

Authenticity Criteria in Conservation of Historic Buildings

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Abstract

1- How authenticity criteria contributes for the conservation of historic buildings.

2-The author, based on relevant research and theories used case studies from historic buildings to understand the best practices in Europe in order to define "a set of authenticity criteria in conservation".

Taking in consideration the different interdisciplinary views in Conservation, this research aims for a consensus about the concept of "authenticity criteria" and as a way to improve the practice on Conservation of Historic Buildings. For this reason a focus group of experts agreed in the definition and finally the consensus about the set of authenticity criteria for Conservation of Historic Buildings.

3-The results shows that "authenticity criteria" as similar to "sustainable development" and it is different and related to common geographical and cultural areas of the Globe.

4-According to the study it is possible to define authenticity criteria for Conservation of Historic Buildings based on different levels of importance for the World Heritage Value. (International, National, Regional and Local)

Keywords: historic buildings, conservation, authenticity

1. Introduction

This study is about a set of authenticity criteria for the conservation of historic buildings in Western Europe, although the definition of authenticity for conservation today is very controversial all over the world.

This paper describes the phases that the study went through in order to achieve a consensus about a set of authenticity criteria for the conservation of historic buildings and also to demonstrate its contribution to the management of UNESCO World Heritage.

2. Background

Following the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Japan in 1994 experts from ICOMOS have published many articles in scientific magazines on this subject but they have not reached a consensus in the area of historic buildings.

According to Stovel (1994) the word "authenticity" appears in the preamble to the Venice Charter (1964) without a definition because most of those involved in the writing of the Charter shared similar backgrounds and therefore broad assumptions about the nature of an appropriate response to conservation problems.

The word "authenticity" gained a measure of formal authority within the World Heritage Committee in the late 1970s, when the Committee included the "test of authenticity" in its Operational Guidelines as a measure of the essential truth of the values established in looking at the cultural criteria (Stovel, 1994). Since then, the problem has been "what are the authenticity criteria in effective conservation decision making?". This is particularly important today in historic areas in Western Europe, given the growing number of individuals and groups working on conservation of areas expressing considerable unease about the state of doctrinal texts in the field.

3. Aims of the Study

According to the philosophy of the Venice Charter on the Conservation of monuments (1964) and the monitoring of a number of case studies, this research has the following:

Scope - Authenticity for the conservation of historic buildings.

Focus -The development of a set of criteria to assess authenticity in conservation of historic buildings.

Purpose to define a set of authenticity criteria to facilitate the conservation of historic buildings in Western Europe.

4. Scope

What is Authenticity in the Conservation of Historic Buildings?

According to the review of relevant research and theories, presented at the Nara Conference (1994), "Authenticity" can be defined as something that sustains and proves itself, as well as having credit and authority from itself. Authenticity refers to something creative, an authorship, something having a deep identity in form and substance. It means something specific and unique, and is different from "identical" which refers to universal, representing a class, reproduction, replica, copy, or reconstruction. While in many cases "authenticity" can relate to the "original creative source", it is also a relative concept, and, according to modern value judgements, it can relate to historical - continuity in the "life" of the heritage resource. This includes interventions in different periods of time, and the way that these have been integrated in the context of the whole. The relative significance of each period in the whole should be established through a historical-critical process, in order to form the basis for treatments. Authenticity can be understood as a condition of the heritage resource, and can be defined in the artistic, historical and cultural dimensions of this resource. These dimensions can be seen in relation to the aesthetic, structural and functional form of the object or site, in relation to its material and technology, as well as in relation to its physical and socio-cultural context (Jokilehto,1994).

According to Jokilehto (1994) at the Nara Conference, *"the existence of authenticity in a heritage resource and its context will be the basis for the measurement of relevant cultural values, on the other hand, the identification of parameters for the specification of pertinent authenticity will also depend on these values. Considering today's society, its character and the problems it faces in relation to its own identity and authenticity, it will be most important to take great care to maintain the authenticity of existing heritage resources from the past. They will form a reference for future memory, and will therefore need to be conserved with due respect for relevant issues. The dynamic conservation management of the built environment and the approach to authentic living traditions requires an appropriate process. Such traditions are becoming rare in the present-day world, and although they should themselves provide the required knowledge and skills for their continuation, they will also need support in general planning and management in order to make it feasible for them to keep their authentic creative capacity"*.

