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Valuing Historic Places: Traditional and Contemporary Approaches

Jeremy C. Wells, Ph.D.¹

Abstract

Decisions about which older buildings, structures, and places should be conserved are fundamental to the practice of architectural conservation. Conservation professionals use the interrelated concepts of integrity, authenticity, and historical value to determine which historic places are worthy of importance. Traditionally, these concepts are predicated on preserving the object rather than conserving the meanings and values associated with the object. In other words, the goal is to benefit the object and not the people who value the object. This method, which has roots in antiquated nineteenth-century Western scientific traditions, deprecates the importance of people, processes, and meanings in how places are valued and conserved. Thus, conservation professionals produce “objective” meanings for other conservators, but not for everyday people. The net result is a failure to understand how local populations actually value their historic places.

A recent movement in architectural conservation is to emphasize the role of contemporary social, cultural, and personal meanings in valuing historic places and the processes in which places develop these values over time. This pluralistic perspective recognizes that different populations and cultures will have diverse ways of valuing historic places. Ultimately, for places such as Iraq, we have very little, if any, data to support conservation decisions that understand and respect local cultures and tradition. The danger is in applying traditional, Western, concepts that still dominate the conservation profession to non-Western contexts. There is a tremendous learning opportunity to engage in the cross-pollination of ideas from the perspectives of the Western and Eastern traditions and to learn how the citizens of Iraq value their cultural heritage. This information, once gathered, can then inform how to best approach the conservation of Iraqi urban centers.

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1. Introduction

What is the purpose of architectural conservation?² Who or what should it benefit? Traditionally, from the perspective of Europe and the United States, the answer has been that architectural conservation is done to benefit historic buildings and places. According to Salvador Muñoz Viñas (2005), this fabric-centered³ approach to conservation “lacks a logical basis” or even a formal definition; conservation has therefore been defined by the way past projects have been conducted and “its use and repetition is what allows us to know and understand it” (p. 43). Rather than benefitting people, the goal of architectural conservation has been “to reveal and preserve an object’s true nature or true condition” (ibid., p. 91). Ignoring the logical fallacies of attempting to reveal an object’s “true” state (e.g., what is the nature of a “false” object if it does indeed exist?), the traditional Euro-American approach to conservation places little value on the benefits of conservation to *people*, instead preferring to focus on benefits to the historical object itself.

This paper will describe this traditional Euro-American approach to architectural conservation that still dominates professional practice and compare it with the developing ideas behind a “people-centered” approach to conservation. This people-centered approach may present a better model of the conservation of urban centers in Iraqi cities as it recognizes and capitalizes on cultural differences as a way to inform the recognition and treatment of the older built environment.

2. The Euro-American conservation doctrine

Unlike most built environment professions, the practice of architectural conservation in Europe, North America, Australia and increasingly in other parts of the world is driven by an array of international and national conservation doctrines.⁴ This Euro-American architectural conservation doctrine dictates how interventions are conducted in the built environment and how historical buildings and places are valued. The act of codifying these beliefs into written documents prevents, by intentional design, the natural evolution of meaning over time (Wells, 2007). The nineteenth-century values that white, European men wrote into the original doctrines of architectural conservation, such as the SPAB Manifesto,⁵ have been transmitted via subsequent doctrines, such as the Venice Charter (1964), to the present date in substantially unaltered form. The result is that today the practice of architectural conservation retains its nineteenth century epistemological and ontological foundations that are based on antiquated notions of meaning, value, and truth (Muñoz Viñas, 2005; Wells, 2007; Tainter & Lucas, 1983). From a pragmatic perspective, the contemporary Western practice of architectural conservation is therefore dominated by the positivistic values of experts with little consideration given to the values of ordinary, everyday people who use and value historic places.

Euro-American conservation doctrine grew from the belief that the valuation of historic buildings and places could be treated in a scientific, objective manner in which the accumulation of facts, independent of pluralistic interpretations, would universally be able to establish which places have historical value and which do not (Green, 1998). The pseudo-scientific basis of conservation doctrine enables the practitioners of architectural conservation to assume that all of humanity values historic buildings and places in much the same, indisputable way. In reality, conservation doctrine is a Western cultural belief system that Laurajane Smith (2006) refers to as part of the “authorized heritage discourse”; this discourse actively seeks to reify the existing meanings of professionals while discouraging dissenting

² This paper will use the term “architectural conservation” to refer to the range of activities that focus on the recognition and treatment of the older (or historic) built environment. This term is essentially synonymous with the term, “historic preservation,” that is commonly used only in the United States.

