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# How to Be Authentic in the UNESCO World Heritage System: Copies, Replicas, Reconstructions, and Renovations in a Global Conservation Arena

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**Abstract** The institutional framework of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention of 1972 has become a major influence on heritage institutions, discourses, and aspirations world-wide. This essay explores how the World Heritage arena has dealt with copies, replicas, and reconstructions of built heritage, given that the authenticity of a site has been a prerequisite for inclusion in the prestigious World Heritage List from the outset. Initially, World Heritage decisions were meant to follow the strict emphasis on original material, fabric, and design outlined in the Venice Charter of 1964. For the reconstructed historical centre of Warsaw, however, compromises were being made early on, and the Nara Document on Authenticity adopted in 1994 significantly widened the scope of authenticity criteria. Subsequent World Heritage recommendations and decisions, however, have shown little consistency and oscillated between liberal interpretations of authenticity and Venice Charter purism. The essay argues that this is partly due to the vested national interests in the World Heritage arena, making many decisions dependent on political lobbying rather than principles. To a significant degree, authenticity continues to be underdetermined, and delegates act according to what feels authentic rather than on the basis of clear guidelines.

**Keywords** UNESCO World Heritage, authenticity, reconstructions, restorations, material continuity

*“L’emploi du mot ‘authenticité’, non assorti d’une spécification appropriée, est vide de toute signification valable. (The use of the word ‘authenticity’, when not properly specified, is devoid of any valuable meaning.)”*  
[Greek delegate in the 1998 session of the World Heritage Committee]<sup>1</sup>

The UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted in 1972 has experienced a spectacular rise. With 192 participating states, it enjoys almost universal ratification. The inscription of a site on the World Heritage List can work wonders for tourism, national and local prestige, development funds, and sometimes also conservation, so that nation states keep bringing in new candidates. As of 2016, the list comprised 1,052 sites in 165 countries. The convention is clearly the flagship activity of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), outshining the organisation’s official priority in education. The annual World Heritage Committee sessions have grown from small gatherings of a few dozen conservationists to global events, with 1,200 participants from more than 150 “States Parties” (i.e. treaty states) assembled at the 2014 meeting in Doha, Qatar. Visibility in the mass media and on the internet has grown sharply since the mid-1990s, and World Heritage university programmes and training centres are opening around the world. Even war has been waged over World Heritage: the 2008 listing of the ancient Khmer temple of Preah Vihear on disputed territory provoked several bloody clashes between Cambodian and Thai troops. Heritage sites have also been attacked precisely for being on the famous list: during the 2012 Committee sessions, Islamist rebels then in control of northern Mali started to destroy Sufi tomb and mosque entrances in Timbuktu, in express defiance of a Committee decision a few days earlier that had placed Timbuktu on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Paradoxically, the World Heritage title guaranteed that this iconoclastic act was rewarded with global media headlines.<sup>2</sup>

The World Heritage arena has become the single most important clearinghouse for and disseminator of conservation discourses, policies, and practices, particularly for cultural heritage. Given that originals and copies, reconstructions and authenticity have been central to conservation discourse from the outset, the World Heritage system also has had to come to terms with this aspect. In fact, it has kicked off a major conceptual revision of authenticity that has influenced heritage conservation policies the world over. My goal in this essay is to trace this development and to determine how much of it is due to substantive programmatic shifts, as opposed to the conceptual fuzziness and improvisation that characterise much of what happens in the World Heritage arena. My research in that arena since

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1 WHC-98/CONF.203/18, 128. Here and in the following, I cite UNESCO documents with their permanent identification code. These documents are all online and easily located when web-searching for that code, whereas their specific URLs may change over time.

2 Brumann 2016, 309–314.

2009 is based on an ethnographic approach which combines participant observation of World Heritage meetings, interviews with key players, and a study of the written and audio-visual record, an approach which, in a play on George Marcus,<sup>3</sup> I have termed “multilateral ethnography.”<sup>4</sup>

## The emergence and institutional framework of the World Heritage Convention

The World Heritage Convention was dreamed up in the 1960s, when economic growth and high modernity came to threaten the world’s cultural and natural wonders and UNESCO orchestrated a number of safeguarding campaigns, most famously for the Nubian monuments at Abu Simbel.<sup>5</sup> This helped to establish the idea of a global right to, and also responsibility for, humanity’s most important heritage, paralleling other attempts in international law to install “mankind” in its entirety as a rights-holder.<sup>6</sup> Since 1978, the World Heritage List has been progressively filled.

To have a site listed as World Heritage, a treaty state has to submit a nomination file to the secretariat of the convention, the World Heritage Centre, at UNESCO’s headquarters in Paris. This unit then forwards the file to the advisory body in charge, the International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) for cultural sites, or the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for natural sites, both of which are international NGOs. Through an evaluation based on expert opinions and an inspection of the site, ICOMOS and IUCN give their recommendation on whether, for meeting at least one of six cultural and four natural criteria, the candidate has the “outstanding universal value” or “OUV” stipulated by the convention for entry into the World Heritage List. The final decision, however, is taken by the World Heritage Committee, a body composed of 21 treaty states elected by the biannual General Assembly of all signatories for four-year terms. In its annual 11-day session in changing locations, this Committee also decides on all other matters concerning the convention, such as conservation issues of the already listed sites, the use of the (rather limited) World Heritage Fund, and general policies. World Heritage is largely a title, and the nominating nation state itself remains in charge of protecting the site, with little that the Committee can impose against its will. The symbolic weight of inclusion in the list, however, is significant enough to attract a huge global interest and a corresponding amount of political pressure and lobbying. Since 2010 in particular, the Committee and its nation-state representatives have asserted their independence against the

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3 Marcus 1995.

