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Pluralitas non est ponenda sine necessitate

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Abstract

International documents and charters list matters to be considered when protecting built environment, but they do not tell how to evaluate them. Here, a model for evaluation is presented based on a complex and dynamic understanding of value. This model is concerted with a model for distribution of heritage goods according to kind of market. The idea of evaluators as experts is criticised as evaluation is always a unique and individual act. Only knowledge about criteria used in evaluation, not evaluating as such, can be accumulated and thereby professionalised.

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1. Heritage and value

How to understand heritage? One of the most influential concurrent charters on heritage, the **Burra Charter**, provides a broad outline of built heritage as *the place and its fabric*, including its *setting*. Any particular heritage connects to *referential places and objects*. The foreseen use of built heritage includes the aspect of *adaptation* and *compatibility* between use and structure. Measures applied may include *maintenance, preservation, restoration or reconstruction*.¹ According to the Burra charter, at the core of heritage is *cultural significance*, allegedly indicating

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¹ Burra Charter

the *range of cultural heritage value*. In this way, heritage seems to connect directly to value. What remains obscure, however, is the meaning of “significance” and “value”. What does significance include: only site and setting, or the foreseen use and other measures as well? When speaking about cultural heritage value, do we understand the things we refer to as *being values* or *being ascribed values*?

The conservation principles, policies and guidelines of **English Heritage** trigger a similar dilemma. Listed values are “evidential”, “historical”, “aesthetic” and “communal”.² Strictly speaking, these are however not values, but chosen aspects, which provide the basis for evaluations. In any individual case, we have to assess each aspect by ascribing it value in the given context. Assessment means by necessity the application of a defined set of *viewpoints*, which we have to explicate. Moreover, we have to *evaluate* not only the chosen points of view, but consider their respective weights as well.

2. Value: precondition or result?

In common speech, there is a tendency to expand the use of the word value to encompass a range of matters. The Finnish minister of housing said a few years ago: “We have to communicate our value aims”.³ The idea of the statement was probably to say that her party had an excellent value basis, despite occasional political drawbacks, but that the party had not been sufficiently successful in communicating those fine aims. As the example indicates, politicians can defend unpopular policies by referring to good intentions. Although they get involved in decisions that even their supporters do not like, they can justify themselves by referring to principles, which their followers appreciate. Life in general and politics in particular, is of course perpetual bargaining and compromise - but our intentions are the best possible! Referring to value is typical to political speech, but how can values be aims? How can value aims be communicated? This would mean that “values” are substantives, internalised assets that we may employ whenever needed. A reasonable interpretation of the actual case is that “value” is made synonymous with concepts like “principles” or “norms”.

When we conceive values as *substantives*, we indicate a basis for making evaluations and assessments. In psychology, there is a tradition of “value inventory”, founded on the idea that a set of values form the point of departure for decision-making and acting. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory describes the effects of society’s culture on the assumed values of its members, and their consequent behaviour.⁴ Hofstede’s theory has been criticised on the ground that assumed cultural differences do not explain variances in individuals’ factual preferences very well.⁵ With reference to the previous discussion, we may say that common values as defined by value inventories match the idea that certain matter *are* values. Whether outspoken preferences called values have an influence on factual decisions taken by individuals in everyday life is doubtful. Maybe the alleged “value base” connects to justification more than to any act of deciding and choosing?

At least in politics, value-speech seems to match the need for justifying, and maybe politics in this respect is just an extension of everyday life? Some research underpins such a view. Based on extensive empirical studies, Zajonc has argued that “preferences need no inferences”.⁶ It is not reason and logic that guide our decisions, which are in fact instinctive and based on emotion, and preclude our chance to consider choices cognitively. Our logical reasoning merely justifies and rationalises the decisions we have already made. Even assumed pure perceptions contain affections. Zajonc argued that repeated exposure to stimulus breeds familiarity, which brings about a change of attitudes, taking the form of affected preferences. Consequently, preferences are emotional and they form a subconscious level before a person is even aware of them. This may explain the discrepancy between outspoken and factual preferences: In real life, one makes decisions according to preferences defined under prevailing conditions and limited options, which do not necessarily match preliminary outspoken “values”.

² English Heritage, Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance

³ Minister of Housing Ms Pia Viitanen, May 30th 2013: “Meidän on kommunikoida arvotavoitteemme!”

⁴ Hofstede 1991; Hofstede 2001; Schwartz 1992 has elaborated value types, defines as power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, super-grouping.

⁵ Brewer, P., & Venaik, S. 2012; Venaik, S., & Brewer, P. 2013.