³ In this paper “fabric” refers to the physical material from which a building or place is constructed.

⁴ A doctrine is a unified, codified belief system that prescribes acceptable and unacceptable practices within a domain.

⁵ William Morris formed the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in England and wrote a manifesto in 1877 to direct its activities.

points of view—especially those from everyday, ordinary people. Conservation, therefore, “is a cultural problem” (Jokilehto, 2007, p. 277), not a scientific one. While some aspects of conservation doctrine may indeed have universal value, there are many examples where different cultures wish to treat and value their historical places in different ways (Chung, 2005). The difficulty comes in assuming that the Euro-American conservation tradition represents a superior methodology when other cultures may have equally valuable ways of understanding and valuing the older built environment.

One common element of architectural conservation doctrine is the directive to differentiate new building fabric from original, or older building fabric. Table 1 lists examples of this particular directive from a number of doctrinal sources.

Table 1: Example of an architectural conservation doctrine to differentiate new and old building fabric

Doctrine	Domain	Directive
Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964)	International	Article 9: “The process of restoration ... must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and in this case moreover any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp.” Article 12: “Replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence.”
Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 1999)	Initially Australia, but now adopted internationally	Article 19: “Reconstruction is limited to the reproduction of fabric, the form of which is known from physical and/or documentary evidence. It should be identifiable on close inspection as being new work.”
Guiding Principles (SPAB, 1877)	U.K.	“New work should express modern needs in a modern language. ... [W]ork concealed deliberately or artificially aged, even with the best intentions, is bound to mislead.”
Principles of Repair (English Heritage, 1993)	U.K.	“Repairs should be made honestly, with no attempt at disguise or artificial ageing.”
Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings ([NO STYLE for: British Standards Institution 1998])	U.K.	Section 7.4.4: “Additions should neither dominate, mask or challenge the authority of the old nor detract architecturally or visually from it.”
Secretary of the Interior’s Standards (NPS, 1995)	U.S.	Item 9: “The new work shall be differentiated from the old.”
Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (Parks Canada, 2003)	Canada	Item 11: “Make the new work physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place.”

3. Essential concepts of the traditional Euro-American conservation doctrine

3.1 Authenticity

At an essential level, “authenticity” is a judgment of how “real” or “fake” historical buildings, places, and objects are. As such, authenticity conveys a kind of truthfulness; authentic historical objects represent “truth” while inauthentic objects represent “lies.” For instance, a common directive in the practice of architectural conservation is to avoid creating a “false sense of history” through the “use of conjectural features or features from other buildings” (Weeks & Jandl, 1996, p. 19). This thinking leads to

the conclusion that it is possible to make an historical building tell lies through the application of inappropriate design techniques that may have actually existed in the past, but never existed in this *particular* building. In other words, the goal is to not impair or destroy the “truth” of a building. This logic dictates that to make a building tell the truth, then any “new work shall be differentiated from the old” (NPS, 1995; ICOMOS, 1964).

Authenticity derives its authority from the presence of construction materials, which are also called “fabric,” from certain time periods; typically this fabric must be more than fifty years old.⁶ Within the United States and in many European contexts, the terms authenticity and “integrity” are used interchangeably, but with an understanding that integrity refers to the process of assessing authenticity.⁷ William Dupont (2003) summarizes this relationship between truth, integrity, and the authenticity of the older built environment:

A place with authenticity must have some reality that has survived from a past time. A built thing, be it a car, landscape feature, or whole building, is authentic only if it retains a high percentage of material that is essentially unaltered. ... Historic preservation professionals often use another term, integrity, to describe the amount of authenticity [in a building], because there is an embodied truth and honesty within a physical thing when it is authentic. Something authentic is said to have high integrity. A historic place that is authentic usually is considered to have higher cultural value than a comparable place with less integrity. Unaltered building fabric is appealing because it has unassailable integrity. (p. 6)

There is therefore an implicit understanding that building fabric (and to a lesser extent, historical spatial arrangements in the built environment) acquires value as it becomes associated with particular events from the past. Building fabric is therefore treated as if it is a living entity that has the capacity to “see” and “remember” historical events. As such, historical events from the past are considered to be imprinted into the fabric itself, somehow becoming part of the permanent physical makeup of older building and landscape materials. This *belief* is one reason why the Euro-American conservation tradition demands that the older fabric of a building be retained as much as possible during interventions. Even if new building fabric could perfectly duplicate the materials and design of the original, the copy could never have the same value (or authenticity) as the original because the copy did not bear witness to the events of the past. Thus, the Euro-American penchant for the retention of older building fabric, also known as the “material fetish” (Muñoz Viñas, 2005, p. 86), is a key component of how architectural conservation is practiced in Western contexts.