4 Brumann 2012.

5 Allais 2013; Betts 2015.

6 Wolfrum 2009; Rehling and Löhr 2014.

expert bodies, frequently overruling their recommendations in pursuit of more World Heritage listings and less stringent conservation demands.<sup>7</sup>

The World Heritage Convention deals only with sites, that is, clearly delimited tracts of land or sea and what is found on them; movable artefacts are excluded, and practices, performances, and skills are treated by the separate UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of 2003.<sup>8</sup> With sites, one could argue that there can be no copying in the strict sense, as even a perfect replica of what is on a given site cannot be in exactly the same place. A copy of the town of Hallstatt—part of a World Heritage cultural landscape—has been built in Guangdong Province, China<sup>9</sup>, but as it does not occupy the original location in Austria, there is no confusing it with the original. Yet when parts or the entirety of a lost building are reconstructed on the site proper with the ambition to create something similar to the original building, we have the quest for identity that defines the copy, “a thing made to be similar or identical to another.”<sup>10</sup> And just as with reconstruction, piecemeal restoration over the centuries too will raise the question whether the contemporary structure still *is* the original and not something else, not strictly a copy perhaps but a dubious hybrid whose relationship to the original is no more certain than that of Theseus’s ship famously described by Plutarch.<sup>11</sup> Originals, copies, restorations, and reconstructions all inhabit the same conceptual field of authenticity, physical identity, and physical continuity over time and it is this connected semantic domain—larger than just “copies” but inseparable from them—that I will explore in the following. I do so on the understanding that, beginning with the way atoms are structured, perfect physical continuity over time is impossible to achieve for any empirical entity. So not only are two things out in the world never completely alike, accepting the identity of a thing with its own earlier forms, too, requires a leap of faith that benignly ignores the differences, however minute and imperceptible they may be. “Originals,” “copies,” and how these are valued, therefore, are not givens but products of symbolic construction, and the societal standards for such construction change over time, as my case study vividly illustrates.

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7 Brumann 2011 and 2014b; Meskell 2014.

8 Smith and Akagawa 2009; Bortolotto 2010 and 2011b; Hafstein 2009.

9 Tatlow 2012.

10 *Oxford Living Dictionaries*, s.v. “copy.”

11 “The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same” (classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/theseus.html).

## Authenticity prior to 1994

The text of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, as adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in 1972, does not mention copies or authenticity in its substantive part,<sup>12</sup> but the first Operational Guidelines adopted in 1978—the “code of law” of the convention that, in contrast to the convention text itself, is regularly updated—already stipulated that “the property should meet the test of authenticity in design, materials, workmanship and setting.”<sup>13</sup> They further stated that “authenticity does not limit consideration to original form and structure but includes all subsequent modifications and additions over the course of time, which in themselves possess artistic or historical values [sic].”<sup>14</sup> This formulation clearly breathes the spirit of the Venice Charter of 1964,<sup>15</sup> the foundational document of modern conservation adopted by an international conference of conservationists that also decided the founding of ICOMOS. When discussing restoration and archaeological excavations (articles 9 to 15), the Charter emphasizes the conservation of original materials, including any layers superimposed onto the building by later historical periods. For archaeological sites, it prohibits reconstruction entirely except by anastylosis,<sup>16</sup> and for everything else, it allows it only in exceptional circumstances and when based on solid historical documentation and clearly distinguished from original materials. As Jones and Yarrow formulate it in a recent article, historic buildings are preserved here as “documents embodying evidence” rather than as aesthetic entities.<sup>17</sup>

I think we are so used to this ideal of minimum intervention as the mainstream of modern conservation, having it seen it implemented in countless monuments, that we tend to forget how new it actually is. When, at the end of the eighteenth century, an interest in the preservation of historic—mainly Medieval—buildings arose in Western Europe, this was often realised through what came to be called “restoration,” that is the realisation of the presumed intention of the original builders, both by completing unfinished parts and by removing post-Medieval additions. As one

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12 Curiously, it speaks of copies, authenticity, and truth in a technical postscript to the 38 articles: “Done in Paris, this twenty-third day of November 1972, in two authentic copies bearing the signature of the President of the seventeenth session of the General Conference and of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which shall be deposited in the archives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and certified true copies of which shall be delivered to all the States referred to in Articles 31 and 32 as well as to the United Nations” (emphases added).

13 Accessed February 16, 2017. [whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide78.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide78.pdf), 4.

14 Accessed February 16, 2017. [whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide78.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide78.pdf), 4.

15 Accessed February 16, 2017. [www.icomos.org/charters/venice\\_e.pdf](http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf).

