Dilemmas of Heritage, Destruction and Memorial: Two Lost 'Cathedrals'—The Intertwined Fate of the Great Synagogue of Vilna and the Ḥurva Synagogue of Jerusalem

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Abstract

The issue of authenticity, continuity and the reconstruction of lost monuments has been the subject of vigorous debate in the philosophy and methodology of heritage conservation since its inception and especially after the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet bloc. This article discusses the intertwined history of the Great Synagogue of Vilna (Vilnius) in Lithuania and the Ḥurva Synagogue of Jerusalem. Both synagogues, which had been the main 'cathedral' shrines for the Jewish communities of Vilna and Jerusalem, were destroyed during the conflict, leaving ruins in their place. After many years of loss and given their importance, an opportunity arose to memorialize or reconstruct these monuments. Special attention is given to the significance of these two synagogues as places of identity and to the way in which changing dynamics in the ethics of heritage management concerning the reconstruction of lost built cultural heritage have affected outcomes at these two sites.

Keywords

Architecture, cultural studies, destruction and reconstruction, ethics of heritage management, synagogue

Introduction

The issue of authenticity, continuity and the reconstruction of lost monuments has been the subject of vigorous debate in the philosophy and methodology of heritage conservation since its inception and especially after the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Discussions of the changing attitudes to authenticity and reconstruction have become central to UNESCO World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS debate, producing a plethora of charters, recommendations and associated academic writings over the past three decades, with present attitudes ranging from those who would prefer to leave destroyed monuments in their ruinous state to those who would consider reconstruction when documentation is of a standard that enables 'authentic' reconstruction.

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For the synagogues of Europe, this dilemma is especially acute. The Centre for Jewish Art of the Hebrew University has listed around 17,000 synagogues in Europe prior to the Second World War.[1] As a result of the systematic Nazi destruction of synagogues from 1938 to 1945, the extremely limited resources of the vastly reduced Jewish communities in Europe after the Second World War and the sporadic but sustained abandonment and deliberate destruction of synagogues by the authorities in the former eastern-bloc states and simple negligence, the number of surviving synagogue buildings in Europe numbers today less than 3,000, of which only 700 retain their original function. Most of the Great Synagogues in Germany, Poland, the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Greece, etc., were lost, together with all of the important wooden synagogues.[2] Cities, towns and villages, which were home to large Jewish communities prior to the Second World War, not only lost their Jews and their culture but, through the destruction of the Jewish monuments, such as synagogues, have also lost the symbolic memory of the contribution of Jewish history and civilization to the development of those places of settlement and to the urban fabric. The 'Great Synagogues' of Europe, such as those in Warsaw, Frankfurt, Munich, Königsberg, Berlin, Breslau, Thessaloniki, Riga, Minsk, Vilna, Lviv, etc., multiplied by the hundreds, were lost. This loss was not only of the physical, for these monuments embodied a symbolic value that went far beyond the bricks and mortar. Indeed, many cities of Europe are symbolically represented by their cathedrals, and we only need to witness the reaction to the fire in Notre Dame to fully appreciate the importance of that symbol to entire populations.[3] For the people of Europe and especially the Jewish communities, the Great Synagogues were poignant physical symbols of the place of Jewish civilization as part of European culture. For many European cities, the loss of the physical symbol after two to three generations also means the absence of Jews from the urban historic fabric of those cities. As time passes, since these monuments disappeared from the urban fabric, the place of historic and significant Jewish presence in these cities fades from daily public consciousness. Notably, in places where post-bellum Second World War reconstruction took place (Warsaw and Dresden, for example), the synagogues were omitted from the list of structures rebuilt in their original (authentic?) form if at all.