3.2 Historical value

The second element in understanding the practice of architectural conservation from the Euro-American perspective is historical value. While authenticity and integrity convey the truth of the older built environment, historical value represents the objective assessments of experts in determining which places are important. Historical value can be divided into two elements: association of the older built environment with historical events or people from the past and the ability of building fabric to convey information on past cultural practices, such as craftsmanship. Lipe (1984) elaborates on the latter value as deriving from “the materials themselves, and the network of spatial associations among them” (p. 6). Thus, historical objects can be directly “read” to provide information.

Different countries will use different terms when describing the overall value of an historical place. For instance, in the United States, the term is “significance,” in Australia it is “heritage value,” while in the United Kingdom it is “special interest.” Historical value is established through the systematic gathering of “facts” to support a given historical association in a methodological framework that assumes these facts can exist independently of pluralistic interpretation. This methodology resembles the manner

⁶ The “older than fifty years” criterion to describe when a building or building can be considered historic has no empirical basis and was simply a convenient, round number to use when defining criteria to determine historical significance.

⁷ Confusingly, UNESCO’s criteria for a World Heritage Nomination includes a directive to assess the “integrity” of a site, but this particular usage of the term has very different connotation related to the “holistic” character of the site.

in which historians conducted research prior to the 1970s based on a view of history that consisted of objective facts and thus could be described in a manner free of bias and independent of subjective values (Danto, 2008, pp. 12-15). Alois Riegl (1996/1903) was the first to describe “historical value” in this sense, which he indicated “rests on a scientific basis and therefore can only be achieved through intellectual reflection” (p. 74).

3.3 Aesthetic value

A work that embodies artistic or design value “may be important because it is a unique example or it may be pivotal or representative” (Worthing & Bond, 2008, p. 66). This value is especially associated with the academic contexts of art and architectural history, and to a more limited extent, urban studies or urban history. The National Register of Historic Places in the United States allows properties to be significant for artistic and design values (criterion “C”) if such properties represent a particular method of construction, the “work of a master,” or “high artistic values” (National Park Service, 1997b, p. 51). When arguments for artistic/design value are used in connection with historical value, they tend to be contingent on rarity value. Traditionally, architectural conservators have over-emphasized formal, artistic values leading to an underemphasis on ordinary or vernacular places (Howett, 1997).

4. Assessment of authenticity and historical value from the traditional Euro-American perspective

The Euro-American tradition of assessing authenticity and historical value relies solely on human senses—especially our visual perception (Tainter & Lucas, 1983). In other words, if some aspect of the built environment cannot be directly perceived, then it simply does not exist. This paradigm, by design, excludes other ways of knowing, including through the social and cultural values of the local population. Architectural conservation doctrine actively discourages such subjective meanings as being entirely irrelevant to the values of historical buildings and places (Carr, 2005, p. 174; Weeks & Jandl, 1996, p. 19; Smith, 2006).

Unlike many countries, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, the United States (through the National Park Service) has extensively developed the concept of “integrity” to describe building fabric and spatial contexts. This pseudo-quantitative approach to assessing the authenticity of historical buildings and places relies on individual assessments of “location,” “design,” “setting,” “materials,” “workmanship,” “feeling,” and “association” (National Park Service, 1997a, pp. 44-49). With the exception of feeling and association, the determination of the other five elements of integrity is done with the assemblage of simple, objective facts to substantiate a claim, for instance, that the fabric of a building has physical (e.g., visual) evidence of the use of tools to create a certain design.

Historical value is established by assembling historical facts that must *prove* that a property was associated with an event or person from the past. In other words if a house is significant because a well-known leader lived there, then sufficient facts must be presented to show that this individual did indeed live in the house during a certain time period. The greater the number of these facts and the more the event or person from the past is part of a broad historical theme, then the historical value of the place also increases. Curiously, the National Park Service in the United States fully admits that its methodology is epistemologically antiquated and based on how history has been studied since at least the eighteenth century (National Park Service, 1997a, p. 7). Green (1998) refers to this approach to historical research as an “outmoded, positivist concept of what history is and how it should be approached” (p. 85); the basic problem is that it assumes “facts come before the interpretation” (p. 88), a perspective long abandoned by contemporary historians, and debunked by post-structuralist philosophers such as Foucault (1972).

