



# Heritage values and valuation

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## **Abstract**

*This paper explores first the definition of values and related notions, such as relativity, absolute, universal, and the relationship of heritage values with human rights. This is followed by a survey on the evolution of heritage values from the Antiquity to the Present, taking into account some of the principal landmarks on the way, including reference to thinkers such as John Ruskin, Alois Riegl and Cesare Brandi. Reference is made to the international doctrine, and particularly to the definition of the Outstanding Universal Value within the World Heritage context. The question is raised whether it is possible to measure heritage value. The answer is that it is more appropriate to speak of measuring the impact of such values. It is noted, for example, that heritage value cannot be comparable to market value, even though these sometimes coincide. The relevant parameters in each case are different. One way of measuring the impact is to work with the groups of stakeholders aiming at communicating and learning shared values in a heritage community. This is also the basis for the so-called Public Value, which can justify initiatives by policy makers and administrations. The paper concludes that values are generated through continuous learning processes and the definitions change over time resulting in diversity. Measuring values is more appropriately expressed in terms of monitoring their impact.*

## **Definition of value and related notions**

### *Value*

The notion of *value* is often used freely without thinking too much about its meaning or related attributes. Opening a dictionary, we can note that value refers to “that amount of some commodity, medium of exchange, which is considered to be an *equivalent* for something else” (Oxford English Dictionary, OED, 2010). It means that assessing the value of a thing implies comparison. It is thus necessary to identify specific attributes of a heritage resource and to compare these with similar attributes of another. Comparison can show that, in reference to those types of attributes, the value of one thing is equivalent or different in comparison to another.

### *Relativity*

The notion of *relativity* is given to mean: “Involving or implying *relation*, depending for meaning or significance upon some relationship of things...”, i.e. assessing things in comparison to each other. Thus, relativity of values could be taken to mean: the value or worth of one thing compared to specified qualities or attributes of other things. Albert Einstein, who developed the theory of relativity, referred relativity to the condition of the observer.

In terms of cultural heritage, relativity of values would be taken to mean the value or worth of a particular heritage resource (e.g. work of art) assessed in comparison to other things having similar connotations, generally resulting from the same cultural-historical context.

### *Absolute*

The question of *absolute value* has been pondered in philosophy and mathematics, where it has particular definitions. For example, in geometry, the absolute value represents (absolute) displacement from the origin (or zero) and is therefore always nonnegative. Absolute value can also be referred to a specific religion, taken as belief in and reverence for a supernatural power or powers regarded as creator and governor of the universe. Therefore, in religion the concept of *absolute* can be referred to God, the Creator. Consequently, the ethical norms of that particular religion can be considered *absolute values* to be adhered to by the believers. When something is identified as cultural heritage, however, it would not seem appropriate to speak of absolute values.

### *Universal*

Something can be said to have universal value if it represents the same value or worth for all people, or what most people find valuable. In traditional society, a particular community can have its own universe, within which, through traditional continuity, a 'universe of norms or values' has gradually emerged, though this does not necessarily give universality to these norms in the broader context. An interesting early reference to universality, sometimes taken as the first human rights declaration, is the so-called Cyrus cylinder, a clay cylinder with a cuneiform message by the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, in 539 BC. It denounces Nabonidus as impious and portrays the victorious Cyrus as pleasing to the chief god Marduk. It then tells how Cyrus had improved the lives of the citizens of Babylonia, repatriating displaced peoples and restoring temples and sanctuaries.



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Misión de monitoreo  
de sitios del Patrimonio  
Mundial en China  
Taishan, China. 1988.

*Imagen: Autor anónimo  
Archivo de ICCROM*

In the modern world, a fundamental reference is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* by the General Assembly of the United Nations, on December 10, 1948. Here, article 1 declares: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". And article 3 states: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person". Article 26 refers to the right to education, and article 27 to the right to take part in cultural life. Consequently, such notions as being free and equal, and having the right to life, liberty and security of person, as well as to education and culture, can be taken as universal values. These values were reconfirmed in the *Millennium Declaration of the United Nations* in 2000.

