

Geopolitical changes and cultural vulnerability: analyzing the influence on community resilience and heritage sites

Petronela SPIRIDON-URSU^{1,*}, Iuliana-Gabriela BREABĂN¹, Ion SANDU²

¹Faculty of Geography and Geology, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, Iași, Romania

²Institute of Interdisciplinary Research, Arheoinvest Center, Department of Natural and Exact Science, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, Iași, Romania

*Correspondence: spiridon.petronela@gmail.com; Tel.: +40-0743-300-774

Keywords: heritage sites; environment; geopolitics; war; vandalism; community; cultural identity; resilience-building

Abstract: Geopolitics can have a significant impact on historical monuments, by destroying them, protecting them, managing them, and promoting them internationally. During armed conflicts or geopolitical tensions, historical monuments can become targets of vandalism by tactical protest. This may be the result of a desire to erase the symbols of a certain culture or to discredit an enemy. On the other hand, geopolitics can also protect monuments, by recognizing them as world heritage by organizations such as UNESCO, which can contribute to their conservation and restoration. Some historical monuments need restoration and conservation work to keep them in good condition. Governments and international organizations may allocate financial resources to these projects, and the allocation of these funds may be influenced by geopolitical interests. For example, certain countries may wish to support restoration projects of monuments in allied countries or with which they have special relations in order to strengthen their influence or promote their image internationally. The present paper wishes to highlight the impact of armed conflicts on cultural heritage and the need to update general strategies of cultural identity and community resilience, accepted and adopted worldwide.

This work was co-funded by the European Social Fund, through Operational Programme Human Capital 2014-2020, project number OCU/993/6/13/153322, project title "Educational and training support for Ph.D. students and young researchers in preparation for insertion into the labor market".

1. Introduction

Almost 40 years after the end of the Second World War, in 1983 the UN General Assembly established the World Commission on Environment and Development to study the level of development and the state of the environment on a global scale with the aim of identifying (United Nations, 1987):

- long-term environmental strategies to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;
- common goals that support each other and take into account the interrelationships between people, resources, environment and development;
- ways and means by which the international community can more effectively address environmental concerns.

In the document resulting from the research, entitled "Our Common Future" (also known as the Brundtland Report) and published by the UN in 1987, fundamental environmental topics such as: global warming, the threat of the ozone layer, desertification, deforestation, acid precipitation, which have a direct or indirect impact

on the cultural heritage, are explored in depth (United Nations, 1987). The strongest alarm signal, however, is given by the rising arms race and the war that poses a threat to the environment, the development goals of states and the natural, artistic and spiritual heritage.

Today, 40 years after the publication of the Brundtland Report, spending on armaments continues to rise globally and armed conflicts are expanding between states on all continents.

The Stockholm Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) latest Trends in World Military Expenditure Report notes that there is the largest increase in arms trade since the 1960s to date, a 3.7% increase in global spending with weapons against 2022. The exceptional growth was largely accounted for by substantial increases in Russian and Ukrainian spending, but many other European countries boosted their military budgets in 2022. Spending increases in parts of Asia and Oceania also contributed to the global growth in 2022 (Nan Tian, 2022).

On the other hand, the annual expenditure on World Heritage is vary greatly depending on factors such as the number and condition of the sites, the level of tourism, and the socio-economic and geopolitical context of each country. Therefore, the annual expenditure for World Heritage is a multifaceted subject, including funding provided by individual countries, international organizations, and private donations.

Many countries have dedicated funds or grants to support the preservation of their own World Heritage sites; these funds can come from a variety of sources, such as government budgets, tourism revenues, or public-private partnerships. In the last decade, governments have increased budget allocations, established dedicated funds, and initiated partnerships with private entities. This has resulted in a larger pool of funds available for site conservation, research, and capacity building (UNESCO, 2023; Curtea de conturi UE, 2020; Spiridon et al., 2016a; Spiridon et al., 2016b; Stig Sørensen, 2020; Thapa, 2010; Ursu et al., 2019).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provides support to World Heritage sites through its World Heritage Fund. This fund allocates financial aid and technical expertise to countries to support the conservation and sustainable management of their World Heritage sites (UNESCO, 2023).

Furthermore, international organizations like the World Bank and various non-governmental organizations also contribute to the annual expenditure on World Heritage through grants and financial assistance.