This article will examine one such example from Europe, the Great Synagogue of Vilna (Vilnius)[4] in Lithuania, and juxtapose it with the Great Synagogue of Jerusalem known as the Ḥurva. Both monuments were destroyed, in different belligerent circumstances in the 1940s, leaving both cities without their symbolic marker. In both cases, long-term discussions have taken place to consider what should be the best way to commemorate or even reconstruct these buildings. The confluence of their histories and the similarities in the philosophical debate make mutual discussion worthwhile. Furthermore, and vital to this discussion, both Jerusalem and Vilna (Vilnius) are World Heritage sites recognized for their historical importance and their well-preserved cultural and architectural complexes, including hundreds of individually important monuments. Both the Old City of Jerusalem and Vilnius lost almost all their synagogues, including their symbolic 'cathedral' synagogues, during the events of the twentieth century, Vilna losing around 150 further synagogues and the Old City of Jerusalem losing 57. In both cases, intervention by the World Heritage Centre was required during the evaluation stages of their selection as sites of outstanding universal value, to give appropriate importance to their lost Jewish monuments, whether because of having been forgotten after being removed from urban memory or because of a conscious decision of exclusion.

The Great Synagogue and *Shulhoyf* of Vilna: Historical Outline

The Jewish quarter of Vilnius, with the Great Synagogue at its heart, is located within the historic town of Vilnius, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1994.[5] Known by Jewish tradition as *Yerushaliym D'Lita* ['Jerusalem of Lithuania'], because of the importance of the community as a centre of rabbinic and

secular learning, Vilnius was first mentioned as the Lithuanian capital in 1323, in the letters of the Grand Duke Gediminas in which he invited foreign craftsmen and merchants, including Jews, to settle in the city.[6] Still, the time when Jews first settled in Vilnius is unknown; clear documentation of a Jewish community is available only from the sixteenth century. In 1593, the community obtained a privilege from King Sigismund III Vasa, which allowed them to settle in the city, build a synagogue, establish a cemetery and engage in trade. After attacks on the community, an additional privilege was issued in 1633 by King Władysław IV Vasa, which reads: 'for the purpose of security and better protection from fire, permission is given to build a synagogue in our city of Vilnius, on Jewish Street, which is densely lined up with buildings…, on the same plot where it stands now'. In this way, the construction of the masonry Great Synagogue was sanctioned together with the right to establish a Jewish quarter, delimited by a number of streets. The limitation of abode to the Jewish quarter was abolished in 1783, and dozens of synagogues and prayer houses were established, numbering around 160 prior to the Holocaust.

In the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries, the Vilna Jewish community grew to become was one of the largest in Eastern Europe, this period dominated by the life and works of the Gaon of Vilna (1720–1797), the most illustrious scholar of his time and renowned for his method of Torah study. Though the importance of Vilna continued under Tsarist rule in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a centre of Torah study, secularization of the community also made it a cultural and political centre, with Vilna becoming a focus of teaching, Yiddish language literature and publishing, Yiddish and Hebrew journalism, theatre, Bundist and Zionist activities and Jewish research. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Jewish population of Vilna peaked, reaching 47% of the city's residents. The community was almost entirely destroyed during the Second World War when about 70,000 Jews from Vilna and the surrounding region were murdered in Ponar (Paneriai) by the German Nazis and their local collaborators.

The Great Synagogue of Vilna was built between 1633 and 1635, in Renaissance–Baroque style (Figure 1).[7] Over the course of time, the Great Synagogue was surrounded with other buildings within the labyrinth—like *Shulhoyf*, a complex of 12 synagogues and other communal institutions. These



Figure 1. The Great Synagogue of Vilna.

Source: Public Domain (Wikimedia Commons): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Synagogue_of_Vilna_-_1914-1918.jpg

created a sort of Jewish town square that included the premises of the community Board [*kahal-shtub*], the community bathhouse and ritual baths [*miqveo't*], a public lavatory, a communal 'well', kosher meat stalls and the famous Strashun Library. The whole complex became a great centre of Torah study and the heart of the Lithuanian Jewish religious community of *Mitnagdim,* who sided with intellectual study of the religious texts, contrasting the more spiritual profession of the faith adopted by the *Hasidim*.