## Evolution of heritage values

### *Religions*

The ethical values of the three principal religions around the Mediterranean countries are based on God's Word as expressed in the Holy Book. For the Christians, the principal value is referred to Christ and human soul, spiritual wisdom, faith, and friendship. The Jews also give special significance to the Temple in Jerusalem, associated with the fundamental values of the religion. In Islam, the Qur'an is considered to reveal history as truth free from deviations. Human being as a creation of God has dignity, which is often taken as an absolute and universal value, as also referred to in the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights*. Pope Benedict XVI has often expressed serious concern for the tendency of the modern society to opt for Relativism almost in *absolute terms*. His fear is that overdoing relativism in ethical and spiritual values would result in the annihilation of all cultural values, which results in nihilism and the negation of the revealed and acquired ethical values.

### *From the Antiquity to Romanticism*

The equivalent of the English word value in ancient Greek is given as '*arete*', referring to goodness, excellence or virtue. It was generally used to indicate the virtues of heroes and nobles (*aristos*), as well as being a fundamental part of education, the '*paideia*'. It was thus fundamentally associated with education and culture. Arete is sometimes referred to as a deity and as the sister of Harmonia, the two being daughters of Ares and Aphrodite. In Latin, *value* is interpreted as: '*aestimatio*' (value, estimated worth), useful (*utilitas, commoditas*). It is interesting to note the different emphasis in ancient Greece, where the notion of value would have been associated with virtue and cultural values, in contrast to ancient Rome, where it was referred to usefulness or estimated worth. This will not be the whole picture, but it indicates priorities.

The concept of heritage in Antiquity would have been generally associated with land inherited from the parents. However, the past was also considered a source of learning, a time that had already been lived and tested. Indeed, in Mesopotamia and in Ancient Persia, the kings had libraries and treasuries where they kept documents or objects associated with educational or historical value or with political prestige. Tradition, *per se*, represents a spiritual inheritance, which gave a framework for orienting choices in a community. Tradition was not a static condition, but it offered a value system that needed to be re-appropriated by each generation before it could be considered their heritage. To be alive, traditions were also subject to change.

The European Middle Ages were built upon the inheritance of the antiquity, which was clearly a reference for the arts, sculpture and architecture. Antiquity was also present in the form of ruins and fragments that gave a certain character to the landscape. Antiquity was both feared and respected, and there was even some legal protection for specific antique monuments, such as the triumphal arches or commemorative columns in Rome. Some families were conscious of their heritage, saving fragments as part of their palaces, or collecting curiosities. At the same time, the antiquity also provided a material resource that was ruthlessly destroyed, traded and reused for building new.

The concept of Heritage received a new significance particularly in the Italian Renaissance, when artists and humanists started exploring and learning from the *ancients*, which resulted in the appreciation of the *artistic and historical values*. Antiquity became the principal lesson and reference for contemporary creation, and the Middle Ages were rejected particularly in Italy. In Nordic countries, instead, the Middle Ages provided their ancient resource, which thus became subject for research and protection.

Heritage concepts were further consolidated in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Collections of antiquities became an important social prestige, and the Grand Tours to the Mediterranean countries and beyond became an aim for those who could afford it, emphasizing the *educational and social-political values*. At the same time, the concept of cultural heritage started enclosing an ever-increasing timeframe. Modern protection of heritage sites can be seen to have its foundations especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when these values were given a more concrete form by humanists, such as Giambattista Vico, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. Generally, heritage values were seen in the cultural sphere, but were also associated with the notion of *economic value*, first referred to the notion of exchange value. Indeed, the modern concept of *value* can be taken to have its origins in the field of the economics.