In the same time, over the past decade, there has been a growing trend of corporate and private sector involvement in funding World Heritage sites; companies and individuals have recognized the value of preserving these sites and have made donations, sponsorships, and philanthropic contributions towards their conservation and promotion.

With the rise of social media and online platforms, crowdfunding has emerged as another avenue for funding World Heritage projects. Individuals and communities have been able to raise funds from the general public to support local heritage preservation initiatives.

In recent years, there has been a push for innovative financing mechanisms for World Heritage sites. This includes initiatives such as tourism taxes, revenue-sharing schemes, and public-private partnerships that aim to generate sustainable funding streams for site management and conservation (Thapa, 2010).

The expenditure can be categorized into different areas, such as site conservation, documentation and research, capacity building, visitor management, and community engagement and resilience, but regardless of the identified needs in the field of cultural heritage, the army benefits from more financial resources year after year.

This state of affairs contributes alarmingly to the continuous degradation of the environment, to the deepening of demographic problems and to the spread of tactical protest vandalism which, in addition to the strong desire to demonstrate power, subsidiarily aims to eradicate the identity and the local, regional, national cultural values

in an irreversible way by (United Nations, 1987; Nagaoka, 2020; Spiridon et al., 2017; Stig Sørensen, 2020; Taniguchi, 2020; Thapa, 2010; Curtea de conturi UE, 2020; Pusch et al., 2000; Wardekker et al., 2023):

Destruction and demolition: During armed conflicts, cultural heritage sites are often targeted intentionally for strategic or ideological reasons. Historical buildings, monuments, museums, archaeological sites, and religious structures may be damaged or destroyed through bombings, shelling, or deliberate acts of vandalism.

From the most recent global conflicts, we mention the following cases of destruction and demolition of cultural heritage site:

- The ancient city of Palmyra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Syria, which faced extensive destruction during the Syrian Civil War (about 13 years, since 2011). The extremist group ISIS targeted the site, causing damage to iconic structures such as the Temple of Bel (Figure 1) and the Arch of Triumph (Figure 2). The historic citadel of Aleppo in Syria also suffered severe damage during the conflict (Abdulkarim, 2020, Spiridon et al., 2017, UNESCO, 2023);



Photo source: Joseph Eid/AFP/Getty Images (<https://www.theguardian.com>)

Figure 1. Temple of Bel, March 2016



Figure 2. Arch of Triumph, March 2016

- The destruction of several cultural heritage sites in the Iraqi city of Mosul when it was occupied by ISIS. The militant group intentionally demolished the iconic 12th-century al-Nuri Mosque (Figures 3, 4) and its leaning minaret, known as the Great Mosque of al-Nuri (Atonelli et al., 2021);



Photo source: Thaier Al Sudani / Reuters, July 2014 (<https://www.thenationalnews.com>)

Figure 3. The Great Mosque of Al Nuri in Mosul, Thaier Al Sudani



Photo source: ASSOCIATED PRESS March 18, 2018 (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com>)

Figure 4. Ruins of the al-Nuri Mosque in Mosul

- The destruction by the Taliban in 2001 of the Bamiyan Buddhas, 6th-7th century CE (Figures 5, 6), giant statues carved into cliffs. Other archaeological sites and historical monuments have also suffered damage and neglect due to warfare and lack of resources for preservation and maintenance (Nagaoka, 2020; Bouchenaki, 2020).



Photo source: ©Pascal Maitre/Panos Pictures

Figure 5. Bamiyan Buddha before being destroyed by the Taliban

Figure 6. Bamiyan Buddha after it was destroyed by the Taliban in 2001

- The destruction by armed groups of ancient mausoleums and shrines, including the Sidi Yahya Mosque and the mausoleum of Sidi Mahmoud Ben Amar in 2023
- 2023, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, during the conflict in Mali (Abdoulaye, 2022);
- The destruction of numerous cultural heritage sites during the conflict in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The historic city of Donetsk has seen damage to its iconic buildings, such as the Donetsk State Academic Music and Drama Theatre (Figures 7, 8), due to shelling and bombings. The ancient city of Luhansk has also suffered significant destruction, with its architectural landmarks, churches, and museums facing damage or destruction (Poshyvailo, 2023).