5. Propositions

The research question is “what are the parameters of authenticity criteria for conservation of historic buildings?” As stated by Stovel (1994) the best definition for Conservation is Feilden (1993) quotation: "Conservation seeks to prolong the life of cultural property and if possible to clarify the historic and artistic message without loss of authenticity."

According to Jokilehto's definition of authenticity (1994) referred on 1.4 the research was based on the following propositions from the USA National Parks Service which constitute the basic parameters to assess authenticity in historic places. The following propositions parameters are used in the four case studies in West Europe in order to built theory:

1. **Location**, is the place where the significant activities that shaped a property took place;
2. **Design**, *is the composition of natural and cultural elements comprising the form, plan, and spatial organisation of a property;*
3. **Setting**, *is the physical environment within and surrounding a property;*
4. **Materials**, *within a property include the construction materials of the building, immediate surrounding area of the building itself, highways, fences and other structures;*
5. **Workmanship**, *is displayed in the way people have fashioned their environment for functional and decorative purposes;*
6. **Feeling**, *although intangible, is evoked by the presence of physical characteristics that reflect the historic scene;*
7. **Association** *is the link between a property and the important events or persons that have shaped it*

6. The objectives of the research

In the last twenty years much has been written about authenticity in monuments and nowadays the concept of “monument” includes not only the isolated building with historical value, but also all the buildings and areas that due to their exceptional character, represent some significant period in the evolution of human beings.

This notion has been enlarged in the recent concept of "cultural landscape" as defined by UNESCO (1997).

Bearing in mind the philosophy of International Charters and Conventions on the preservation process of historic places proposed by UNESCO and ratified by most European countries, this study reflects

on a set of criteria as a way to assess authenticity for the conservation of historic places based on the assumptions from the Venice Charter on Restoration, in 1964.

Thirty years later, in 1994, the ICOMOS (Stovel, 1994) reflected upon the evolution of the use and the concept of authenticity for World Cultural Heritage in many meetings with the aim to achieve some consensus at the Nara Conference (1994).

Since then, and to date, much has been written about "authenticity" in historic buildings and sites. On its importance, Linstrum (1996) makes the following remark: "Authenticity is fashionable; we think it is important, otherwise we would not be spending three days discussing it".

Both the theoretical debates about monumental buildings and the studies of practical urban areas carried out in European historical cities (Cohen 1999), show the need to define a set of authenticity criteria as a means to elect priorities and to have a real intervention in each respective historic area.

To sum up the presence of this very real problem in the preservation of historic areas in Western Europe, theoretical and practically oriented research work has been developed based on a literature review of the material available on this subject and by using a selection of case studies of historic centres in European cities which serve to support this issue.

The authenticity criteria, referred to throughout this study, is the indicators that the scientific community describes not only in their theoretical development work but also in their practical judgements selected for the classification process of national historic areas (USA) or of the World Heritage areas of UNESCO (ICOMOS). The set of four criteria that are being used for the classification of the World Heritage areas of UNESCO (Jokilehto, 1993) were compared with the seven criteria of property evaluation from the USA Parks Service, which are designed to be used as an analytical tool for the preservation of the authenticity of historic places. The criteria used by the US Parks Service has the following parameters: Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling and Association.

According to Jokilehto's (1994) definition of authenticity that had the support of "the sounding board of experts", and the latest research and theories, seven criteria were elected and applied on four case studies in Western Europe. These initial seven authenticity criteria were defined and applied to the historic centres of Lisbon (Bairro Alto), Bruges, Chester and Athens (Plaka).

A cross-case analysis was used in each of these case studies for the refinement of these criteria in order to create the model of research. The result was a set of authenticity criteria defined by five parameters as follows:

1-Material / Substance	The physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form, an historic property.
2-Design	Combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.

3-Workmanship	The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
4-Function / Use	The degree of continuity of original or significant uses in a property.
5-Setting	The physical environment of a historic property.

This set of criteria was tested and validated by a “panel of specialists” through the application of the Delphi Method made up by an “expert group” of different European countries and organisations.

7. Research outline

In order to establish a “set of criteria on authenticity for the conservation of historic buildings “the research design is shown in figure 1.1.

First, the initial literature survey based on the Venice Charter (1964), The Nara Conference Proceedings (1994), The San Francisco conference (1996) and other important charters and conventions (ICOMOS Scientific Magazine) provided the researcher with strengths and weaknesses which pointed out the importance of this research subject. The scope of the research in which authenticity is based are the principles and the agreement about this concept in Venice Charter (1964) for the conservation of monuments and sites.