5. Problems with the Euro-American tradition

The essential problem with the traditional Euro-American method for assessing authenticity and historical value is that it cannot assess how and why everyday people—the actual users of historical places—value the older built environment today. This traditional assessment method is very good at articulating the values of professionals (typically Westerners), but entirely misses why people are emotionally attached to historical places and why these places have cultural and social meanings to certain populations. It is an odd situation indeed that this dominant method for understanding why historical places are important only considers how people valued places in the distant past and entirely ignores people's values in the present. The ramification of this practice is that historical places are given value by conservation professionals using *their* value system while ignoring the values of the people who ultimately experience these places. Thus, many places that are conserved have little or no value for local populations while other places that actually are important to a group of people receive no attention at all.

In the past fifteen years, there has been a growing dissatisfaction with the dominance of the Euro-American conservation tradition and its emphasis on positivistic, expert/objective values used in assessments of historical significance. Thomas King (2003), one of the most widely read and respected authorities in cultural resource management, recently assessed the inadequacies of the National Register of Historic Places in the United States and concluded that the preparation of nominations can actually endanger historic places. He therefore recommends against nominating traditional cultural properties to the National Register. This situation arises from the inability of a National Register nomination to holistically capture the values associated with important places and therefore renders highly significant places unimportant in the eyes of the federal government and its agencies. Another preservation professional, Jack Elliott, an historical archaeologist from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, decries that there is an overemphasis on the “informational” and “material aspects” of historic preservation with little attention paid to important experiential values. Lastly, the Getty Conservation Institute (see Avrami, Mason & Torre, 2000; Torre, 2002) has conducted what is arguably some of the most important foundational work on the importance of contemporary heritage values in defining historical significance. These are just a few examples.

In sum, the problem with traditional methods for defining historic significance can be described as a disconnect between the objective values of experts and the subjective values of everyday people. Experts base their decisions on doctrines that contain static, century-old concepts while most people rely on feelings or an attachment to place to determine value. If the goal of architectural conservation is to save places for the benefit people, perhaps we ought to engage a methodology that determines historical significance based on how everyday people value historic places rather than relying solely on the traditional objective, expert values upon which architectural conservation has frequently relied. Conservation is not about saving places to benefit architectural historians, or architects, or, for that matter, conservationists—older buildings, places, and landscapes are of benefit to a much wider audience. It is critical, therefore, to understand how historic places contribute to human flourishing and existing assessments of historical value are not up this task.

One area where conservation doctrine is particularly problematic is in the directive to differentiate new design from original (or older) building fabric as directed in a number of examples of conservation doctrine, such as the Venice Charter and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards in the United States. The nature of this differentiation has been the subject of many disputes, with some critics charging that conspicuously making changes to buildings look different from the existing features engenders bad design (Krier, 1998, p. 81). Much of this argument revolves around creating design “of our own time.” Steven Semes (2009) reveals the hypocrisy of preserving historical architectural styles while actively discouraging using an historical design palette to create unity and compatibility with new interventions: “Why would one devote one's career to the preservation of architecture that one no longer believes in? And, if one values historic urbanism and traditional buildings, why would one actively discourage attempts to build more of what one values in favor of experimental

models that frequently result in failure?” (pp. 141-42). For Semes, “the architecture of our time is whatever we choose to make it as it emerges from the conditions of contemporary practice” (p. 40).

Lastly, it is important to look at the authors of the conservation doctrines that are increasingly touted as solutions for developing countries in protecting their heritage. The concepts of objectivity and rationalism that are emphasized in the Euro-American conservation tradition have been historically defined through the male perspective to the exclusion of female ideas. This phenomenon is not unusual as there is a male bias to knowledge as Nicolson (2000) describes: “[T]he norm has always been constructed in terms of male experiences and perspectives and, indeed, as it has always been constructed through depicting women as the Other, women are ... disqualified from the status of neutral and objective knowers” (p. 23). Middle- to upper-class European and American men wrote conservation doctrine with the intent to codify (or control) meaning from their perspective in order to foster good cultural behavior through definitions of acceptable and unacceptable conservation practices. In doing so, the authors unintentionally created hierarchies of knowledge that excluded the meanings of people from different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds as well as from the female perspective. Until the advent of the Athens Charter in 1931, architectural conservation philosophy was fluid. The rise of heritage conservation charters in the twentieth century starved conservation philosophy and engendered the relatively impoverished perspective of conservation doctrines that exist today (Wells, 2007). The perspectives of women or minority groups were not included in conservation doctrine until the creation of the Burra Charter in 1979 (Australia ICOMOS, 1999).