Photo source: Wikipedia.org

Figure 7. Donetsk State Academic Music and Drama Theatre, before March 16, 2022

Photo source: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org>

Figure 8. Donetsk State Academic Music and Drama Theatre, after March 16, 2022

The destruction and demolition of such sites not only result in the loss of physical structures but also erode the cultural identity and history of affected communities.

Looting and robbery: Conflict and war can create a chaotic environment where looting and pillaging of cultural artifacts become prevalent. Valuable objects, artworks, manuscripts, and archaeological treasures may be stolen and smuggled out of the country, leading to a loss of cultural heritage and historical knowledge. History offers us many examples in this sense, but we will mention only a few of them below:

- The most notorious example during World War II is the looting of the so-called "Degenerate Art" when Nazis systematically looted valuable works of art, cultural

- treasures, and artifacts from the occupied territories (thousands of modern and avant-garde artworks were confiscated and destroyed) (Peters, 2017);
- The National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad was looted during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Priceless artifacts, including Mesopotamian statues, ancient manuscripts and tablets, were stolen or destroyed. This event was widely condemned as a significant loss of human cultural heritage (Hanson, 2011);
 - During the Libyan Civil War in 2011, numerous archaeological sites and museums were targeted by looters. Valuable ancient artifacts, including statues, mosaics, and ancient coins, were stolen and smuggled out of the country. The looting continued in the aftermath of the war, contributing to the illegal art market.
 - In 2012, during the conflict between government forces and rebel groups in Mali, the historic city of Timbuktu suffered significant looting and destruction. Manuscripts from ancient libraries, mausoleums of Sufi saints, and other cultural sites were pillaged, resulting in the loss of important historical and religious artifacts.
 - The ongoing civil war in Yemen has had a severe impact on the country's rich cultural heritage. Museums, libraries, and archaeological sites have been looted, and ancient artifacts have been smuggled out of the country. The destruction of historical sites, such as the Old City of Sana'a, has resulted in the loss of unique architectural treasures.

It's important to note that the looting and pillaging of cultural artifacts during war not only lead to the loss of irreplaceable heritage but also contribute to the illegal art market and the destruction of historical knowledge.

Occupation and neglect: In regions affected by conflict, military occupation may lead to the neglect and abandonment of cultural heritage sites. Historic buildings, museums, and libraries may be left in disrepair, lacking proper maintenance and care. This can result in the deterioration of structures and the loss of unique artifacts.

As an example showing the unfortunate consequences of conflict and military occupation on the preservation and maintenance of cultural heritage sites we can mention: the walled city of Famagusta (which was left in a state of neglect and abandonment since the 1974 conflict between the Greeks and the Turks), the Old City of Jerusalem, archaeological sites in the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip (some cultural heritage sites that have been neglected and abandoned due to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian Conflict) or historical sites, such as the ancient city of Aleppo (Figure 9), and the ancient city of Palmyra, which are neglected and abandoned in the context of the ongoing Syrian civil war.



Photo source: Kyodo News Stills/Getty Images

Figure 9. Photo taken on Citadel of Aleppo, northern Syria, February 21, 2018

Displacement and disruption: War often causes mass displacement of communities, forcing people to leave their homes and communities behind (for instance during the conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s, the Rwandan Genocide in 1994 (Figure 10) or during the Syrian Civil War (Figure 11)).

War-induced displacement disrupts communities, cultural practices, and the preservation of cultural heritage sites. Losing the connection between people and their heritage can have long-lasting effects on identities, traditions, and the physical maintenance of cultural sites.



Photo source: Wikipedia.org

Figure 10. People leaving their homes, the Rwandan Genocide in 1994



Photo source: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org>

Figure 11. Syrian refugees fleeing, Syrian Civil War

Collateral damage: Even when cultural heritage sites are not intentionally targeted, they can still suffer collateral damage during conflict. Crossfire, bombings, and heavy weaponry used in warfare can lead to unintentional destruction or severe damage to historical buildings and monuments.

The destruction of cultural heritage during war not only causes the loss of physical structures and artifacts but also erases collective memory, identity, and cultural continuity. Efforts to safeguard and protect cultural heritage during conflicts are vital to preserve our shared history and cultural diversity.

2. Materials and Methods

The methodology used in this article is a literature review, which aims to deepen the topic of cultural heritage protection during armed conflicts and increase better understanding regarding the participatory process of conservation of the cultural heritage and cultural resilience of the ordinary people.