See also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geert_Hofstede (read 16.2.2016)

⁶ Benson et al. 2012, 232-235

We can, however, understand decision-making in a third way. Perhaps choice is made cognitively, if not in familiar matter of everyday life, but when we are faced with the demanding task of evaluating the value of heritage?⁷ In that case “value” should be *the outcome of, not the precondition for evaluation*.⁸ Values would exist as results of evaluation. They are thus not substantives but attributes, that is, *adjectives*. Accordingly, we may ask ourselves: How to perform such assessments? Evaluation should obviously allow for interpretations that are anchored in different schools of thought. The controversies among psychologists actually reflect an age-old philosophical discussion, that between realists, conceptualists and nominalists. This discussion has undulated from antique times to present. At stake is the world view in terms of ontological categories such as universals and particulars.⁹ A smart model should not only invite but thrill representatives of different tastes to join the game.

3. A model for evaluation

In philosophical handbooks, the overall concept of value is as a rule broken down into two main categories, *instrumental* values and *intrinsic* values.¹⁰ The first category indicates matters that are employed as means for reaching the good while the latter category defines matters that are good by themselves.¹¹ At a first glance, this distinction sounds clear enough, but, after contemplating, it turns out to be problematic. When speaking about instrumental values, we apply a yardstick of utility. Intrinsic values as such, on the other hand, have per definition nothing to do with utility. In this way the two categories are not comparable: it is like comparing an apple with happiness. Of course eating an apple may evoke a feeling of happiness, but this does not mean that the more we eat apples, the happier we are, or, that the ultimate goal of eating apples is to get happy. In order to refine the aspect of utility, we have to figure out a pair concept of benefit that facilitates for comparison within the overall conception of utility as well as making them complementary at the same time. My suggestion is to speak about *instrumental benefits* on the one hand and *unconditioned benefits* on the other hand. Such categories are actually *prescriptive*. In the first case foreseen benefits can be specified. In the second case, foreseen benefits can be imagined, but they cannot be explicitly defined.

Utility is just one dimension of value and there are surely others to be found. The idea of intrinsic value is thrilling, and obviously important as it has been a standard component of the value-repertoire for such a long time. When we say that something has got a value in itself, regardless of its instrumental value, our main concern is not utility, but the *origin* of value. I call this category the *inherent origin* of value, which indicates that what we consider valuable is related to the properties of the matter under consideration. What we do is not to predict values of the future, but to *describe* the origin of value. Again we are faced with the task to find a complementary concept that fits within the overall conception of describing origin, and, which at the same time, forms together with inherent origin a pair of concepts that are mutually complementary. In addition to inherent origin of value, I would like to speak about the *contextual origin* of value. The matters we consider valuable are in this case not reduced to properties of an object, but their origin is sought after in the context, which can be God-given, socially determined or contextual in other ways. Someone could remark that the origin of value is always contextual. To be sure, this is correct already for the reason that all matters exist in a context as even the whole world can be imagined to be part of a mega-world, part of a mega-mega-world, etc. Here is no inherent paradox, however, as I am discussing the *conceived* origin of values, not ontological classification.

In conclusion, we can visualise the pursuit for *utility and origin of values* in terms of instrumental and unconditional benefits, reflecting means and ends, as well as inherent and contextual origin of values, reflecting assumed factual properties or human cognition (see Figure 1).

⁷ Concurrently, such a view seems to be well established, see Kahneman 2011

⁸ The fact that cultural heritage exists does not provide us with the possibility of logical inference, that is, to determine what we ought to do with it. In parallel with “Hume’s Guillotine”, no evaluative conclusion may be validly inferred from any set of purely factual premises. Accordingly cultural heritage has got value only when it has been ascribed value. See Hume’ Treatise (T3.1.1.27), see also <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-moral/#io>

⁹ Papineau 2010, 12

¹⁰ Lübecke 1988, 589-590

¹¹ In parallel, the sociological vocabulary of Max Weber concerns various forms of action. *Zweckrational* action is pursued according to consequences and available means while *wertrational* action indicates motives intrinsic to the actor. See <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/zweckrational> and <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/wertrational> (read 15.2.2016)

