


SECTION 24. ARCHITECTURE AND CONSTRUCTION

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REBUILDING THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE: REFLECTIONS ON THE CASE OF POST-WAR WARSAW

Introduction. It is a well-known fact that in the aftermath of the Second World War, there was need for much rebuilding, when also dozens of important historic towns had been destroyed, including London, Dresden, and Warsaw, as well as even Florence. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, heritage values were mainly referred to monuments and archaeological sites, as well as important collections of historic and artistic objects. Reconstruction of the architecture heritage that has been destroyed or lost in an armed conflict not necessarily meant recreating something exactly as it was before. Often, it would result in a new building in the style relevant to the period even though adjusting to the inherited context. In the case of London, the new constructions were designed in modernist style, while leaving the surviving old churches standing in this newly built context. In the case of Florence, the destroyed river sides were rebuilt in modern forms but respecting the rhythm and volume of the lost urban fabric. The cases of Warsaw and Dresden are symptomatic of the period. In the case of Dresden, the severely damaged major monuments were rebuilt and restored as memorials for the past. In the case of Warsaw, the entire area of the medieval city was deliberately annihilated by the enemy, who wanted to cancel the identity of the Polish people. Nevertheless, after the war, Poland decided to rebuild it on the basis of available documentation. Warsaw was one of the early World Heritage inscriptions in 1980 [5]. In its evaluation, ICOMOS noted that the reconstruction of the historic center so that it is identical with the original, symbolizes the will to ensure the survival of one of the prime settings of Polish culture and illustrates, in an exemplary fashion, the efficiency of the restoration techniques of the second half of the 20th century. The post-war reconstruction of Warsaw was recognized as a world heritage site according to the following criteria: as unique and influential European experience, and criterion, as an exceptional example of the comprehensive reconstruction. And although in later debates, it was decided that Warsaw would be taken as an exception and it should not be taken as a precedent for reconstruction of other properties, reconstruction practices in the current situation with destroyed Ukrainian cities (Mariupol now lies in ruins, with 90% of buildings damaged there, and thousands of buildings were destroyed in Kharkiv and Chernihiv).

Main section. During the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, more than 85% of Warsaw's historic center was destroyed by Nazi troops. After the war, a five-year reconstruction campaign by its citizens resulted in today's meticulous restoration of the Old Town, with its churches, palaces and market-place. It is an outstanding example of a near-total reconstruction of a span of history covering the 13th to the 20th century. The reconstruction included the holistic recreation of the urban plan, together with the Old Town Market, townhouses, the circuit of the city walls, the Royal Castle, and important religious buildings.

The reconstruction project utilized any extant, undamaged structures built between the 14th and 18th centuries, together with the late-medieval network of streets, squares, and the main market square, as well as the circuit of city walls. Two guiding principles were followed: firstly, to use reliable archival documents where available, and secondly, to aim at recreating the historic city's late 18th-century appearance. The latter was dictated by the availability of detailed iconographic and documentary historical records from that period. Additionally, conservation inventories compiled before 1939 and after 1944 were used, along with the scientific knowledge and expertise of art historians, architects, and conservators. The Archive of the Warsaw Reconstruction Office, housing documentation of both the post-war damage and the reconstruction projects, was inscribed in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2011 [1].

The reconstruction of the Old Town was a coherent and consistently implemented project devised at the Warsaw Reconstruction Office (Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy, BOS) in the years 1945-1951. It was established to restore Warsaw, and the organization was unique in many ways. It was a "super-institution" that had all kinds of responsibilities, from removing rubble to urban planning and charting the city's development over the following 50 years. BOS included 1,500 people. In addition to architects and engineers, there were artists and photographers who documented the destruction and the reconstruction. Also, there were lawyers, economists, and journalists, who promoted the project via their own newspaper. Curiously, BOS included architects with different political backgrounds: communists, nationalists, and even those who returned from England after the war. The latter would have been treated very suspiciously if they had worked in other fields. However, architects were essential to this, so they were accepted [6].

High tenement houses from the late nineteenth century were replaced with pastiches of late Baroque or Neo-Classical architecture, while the edifices that had been remodeled several times were puristically restored to their genuine form, complying with the attempt to achieve a harmonious landscape of an ideal town from the time of Poland's last King Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski. Essentially, in the course of the post-World War II reconstruction of Nowy Świat Street, Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, and the Old Town, mainly façades were recreated, while the interior outlay was modified to meet the contemporary needs. Moreover, the reconstruction provided a good opportunity to improve the standard of living inside this architecture: access outlays were modernized, bathrooms were introduced, and sunlight access to buildings improved, while small and narrow yards were replaced with larger ones [7].

The ideas behind the reconstruction of the capital's monuments carried out, under the socialist regime, included reconstruction in the spirit of the heyday of a monument, respect for relics and the anticipation of space needed for modern art. It is also important that the Historic Centre of Warsaw has fully retained its authenticity as a finished concept of post-war reconstruction. This World Heritage property includes two categories of structure. The first comprises extant structures predating the damage of World War II. This applies to most basements; some ground floor stores and certain sections of wall up to the level of the first floor. The second category encompasses reconstructed features – this group includes buildings recreated in accordance with pre-war records (some of the Old Town's townhouses, the Sigismund's Column, churches, and the Royal Castle), and those rebuilt based on historical and conservation studies pertaining to the architecture of the 14th to 18th centuries (e.g., the façade of the cathedral, and the Old Town walls with the Barbican). The state of preservation of individual types of structure and entire buildings is satisfactory [3]. The reconstruction of Warsaw's historic center was a major contribution to the changes in the doctrines related to urbanization and conservation of cities in most of the European countries after the destructions of World War II. Simultaneously, this example illustrates the effectiveness of conservation activities in the second half of the 20th century, which permitted the integral reconstruction of the complex urban ensemble.