In this sense, we have started from known international documents that address the issues of protection and conservation of world cultural heritage, community cultural identity and resilience in times of armed conflict and have analysed whether or not these have been respected or violated over time.

We then went on to review the literature on cultural resilience to identify ways in which individuals and communities can actively and consciously develop essential resilience-building skills.

3. Results and discussions

3.1 Exploring Identity and Community Cultural Resilience in International Documents

There are documents, regulations, and protocols related to the protection of cultural property. Here are a few notable ones:

- a) The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict is an international treaty that aims to safeguard cultural heritage during times of armed conflict. It was adopted on May 14, 1954, and has since been ratified by numerous countries.

The convention recognizes the significance of cultural property, including monuments, archaeological sites, works of art, and manuscripts, and seeks to protect them from destruction, damage, and looting. It emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural heritage for future generations and promotes cooperation among nations in achieving this goal (UNESCO, 1954).

Under the convention, parties are required to take necessary measures to protect cultural property within their territory, both in times of peace and during armed conflicts. They must establish safeguards, such as inventories, documentation, and emergency plans, to mitigate potential risks and prevent damage.

The convention also establishes the distinctive "Blue Shield" symbol, which is internationally recognized as a protective emblem for cultural property. This symbol aims to alert military forces and the public about the importance of preserving and respecting cultural heritage, even in times of war.

Overall, the 1954 Hague Convention plays a crucial role in raising awareness about the importance of safeguarding cultural heritage and providing legal frameworks for its protection during armed conflicts. It serves as an essential tool in preserving the rich diversity of our global cultural heritage for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

- b) UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property: This convention, adopted on November 14, 1970, aims to prevent the illicit import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural property. It allows countries to take measures to restrict the trade of cultural property obtained through unauthorized means and encourages international cooperation to combat illegal trafficking (UNESCO, 1970).
- c) UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (1995): The UNIDROIT Convention, adopted on June 24, 1995, focuses on preventing and combating the illicit trafficking of cultural property. It establishes rules for the restitution and return of stolen or illegally exported cultural objects and promotes international cooperation in this field (UNIDROIT, 1995).
- d) In order to protect endangered cultural heritage, the International Committee of the Blue Shield International¹ organization was created in 1996 by the four non-governmental organizations, which represent professionals active in the fields of archives, libraries, monuments and sites, and museums: International Council on Archives (ICA), International Council of Museums (ICOM), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and, International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) (<https://theblueshield.org/>).
- e) In 1998, through the Stockholm Declaration, ICOMOS "affirms that the right to cultural heritage is an integral part of human rights considering the irreplaceable nature of the tangible and intangible legacy it constitutes, and that it is threatened to in a world which is in constant transformation. This right carries duties and responsibilities for individuals and communities as well as for institutions and states. To protect this right today is to preserve the rights of future generations (www.icomos.org).
- f) Second Protocol to The Hague Convention (1999): This protocol, also known as the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention, was adopted on March 26, 1999. It strengthens the protection provided by the original convention and extends its scope to non-international armed conflicts. The protocol includes provisions related to enhanced protection, criminalization of offenses, and the establishment of enhanced protection lists (UNESCO, 1999).
- g) The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an international tribunal that prosecutes individuals for war crimes, including the intentional attack or destruction of cultural property during armed conflicts. The ICC's Rome Statute, which came into force in

¹ Blue Shield International is an organization that works to protect cultural property during armed conflicts, natural disasters, and other emergencies. It coordinates efforts between various national committees and organizations, promotes cooperation and awareness, and provides expertise in the protection of cultural heritage (<https://theblueshield.org/>).

2002, includes provisions for prosecuting these crimes and holds individuals accountable for their actions (ICC, 2002).

- h) The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) play a vital role in the protection of cultural property during armed conflicts. They provide guidelines and support for the safeguarding of cultural heritage, raise awareness about the issue, and advocate for respect and protection of cultural property.

It's important to note that these are just a few examples, and there may be other regional or country-specific treaties, conventions, initiatives, and organizations dedicated to the protection of cultural property in times of armed conflict. The collective efforts of these instruments and initiatives reflect the global commitment to preserving humanity's cultural legacy, even in times of turmoil.