Based on relevant research and theories, and the views of the “sounding board of experts”, the four case studies in Europe constitute the practical material for the criteria. These case studies used as examples to built theory. Having the theoretical framework and relating it to the practical experience in some case studies, a set of authenticity criteria is defined and creates the model of the research. The model of the research defined is a set of authenticity criteria composed by five parameters. These five parameters are the aspects to assess authenticity for conservation of historic buildings. The five aspects proposed to assess authenticity are:

1. Materials (USA Parks)
2. Design (USA Parks)
3. Workmanship (USA Parks)
4. Function (Jokilehto and Stovel)
5. Setting (USA Parks)

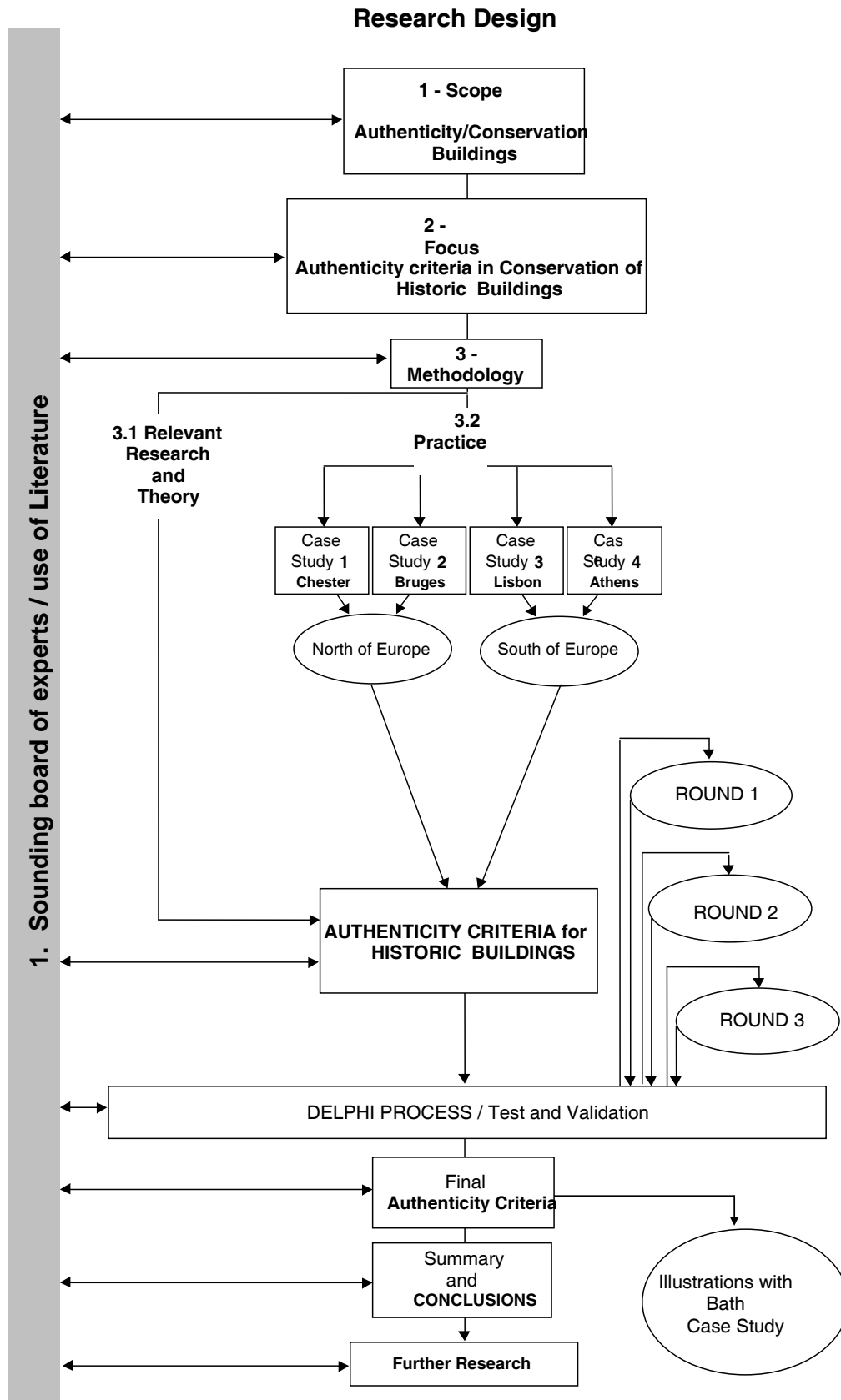


Figure 1.1

In order to test and validate the model- “a set of criteria” defined it was used the Delphi Process in order to reach a consensus on authenticity criteria for conservation of historic places of Western Europe:

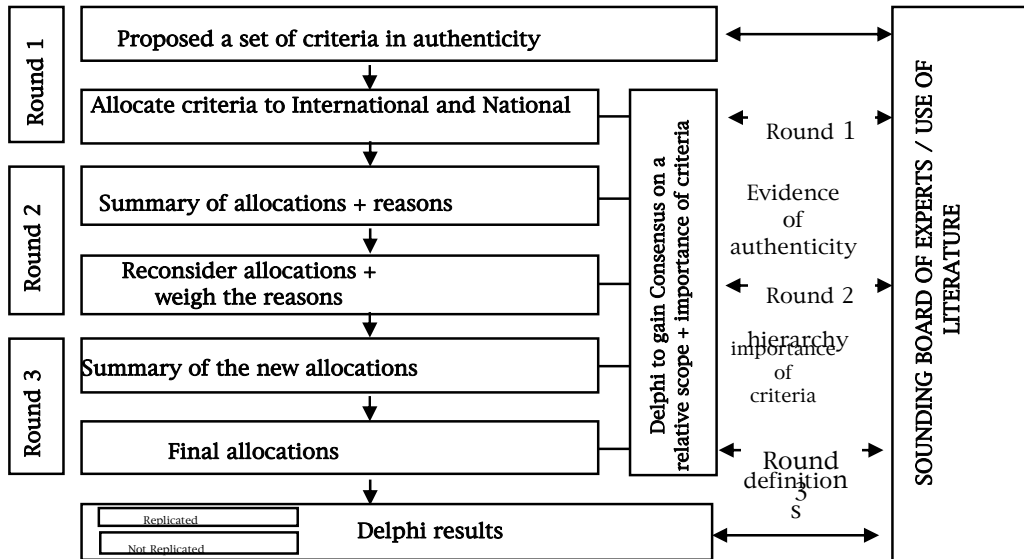


Figure 1.2

The Delphi process is developed in three rounds as follows:

- First Round was based on the criteria achieved with case studies. The researcher allocated the criteria according to the hierarchy of importance and sent to twenty panellists in order to achieve consensus about the allocations.
- Second Round reconsidered the allocations of the first round and weighting the reasons for the hierarchy proposed and definitions of authenticity criteria.
- Third round summarized the new allocations and gained consensus for the final allocation and definition.

The Delphi results, with the final criteria were validated and illustrated by a case study in Bath in order to know the possibilities of generalization of the final authenticity criteria for conservation of other historic places of West Europe.

8. Conclusion

The final criteria achieved with this research (table1.1)reveals the emerging importance of function and use in historic buildings for the future. This research achieved the following five authenticity criteria:

Table 1.1: Five authenticity criteria

<p>A. <i>Design</i></p>	<p><i>Is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. It results from conscious decisions made during the original conception and planning of a property (or its significant alteration) and applies to activities as diverse as community planning, engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture. Design includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials</i></p>
<p>B. <i>Material</i></p>	<p><i>Are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. The choice and combination of materials reveal the preferences of those who created the property and indicate the availability of particular types of materials and technologies. Indigenous materials are often the focus of regional building traditions and thereby help define an area's sense of time and place.</i></p>
<p>C. <i>Workmanship</i></p>	<p><i>Is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. Workmanship can apply to the property as a whole or to its individual components. It can be expressed in vernacular methods of construction and plain finishes or in highly sophisticated configurations and ornamental detailing. It can be based on common traditions or innovative period techniques.</i></p>
<p>D. <i>Setting</i></p>	<p><i>Is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the character of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves how, not just where, the property is situated and its relationship to surrounding features and open space</i></p>
<p>E. <i>Function/Use</i></p>	<p><i>Is the degree of continuity of original or significant uses in a property. An historic area and its surroundings form a coherent whole including associated human activities and constructions; continuation of original or compatible uses minimizes negative impact on authenticity</i></p>

Due to the fact that the sounding board of research and Delphi members were made up of experts with different background, ranging from Academia, Architecture, Construction, Industry of Culture, NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations) and other built heritage organizations (UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, Europa Nostra and Council of Europe) the final set of criteria to assess authenticity for conservation of historic places in Western Europe has an holistic point of view.

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