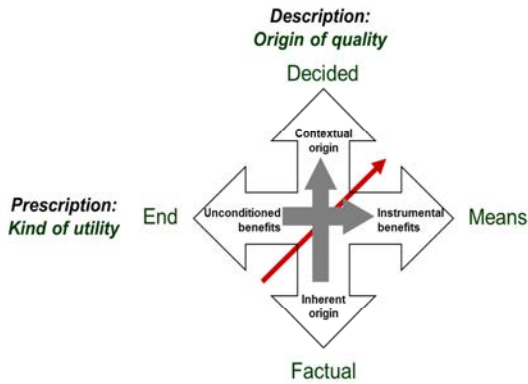


Figure 1. A model for defining values

The application of the model is dynamic in the sense that historical structures can be evaluated very differently according to chosen historical context. Let us take a Norwegian stave church as an example. Such churches are some 1000 years old and were introduced at the dawn of Christianity in Norway. Being magic items, the origin of their value was the object itself. Their utility was most probably unconditioned as they represented a strange and hitherto unknown form of religion, save for the ruling apologists of the new faith. Nowadays the stave churches are considered very important as cultural heritage and locally as sources of revenue. The origin of their value is now contextual and their benefits are instrumental. The example indicates a historical switch in the ways we determine values. If we take the aspect of “historical” seriously, we have to carry out our evaluations in a manner that indicates not only the history of the physical object, but the various ways it has been conceived throughout history as well. In the face of enlightenment and modernism, the tendency of interpretations seems to imply a move from unconditioned to instrumental utility, and, with regard to the understanding of origin, from inherent to contextual origin of values.

In March 1841, the German poet Heinrich Heine is supposed to have remarked: *Money is the god of our time, and Rothschild is his prophet.*¹² Money has after all a much longer history. Already in Mesopotamia 5000 years ago, the shekel was used as a unit of currency denoting a certain weight of barley, which equalled defined weights of precious metals. Coinage has been assumed to be an invention of Ancient Greece or Minor Asia of the 7th century BCE.¹³ Money quickly came to be a common and general determiner of value and the consequences for spiritual life in Greece were dramatic. Philosophy, freed from religion, emerged as a result.¹⁴ Pondering value became a favoured pastime among Socratic and Sophist philosophers. In Europe, the abstract and philosophical question of value rose from conditions where the discipline of economy separated from theology in the 17th century. “Value” came to denote economic value, but in the 18th century, the concept found its way into philosophy as well, resulting in what we now call ethics and aesthetics. In the 19th century, “value” penetrated the various big ideologies of the time as well as psychology. Concurrently, no evaluations are made without considering money in one form or the other. This does not mean that we should forget the other dimensions when discussing value. The ideas of unconditioned benefits and the inherent origin of value are still powerful conceptions, which are tacit in the townscape of any metropolis across the globe. Despite modernist belief, modernism itself is saturated with magic – like any other ideological hegemony.

4. Distribution of goods

¹² Ferguson 2009, 86

¹³ The oldest known coins were made on the Greek island of Aegina c. 700 BCE according to Kishtainly et al. 2012, 24; The earliest surviving coins dating from the 7th century BCE came from Asia Minor according to Cameron 1993, 35-37

¹⁴ Bengs 1991, 53; Lång 1982

The model for defining values requires a model for distribution. By analysing market conditions, and relating them to the kind of goods we want to pursue, we may get useful instruments for heritage protection and valorisation. Markets must be analysed in terms of both *excludability* and *rivalry* as different kinds of utility and origin of value probably match different types of markets. The axis of rivalry includes the extremes of *rivalrous* or *non-rivalrous* markets, and the axis of excludability includes the diametrical oppositions of *excludable* and *non-excludable* markets.¹⁵ By cross-tabulation we get four classes of goods, corresponding to the various market conditions: (1) *public goods* are featured by being freely available for all without competition (air, sun, partly law and order, etc.), (2) *private goods* are exchanged freely and exclusively on the market place (although monopolies or natural monopolies may circumscribe competition), (3) *club goods* indicate exclusive barriers to enter but equal rights among club members, (4) *common goods* are characterised by being accessible for all, but rivalry may cause resources to deplete (see Figure 2).

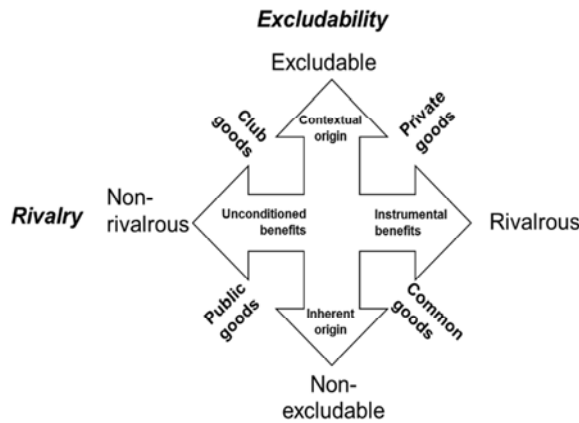


Figure 2. A model for distributing goods and corresponding values

To classify various kinds of goods is of course dependent on historical conditions. The analytical definition of the four classes of goods in terms of rivalry and excludability is as valid as any analytical definition, but categorising any factually existing good requires an analysis of the historical context. For instance narcotics and child labour used to be private goods, but now they are club goods or simply illegal. Let us consider the example of *public space* in the urban setting. Public space used to be part of available *public goods*. With increasing congestion indicating rivalry for space, much of urban public space has become part of *common goods* subjected to depletion. If we consider competition among different modes of transport, we may propose that public space is nowadays the arena of *club goods* (pedestrians, light transport, private car drivers, public transport, various categories of people in terms of age, social prestige, etc., associate in order to advance the perceived interests of the own group or the manufacturers of vehicles).