6. People-centered architectural conservation

The traditional Euro-American approach to architectural conservation is entirely based on a fabric-centered approach to heritage. Conservation is done for the benefit of buildings, places, and landscapes, but not necessarily for the benefit of people. What is needed is a shift to a people-centered approach to architectural conservation with the aim of benefitting humanity at the local, regional, national, and global scale. Such a perspective does not necessarily mean entirely deprecating fabric-based approaches, but instead supplementing these traditions with a better understanding of the contemporary social, cultural, and experiential dimensions of built heritage. Armed with a better understanding of how everyday people actually value historic places, architectural conservators can adjust their interventions and plan accordingly.

The first step in understanding contemporary social, cultural, and experiential values associated with the older built environment is to define these values in relation to authenticity, which was discussed at the beginning of this paper. While the traditional approach to authenticity is fabric-based, authenticity has additional connotations rooted in social, cultural, and personal experience. One need go no further than to look at how the word itself is used in everyday language: an “authentic” biryani rice dish is not required to be the original and only biryani ever created, but must simply employ authentic ideas and correct items in its construction. Thus, in this sense authenticity is not fabric-centered, it is idea-centered or constructed from meanings. Authenticity is also used in connection with an occurrence as in an authentic experience, such as a trip to Egypt to see the Sphinx as compared to its reconstruction in Las Vegas; in the former case the experience is authentic, while in the latter, it is not. In this last instance, authenticity is therefore experience-centered. Jamal and Hill (2002) describe and name these types of authenticity as “objective” authenticity, “constructed” authenticity, and “personal” authenticity. Each one of these concepts of authenticity is uniquely associated with a corresponding set of expert/objective values, sociocultural values, or experiential values. It is important to remember that the list of values that will be explored is not meant to be an all-inclusive or exhaustive list, but instead represents the typical kinds of values that social scientists and conservationists have commonly encountered in association with historic places.

6.1 Constructed authenticity

As explained earlier, authenticity can be defined through the lens of ideas or meanings rather than physical fabric. In this sense, a heritage object that is deemed authentic achieves this state through culturally- or socially-approved ideas or meanings that can exist independently of physical reality. For instance, in Japan, authenticity is defined this manner. The “1000-year old” temples in Japan may actually contain very little original fabric from their construction, but what is preserved are the ideas embodied in their construction rather than the actual construction materials; as a symbol, the temples are preserved. Every year, a painstaking process rebuilds parts of these structures. The methods used in doing this activity employ traditional crafts; much care is taken to preserve the symbolic ideas conveyed by the temple through replicative design. Preservation of fabric is a secondary concern.

6.2 Types of sociocultural values associated with constructed authenticity

Symbolic value: This value represents objects or environments that embody and transmit important cultural meanings (Throsby, 2000, p. 29), such as the previously mentioned temples in Japan. Other examples include prominent monuments such as the Ziggurat at Ashur or the Taj Mahal in India. Certain cultural landscapes may have symbolic value such as Central Park in New York or Ayers Rock in Australia.

Technical value: Great achievements of the past are often admired for their genius and engineering prowess that represent some of the greatest achievements of humankind (Worthing & Bond, 2008, p. 63). The Suez Canal is an example as are the great pyramids of Egypt.

Educational value: Historic places can offer much in the way of educational value, from learning how people lived in and designed buildings and places to learning how to respect different cultures’ contribution to world heritage (Feilden & Jokilehto, 1993).

Recreational value: The English Heritage describes recreational activities in historic places as being “a vital part of people’s everyday life and experiences” (English Heritage, 1997, p. 4). Many heritage landscapes offer a variety of recreation activities.

Spiritual/religious value: Certain places are connected with the religious beliefs of people (Mason, 2002, p. 12). Often associated with indigenous peoples, this value can be potentially applied to any cultural group. Mecca and the Dome of the Rock are examples.

Use value: Perhaps one of the most important values to be ascribed to buildings and places, this value is defined as the ability of a building, place, or landscape to provide a benefit that is typically linked to an economically justifiable purpose (Mason, 2002, p. 12).

Social capital/identity value: This value relates to the social uses of the historic environment, such as group gatherings and ceremonial activities, which help to reinforce community identity and build social capital and foster social cohesion (Mason, 2002, p. 12; Worthing & Bond, 2008, p. 66).

Cultural attachment value: Environmental psychologists and geographers argue that phenomenon of place attachment fits best within a phenomenological framework and individual experience, but Setha Low claims that there is also a cultural dimension to place attachment. Attachment, therefore, can also form when individual experience aggregates at the group level to include “cultural beliefs and practices that link people to place” (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 165).

