific choices made project by project.**

**When should we intervene and what approach should be adopted ?** To address this issue at an international level, **should we go to a Charter of Reconstruction and for what purpose ?**

In this socially and politically complex post-trauma context, ICOMOS - an NGO to all nations that sits outside the political realm - caters to diversity of world cultures and aim to offer its scientific and technical expertise for heritage when its participation is requested.

**ICOMOS can only intervene with the necessary fallback options** to guide decisions relating to heritage and deliver to its national and international partners a rigorous methodological approach.

No action can take place without **the engagement of civilian populations and local actors** in the broad sense of the word, and without taking into account all sensitive issues related to the nation concerned.

Two main themes should **guide our thinking and action plan :**

- ✓ Contribute to the definition and implementation of the preservation of memory sites, invest in the training of local actors to restore the sites and build places of memory.
- ✓ Participate alongside our national colleagues and contemporaries in a bid to coordinate international efforts and pool resources together from other nations.

To guide the choices of rebuilding, restoring or maintaining a site unchanged, a rigorous methodological approach is required.

**A ten points plan could serve as a basis for a practical response from ICOMOS.**

- 1. Participate internationally to the collection and organization of existing technical and scientific data on the monuments, make these data available** to national institutions in charge of heritage preservation
- 2. Contribute to an effective condition report of heritage sites and monuments** when possible without endangering the life of national and international experts
- 3. Provide a contribution to the current debate**, based on the documentary knowledge and understanding of the heritage site, on existing condition reports, on the analysis of the national and local expectations **in order to define which project is to be implemented for the restoration of the historical dimension of the site or monument.**
- 4. Participate in the development of the restoration program and project with a close dialogue with the institutions in charge of heritage**
- 5. Participate to awareness campaigns and fundraising actions towards state and private donors.**
- 6. Identify and strengthen local expertise and scientific and technical resources in order to conceive and implement projects using these skills .**
- 7. Share knowhow and expertise, implement training courses *in situ*, increase professionalism and qualification of local actors**
- 8. Host in our countries curators and researchers** and allow junior researchers and curators to develop their skills
- 9. Take into account economic and social development of local communities, fully involve local communities in the on site work and make sure that investments are equally and equitably allocated to monuments and the communities living conditions**
- 10. Collect and organize the documentation and data** that will show what studies and work was discussed and carried out on monuments, **make provisions for their widest and free production and dissemination**

More than a Charter, **a step by step approach should be adopted and promoted** to ensure a rigorous methodological approach of reconstruction, **to construct reconstruction.**

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