The original structure of the Great Synagogue was almost square and could hold about 450 people, the floor of which was located 10 steps below street level to give the interior a lofty appearance, while complying to height restrictions of the building imposed on the community by the authorities which specified that a synagogue could not be built higher than the surrounding churches. Pilasters divided all four façades into three bays each, corresponding to the interior arrangement of the building. Each bay contained a window, placed high above the ground. The central bay of the south-eastern façade, marking the interior placement of the *Aron Kodesh* (Torah Ark), was narrower than the side bays. In the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries, annexes were attached on three sides of the synagogue, so that only the south-eastern façade remained exposed, though it was partly concealed by shops and later by the Strashun Library. Thus, only the upper register of the façades with 12 windows of the prayer hall was seen from outside.

The external pilasters were continued inside the building with high Tuscan columns supported nine cross vaulted bays. In the middle of the four columns at the centre of the synagogue was a three-tiered *bimah*. The lower tier of the *bimah* was composed of 12 columns, 4 Corinthian and 8 Tuscan, supporting a canopy surrounded by 12 curved buttresses and 4 seated lions. The splendid two-tiered mannerist *Aron Kodesh* on the eastern wall was decorated with stucco carvings, representing vegetative, animal and Jewish symbols. The ark was approached by two short flights of steps, with iron balustrades. On the north-eastern and north-western sides of the prayer hall, there were two-storey structures, serving as the *ezrat nashim* [women's sections], connected to the hall by small windows.

After centuries of existence, with the destruction of the entire Jewish community of Vilnius, this most important shrine of the Jews of Lithuania was ransacked and burnt by the Germans during the Second World War (Figure 2). In 1957, the Lithuanian–Soviet authorities completely razed the ruins of the



Figure 2. The Remains of the Great Synagogue of Vilna After the Second World War.

Source: Yad Vashem: https://photos.yadvashem.org/photo-details.html?language=en&item_id=34640&ind=44.

synagogue and the *Shulhoyf*. On the site of the Great Synagogue, a simple brick elementary school was constructed. If the Nazis had destroyed the Jews of Vilna, the Soviet authorities conducted a systematic campaign to erase their memory.

Even though the Great Synagogue and its surrounding buildings were not comprehensively documented prior to its demolition, the site was well documented, photographed and frequently depicted by artists and in literary and research works, both before and after the Holocaust. In 1893–1898, renovation works in the Great Synagogue were carried out, for which plans were submitted to the municipal authorities by the engineer, Leonid Vilner. A second detailed plan of the monument was produced in 1934 for the Institute of Polish Architecture at the Warsaw University of Technology. A surprising supplement was a detailed documentary painting by Marc Chagall, which provides us with the colour scheme of the interior. The excavations we have been conducting at the site since 2011 have provided further data and authentic remains that can help in many cases to provide data where otherwise conjecture may be unavoidable.[8]

Ḥurvat Rabbi Yehuda he-Ḥasid Synagogue in Jerusalem: Historical Outline

In 1700, around 500 Ashkenazi Jews, led by Judah he-Ḥasid, arrived in Jerusalem. They built a small synagogue that, after being destroyed by local Arab debtors, was burnt and left as a ruin (the Ḥurva). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Lithuanian disciples of the Gaon of Vilna settled in Jerusalem and decided to rebuild the Ashkenazi synagogue, a symbolic act that was part of the prerequisite for the Messianic age.[9]

Only in 1855, after international intervention, was Moses Montefiore handed a building permit. The Ḥurva Synagogue was designed and later built under the supervision of Assad Effendi, the sultan's official architect in Byzantine revival style (Figure 3). It was supported by four massive corner pilasters over