6.3 Phenomenological (experiential) authenticity

Phenomenology is the philosophical study of beginnings applied to the highly personal, individual experience in the “lifeworld.” It seeks to uncover the subjective elements of personal experience the moment they occur before subsequent personal reflection reduces the richness of the experience. Phenomenological authenticity focuses on the individual’s experience of being in and relating to the world (Tilley & Bennett, 2004, p. 29; Dovey, 1999, p. 39) by utilizing Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) foundational work as “a way of thinking through the body in its participatory reaction with the world” to reveal emotional attachments to certain places. For instance, upon seeing Mecca for the first time, one might immediately feel sensations of awe and wonder accompanied by a strong physical sensation. This initial, emotional reaction to a place is what phenomenology attempts to understand, which is why it is frequently used in nursing research to study people’s experience with pain. Research in sense of place and place attachment by humanistic geographers, such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) and David Seamon (1984), is also based on phenomenology. If we accept that the emotional bond with a place has a phenomenological basis then the fundamental basis of historical authenticity resides on individuals’ lifeworld experiences. Other forms of authenticity—fabric-based and constructed—must therefore rest on this phenomenological platform.

6.4 Types of experiential values associated with phenomenological authenticity

Age value: Over a century ago, Alois Riegl (1996), a well-known Austrian art historian, defined “age value” as a phenomenon that “addresses the emotions directly” through an “imperfection, a lack of completeness, a tendency to dissolve shape and color” (p. 74). Concepts such as patina and decay are associated with age value. Thus, people’s emotional attachment to place can be catalyzed by the way materials change over time.

Spatial value: This term is derived from landscape architect Randy Hester’s (1985) work in community-influenced landscape design in which he links “unconscious attachment to place” with the valuation of spatial elements of landscape. Spatial value, while associated with aesthetics, is more effective in communicating its phenomenological relationship with place attachment.

Attachment value: People have emotional bonds with specific places. Also known as “place attachment,” this value is predicated on how one experiences a place based on certain environmental cues which are often provided in abundance in historic places. While there is a widespread belief that the first reaction to a building or a landscape is emotional (Frank & Petersen, 2002, p. 90; Carr, 2005, p. 173), architectural conservation doctrine actively discourages a consideration of emotional connections to place to help define historical value (Alanen & Melnick, 2000, p. 17).

7. Assessing contemporary social, cultural, and experiential values associated with built heritage

There is no single, universal procedure that can be used to collect, analyze, and then utilize sociocultural and experiential values to inform historical value. Much depends on how the research problem is defined, the particular question that is being asked, and the context for that question. Social scientists are well versed in the issue of defining a research problem and have written a wide variety of books on the subject. What is altogether absent, however, is how social science research methodologies can specifically be used to help define historical value. It is for this reason that a brief overview of social science research methodologies and their application is in order. Many of these techniques may be quite new to individuals coming from a public history or design background. While it is outside the scope of this paper to delve into a full overview of multidisciplinary research design (there are many authors that have already done so), a quick overview of social science methodologies and methods is useful in order to bring a common understanding to this discussion. An in-depth explanation of the ontological and

epistemological orientations of different qualitative and quantitative traditions has been attempted before (see Guba & Lincoln, 1994) so this overview will take a pragmatic and introductory approach to the subject with the expectation that the reader will seek additional resources on research design which are supplied in the research methodologies table included in this paper. Table 2 summarizes the range of possible research methodologies that could be applied toward understanding the values of the older built environment.

Generally speaking, research methodologies fall into quantitative and qualitative traditions. The quantitative one is perhaps the oldest and is associated with the positivistic sciences organized by Auguste Comte in the early part of the nineteenth century. If the research question requires measurable or quantifiable data, a quantitative approach is a good fit. If the research question seeks meanings or subjective data, then a qualitative approach is a common choice. A mixed methodological approach combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies in a manner that will tend increase the accuracy of the results through a triangulation process. One methodology may follow the other sequentially or be accomplished in parallel; the design is up to the researcher. Creswell (2003), for instance, offers a good explanation of how to design mixed methodological research.

A method is the tool with which data is collected; every method is associated with at least one methodology. For instance interviews, which are a method, are associated with the methodologies of ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory. Treatment and control groups are methods that are exclusively associated with the methodology of experimental research. As with any tool, methods must be chosen for their ability to answer a research question. Thus, with any research project, the approach is top down, usually in this order:

1. Define the problem (contextualize the need for the research)
2. Define the research question (relate to the problem)
3. Select a methodology for its ability to answer the research question
4. Select methods for the ability to gather data relevant to answering the research question.