Unfortunately, the provisions of these documents have been violated over time. Cultural property continues to be targeted, damaged, and destroyed during armed conflicts, despite the existence of international conventions and regulations aimed at protecting them.

There have been numerous instances where cultural heritage sites, museums, libraries, and archives have been intentionally attacked or looted during armed conflicts. These actions result in the irreversible loss of invaluable cultural artifacts and sites that hold historical, archaeological, and artistic significance.

One notable example is the destruction of cultural heritage by the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq. ISIS militants deliberately targeted and vandalized ancient archaeological sites, museums, and cultural institutions, including the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Palmyra in Syria and Mosul in Iraq. These acts of cultural heritage destruction are not only a loss for the affected countries but also a loss for humanity as a whole (Abdulkarim, 2020; Nagaoka, 2020; Spiridon et al., 2017; Taniguchi, 2020; UNESCO, 2023).

In other cases, cultural property has been impacted as collateral damage during armed conflicts, with attacks on military targets inadvertently causing harm to nearby cultural sites. The indiscriminate use of weapons or inadequate safeguards can lead to the destruction of cultural heritage, despite international laws prohibiting such actions.

However, it's essential to highlight that efforts are being made to document, condemn, and prosecute these acts of cultural heritage destruction as war crimes. International organizations, governments, and civil society groups are working together to raise awareness, strengthen protections, and promote the responsible stewardship of cultural property during armed conflicts.

3.2 Resilience-building

Resilience-building refers to the process of developing and enhancing the ability of individuals, communities, and societies to withstand, adapt, and recover from adversities, challenges, and crises. It involves strengthening social, economic, environmental, and cultural systems to better cope with shocks and stresses. In the context of cultural resilience, it focuses on preserving and maintaining cultural identity, traditions, practices, and heritage in the face of various threats or disruptions, including armed conflict. Here are some key aspects of resilience-building (Brown, Hay-Edie, 2015; Cisee, 2020; Clauss-Ehlers, 2004; Clauss-Ehlers, 2010; Holtorf, 2018; Nagaoka, 2020; Saeed et al., 2021; Spiridon et al., 2015; Smyntyna, 2016; Stig Sørensen, 2020; Taniguchi, 2020; WardekkeR et al., 2023):

- **Cultural Identity:** Resilience-building aims to foster a sense of cultural identity and pride. It involves recognizing and valuing one's own cultural heritage and traditions.
- **Community Engagement:** Building resilience relies on active community participation and engagement. It involves bringing community members together, encouraging collaboration, and involving them in decision-making processes related to cultural preservation.

- **Education and Awareness:** Promoting education and increasing awareness about cultural heritage and its significance is vital for resilience-building. By understanding the value of their cultural heritage, individuals and communities are more likely to take actions to protect and preserve it.
- **Documentation and Digitization:** Resilience-building often includes efforts to document, record, and digitize cultural knowledge, practices, and artifacts. This helps create archives or databases that can serve as resources for future generations, even in the face of challenges or loss.
- **Adaptive Strategies:** Resilience-building involves developing adaptive strategies to cope with changing circumstances. This may include adapting cultural practices, considering alternative approaches to preserve intangible heritage, or integrating traditional knowledge with new technologies and innovations.
- **Networking and Collaboration:** Building networks and fostering collaboration among individuals, communities, cultural organizations, and institutions are essential for resilience-building. Partnership and knowledge-sharing help leverage resources, expertise, and support.
- **Sustainable Development:** Resilience-building promotes sustainable development practices that take into account cultural values, local knowledge, and environmental considerations. It emphasizes the integration of cultural heritage preservation with social, economic, and environmental well-being.
- **Policy and Governance:** Resilience-building requires supportive policies and governance structures that prioritize the protection and preservation of cultural heritage. It involves advocating for legal frameworks and initiatives that safeguard cultural assets and promote inclusive cultural practices.

By integrating these elements into resilience-building efforts, individuals and communities can work towards the preservation, adaptation, and revitalization of their cultural heritage, fostering their ability to withstand and recover from the impacts of armed conflict and other challenges.