From the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the French Revolution, growing Nationalism and irresistible Romanticism, the recognition of heritage values was finally brought into the public sphere becoming *National Heritage* subject to state protection and administration. The range of values from this context touches the arts and aesthetics, romantic nostalgia, and then particularly history. In terms of art, the 18<sup>th</sup> century concept of Ideal Beauty gives way to the recognition of the creative expressions by individual artists. The exploration and study of the remains of the past develops into a science, which is called archaeology and which penetrates the values associated with cultural heritage. These trends seem to have been influenced particularly by Positivistic philosophy, which emphasized that the only authentic knowledge was knowledge based on actual sense experience. Such knowledge could only be verified through strict *scientific methods*, avoiding any metaphysical speculation.

The debate about restoration that had started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and gaining already much support by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, was finally developed into theories of restoration in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This period coincided with the general revival of the past, as expressed in religion, in the arts, and in literature. It was also a period of political philosophy and the implementation of the concept of Nation States. Consequently, and already from the French Revolution, ancient monuments were recognized as National Monuments and part of the National Cultural Heritage, created by the nation and requiring protection by the nation state.



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Curso de ICCROM sobre  
Conservación Arquitectónica,  
ARC75 (Architectural  
Conservation Course)  
Roma, Italia. 1975.

Imagen: Franco Rigamonti  
Archivo de ICCROM

These monuments had often suffered from long neglect and destruction, needing major works to re-establish their ancient forms. This resulted in restoration campaigns, starting in Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy, and followed by other countries in Europe and elsewhere.

#### *From Ruskin to Brandi*

This *restoration fury* was strongly criticized by several, including the highly influential John Ruskin, who wrote his *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1949) to stress the true values of architecture. These were symbolically referred to Seven Lamps on the path leading to truth: Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory, and Obedience. It was especially in his Lamp of Memory, where he condemned restoration as a destruction of everything that had been valuable in the past, replacing it with a valueless and spiritless copy. While Ruskin has often been called the Prophet of Beauty, and one who worshiped the golden patina of age, his important contribution was the recognition of the historic value of cultural heritage, and thus its historical authenticity.

In 1903, the Austrian art historian, Alois Riegl was commissioned by the Austro-Hungarian State to write a treatise on restoration, which he called *Denkmalkultus (Cult of Monuments)*. Here he analysed heritage values placing them basically in two groups: Memorial values and Present-day values. The memorial values included the so-called age value (*Alterswert*), which he considered a product of the modern age, expressed in the signs of age and the patina. Present-day values included the relative art value, considering that people could normally appreciate the aesthetics of the works of any period, based on their contemporary educational and cultural background. Riegl also coined the concept of *Kunstwollen*, according to which each period and each culture has its particular conditions, within which artistic production achieves its character. Therefore, the valuation of cultural heritage can only be fully appreciated if seen in the relative cultural-historical context.

Cesare Brandi's renowned *Theory of Restoration* was published in 1963 (the English version appeared in 2005). Brandi considered art as the supreme value in the life of any person and the history of humanity, and his activity was ceaselessly focused on identifying and studying artistic expression, wherever it could be found. A work of art, for him, was a special

product of humanity, which needed to be recognized in its specificity. This also became the principal scope of restoration. He contrasted the work of art to a common product that generally aimed at particular use or function. In the case of *common products*, restoration could be seen as a repair, aiming at the reestablishment of the functionality of the object. A work of art, instead, had an *intrinsic value* as a specific product of humanity (defined as the ethical or philosophic value that is associated with an object *in itself* or *for its own sake*). Restoration of a work of art, therefore, had to be based on the historical-critical recognition of its specific aesthetic and historic value, rather than its use value. In practice, there is a need to strike a balance between the different value perceptions as a basis for a critical judgement concerning restoration – particularly when dealing with architecture.