16 “Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognizable and its use should be the least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form” (Article 15).

17 Jones and Yarrow 2013, 11.

of the leading figures, Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, put it in a widely-cited phrase, “restaurer un édifice, ce n’est pas l’entretenir, le réparer ou le refaire, c’est le rétablir dans un état complet qui peut n’avoir jamais existé à un moment donné (to restore an edifice is not to maintain it, repair or rebuild it, but to re-establish it in a complete state that may never have existed at a particular moment).”<sup>18</sup> He put this into practice in the reconstruction and completion of Notre Dame in Paris and the cathedral and fortification wall of Carcassonne in southern France. Opposition arose around the mid-nineteenth century, led by figures such as William Morris and John Ruskin. No less widely cited, Ruskin claimed that “it is [...] no question of expediency or feeling whether we shall preserve the buildings of past times or not. We have no right whatever to touch them. They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us.”<sup>19</sup>

The principal question of what to preserve—the original vision and visual appearance or the original material—has remained a burning one in conservation practice. In the detailed day-to-day decisions that conservation and planning practice constantly require, it often aligns itself with professional sensibilities, such as those of curators who go for original materials, as opposed to architects and urban planners, who often side with visual integrity.<sup>20</sup> Yet on a theoretical level, the emphasis on original materials became mainstream and was enshrined in the Venice Charter, finding its way from there into the World Heritage Operational Guidelines. Partly, this was because of personal continuity, as one of the drafters of the Venice Charter, the Belgian Raymond Lemaire, also chaired the expert meeting that drafted the first Operational Guidelines. He insisted on using the term “authenticity,” rather than the more open “integrity” that was also discussed, as some experts feared that this would legitimise nineteenth-century stylistic restoration.<sup>21</sup>

Almost immediately upon starting the World Heritage List in 1978, however, the World Heritage Committee betrayed these purist principles. When the Historic Centre of Warsaw was nominated, the Committee hesitated at first because of the lack of authenticity of what was, in more than 85 percent of that case, a post-war reconstruction of what the Nazis had deliberately laid to ashes.<sup>22</sup> An ICOMOS expert, however, suggested the possibility that “a systematic 20th Century reconstruction [can] be justified for inclusion on grounds, not of Art but of History,”<sup>23</sup> and, swayed

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18 Viollet-le-Duc 1875, 14. It is here where I see some of the transformative ambition that anthropologists have seen at the root of much mimetic action in ritual and other contexts: through imitating something, one actually brings it into being (see chapter Ladwig). Anachronistic though it is, the term “remastering” (see chapter Mersmann) also suggests itself for the restoration approach.

19 Ruskin (1849) 1920, 206.

20 Jones and Yarrow 2013; Brumann 2007, 229–232.

21 Gfeller, forthcoming.

22 CC-79/CONF.005/6, Annex II, 5.

23 CC-79/CONF.003/11, Annex.

by the symbolic weight of this reconstruction, the Committee eventually inscribed Warsaw on the World Heritage List in 1980.<sup>24</sup> The Bureau, a sub-body of the Committee, however, hastened to emphasize that “there can be no question of inscribing in the future other cultural properties that have been reconstructed.”<sup>25</sup> And indeed, the nomination of Viollet-le-Duc’s pet project of Carcassonne in 1985,<sup>26</sup> and that of the Baroque ensemble in Dresden of 1990,<sup>27</sup> were rejected as the reconstructed parts were found to lack authenticity. But Speyer Cathedral was inscribed in 1981, despite extensive neo-Romanesque restoration in the nineteenth century; on the contrary, its influence on the evolution of the principles of restoration was expressly acknowledged.<sup>28</sup> For Rila Monastery in Bulgaria, in 1983, the Committee overruled ICOMOS’s advice against listing,<sup>29</sup> recognising this nineteenth to twentieth-century reconstruction as a symbol of the Bulgarian Renaissance and its quest for an unbroken link with the Slavic past.<sup>30</sup> The church of St. Michael in Hildesheim, destroyed to a considerable extent in the Second World War, was rejected in 1982,<sup>31</sup> but then inscribed in 1985, now as a joint property with St. Mary’s Church in the same city.<sup>32</sup> The ICOMOS evaluation only notes, without going into detail, that ICOMOS changed its mind and was in full support of the inscription,<sup>33</sup> but it can be surmised that reconstruction was censured at first but tolerated the second time around. In 1988, the Committee inscribed the Medieval City of Rhodes,<sup>34</sup> despite ICOMOS’s dismissal of its early-twentieth-century reconstruction as “pseudo-medieval monuments” and “grandiose pastiches [...] devoid of archaeological rigor” that could only find some consolation in the fact that the plans to rebuild the Colossus of Rhodes had been abandoned.<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that all these exceptions to the Venice Charter’s rigour were made for European sites.

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24 CC-80/CONF.016/10, 4.

25 CC-80/CONF.017/4, 4.

26 SC-85/CONF.007/9, 11.

27 CC-90/CONF.003/12, 13.

28 CC-81/CONF/003/6, 4. Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/168.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/168.pdf).

29 Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/216.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/216.pdf), 2.