The two models described above seem to comply. This could stimulate the aspiration to pick markets that comply with perceived values. It seems clear that protection of built heritage is most successful when all the four types of markets listed above are employed. One could maintain that heritage, lacking instrumental benefits but thought to possess inherent values, should be distributed as public goods. A lot of heritage can (and probably should) be distributed as private goods, because the market value of heritage is constantly on the rise due to restricted supply. The higher the price, the better is the protection. Providing instrumental values are sought for, heritage could be distributed as common goods in case inherent values are not threatened, that is, in case “the tragedy of the commons” is not likely to take place.¹⁶ Heritage distributed as club goods is already an established practice. It suits

¹⁵ See Living economics <http://www.livingeconomics.org/article.asp?docID=239> (read 24.2.2016)

¹⁶ Ostrom 2002

values of contextual origin, matching the preferences of the club members, and benefits that are not instrumental in character.

5. Professionalism and evaluation

In the mid of the 17th century, people started to realise that society changes in a way that was not only a result of wars and other disasters. The idea of *progress* was born, not solely in terms of technical inventions, but in terms of the society.¹⁷ A very wide and thorough international discussion emerged, and a century later the conclusion was clear: Improvement and accumulation of knowledge was possible providing knowledge production did not include judgement. This idea implied that accumulation takes place in science, but not in aesthetics or ethics. As a matter of fact, “material improvement was held to deprive poets and painters of passion, the corrosion of criticism to discourage fluency, and mass audiences to subvert aesthetic standards”.¹⁸ In conclusion, knowledge was not to be accumulated if judgement was involved, because judgement is always a unique and individual performance, which cannot be re-enacted. This seems still to be a valid conclusion, underpinned by the fact that Ancient texts on aesthetics and ethics are still part of the curriculum of every university, while the same cannot be said about Ancient science or mathematics. They are simply out of date.

Professionalism requires expertise, gained by education and practice. One can be an expert without being a professional as professionalism refers to the selling of expertise. Expertise is dependent on the perpetual accumulation of knowledge, because otherwise expertise cannot be sustained. This would then indicate that there can be little expertise on making judgement, and professionals who do not base their knowledge on expertise, will find it hard to defend their professionalism. Let us consider some professions. Architects are not experts on architecture. They may, however, be experts on criteria used for evaluating architecture. Thanks god, priests are not experts on ethics, but they may be experts on Christian criteria employed in moral judgement. Medical doctors’ knowledge of health may be poor as they are trained in handling sicknesses, which, as far as health and sickness are interrelated, undermines their credibility. Lawyers are trained in the rules of law, but in their practice they seem to tamper with the law in order to win their cases, being the archetypal representatives of ephemeral moral. In parallel, there can be *little expertise on evaluating cultural heritage*. There can be expertise only with regard to criteria used in evaluation.

6. Conclusions

International charters on heritage tell us something about aspects to be applied in evaluating cultural heritage, but they tell us nothing about how to evaluate. In order to make assessments in a way that can be communicated to others, the composition of “value” has to be made explicit. Then critique can be subjected to further critique, which is a requirement for public discussion and thereby public support.

A difficulty with the concept of value is its multiple meanings. Value is used for labelling things as well as labelling their properties. It is used as substantive as well as adjective. In the former case “value” has entered political speech and is favoured in justification of unpopular politics in particular. Here, value is defined as the outcome of an evaluation in terms of utility and origin of value. I stick to Ockham’s razor, that is, the heading of this paper, which indicates that every linguistic expression does *not* match factual things.¹⁹

The model for evaluation can be combined with a model for analysing markets in terms of excludability and rivalry. The two models seem to make a match and may provide for some heuristic guidelines regarding distribution of cultural assets.

Because there can be no expertise on judgement - and all human activities involve judgement - we should commendably stick to a system of authority that involves as many as possible of those concerned. That is my lay opinion, but not a fact nor a statement based on expertise.

¹⁷ Heller 1981, 170-196; Liedman 1997, 94

¹⁸ Lowenthal 1995, 94

¹⁹ Höffe 1995, 221

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