### *International Doctrine*

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has marked the commercial and industrial globalisation of the world. At the same time, it has made people increasingly aware of their heritage values, which has been reflected in the establishment of a number of international organizations, of which UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, ICOM and IUCN act on the international level. Acquiring international consciousness of heritage values has established a counter point to the commercial globalisation, while stressing local heritage values. In fact, all present-day cultures are brought around the same platform, reflecting today's multicultural society. Therefore, perhaps one should no more speak of east and west, but rather of the traditional world contrasting with the globalised world. Indeed, the division is no more between states. Rather, there are different levels of value perceptions in the different countries and cultural regions. Indeed, our period is marked by an international effort of a search for heritage, concerning not only collections and monuments, but the entire historical and natural environment.

The *trade mark* of the international recognition of heritage is the emblem of the World Heritage List, based on UNESCO's *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972). This Convention notes that the world cultural and natural heritage is constantly under threat, and recognizes that parts of it are of "outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole". Today, this Convention can be considered the most successful international legal instrument created by UNESCO. As of November 2007, the Convention has been ratified by 185 States Parties, and the List includes 679 cultural, 174 natural and 25 mixed properties in 145 States Parties.<sup>1</sup> The basic condition of World Heritage listing is the need to satisfy the requirement of Outstanding Universal Value, which will be discussed below.

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<sup>1</sup> In March 2016, the Convention has been ratified by 191 States Parties, and the List includes 802 cultural, 197 natural and 32 mixed properties in 163 States Parties

## How to measure heritage values?

Taking into account the definition of the concept of *value*, at the beginning of this paper, one can note that values are fundamentally mental products of human mind, based on parameters that are found in the relevant social-cultural and physical context. They are products of learning processes, and need to be regenerated by each generation of individuals. They are thus not static, but subject to change over time. Indeed, as is obvious, values are not embedded in the heritage objects but are associated with these by the communities or individuals who recognize their worth. Consequently, when approaching an historic place or object, it is necessary to start by assessing its present-day value. However, in order to have a more comprehensive picture, there is also need to appreciate its fortune over time, i.e. how this particular object or place has been valued in the past, comparing it to others with similar attributes. Indeed, this is typically the work of art and architectural historians.

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Conferencia Regional. Organización de Patrimonio Cultural, Artesanía Popular y Turismo de Irán  
Teherán, Irán. 1994. *Imagen: Autor anónimo. Archivo de ICCROM*



Concerning commerce, it is possible to measure the worth of objects that are on sale in terms of their price. The same is the case with works of art or objects of antiquity, when these are offered on the market. Obviously, the price of a work of art, like any other product, will be subject to change depending on various external factors. But, can one really measure the heritage value of heritage with reference to its market value? Indeed, the market value of an object is not the same as its heritage value. The two notions are based on different parameters, which do not necessarily coincide. The issue of *market value* has been defined (Wikipedia) as “the estimated amount for which a property should exchange on the date of valuation between a willing buyer and a willing seller in an arms-length transaction after proper marketing wherein the parties had each acted knowledgeably, prudently, and without compulsion”. This notion is different from the market price which is “the price at which one can transact”.

Concerning heritage objects, rather than proposing to measure heritage values, it would seem more appropriate to *assess the impact of its recognition*. Heritage values can be identified as *layers of perceptions*, associated to different aspects or attributes of the heritage resource. *Cultural values* would include identity value, which is the emotive association to an object or place by individuals or by a community. This value is based on recognition by the public in general. Secondly, a heritage resource can be appreciated for *its relative art-historical or technical-historical value*, the recognition of which is based on research by professionals, such as art historians. Thirdly, one can recognize the *rarity value* of a heritage resource (e.g. being extremely old or rare), which is partly based on historical research, but which would then also be recognized by the administration responsible for listing heritage properties for protection. In addition to cultural values, heritage resources are also associated with *contemporary socio-economic values*, including for example *functional values* related to usefulness, educational values related to tourism, social values related to awareness, and political values related to the priorities of the particular regime. Often, protection and investments in a particular heritage resource are decided by administrators and politicians.