The post-war efforts to reconstruct and rebuilding Warsaw and were also representative of the period in which they were carried out, reflecting not only the then-current trends in architecture, but also in the renovation and modernization of historic buildings. It should be noted

that the conceptual principles of cultural heritage architectural rebuilding were outlined during the 20th century. In particular, the principles guiding the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings should be agreed and be laid down on an international basis, with each country being responsible for applying the plan within the framework of its own culture and traditions.

The Athens Charter (1931) proposes the idea of a common world heritage, the importance of the setting of monuments, and the principle of the integration of new materials. The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments consists of a manifesto of such points: to establish organizations for restoration advice, to ensure projects are reviewed with knowledgeable criticism, to establish national legislation to preserve historic sites, to rebury excavations which were not to be restored, to allow the use of modern techniques and materials in restoration work, to place historical sites under custodial protection, to protect the area surrounding historic sites. The Athens Charter influenced the creation of the Venice Charter (1964). According to the Venice Charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites, the conservation and restoration of monuments must have recourse to all the sciences and techniques which can contribute to the study and safeguarding of the architectural heritage. Where traditional techniques prove inadequate, the consolidation of a monument can be achieved by the use of any modern technique for conservation and construction, the efficacy of which has been shown by scientific data and proved by experience. Replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence. Additions cannot be allowed except in so far as they do not detract from the interesting parts of the building, its traditional setting, the balance of its composition and its relation with its surroundings [4].

The Venice Charter is representing modernist views opposed to reconstruction. Reconstruction is now cautiously accepted by UNESCO in exceptional circumstances if it seeks to reflect a pattern of use or cultural practice that sustains cultural value, and is based on complete documentation without reliance on conjecture. However, experts point out that the following aspects are not covered in the Venice Charter: the concept of site which also applies to historic landscapes and gardens, the concept of reversibility in restoration, the social and financial issues. The Venice Charter and its subsequent interpretations have attracted criticism, especially by the followers the idea of a living architectural tradition. As a result, many now believe that visual harmony, aesthetic balance and the essential character of a place are of greater importance than abstract Modernist theories. Because of concern over the damage being to historic settings by the Venice Charter's misapplication, in 2006 another conference was held in Venice under the auspices of INTBAU (the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture & Urbanism). Its principal objective was to provide a theoretical framework that would enable new buildings and additions to be in greater harmony with their historic surroundings. Critics of the Venice Charter point to the Charleston Charter (2005) as providing preferred guidelines for dealing with historic areas. It states that new construction in historic settings, including alterations and additions to existing buildings, should not arbitrarily impose contrasting materials, scales, or design vocabularies, but clarify and extend the character of the place, seeking always continuity and wholeness in the built environment [2].

The Venice Charter has itself become an historic document. While some of its guidelines are considered to have proven their worth by both its supporters and critics, there are now plans for it to be rewritten. Beginning with the World Heritage Convention (1972), some of the limited explanations in the Venice Charter were revised. The understanding of cultural heritage, which was expressed as historic monuments, was categorized as monuments, groups of buildings and sites. Later on, The Nara Document on Authenticity (1992) carried out the responsibility to clarify the authenticity related issues which were expressed in the articles 6 and 7 of the Venice Charter.

The important event was been the international conference in 2018 in Warsaw was to summarize previous discussions and experiences regarding the recovery and reconstruction of UNESCO World Heritage sites and attempt to develop the most appropriate, universal guidelines

for moving forward with properties of exceptional value at the time of destruction. The conference entitled “The challenges of World Heritage recovery. International conference on reconstruction” was noted: “Prior to taking any decision on a proposal for recovery and reconstruction of a heritage place, it is essential to understand 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” [8].

Historic cities that have suffered severe damage are areas that need to be replanned to preserve their urban characteristics and adjust to their residents’ needs. According to the terms of Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) principles, the historic centers are considered as living organisms that need to be adjusted to modern society’s needs [9]. Therefore post-war reconstruction must focus on such elements as the site’s morphology, geomorphology, and built environment features, historic or contemporary; its infrastructures; its open spaces and gardens; its spatial organization, and the cultural value of the built environment. Finally, it underlines the importance of community engagement for the city’s regeneration in terms of HUL.

Conclusions. The reconstruction of Warsaw is a useful experience for Ukraine in how to achieve a balance between historical and modern. Warsaw valued its heritage, but did not neglect new ideas. The experience of the Polish capital shows how these two components can be combined. What can a city become, where memory is preserved and development is not limited, and modern approaches help solve problems that existed even before the war. There is a need to explore the range of contemporary conservation work being undertaken and explore how new traditional design can be used in a historic context. Understanding of the significance of Warsaw’s reconstruction in the post-war history of Poland and Europe is an important to provide theoretical underpinnings for creating new buildings and additions that are in greater harmony with their historic surroundings. It useful as for projects in traditional urbanism and preservation, for the Ukrainian professionals who are urban planners, developers and designers who are creating additions or infill for historic areas – especially when debates with design review might arise.

Acknowledgment. This study was carried out with the support of the Kosciuszko Foundation Program for Ukrainian scientists “Freedom starts with your mind”.

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