Guidance on the use of these methodologies and methods can be found within their parent disciplines. For instance, anthropology has a well-developed knowledge base for ethnographies while sociology has a knowledge base for grounded theory. Each discipline has developed their methodologies for specific purposes rooted in their epistemological traditions; knowing why these techniques were created can be useful in understanding their applicability for a particular research question. For instance, action research was developed out of a need to empower disadvantaged groups to take action for themselves to solve a problem. Therefore research that focuses on empowering people to take action based on how they define important historic places would fit within this approach. Grounded theory was developed in order to create sociological theories and places a high standard on validity through repeated visits to the field until no variations in data are observed. Grounded theory, for instance, could be used to generate a theory as to why people become attached to certain places, but not to others in particular built environments.

To date I have located only one social science research approach that has been specifically designed for assessing heritage values. In the 1990s, Setha Low (1990) adapted existing ethnographic methods for the purpose of assessing heritage values. Her “Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Procedure” (REAP) is now being taught in a few architectural conservation programs, usually in a studio situation, such as the University of Pennsylvania. The goal is to “help conservation professionals and managers understand the complexity of social relations and cultural dynamics at play in the conservation planning and development of heritage sites” (Low, 2002, p. 31). While framed in ethnographic traditions, the REAP approach also includes other social science methodologies including phenomenology and the historical/interpretive methodology. The methods utilized include physical traces mapping, behavioral mapping, transect walks, individual interviews, expert interviews, impromptu group interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and the use of historical and archival documents (*ibid.*, pp. 37, 38).

Table 2: List of potential research methodologies to investigate contemporary social, cultural, and experiential values associated with the older built environment. (This list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather represents many of the common research traditions in the social sciences.)

<i>Paradigm</i>	<i>Qualitative</i>			<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Quantitative</i>		
<i>Methodology</i>	Ethnography	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Action (Collaborative/ Participatory) Research	Survey (correlational)	Experimental design	Quasi-experimental design
<i>Theoretical frame</i>	Anthropology (culture)	Philosophy	Symbolic interactionism	Humanistic psychology	Measurable evidence (positivist/post-positivist)	Measurable evidence (positivist/post-positivist)	Measurable evidence (positivist/post-positivist)
<i>Parent disciplines</i>	Anthropology	Philosophy, humanistic geography, architecture	Sociology	Feminist and minority studies, education	Sociology (but widely used elsewhere)	Traditional sciences; social sciences	Social sciences
<i>Associated methods</i>	Interviews, participant observation	Interviews, reflection on literature	Interviews, participant observation	Storytelling, sociodrama, plays, skits, puppets, song, drawing, painting along with methods used in other qualitative/ quantitative research	Survey instrument	Control of discrete variables via a control and treatment group	Statistical control of variables among naturally occurring treatment groups
<i>Reveals</i>	Cultural values associated with heritage	Individual "essential" values associated with heritage	Theories about cultural valuation processes	Actions which may empower a disempowered group	Categorical and continuous variables; correlations	Causal relationships between variables	Causal relationships between variables
<i>Analytical procedure</i>	Identification of patterns and themes from an "emic" or inside perspective	Identification of patterns and themes through a process of "open" unbiased reflection	Identification of a "grounded" theory through a process of continual collection, recollection, analysis, and reanalysis of field data until a consistent theory emerges	Direct involvement of human subjects as co-researchers in an iterative data collection and analysis process that leads to a practical end	Multivariate statistics	Univariate and bivariate statistics	Multivariate statistics
<i>Example research questions</i>	Which heritage resources hold the highest value for a cultural group? Why are these resources important to this group?	What is the nature of being in certain places that engenders attachment to these places? What is the meaning of these places for the individual?	Why do some heritage places become valuable while others do not? What is the nature of this process?	What actions can a disempowered local group take to locate and protect their own heritage?	How many people think a particular place is important? Can place attachment be correlated with how people value a place?	How does viewing pictures of heritage sites change measures of galvanic skin response?	Can people's attitudes toward significance be predicted based on geography?
<i>Resources</i>	Low (2002); Spradley (1979, 1980); Angrosino (2002).	Moustakas (1994); Van Manen (1990); Munhall (2007).	Glaser (1992); Charmaz (2006); Strauss (1987).	Heron (1996); McNiff & Whitehead (2006).	Dillman (2007); Foddy (1993); Tabachnick, & Fidell (2007).	Funkenbusch (2005); Kaplan (2004); Tabachnick, & Fidell (2007).	Kaplan (2004); Tabachnick, & Fidell (2007).

General handbooks include: Denzin & Lincoln (2005); Singleton & Straights (2005); Creswell (2003); Punch (2005); Maxwell (2005); Yin (2003).

