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Pluralitas non est ponenda sine necessitate

Christer Bengts^{a,*}

^a*Aalto University, Finland*

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

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +35850512 4516.

E-mail address: christer.bengts@aalto.fi

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

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