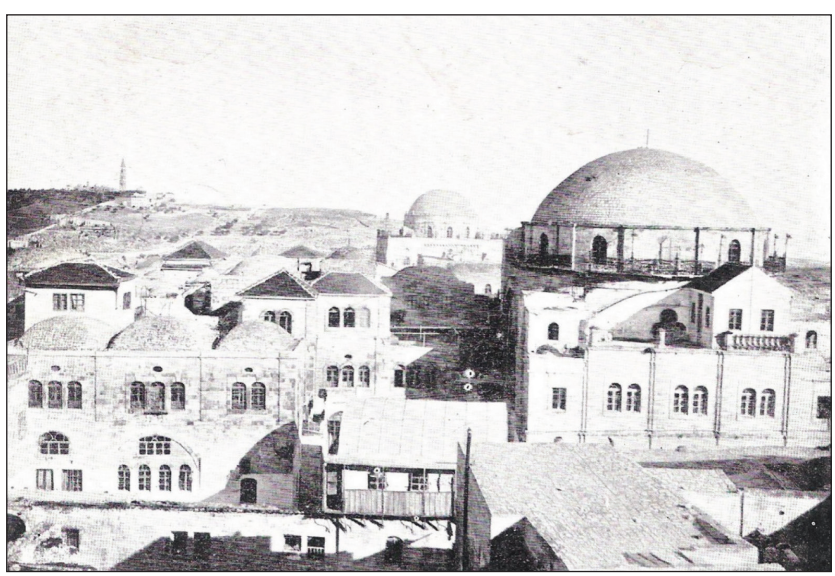


Figure 3. The Ḥurva Synagogue in Jerusalem at the End of the Nineteenth Century.

Source: Public domain (Wikimedia Commons): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hurva_Synagogue_(before_1899).jpg

a drum that was set to carry a large dome, one of the highest structures in the Old City. At the base of the dome were 12 windows, and a large window was incorporated into the façade. The two-tiered Torah ark had the capacity to house 50 Torah scrolls. The ark, together with its decorative gates, was taken from the Nikolayevsky Synagogue in Kherson, Russia.

In 1864, the new synagogue was dedicated, and the Ḥurva Synagogue immediately became the most ornamental and important synagogue in the Land of Israel. It was a focal point of Jewish spiritual life in the city and was the site of the installation of the Ashkenazi chief rabbis. As a 'cathedral' synagogue, the Ḥurva hosted important guests such as the High Commissioner of Palestine when symbolically meeting the Jewish community of the city.

In May 1948, after the battle for the Old City, the Jordanian Arab Legion blew up the synagogue together with 57 other synagogues in the Jewish quarter.

Following the Six-Day War, the State of Israel decided that a commemorative architectural solution was required, under the basic understanding that the synagogue should be rebuilt. Louis Kahn was commissioned to create a contemporary plan, which, though supported by many architects and planners, proved too challenging for the public. With no agreed solution, a symbolic arch was built as a memorial to the Ḥurva in 1977, though this did not satisfy the desire to reconstruct a major synagogue at the site.[10]

Eventually, a plan to rebuild the synagogue in its original nineteenth-century style was approved by the Israeli government in 2000. Architect Nahum Meltzer was commissioned to reconstruct the synagogue based on a detailed analysis of the documentation of the original structure commissioned from the Israel Antiquities Authority, and the reconstructed Ḥurva was opened in 2010 (Figure 4).



Figure 4. The Reconstructed Ḥurva Synagogue in Jerusalem.

Source: Wikimedia Commons and Cchinski: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sinagoga_Hurva.JPG

The reconstructed Ḥurva Synagogue was based on detailed documentation of the original building, both inside and outside, that was available to the architect for the design of the reconstructed synagogue. Beyond plans and hundreds of photographs of events that were held at the synagogue until 1948, a scaled model was located. This model, sculpted in wood by Meir Rozin in 1912, showed the decoration of the walls and also the furnishing of the interior. While full documentation existed, the urban fabric around the synagogue had greatly changed. The original building was set into a cluster of structures and only had one street-level façade. In the new plan design was required for open façades that had not previously existed and thus could not be authentic in design. Archaeological excavation conducted by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem proved to be a useful tool, exposing the foundation of the synagogue and also remains of earlier structures dated to the Second Temple period. These included 2,000-year-old ritual baths [*miqve'ot*], which were later integrated into the reconstruction.