8. Ways to approach the conservation of Iraqi urban centers

Archaeology and antiquities have long been the primary focus of internal and external efforts at recognizing and protecting Iraq's heritage. Gertrude Bell, a British official, helped craft Iraq's first antiquities law in the 1920s with specific provisions to encourage Westerners to conduct archaeological excavations in Iraq (Bell, 1927, p. 654). Bell's perspective was that because there was little or no archaeological expertise in Iraq at the time, that Iraqi antiquities should be allowed to be exported to foreign museums for safekeeping (p. 725). It was not until 1932 when Sati al-Hursi was appointed Director of Antiquities that measures began to be put into place to prevent the export of Iraqi antiquities. Since the 1930s, the Iraqi government has enabled strong legislation to recognize, protect, and promote ancient Iraqi heritage. Unfortunately, the recent wars have allowed the old pattern of looting and export of antiquities to take place. In fact, there is evidence that Westerners are again trying to regain control of Iraq's ancient heritage as evidenced by the American Council for Cultural Property's efforts in "actively lobbying to have the very strict Iraqi antiquities legislation relaxed to enable them to purchase archaeological material in a post-Saddam Iraq" (Stone, 2005, p. 936).

While ostensibly the purpose of allowing Westerners to conduct archaeological excavations in Iraq was to encourage scientific research and publishing, the reality is that very little of this information is published and essentially none of it is published in languages the local population can read (Matthews, 2003, p. 4). There is a danger that as Iraq focuses more on its recent heritage and the conservation of its urban centers, there will be Westerners very willing and ready to offer the traditional Euro-American architectural conservation doctrine in a neat package as a ready made solution. As Matthews (2003) suggests, however, maybe it is "time to allow the modern peoples of Iraq ... to construct their own historical trajectories, whatever they may be and however difficult we in the West may find them to digest" (p. 5). We need to acknowledge that the Western stewardship of the archaeological record is "suspiciously self-serving" (Hamilakis, 2003, p. 107) and be wary of similar Western approaches to Iraqi urban centers. Western conservation professionals—through their training and indoctrination into architectural conservation doctrine—tend to focus on the historical object and deprecate the equally important aspects of intangible heritage and the values of local populations. Moreover, such professionals "are thus representing themselves and being accepted merely as professionals and experts, not as critical thinkers who question the regimes of truth within which that expert knowledge is deployed" (*ibid.*, p. 107). Aylin Orbasli (2007) is far more critical of Western approaches in the Middle East and encourages much needed debate on the subject:

A more pertinent concern may be whether the Western theoretical model of conservation and its principles can be successfully transferred to the Middle East. It can be argued that there are some notable cultural differences, including different ways of interpreting history. Likewise, the question should be asked as to whether conservation philosophy needs to be adapted for the regional context of the Middle East. ... Interestingly some of the debates that have taken place in some Southeast Asian countries relating to adapting international conservation doctrines to reflect cultural differences have not been voiced or debated in the same way in the Middle East. An allowance for philosophical differences should not, however, be removed from the international benchmarks and standards set out by ICOMOS charters and other international doctrines. Nonetheless, it seems that a critical debate on the issue is long overdue. (p. 317)

Iraq, therefore, represents a unique opportunity to begin to rethink how urban conservation should be approached. Ultimately, for places such as Iraq, we have very little, if any, data to support conservation decisions that understand and respect local cultures and tradition. The primary argument of this paper is to consider Western approaches to social science research methodologies in order to understand the values of a local population as an alternative to simply adopting the Western value system inherent in architectural conservation doctrine *per se*. While the traditional Euro-American architectural conservation doctrine will likely be of value toward understanding the conservation of Iraqi urban centers, the cultural beliefs in this doctrine should be supplemented—ideally enhanced, if possible—with the cultural values and beliefs of the Iraqi people.

9. Conclusion

The Euro-American approach to architectural conservation is epistemologically antiquated and justifies its cultural belief system as a pseudo-scientific endeavor. If we recognize that the way in which architectural conservation is practiced is predicated on *beliefs* and not scientific truths, then a new door opens to different ways of addressing the conservation of Iraqi urban centers that incorporate the local and regional values of everyday people. While any activity focusing on the physical remnants from the past ought to consider the nature and treatment of building fabric, ultimately the reason why we engage in architectural conservation is to benefit people. Architectural conservation creates a sense of place, provides an environment in which emotional attachments can occur, and ideally improves human flourishing. This people-centered approach to architectural conservation not only acknowledges cultural differences, but capitalizes on them in an effort to improve the way in which interventions in the older built environment are conducted.

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