30 SC/83/CONF.009/8, 6.

31 CLT -82/CONF .014/6, 6.

32 SC-85/CONF.008/9, 8.

33 Cf. Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/187bis.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/187bis.pdf), 2.

34 SC-88/CONF.001/13, 17.

35 Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/493.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/493.pdf), 3.

## The Nara Document

A full conceptual debate only arose with one of the first Japanese World Heritage nominations in 1993—the Hōryūji, near Nara. This temple complex contains the allegedly oldest wooden buildings on earth, dating from the seventh and eighth century, but was extensively restored in the thirteenth, seventeenth, and twentieth centuries. As is possible with traditional wooden buildings in Japan, they were partly or wholly dismantled and then reassembled, allowing the replacement of much damaged material,<sup>36</sup> which led some European experts to question their authenticity. A fundamental reconsideration of that notion thus seemed called for, and Japan offered to host an international workshop in Nara, in 1994. This workshop resulted in the “Nara Document on Authenticity,”<sup>37</sup> widely cited and praised today as the most significant conceptual contribution to this issue by the World Heritage institutions.

Whether the Nara Document provides clear guidance is debatable. §13 of the document states that authenticity can manifest itself in “form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors.” This list adds quite a number of aspects, including rather ephemeral ones, to the “design, material, workmanship, and setting” formulation of the original Operational Guidelines. Further, §11 claims that “it is [...] not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong.” How such cultural relativism can be reconciled with the “outstanding universal value” demanded by the convention is an obvious question. It appears to me that, rather than pinning down what authenticity is, the formulations of the Nara Document broadened the range of what it might be taken to mean.

The main actors behind this development were not the imagined beneficiaries, that is representatives of non-European countries with wooden or earthen architecture, but rather representatives of what, borrowing from Immanuel Wallerstein,<sup>38</sup> could be called the “semi-periphery” of the “world system” of heritage conservation. 19 out of 23 conservationists who drafted the Venice Charter in 1964 were European and 16 of these were Western European. Thirty years later, however, the main contributors included the Japanese, of course, but also several Norwegian experts who likewise had wooden buildings on the World Heritage List and knew Japanese conservation techniques from extended visits. The Canadian General Secretary of ICOMOS, Herb Stovel, who was perhaps the single

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36 Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/660.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/660.pdf), 3–4.

37 Accessed February 16, 2017. <http://whc.unesco.org/document/9379>.

38 Wallerstein 1974.



most important driver, and Australian participants also played considerable roles. The abovementioned Belgian Raymond Lemaire drafted the document together with Stovel but later claimed to have condoned what he did not fully support; other than him, no one from Western European countries, with their time-honoured conservation systems predicated on stone architecture, was centrally involved.<sup>39</sup>

A Japanese participant told me how the European and American participants at the Nara Conference appeared to her as longing for something different—redemption from Venice Charter constraints, so to speak—and were almost disappointed to learn through her presentation that Japanese conservation practices are not so different after all. I am sure that expectations were influenced by the *shikinen sengû*, the ritual renewal of the most important Shinto shrine in Ise every twenty years, on one of two alternating plots of land; the previous buildings are dismantled in the process. This case is a staple when, in books on conservation, alternative philosophies to those of mainstream European conservation are introduced. Almost invariably, the practice is exaggerated then, for example by ascribing it to Japanese shrines and temples in general when, in actual fact, it applies to less than a dozen Shinto shrines. The conservation of the Hôryûji, by contrast, differs from Venice Charter ideals only in degree, not in kind, as material replacement is kept to the necessary minimum and copying damaged wooden components does not even allow conjecture, given the modular construction and sophisticated joinery of traditional Japanese architecture that requires a replacement piece to fit perfectly. Whatever differences from the conservation practices of European cathedrals may arise here are almost entirely due to the building material, not to fundamentally different conceptions of authenticity and continuity. Accordingly, the Japanese convenors of the workshop would have been happy with minor modifications of the Operational Guidelines, as my informant said, and it was others who urged for a more comprehensive overhaul.

They stopped short of abolishing authenticity altogether, however; Gfeller emphasises how, thereby, they also guaranteed expert control over its application within the World Heritage framework.<sup>40</sup> A comparative look at the other well-known UNESCO convention on intangible cultural heritage adopted in 2003 seems to prove her right: there, at the insistence of the involved experts, authenticity was banned both from the convention text and the Operational Directives as not applicable to living heritage and the incremental changes such intangible heritage undergoes in every performative, ritual, or practical iteration. I still think, though, that while

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39 Gfeller, forthcoming. Gfeller points to the fact, however, that a need for widening authenticity conceptions had already been acknowledged by ICOMOS representatives from these countries, and indeed, the abovementioned French ICOMOS expert who advised the World Heritage Committee on how to deal with the Warsaw nomination in 1980 had referred to Japanese temples and the possible rehabilitation of nineteenth-century restorations back then.

40 Gfeller, forthcoming.

retaining the concept, the adoption of the Nara Document has opened the door for all kinds of yardsticks, and whether these are innovative or simply interest-driven is often a matter of perspective.