Back to the Dilemma

While the issue of authenticity and reconstruction has been central to the debate since the time of Ruskin in the late nineteenth century,[11] the modern paradigm of what is acceptable was only collated and redacted in 1964 in the Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964). Reconstruction was ruled out in general, the Charter encouraging at best only anastylosis. The only proviso outlined noted that reconstruction can only be justified in exceptional circumstances and then only when proper documentation exists, proper distinction is made between the original material and the reconstruction and when it bears a contemporary stamp. Indeed, the 'Management Guidelines for World Heritage', authored by Feilden and Jokiletho (1993), relate to reconstructions in the strongest terms, deeming them copies, forgeries, imitations and not reaching the baseline of what qualifies as heritage at all, never mind World Heritage. Furthermore, strict criteria for authenticity were developed, defined through function, design, setting, material and workmanship.

Human reality, however, is too often stronger than intellectual reasoning, especially where lost heritage has a symbolic, social or sacred meaning that reaches beyond the desire to operate according to the letter of the 'law'. To adjust to these changing values, heritage professionals through the Nara Document (ICCROM, 1994), the Riga Charter (ICCROM, 2000), the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 2013) and the Warsaw Recommendation (World Heritage Convention, 2018) have step-by-step softened the edges of the western European taboo on the reconstruction of lost monuments,[12] especially in Eastern Europe, where huge swaths of important built cultural heritage was decimated during the years of Nazi and Soviet control.[13] This is an attempt to catch up with practice, for since the Second World War, destroyed monuments of human meaning have been reconstructed and their revitalized existence later rationalized, before being accepted as World Heritage. The most commonly quoted examples, but not the only, are the Old City of Warsaw, the Mostar Bridge, Dresden (delisted in 2009, but not because of lack of authenticity), the Ducal Palace in Vilnius as part of the Old City of Vilnius, the Timbuktu mausoleums, the Tombs of the Buganda Kings at Kasubi and more. In many cases, buildings outside World Heritage sites, but still in important historic cities, have been reconstructed with little or questionable consideration for authenticity (e.g., Saviour Cathedral, Moscow; Royal Palace, Berlin).

In a noteworthy article on the subject of site reconstruction, Nicholas Stanley-Price outlines limited justifications for full rebuilding, including national symbolic value; continuing function or reuse; education and research; site preservation and even tourism promotion. He goes on to state that the objection to reconstruction should not include buildings that have been reconstructed following a natural disaster or a war, if there exists ample documentary evidence of the destroyed buildings

(Stanley-Price, 2009). Indeed, Jokilehto, in a greatly changed and evolved adaptation of his principled support for the stringent rules of the Venice Charter concerning authenticity, manifests movement towards a more nuanced position judging that the issue needed to be assessed in tandem with consideration for local context (Jokilehto, 1994, 2017).[14]

This doctrinal shift, which includes intangible elements as integral to authenticity, as noted in the Warsaw recommendations, guides the direction for both the Ḥurva Synagogue and the Great Synagogue of Vilna, both monuments that passed through the trauma of conflict and deliberate destruction as a way to negate identity. In such cases the reaffirmation and recovery of that identity, dignity, meaning and symbol through reconstruction can be justified, even in the context of World Heritage. The Ḥurva was reconstructed, after decades of deliberation, consideration and heated argument. Certainly, the criteria of detailed documentation, research and symbolism were covered. For this structure, functionality could also be returned, for the Old City of Jerusalem was missing its central synagogue. Furthermore, the community that used the synagogue was extant, so the Ḥurva would be more than a memorial. This reconstruction went ahead, the surviving parts of the original structure being clearly marked and the necessary changes to fit the new urban fabric were made to those who visit the site.