The UNESCO operational guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, revised in 2023 (WHC, 23/01–24 September 2023), underlines the significant role of the local population in the complex processes of conservation, restoration and/or reconstruction of their cultural heritage. Within these guidelines, objective d), reformulated in 2019, was maintained with the aim of increasing the participation of local and national populations, including indigenous peoples, in the protection and presentation of heritage in an equitable, inclusive, and effective manner (UNESCO, 2023). This goal was successfully achieved during the reconstruction of the mausoleums in the historic city of Timbuktu which suffered significant destruction in 2012 during the conflict between government forces and rebel groups in Mali (Figures 12, 13).



Photo source: Getty Images/AFP/E. Feferberg

Figure 12. The ruins of the Alfa Moya mausoleum in Timbuktu, 2013



Photo source: Timbuktu © CRAterre | Thierry Joffroy

Figure 13. Reconstruction of Timbuktu mausoleums nears completion

There was a deliberate effort to preserve traditional masonry techniques and knowledge. Recognizing the importance of these practices, the decision was made from the outset to prioritize their continuation. The traditional Masonic guilds played a significant role in this reconstruction process, ensuring that the valuable skills and methods employed in traditional masonry were upheld and incorporated into the project (Cisee, 2020).

4. Conclusions

The negative impact of armed conflicts on cultural heritage is obvious and seemingly inevitable.

Cultural property, cultural artifacts and sites that hold historical, archaeological, artistic and spiritual significance continues to be intentionally targeted, damaged, looted and destroyed during armed conflicts, despite the activity of international institutions and organizations in the field, despite the existence of international conventions and regulations aimed at protecting them.

The existent documents, regulations, and protocols related to the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict form a comprehensive framework that highlight the international community's commitment to preserving and safeguarding our shared cultural heritage, even in challenging circumstances.

In addition, several organizations, such as UNESCO and national heritage authorities, maintain no-strike lists or registers of cultural sites and objects that should be protected from attacks during armed conflicts. These lists help military forces to identify and avoid targeting cultural property, minimizing the risk of destruction.

Many countries have enacted national legislation to protect their cultural heritage during armed conflicts. These laws usually establish provisions for the protection, preservation, and restitution of cultural property, as well as penalties for their destruction or illicit trade.

While violations of these protective provisions persist, it is essential that we continue to advocate for the respect and preservation of cultural heritage and support initiatives that aim to safeguard these invaluable treasures for future generations, focusing on the preservation of cultural heritage in the face of various threats and promoting cultural resilience in all contexts (cultural identity, education, and awareness, documentation, and digitization, adaptive strategies, networking and collaboration, sustainable development and policy and governance).

As long as the right to cultural heritage is an integral part of human rights, each person must be involved in the participatory process of conservation of the cultural heritage that surrounds him and, even in challenging circumstances such as armed conflict, be culturally resilient and able to preserve and cultivate its cultural identity.

To be culturally resilient, ordinary people can take some daily actions that encourage cultural resilience in difficult times such as:

- Preserving oral traditions, stories, songs and rituals, sharing and documenting these traditions within the community, ensuring that they are passed down to future generations;
- Maintaining a connection with the mother tongue as an essential part of cultural identity, encouraging language study and practice within the community, especially among younger generations;
- Protecting cultural artifacts within the community, identifying options for their safe storage or relocation to secure locations during times of conflict, or at least creating a digital record (digital platforms, online archives, virtual exhibitions, or digital storytelling initiatives);
- Engaging in cultural exchange activities within the community or with neighboring communities to celebrate and share cultural traditions through cultural events and festivals;
- Implementing cultural exchange programs in schools;

- Advocating for the introduction of compulsory subjects in school curricula that encourage younger generations to engage with cultural practices, traditions, history, geopolitics, environmental science and climate change, instilling in them a sense of pride and belonging.

By undertaking these actions, ordinary people can contribute to cultural resilience in situations of armed conflict. They help to preserve and strengthen cultural identity, ensuring that it endures despite the challenges posed by conflict.

In addition, updating the general strategies of cultural identity and community resilience mentioned in the existing international conventions and regulations, accepted and adopted worldwide is necessary and must be done in accordance with the rights of ordinary people to hold the authentic testimony of the cultural heritage, to participate in the decisions that affect heritage and the cultural values they embody, to form associations for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. At the same time, it is necessary to establish the limits of community engagement in the complex process of cultural heritage conservation.