## Pre-Nara holdouts

The Nara Document has certainly been widely and favourably received throughout the world. I recall a conversation with the chief conservationist of a German federal state—art historian by training, in one of the heartlands of institutional conservation—who nonetheless told me that, to her, it is a valuable text that helps her in her day-to-day work. Within the World Heritage Committee arena, however, the Nara Document was not immediately adopted. The ICOMOS General Assembly approved it in 1999;<sup>41</sup> later that year, the Committee decided to include it in the revision of the Operational Guidelines where,<sup>42</sup> however, it only appeared in the 2005 version,<sup>43</sup> a full 11 years after Nara.<sup>44</sup> In the Operational Guidelines, the formulations based on the Nara Document (§81–83 in the 2013 version) continue to be immediately tempered by the admonition that “in relation to authenticity, the reconstruction of archaeological remains or historic buildings or districts is justifiable only in exceptional circumstances. Reconstruction is acceptable only on the basis of complete and detailed documentation and to no extent on conjecture” (§86 in the 2013 version).<sup>45</sup> This means that a Venice Charter logic still applies, whatever the Guidelines say about authenticity residing in spirit and feeling.

Venice Charter thinking is also undeniably present when ICOMOS and/or the World Heritage Committee admonish recent or ongoing non-standard reconstructions and “over-restoration” in World Heritage properties, as they have done over the past twenty years for the historic centres of Quito,<sup>46</sup> Istanbul,<sup>47</sup> Zabid (Yemen),<sup>48</sup> Bukhara, and Samarkand (Uzbekistan),<sup>49</sup> the Tabriz Bazaar complex (Iran),<sup>50</sup> churches in Mtskheta (Georgia)<sup>51</sup> and Manila,<sup>52</sup> mosques in the old cities of Cairo<sup>53</sup> and Damascus,<sup>54</sup> the

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41 WHC-99/CONF.209/22, 39.

42 WHC-99/CONF.209/22, 45.

43 Accessed February 16, 2017. <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide05-en.pdf>.

44 For more detail on this process, see Cameron 2008, 21–22.

45 Accessed February 16, 2017. <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide13-en.pdf>, 22.

46 WHC-08/32.COM/24, 138–139.

47 WHC-94/CONF.003/16, 40, WHC-06/30.COM/INF.19, 131.

48 WHC-96/CONF.201/4, 20, WHC-97/CONF.208/4B, 27.

49 WHC-97/CONF.208/4B, 26.

50 Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/1346.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/1346.pdf), 5.

51 WHC-07/31.COM/24, 112, WHC-09/33.COM/20, 139.

52 WHC-98/CONF.203/5, 61–62.

53 WHC-95/CONF.203/16, 25.

54 WHC-97/CONF.204/11, 36.

palaces of Beijing<sup>55</sup> and Lhasa,<sup>56</sup> Bahla Fort (Oman),<sup>57</sup> the reconstruction of archaeological remains in Abu Mena (Egypt),<sup>58</sup> the Negev desert cities on the Incense Route (Israel),<sup>59</sup> the At-Turaif District in ad-Dir'iyah (Saudi Arabia),<sup>60</sup> Samarra (Iraq),<sup>61</sup> Al Zubarah (Qatar),<sup>62</sup> Hampi (India),<sup>63</sup> and Lumbini (Nepal).<sup>64</sup>

One of the more spectacular recent cases was the monumental reconstruction of the half-ruined Bagrati Cathedral in Kutaisi, Georgia. The Committee placed the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2010 when the plans were announced but work was completed in 2012 nonetheless;<sup>65</sup> according to the World Heritage Committee, "the Bagrati Cathedral has been altered to such an extent that its authenticity has been irreversibly compromised." Contrary to ICOMOS's advice, remaining original stone blocks were not re-used, and new building parts of reinforced concrete were implanted in an irreversible manner into the historic fabric. Therefore, Georgia is now being urged to remove the cathedral from the World Heritage List.<sup>66</sup> (This is, incidentally, a serial property, with the unproblematic Gelati Monastery as the other component.) One cannot help noting that almost all of the above-mentioned cases are non-European. One also cannot help noting that the reconstructions of the Bagrati Cathedral or those in Lumbini, Buddha Siddharta Gotama's birthplace, have contributed to the appeal of these sites as pilgrimage destinations so that a Nara Document logic might see the authentic *usage* as being augmented rather than diminished.

## The rehabilitation of Romantic restorations

In comparison, ICOMOS and the World Heritage Committee have been significantly more tolerant of reconstructions predating the World Heritage inscription of the given site, particularly those inspired by nineteenth-century Romanticism. Sometimes, the issue is simply circumvented, such as in ICOMOS's evaluation of the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge in Višegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina, inscribed in 2007. The text mentions significant reconstructions with non-authentic materials and in non-authentic forms after both world wars but, in a confusing turn, concludes that "the

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55 WHC-06/30.COM/19, 101.