Considering what has been noted above, one can identify layers of meanings and values associated with particular heritage properties. Such perceptions can change from one group of *stakeholders* to another. Generally speaking, stakeholders are persons or organizations who are positively or negatively impacted by, or cause an impact on a particular heritage resource. Stakeholders can be grouped according to their level of impact into primary and secondary stakeholders (or even to key stakeholders). Cultural heritage can be of great variety, from collections of ancient coins to cultural landscapes and historic towns. Therefore, the stakeholders can vary greatly from one case to another. In more general terms, we can identify three principal groups of stakeholders, who have an invested interest or who would impact heritage:

- *General public*, including property owners, builders, financial managers, etc.,
- *Professionals*, including disciplines working on heritage resources, from conservators and scientists to architects and planners,
- *Politicians* and Policy makers.

In 2005, the Council of Europe adopted the *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, so-called *Faro Convention*. This Convention defines the concept of ‘*heritage community*’, which would be the primary or key stakeholder in a particular community:



“A heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations”.

Consequently, a heritage community will generate *Shared Values* in association with a particular heritage resource, such as an urban area or a cultural landscape. From the administrative point of view, such shared values can be understood as the Public Value of a particular heritage resource. In the UK, *Public Value* has been defined as the “refined return from the public’s relation to specific heritage resources”. In this context, *Refined* is taken to mean the process of engagement through deliberation and education. Consequently, *Public Policy* refers to initiatives taken by policy makers to safeguard the heritage resource as a response to Public Value. Measuring the Public Value, or better the impact of heritage values associated with a particular resource, can be assessed, e.g. in the amount of Protection, Projects, Publications, and/or Participation that it generates. The framework for the assessment and the definition of the Public Value can be referred to the following parameters:

- *Intrinsic*: values associated with the heritage resource in itself (aesthetic, historical, social, scientific values); the impact can be seen in relation to the initiatives taken to research and make known its qualities, whether historical, artistic or scientific, resulting in publications, but also encouraging the maintenance and conservation of the heritage resource.
- *Instrumental*: benefits that people gain from the use of the resource (individual, local, nationwide); these can be appreciated in the amount of services that are associated with the heritage resource, possibly but not necessarily generated by its heritage value.
- *Institutional*: attitudes taken by public institutions and politicians to generate trust and legitimacy to heritage; these can be initiatives to educate a community and to raise awareness of the public about the qualities and values of a heritage resource, resulting in an increased participation in heritage protection.

A special case of heritage values is related to inscribing a property on the World Heritage List. However, the constructive debate around the World Heritage platform is proving beneficial also more in general, sensitizing the policy makers in the different States to identify and protect properties that never were thought about as cultural heritage before. The principal condition for World Heritage listing is to satisfy the requirement of *Outstanding Universal Value*, OUV, which has been defined in an UNESCO expert meeting:

*The requirement of outstanding universal value should be interpreted as an outstanding response to issues of universal nature common to or addressed by all human cultures. In relation to natural heritage, such issues are seen in bio-geographical diversity. In relation to culture in human creativity and resulting cultural processes.*

(World Heritage Global Strategy meeting in Amsterdam, 1998)



JUKKA JOKILEHTO, VLASTA DVOŘÁK BEGOVIĆ, SVETISLAV VUČENOVIĆ Y PARTICIPANTES  
Curso de Conservación Arquitectónica, ARC77  
Probablemente Roma, Italia. 1977. Imagen: Autor anónimo. Archivo de ICCROM

An ICOMOS study (2005) on such a Thematic Framework lists the following issues considered of universal nature, and therefore themes that can be taken as the basic reference for the definition of OUV:

- *Cultural associations*: Human interaction in society; Cultural and symbolic associations; Branches of knowledge;
- *Expressions of creativity*: Monuments; Groups of buildings; Sites;
- *Spiritual responses*: Spiritual and religious systems;
- *Utilisation of natural resources*: Agriculture and food production; Mining and quarrying; Systems of manufacturing;
- *Movement of peoples*: Migration, Nomadism, Slavery; Routes; Systems of transportation;
- *Development of technologies*.