For the Great Synagogue of Vilna, the issue is more complex. Indeed, so complex that the UNESCO registration of the Historic Centre of Vilnius gives mention of the Great Synagogue only as an 'empty place'.[15] From the last years of the USSR, through Lithuanian independence, until today, the issue of the memorial of the Great Synagogue has been a vibrant and ongoing debate. The idea of this significant Jewish place in the history and urban development of the city as 'empty place', as a non-place, is clearly both offensive and untenable. The synagogue should be seen as the very hub of Jewish life—an institution that connects people and safeguards both religious and secular national identity. As the Jewish community's principal and most essential public building, the synagogue expresses community beliefs and identity. The central synagogue of each community also functioned to define and shape the differential identity of the minority group operating in the space, vis-à-vis its surroundings. Clearly, Great Synagogues and Choral Synagogues fill the same function for the Jewish community as the cathedral for their gentile neighbours, not only as a central locus of religious worship but also as a focus of civic and national identity, not only for the Jewish community but also for their neighbours. So, the Great Synagogue, beyond the physical structure, was a place of meaning, for Vilnius had two cathedrals, the Cathedral Basilica of St Stanislaus and St. Ladislaus and the Great Synagogue, the symbolic centre of the Jews of Lithuania, the Litvaks. The national desire for the return of Lithuanian autonomy had led to the rebuilding of the Ducal Palace,[16] but the necessity to give body and form to the other half of Vilnius's past has yet to be settled. In recent years, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to discuss this issue. Ideas exposed range from leaving the site as it is, laying out a commemorative garden that integrates the excavated remains of the synagogue, through building a memorial centre of modern design, and even full reconstruction.[17] The latter, though justifiable in the context of previous cases, remains problematic, a situation that has left the minuscule Jewish community of Vilnius very wary of such a reconstruction.

The solution, in my eyes, rests in content and functionality. The Nazi murder of the Jewish community has left few Jews to provide an original use for a reconstructed Great Synagogue, a situation repeated throughout Europe. If the synagogues are rebuilt, who are they rebuilt for. In some ways, the discussion of memorial and reconstruction, without a community that can reestablish the original function, is closer to that of Banyan and Palmyra than to historic Warsaw. A similar situation exists in thousands of other towns in Europe in which the synagogues have been destroyed from Kristallnacht right through to recent years, for if important synagogues such as the Great Synagogue of Vilna are to be reconstructed for their symbolic meaning and significance, the question of what to do with these empty edifices remains open. Many synagogues, devoid of community, have metamorphosed as museums and cultural centres, but there is a limit to how many of these spaces contemporary society requires. In some cases, where the

specific edifice transcends local meaning, such reconstruction can be justified and the return of historical meaning necessary for understanding.

In the view of this author, the Great Synagogue of Vilna is a primary example of such a case, for the Great Synagogue, as the second cathedral of Vilnius, garners the symbolic values that warrant its return to the urban fabric of the city. As Laimonas Briedis has noted, Vilnius is a 'City of Strangers', a city where few of its present inhabitants have long-standing roots in the city.[18] The primary audience of the site must be the people who live there who should know something of how their city developed. Furthermore, the Great Synagogue will be a cultural and symbolic centre for the Jews who still live in the city. Clearly the site can also become a place where the hundreds of thousands of surviving descendants of Litvak Jewry can congregate to become reattached with their ancestral *heim*.[19]

Future generations of Vilnius's residents, the Litvak descendants of those who lived there in the past and visitors require both symbolic halves of the city's history, represented by the two cathedrals of Lithuania's capital.

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Data Availability Statement

Data can be shared, and the article is fully referenced.

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Notes

1. Details of the synagogues of Europe that existed prior to the Second World War are catalogued by the 'Center for Jewish Art' at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for the 'Foundation for Jewish Heritage' (https://historicsynagogueseurope.org/synagogue-home and https://www.foundationforjewishheritage.com/historic-synagogues-of-europe)
2. On the lost wooden synagogues of Poland, see Piechotka and Piechotka (2004).
3. For a discussion on the dilemmas concerning the reconstruction of Notre Dame after the fire of April 2019 between those who suggested that something new should be constructed and those who wanted Notre Dame to be rebuilt exactly as it was (see Stephens, 2024).