56 WHC-96/CONF.201/21, 39, WHC-03/27.COM/INF.24, 80.

57 WHC-95/CONF.203/16, 23-24, WHC-96/CONF.201/21, 23-24, WHC-2000/CONF.202/17, 14.

58 WHC-13/37.COM/20, 33.

59 WHC-04/28.COM/26, 219.

60 WHC-10/34.COM/INF.20, 585.

61 WHC-11/35.COM/INF.20, 60.

62 WHC-13/37.COM/20, 181.

63 WHC-99/CONF.208/8, 36.

64 WHC-04/28.COM/26, 264, WHC-05/29.COM/22, 79.

65 WHC-10/34.COM/20, 143-146.

66 WHC-13/37.COM/20, 44.

authenticity seems excellent” and that “the visible alterations to form and material are secondary, and can be put right by appropriate restorations.”<sup>67</sup> For the German limes that was added to Hadrian’s Wall in England in 2005, thereby producing the serial property “Frontiers of the Roman Empire,” the ICOMOS evaluation bemoaned that “in many cases [...] the authenticity has been compromised by unacceptable reconstructions.” Yet as an inventive solution, these reconstructions were excluded from the World Heritage property and declared its buffer zone,<sup>68</sup> in line with the common practice to designate such a zone around a site. Here, however, the buffer zone sits on top of the site, that is the original wall sections under the ground.

In a number of further cases, including the historical churches of Mtskheta (1994),<sup>69</sup> Wartburg Castle (1999),<sup>70</sup> the castles and fortifications of Bellinzona (2000),<sup>71</sup> Tiwanaku in Bolivia (2000),<sup>72</sup> the upper middle Rhine valley with its many medieval castles restored in the nineteenth century (2002),<sup>73</sup> and Kuressaare Fortress in Estonia (2004),<sup>74</sup> the ICOMOS evaluations of the candidates simply downplayed reconstruction as “typical of the time,” “religiously motivated,” and “not of recent date,” or by focusing on the entire landscape rather than single buildings (in the case of the Rhine valley). Dresden was brought back as a cultural landscape, too, so that ICOMOS could now argue that “while recognising the unfortunate losses in the historic city centre during the Second World War, the Dresden Elbe Valley, defined as a continuing cultural landscape, has retained the overall historical authenticity and integrity in its distinctive character and components.”<sup>75</sup> This led to its inscription in 2004, for what became a mere five years of World Heritage glory.<sup>76</sup> There is even a World Heritage property that continues to be under construction today: in 2004, the famous Sagrada Família, Antoni Gaudí’s cathedral in Barcelona, was added to a collection of works by the Catalan architect that together form a single serial World Heritage property. The ICOMOS evaluation notes the authenticity of the parts of the church completed by Gaudí and says that the ongoing construction follows his plans on the basis of “scientifically elaborated guidelines,”<sup>77</sup> finding no

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67 Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/1260.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/1260.pdf), 115.

68 Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/430ter.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/430ter.pdf), 165, 167.

69 Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/708.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/708.pdf), 16.

70 WHC-99/CONF.204/INF.7, 68.

71 WHC-2000/CONF.204/INF.6, 150–151.

72 WHC-2000/CONF.204/21, 41.

73 WHC-02/CONF.201/INF.2, 44–45.

74 WHC-04/28.COM/26, 217.

75 Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/1156.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/1156.pdf), 88.

76 In 2009, the Dresden Elbe Valley was removed from the list due to the construction of a new bridge not approved by World Heritage authorities.

77 Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/320bis.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/320bis.pdf), 172.

reason for concern. One cannot help noting that this roster of tolerated reconstruction—or even tolerated construction—is a rather European one.

With this downplaying of Venice Charter authenticity come inscriptions—all of them European too—where the Romantic restorations have been explicitly valued as testimonies of an important stage in the history of heritage conservation, thus adding to authenticity rather than diminishing it, such as with the Luther memorials in Wittenberg and Eisleben (1996),<sup>78</sup> the castle of the Teutonic Order in Malbork (Marienburg), Poland (1996),<sup>79</sup> and the historic centre of San Marino (2008).<sup>80</sup> When Carcassonne was resubmitted in 1997, Viollet-le-Duc's restorations were valued as a landmark in conservation history, thus resulting in its inscription.<sup>81</sup> It is striking that the true discursive impact of the Nara Document has been with the Romantic restorations, since in the cases of Carcassonne,<sup>82</sup> Malbork Castle,<sup>83</sup> and San Marino,<sup>84</sup> ICOMOS evaluations and delegates' comments referred to the text in order to justify inscription. And in the acceptance speech for Malbork Castle, the Polish delegation expressed satisfaction that "notre fondamentalisme ouest-européen [...] qui nous a amenés à la définition de la notion d'authenticité, limitée exclusivement à la substance matérielle; une idée que nous avons voulu octroyer aux autres régions culturelles du monde (our West European fundamentalism [...] that has brought us to the definition of authenticity limited exclusively to the material substance; an idea that we have wanted to impose on the other cultural regions of the world)" was now put to rest.<sup>85</sup> Making reference to the Nara Document for the timber and earthen structures for which it was originally designed, by contrast, is much rarer in the World Heritage records, even though authenticity-related objections to such candidates are no longer raised and one finds argumentations that clearly breathe a Nara spirit. For example, when recommending inscription of the Tombs of Buganda's Kings at Kasubi, Uganda, in 2001, ICOMOS argued that "buildings such as these are maintained over time and their authenticity lies more in the reflection of traditional material and practices that in the age of their component parts."<sup>86</sup>

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78 WHC-96/CONF.201/21, 66.