Acknowledgments: This work was co-funded by the European Social Fund, through Operational Programme Human Capital 2014-2020, project number OCU/993/6/13/153322, project title "Educational and training support for Ph.D. students and young researchers in preparation for insertion into the labor market".

References

1. Abdoulaye, C. (2022) Revitalization of the Religious Sites of Tombouctou (Mosques and Mausoleums Listed as UNESCO World Heritage) Post Terrorism and Covid Crisis. In *Regenerating Cultural Religious Heritage*, Niglio, O. Eds; Springer: Singapore; pp. 225-236. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-3470-4_16
2. Abdulkarim, M. (2020) Palmyra: From War and Destruction to Rehabilitation. In *The Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues Heritage*; Nagaoka, M. Eds.; Springer, Cham.; pp. 113-121. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51316-0_7
3. Atonelli, G.F.; Cossu, T. (2021) Urban Recovery and Reconstruction Strategies for the Old City of Mosul After ISIL/Da'esh Occupation. In *Transcultural Diplomacy and International Law in Heritage Conservation*; Niglio, O., Lee, E.Y.J. Eds.; Springer: Singapore; 395-407. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-0309-9_23
4. Brown, J.; Hay-Edie, T. (2015) *Engager les communautés locales dans la gérance du patrimoine mondial. Méthodologie fondée sur l'expérience de COMPACT*; UNESCO: Paris, France, 118 p. Available online: <https://whc.unesco.org/document/134456/>
5. Bouchenaki, M. (2020) Safeguarding the Buddha Statues in Bamiyan and the Sustainable Protection of Afghan Cultural Heritage. In *The Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues Heritage*; Nagaoka, M. Eds.; Springer, Cham.; pp. 19-30. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51316-0_2
6. Cisee, L. (2020) Role of the Traditional Masonry Corporation in the Process of Reconstruction of the Destroyed Mausolees in Timbuktu, Mali. In *The Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues Heritage*; Nagaoka, M. Eds.; Springer, Cham.; pp. 123-134. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51316-0_8
7. Clauss-Ehlers, C.S. (2004) Re-inventing resilience: A model of "culturally-focused resilient adaptation." In *Community planning to foster resilience in children*; C.S. Clauss-Ehlers; Weist M.D. Eds.; Kluwer Academic: New York, NY; pp. 27-41. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-306-48544-2_3
8. Clauss-Ehlers, C.S. (2010). Cultural Resilience. In *Encyclopedia of Cross-Cultural School Psychology*; Clauss-Ehlers, C.S. Eds; Springer, Boston, MA; pp. 324-326 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-71799-9_115