These themes do not directly define the value of a particular property. Rather, the themes should be understood as an indication of the type of significance or meaning that the property can have. Once the theme or themes have been identified, it is necessary to detect the related attributes or qualities. It is only then that one can proceed to the actual assessment of the value of the place. The evaluation process can be seen as a methodology, which should be based on the following steps:

1. Identifying the significance of the heritage resource in relation to factors that endorsed its foundation and development, and the themes (issues) that represent its significance and its qualities;

2. Preparing a thematic study of the range of properties that relate to the same theme within the appropriate cultural region, and assessing the heritage value of the property concerned within the relevant chronological-regional context.

The concept of *significance* is sometimes taken as a synonym of *value*. Nevertheless, for our purposes, it is more convenient to refer to the etymology of the word: *to signify, to be a sign or symbol* of something (OED). Referring to the above Thematic Framework, there can be a large number of properties that have similar meaning, i.e. signify the same. However, some of these properties may be associated with higher value judgement than others. Indeed, the definition of the relative value of a particular property should be based on a comparison with others having similar significance or similar qualities or attributes. Thus, the notion of significance should not be taken as a synonym of value, but rather referred to the meaning of a particular heritage resource, which can then be associated with value judgement. Similarly, the qualities or attributes of a property can be assessed for their relative value.

With reference to World Heritage, the verification of the authenticity of the information sources in a particular heritage resource is a basic requirement for the acceptance of its Outstanding Universal Value. In 1994, an expert meeting prepared the *Nara Document on Authenticity* where it is stated as follows:

*Conservation of cultural heritage in all its forms and historical periods is rooted in the values attributed to the heritage. Our ability to understand these values depends, in part, on the degree to which information sources about these values may be understood as credible or truthful. Knowledge and understanding of these sources of information, in relation to original and subsequent characteristics of the cultural heritage, and their meaning, is a requisite basis for assessing all aspects of authenticity.*

(ICOMOS, 1994)

Consequently, heritage values depend on the credibility of the sources of information. The identification of the sources of information depends on the character and qualification of the heritage itself as well as of its context. They can therefore be different from one culture to another, and even from one place to another within the country. Such sources of information may include: 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. The recognition of the significance and the values of a heritage resource is then the fundamental basis for its restoration.

## Conclusions

- Values are generated as a result of continuous learning processes, and the definitions thus can change over time resulting in great diversity both in the definition of the heritage resources and associated values. At the same time, each place, such as historic urban areas or cultural landscapes, can be perceived to have layers of significances and even conflicting values. Therefore, there is need for communication between the different groups of stakeholders, and eventually arbitration in order to reach shared values.
- Measuring values is perhaps more appropriately expressed in terms of monitoring their impact. Values are products of learning processes, and they should not be confused with the market value or market price of a particular object. As a result,

rather than attempting to measure heritage value, it will be more appropriate to assess the impact. Furthermore, the fact that one heritage place appears being given less attention than another does not necessarily mean that it is less valuable. It is only an indication that there is need to learn more about it.

- The values generated by the general public, by professionals and by decision-makers are components of public values or shared values, forming the basis for policies of heritage protection. In the history, such shared values have always been the result of hard work and sacrifice by interested parties. Certainly also in the future, it will be necessary to continue generating interest in particular types of heritage resources. In this regard, the World Heritage Convention has already provided a useful international platform for intercultural communication, bringing together other international organizations, such as ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN. These efforts need to be further enhanced and strengthened at the regional and local levels in order to inform and engage the different groups of stakeholders to communicate and agree about shared values.

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