79 WHC-97/CONF.208/17, 47.

80 WHC-08/32.COM/24, 178.

81 WHC-97/CONF.208/17, 42.

82 Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/345.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/345.pdf), 28.

83 WHC-96/CONF.201/21, Annex VI.2.

84 WHC-08/32.COM/INF.8B1, 187.

85 WHC-96/CONF.201/21, Annex VI.2.

86 WHC-10/34.COM/INF.20, 260.

## Political reconstructions

Warsaw as a case of what, in memory of Pete Seeger, one could call the “We Shall Overcome” type of reconstruction, also did not remain alone. In 2003, the Committee inscribed the Bamiyan Valley on the World Heritage List, two years after the Taliban had blasted the two great stone Buddhas. Bamiyan was a major mishap of the World Heritage machinery: nominated by Afghanistan in 1983, the candidate had not been accepted because of minor technical issues and never been followed up on; so that when the Taliban announced their plan of destruction, there was not even the symbolic weight of a World Heritage title to give them pause.<sup>87</sup> With the Buddhas gone in 2001, the ICOMOS evaluation stressed the authenticity of the remaining parts of the valley as a cultural landscape and pre-emptively expressed its support of a possible reconstruction of the statues from the fragments by anastylosis, obviously not seeing this as a threat to the overall authenticity of the site.<sup>88</sup> So far—and not least because of the security situation—little actual progress has been made, but some form of reconstruction continues to be envisioned (for more detail, see Mersmann’s contribution to this volume).

In 2005, as the most intensely debated reconstruction so far, the Old Bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar in Bosnia was inscribed on the World Heritage List. The iconic bridge collapsed in 1993, after being deliberately shelled in the Balkan War, and was reconstructed with the support of UNESCO and the World Bank in 2001–2004. The Old Town was first nominated in 1999, that is before reconstruction, and with the bridge being only a symbolic presence in the proposed name of the property, “The Old Mostar: A Bridge of the Worlds.”<sup>89</sup> Due to the lack of a management plan, uncontrolled building activity in and near the old town, unclear nomination criteria, and the need to await completion of the bridge, the decision was postponed three times in 1999, 2000, and 2003,<sup>90</sup> although ICOMOS had recommended inscription from the outset.<sup>91</sup> When the Committee debated for several hours over the proposed inscription of a reduced section of the Old City in 2005, some delegates complained that the ICOMOS evaluation had concentrated only on the bridge and its reconstruction. The delegate of Saint Lucia poignantly reminded everyone “that it was not only the Bridge and certainly not the International Community that were being inscribed, but the old town of Mostar.”<sup>92</sup> Other delegates were more welcoming, however, pointing in unspecific ways to the Nara Document or

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87 WHC-01/CONF.208/24, 4–7.

88 Accessed February 16, 2017. [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/208rev.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/208rev.pdf), 3.

89 WHC-99/CONF.204/15, 46.

90 WHC-99/CONF.208/8, 70–71, WHC-2000/CONF.202/17, 47, WHC-2000/CONF.204/21, 51, WHC-03/27.COM/24, 116.

91 Accessed February 16, 2017. <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/1999/whc-99-conf209-inf7e.pdf>, 141.

92 WHC-05/29.COM/INF.22, 185.

playing with the symbolism of the structure by citing a poem about bridges or evoking the bridge between religious communities that had now been rebuilt.<sup>93</sup> The final decision was a compromise between Venice and Nara: the buildings as such, which are all of 2000s vintage, were denied World Heritage honours in that none of the respective criteria were declared to be present. Also, the special features of the original architecture and the quality of the reconstruction—which some delegates called into question—were not mentioned in the official justification for OUV, as originally proposed, but only in a separate part of the decision text.<sup>94</sup> Instead, inscription came to rest solely on criterion vi, which emphasises the symbolic value of a site and is usually reserved for combined use with other criteria.<sup>95</sup> The short justification text for inscription transforms the reconstruction into the very basis of OUV, arguing that it strengthened the Old City's value as a symbol of peaceful multi-ethnic and multi-religious co-existence over the centuries and associating it—in a somewhat nebulous phrase—with international peace and cooperation.<sup>96</sup> Clearly, the mimetic act of reconstruction is ascribed considerable transformative force here (see Ladwig's contribution), aiming for the “healing, reconciling effect” that Mersmann (also in this volume) sees as the hope behind comparable reconstruction plans for the victims of iconoclasm.

## Conclusion

The application of authenticity requirements within the World Heritage system—whether meant in its Venice Charter or Nara Document incarnation—has been uneven, to say the least. By 1998, an Australian delegate to the Committee proposed formulating separate yardsticks for authenticity for each of the six cultural criteria,<sup>97</sup> but this was never put into practice. In 2005, it was decided to separate authenticity and integrity, which heretofore had been treated jointly for cultural properties. (For natural World Heritage properties, only integrity is considered.) In the nomination manual, integrity is defined as the completeness and intactness of the property, whereas authenticity is defined as the ability of the property to convey truthfully and genuinely the OUV for which it is inscribed.<sup>98</sup> This conceptual clarification was motivated by the insight that these two aspects

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93 WHC-05/29.COM/INF.22, 183–187.