4. Terminology of place and its associated national attributions is an emotive issue, no less so in Lithuania, where, prior to the Second World War, a multicultural society of Lithuanians, Jews, Poles, Russians, Belarusians and others lived side by side, each with their own name for their city. Thus, the modern Lithuanian city of Vilnius was known as Wilno to the Poles and Vilna or Vilne to the Jewish inhabitants. As Vilna was the cultural nomenclature preferred by the Jews relating to their city, it used here, while Vilnius is used when referring to the modern city.
5. For the inscription of 'Vilnius Historic Centre' on the World Heritage List in 1994, see https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/541/
6. There are many accounts on the history of the Jewish community of Vilna. See especially Klausner (1934), Ran (1974), Levin (2001) and Wajs and Spector (2005).
7. For discussion on the architecture of the Great Synagogue of Vilna, see Rupeikienė (2008), Levin (2012), Kravstov (2017) and Seligman (2020, 2023).
8. Annual reports of the excavations of the Great Synagogue of Vilna can be found in Archeologiniai tyrinėjimai Lietuvoje (Archaeological Research in Lithuania): https://atl.lad.lt/
9. For a full discussion on the history of the Ḥurva Synagogue, see Gafni et al. (2009).
10. See Akerman, (1998); Seligman and Avni, (2009, pp. 310–311).
11. John Ruskin's ideas on authenticity are formulated in his influential essay 'Seven Lamps of Architecture' (1849), greatly expanded on after the massive destruction of cultural heritage during the Second World War by Cesare Brandi in his book detailing the theory of restoration (1963).
12. For issues of the reconstruction of built cultural heritage after the Second World War in Western Europe, see summary by Detry (2020, 2021).
13. The vitality of this discussion in Russia, Poland, the Balkans and elsewhere in Eastern Europe is evident in a series of new publications, almost exclusively dominated by a more liberal approach to issues of authenticity and integrity in the reconstruction of post-disaster and post-bellum sites of significance and meaning. See, for example, Bartetzky (2012), Mager (2015), Cameron (2017) and Sementsov et al. (2021).
14. On changing attitudes on the ethics of the reconstruction of lost built cultural heritage, see also Houbart and Dawans (2011), Bülow and Thomas (2020) and articles in the *International Journal of Cultural Property*, 2020, Volume 27, Special Issue: Authenticity and Reconstruction (https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-journal-of-cultural-property/issue/0EBCD6A200F94474F8605A3B37B7A54A)
15. See the documentation for the inscription of the 'Vilnius Historic Centre' on the World Heritage List at https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/541/
16. For debates on the ethical legitimacy of the reconstruction of the Ducal Palace in Vilnius, see Valiciene et al. (2009) and Rimkute (n.d.).
17. Conflicting attitudes to the future of the site of the Great Synagogue of Vilna have been expressed by part of the local Jewish community. See, for example, the 'Recommended Guidelines for the Commemoration of the Great Synagogue of Vilna' issued by the Lithuanian Jewish Community in 2018: https://www.lzb.lt/en/2018/12/18/jewish-heritage-experts-agree-guidelines-for-commemoration-of-the-great-synagogue-of-vilna/?fbclid=IwAR2oGq5IsIsz_CRlgf0r1boIb3dFaki-srptb--WfeVsHQ1tFrS99_Ljlxo and the statement of the local NGO, Litvak World' on the same https://litvakworld.com/the-great-vilna-synagogue-site-project/
18. Briedis, (2016, pp. 221–251).
19. The Yiddish term 'Heim' (literally 'home') was used by emigrants from the Pale of Settlement to register sentimental longing for their previous places of origin.

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