9. Curtea de conturi UE (2022) Investițiile UE în siturile culturale: un domeniu care merită o mai bună orientare și coordonare, Raportul special (8)2020 RO. Available online: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eca/special-reports/cultural-investments-08-2020/ro/>
10. Hanson, K. (2011) Ancient Artefacts and Modern Conflict: A Case Study of Looting and Instability in Iraq. In *Cultural Heritage, Ethics, and the Military*; Stone, P.G. Ed.; Heritage Matters. Boydell & Brewer: UK; pp. 113-128. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781846159442.008>
11. Holtorf, C. (2018) Embracing change: how cultural resilience is increased through cultural heritage. *World Archaeology*, 50(4), 639-650. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.2018.1510340>
12. ICC (2002) ICC's Rome Statute Published by the International Criminal Court. ISBN No. 92-9227-232-2. ICC-PIOS-LT-03-002/15. (<https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/Publications/Elements-of-Crimes.pdf>)
13. ICOMOS (1998) The Stockholm Declaration: Declaration of ICOMOS marking the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available online: <https://www.icomos.org/en/what-we-do/focus/human-rights-and-world-heritage/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/372-the-stockholm-declaration>
14. Nagaoka, M. (2020) The Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues – Evolving Conservation Ethics and Principles concerning Intentionally Destroyed Cultural Heritage In *The Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues Heritage*; Nagaoka, M. Eds.; Springer, Cham.; pp. 3-15. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51316-0_1
15. Peters, O. (2017) From “Degenerate Art” To “Looted Art”: Developments and Consequences of National Socialist Cultural Policy. *New German Critique*, 44(1), 9-33. <https://doi.org/10.1215/0094033X-3705676>
16. Poshyvailo, I. (2023) Identity war in Ukraine: The Power of Cultural Resilience. *The GCI Newsletter*, 38(2).
17. Pusch, J.; Gamboni, D. (2000) The destruction of art: Iconoclasm and vandalism since the French Revolution. *Studies in Art Education*, 40(3), 284-288. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1320869>
18. Saeed, Z.O.; Almkhtar, A.; Abanda, H.; Tah, J. (2021) Mosul City: Housing Reconstruction after the ISIS War. *Cities*, 120, 103460. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2021.103460>
19. Smyntyna, O. (2016) Cultural resilience theory as an instrument of modeling human response to global climate change. A case study in the north-western Black Sea region on the pleistocene-holocene boundary. *RIPARIA*, 2, 1-20.
20. Spiridon, P.; Sandu, I. (2015) Conservation of the Cultural Heritage: From participation to collaboration. *European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy*, 5(1), 43-53 <https://doi.org/10.3389/ejcmp.2023.v5iss1-article-4>
21. Spiridon, P.; Ursu, A.; Sandu, I. (2016a) Touristic Revaluation of the Cultural Heritage in the Moldavian Plain. *International Multidisciplinary Scientific GeoConference: SGEM*, 2, 381-388. <https://doi.org/10.5593/SGEM2016/B62/S26.051>
22. Spiridon, P.; Ursu, A.; Sandu, I. (2016b) Heritage Management Using GIS. *International Multidisciplinary Scientific GeoConference: SGEM*, 3, 263-270. <https://doi.org/10.5593/SGEM2016/B62/S26.051>
23. Spiridon, P., Sandu, I., Stratulat, L. (2017) The conscious deterioration and degradation of the cultural heritage. *International Journal of Conservation Science*, 8(1), 81-88.
24. Stig Sørensen, M.L. (2020) The Roles of the Locals - and the Possible Reconstruction of the Destroyed Buddha Statues in the Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan. In *The Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues Heritage*; Nagaoka, M. Eds.; Springer, Cham.; pp. 173-185. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51316-0_11

25. Taniguchi, Y. (2020) Cultural Identity and the Revival of Values After the Demolishment of Bamiyan's Buddhist Wall Paintings. In *The Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues Heritage*; Nagaoka, M. Eds.; Springer, Cham.; pp. 51-70. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51316-0_4
26. Thapa, B. (2010) Funding Strategies for World Heritage Sites in Least Developed Countries. In *Cultural Heritage Management: A Global Perspective*; Messenger P.; Smith G. Eds.; University of Florida Press: USA. <https://doi.org/10.5744/florida/9780813034607.003.0022>
27. Tian, N.; Lopes da Silva, D.; Liang, X.; Scarazzato, I.; Dr Béraud-Sudreau, L.; Assis, A. (2022) *Trends in World Military Expenditure*. SIPRI Fact Sheet: Stockholm, Sweden; pp. 12. <https://doi.org/10.55163/PNVP2622>
28. WardekkeR, A.; Nath, S.; Handayaningsih, T.U. (2023) The interaction between cultural heritage and community resilience in disaster-affected volcanic regions. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 145(3), 116-128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2023.04.008>
29. UNESCO (1954) Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict is an international treaty that aims to safeguard cultural heritage during times of armed conflict. Available online: <https://en.unesco.org/protecting-heritage/convention-and-protocols/1954-convention>
30. UNESCO (1970) Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. Available online: <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/legal-affairs/convention-means-prohibiting-and-preventing-illicit-import-export-and>
31. UNESCO (1999) Second Protocol to the Hague Convention. Available online: <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/legal-affairs/second-protocol-hague-convention-1954-protection-cultural-property-event>
32. UNESCO (2023) Operational Guidelines - WHC,23/01– 24 September 2023. Available online: <https://whc.unesco.org/document/203803>
33. UNIDROIT (1995) UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects. Available online: <https://www.unidroit.org/instruments/cultural-property/1995-convention/>
34. United Nations (1987) Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, Oxford University Press. (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>)
35. Ursu, A.; Spiridon, P.; Rusu, A.; Sandu, I. (2019) Heritage Sites at Risk in Moldavian Plain - Romania, Using G.I.S. *International Multidisciplinary Scientific GeoConference: SGEM*, 19(2.2), 879-886. <https://doi.org/10.5593/sgem2019/2.2/S11.108>