94 Cf. WHC-05/29.COM/22, 141.

95 WHC-05/29.COM/22, 140.

96 “With the “renaissance” of the Old Bridge and its surroundings, the symbolic power and meaning of the City of Mostar—as an exceptional and universal symbol of coexistence of communities from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds—has been reinforced and strengthened, underlining the unlimited efforts of human solidarity for peace and powerful co-operation in the face of overwhelming catastrophes” (WHC-05/29.COM/22, 141).

97 WHC-98/CONF.201/9, 20–21.

98 UNESCO 2011, 61–67.

may not necessarily coincide: Viollet-le-Duc's restoration of the half-ruined fortification walls of Carcassonne, for instance, increased its integrity but decreased its authenticity as a Medieval fortress. Not too much has been made of this new conceptual pair so far, despite its potential for reappraising reconstructions and copies.<sup>99</sup>

There is a tendency to stylise the Nara Document on Authenticity into a major achievement of the World Heritage institutions, a supersession of the restrictive Venice Charter framework for something less Eurocentric and more universally applicable and meaningful. I do not want to deny that it has been perceived as a liberating move in conservation regimes the world over and that the willingness to consider alternative standards of authenticity has increased. When looking at what the World Heritage institutions themselves have made of it, however, there is little consistency, and it rather seems that now, in terms of restoration, reconstruction, and copying, anything goes. Committee decisions and admonitions and ICOMOS evaluations run the gamut from unflinching Venice Charter purism to an extreme liberalism, with or without reference to the Nara Document. From my ethnographic observation of the Committee sessions, this is not surprising. Principal questions are rarely addressed, and whatever general policies arise do so only through the concrete discussion of individual sites. This discussion is always hurried due to severe time constraints, delegates often lack specialised knowledge and preparation, and many of them are ordinary career diplomats with no more than lay perceptions of heritage issues. There is also little institutional memory in place, so that even obvious precedent cases fail to be brought up. Most importantly, however, there is the lobbying and deal-making among Committee delegates whose main objective is to bring home more World Heritage inscriptions, usually by backing each other's bids on a quid-pro-quo basis. When such support has been secured in the run-up to the decision, rather weak and improvised arguments often suffice to organise majorities.<sup>100</sup> This is why I think the potential of the Nara Document for justifying reconstructions and stylistic restorations has not been fully exploited: there is no real need to do so, as less demanding strategies often suffice.

Yet within the ICOMOS evaluations, there is also little consistency and I suspect that here as well, the final recommendations are influenced by lobbying and non-substantive considerations. I find confirmation here in the geographical grading of authenticity judgments where the abovementioned examples suggest that European violations of Venice Charter purism have been more benignly treated than the non-European ones. This

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99 Authenticity becomes even murkier when it is applied to the category of cultural landscapes added in 1992, given that, due to the interaction between humans and nature that is emphasized here, the incremental change of the physical features is expected. As there is usually no copying or reconstruction in the narrow sense, however, I do not treat cultural landscapes in this paper.

100 Brumann 2014b.



diagnosis squares with ICOMOS being an organisation where, to this day, the presence and influence of Europeans is significant.<sup>101</sup>

Anthropologists in particular have enthusiastically engaged in deconstructing popular notions of authenticity, usually pointing out the political, commercial, or other interests behind what they see, in essence, as an arbitrary claim,<sup>102</sup> often connecting it with elite interests and an expert point of view. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>103</sup> however, authenticity is also very much a popular and lay concern; Bortolotto vividly describes how it can creep in through the back door, even in an environment from which it has been officially ousted, such as among the nominations to the lists of the 2003 UNESCO convention on intangible cultural heritage.<sup>104</sup> But this is also because authenticity is a polysemic term with which people associate many different things, starting with authentic experiences or personalities. When one scrutinises what the World Heritage institutions really look for, it is in fact *continuity* over time, be it continuity of material, form, usage, or some other aspect mentioned in the Venice Charter or the Nara Document. But this is never so clearly stated, and authenticity (as a term) stays in place. It would be conceivable to specify requirements for each of these different continuities, and how to weigh deficiencies in some of them against the merits of others. If not that, it would at least be conceivable to *define* authenticity. Yet even the latest version of the World Heritage Operational Guidelines, in the 16 paragraphs it dedicates to authenticity and integrity,<sup>105</sup> has still not gotten around to saying what the word actually means. This conceptual void forces actors within the World Heritage arena to rely on their intuitions and gut feelings, and when a long and emotional debate about the bridge of Mostar, a symbol of peaceful multi-ethnic co-existence, rebuilt by the collective efforts of the international community, culminates in its World Heritage coronation, I suppose—and delegates confirm—that it is almost impossible not to have very *authentic* feelings, however discontinuous with the past the rebuilt bridge may actually be.

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101 Brumann 2017.

102 E.g. Bruner 1994; Gable and Handler 1996; Handler and Linnekin 1984.

103 Brumann 2014a, 80–81.

104 Bortolotto 2011a.

105 Accessed February 16, 2017. <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide13-en.pdf>, 21–24.

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