



Urban authenticity at stake: A new framework for its definition from the perspective of heritage at the Shanghai Music Valley

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ABSTRACT

The field of urban heritage conservation calls for a new understanding of authenticity, given the influence of the tourism industries and the creative city ideal in the contemporary renovation of heritage areas. This has become a relevant issue after the 2011 UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation withdrew its call for authenticity from the forefront of urban heritage conservation. This paper will develop a framework for a value-based assessment of urban heritage authenticity beginning with a review of heritage conservation theory confronting it to a study of this concept in the fields of tourism and the creative city. The proposed value-based approach to urban heritage authenticity will determine two series of attributes: the first comes from the specific field of heritage, and the second relates heritage with tourism and the creative city ideal. This framework will be used to evaluate heritage authenticity in the ongoing development of the Shanghai Music Valley (SMV) initiative in Shanghai's Hongkou district. This evaluation, from an architectural and urban point of view, will point to the inconsistencies that result when authenticity criteria based on the interests of tourism and the creative city are used for heritage conservation, especially, when it appears as a consequence of the atomization of heritage management among an unbalanced landscape of stakeholders.

1. Introduction

The notion of authenticity has evolved from an objective concept to a complex social construction, incorporating objective and subjective aspects of reality. Orthodox 'object-centered' interpretations of authenticity adhere to a historic dimension, relying on truthful sources of information and calling to evidence historical layers in heritage interventions (ICOMOS, 1964). But this understanding fails to recognize the living condition of urban heritage. Departing from the 'value-centered' approach enshrined by the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the 1994 Nara Document of Authenticity was a response to this request (UNESCO, 1994), demanding additional efforts to adapt authenticity to different contexts, reaching a 'compromise' (Ashworth, 2011). This is an especially complex task due to the fact that in contemporary urban economies, urban heritage is no longer opposed to development, but considered a development option preferred over other options (Ashworth, 2011).

The heritage development option has philosophical and political implications that surpass those expressed in charters and recommendations, referring to 'the invention and management of collective identity and reputation' (Ashworth & Karavatzis, 2011). Our thesis is that when urban heritage adopts this leading role, the absence of a clear definition of authenticity (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012)

jeopardizes the heritage asset itself. Competitiveness leads to the application of more marketable 'experience-based' definitions of authenticity that stem from tourism and the creative city ideal in urban heritage management, with the aim of attracting tourists, the creative class, and the promise of further economic investment. It is our contention that when urban heritage is subjected to interests beyond culture, it requires sound, value-based foundations to support its own 'experiential' definition of authenticity. Therefore, this paper will develop a framework for the assessment of authenticity from the point of view of heritage. It will begin with a detailed review of this concept in existing charters and recommendations as well as recent contributions from the realm of theory. It will allow to detect situations where heritage authenticity is dismissed, or where non-heritage definitions of authenticity are applied to urban heritage.

This framework will be tested in the case study of the Shanghai Music Valley (SMV). SMV is an entrepreneurial initiative developed by the government of Shanghai's Hongkou district to foster tourism and the creative industries in the city's former International Concession area. This space has been chosen for this study given how it incorporates a broad range of stakeholders and management issues that have led to an important debate regarding urban heritage conservation in the city. The three major heritage elements that exemplify the main challenges that the SMV area faces are: 1933 Millfun, the China Industry Music Park

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and Ruikang Lilong. The application of the framework to these elements will be based on the analysis of planning documents, site visits and semi-structured interviews with representatives of the stakeholders involved, including researchers, NGOs, planning officials and neighbors. The paper will conclude with an assessment of both the SMV's heritage authenticity and the validity of the framework within the specificity of urban heritage in China and Shanghai.

2. The evolution of urban heritage authenticity: charters, documents and recommendations in light of a theoretical discourse

Considered the founding document of modern heritage conservation, the 1931 Athens Charter established an 'object-centered' interpretation of authenticity, raising a provocative question between conservation and modernization that challenged the perspective of preservationists (*Athens charter for the restoration of historic monuments*, 1931; Ashworth, 2011). The 1964 Venice Charter followed it, taking one step further to conceal both positions, claiming that the legibility of all the layers of history was a prerequisite for heritage authenticity (ICOMOS, 1964).

'Layering' also appeared in international documents such as the Amsterdam Declaration and the Nairobi Recommendation, which recommended effective measures for the protection of the social layers of urban heritage (Council of Europe, 1975; UNESCO, 1976), even though both still departed from an 'object-centered' approach to heritage authenticity based on the dictates of Western specialists.

The 1972 World Heritage Convention had already inaugurated a different course for the production of heritage that requested a new definition of authenticity. In the wake of globalization, the 1994 Nara Charter and the 1999 Burra Charter provided an answer to this situation, advocating for a 'value-centered' approach that linked authenticity to the notion of place and to the participation of stakeholders (UNESCO, 1994; AUSTRALIA ICOMOS, 1999). The 1994 Nara Charter defined authenticity as the essential factor for attributing values (UNESCO, 1994; Mendes Zanchetti & Ferreira Hidaka, 2011).

This nonspecific definition has motivated the proliferation of heritage authenticity notions; each reflects standards for its verification by a wide range of heritage stakeholders. Therefore, the multiple interpretations of heritage authenticity are symptomatic of its negotiable character (Heynen, 2006; Guttormsen & Fageraas, 2011). This may solve the problem of adapting criteria to different contexts, but from our point of view, heritage authenticity remains loosely formulated, leaving urban heritage in a difficult position.

The limited applicability of heritage authenticity is perceived as an obstacle for development, and signs of its 'inconvenient' presence can be found in the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL). The Recommendation only mentions authenticity in paragraph number 24 (UNESCO, 2011), a tellingly relegated position, due to the alleged impossibility of its fulfillment (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012). Further analysis of the Recommendation shows multiple references to tourism and creativity, which have been already criticized by authors like Lalana Soto (2011) for presenting an ideal balanced scenario between heritage, tourism and creative city interests. To this adds, in our opinion, that this balance does not correspond to an equally balanced influence of their respective conceptions of authenticity, consequently jeopardizing urban heritage conservation.

The rise of entrepreneurial city governance show how challenging it is to guarantee this, and the aims to attract the consumer dollar and generate an image of 'quality of life' have risen objections for not bringing all possible stakeholders and their related visions into the discussion (Harvey, 1989). Urban heritage attracts socioeconomic activities that are related to tourism and the creative city, both of which have developed their own 'experience-based' definitions of authenticity (Florida, 2002; Cohen, 2010; Zukin, 2010). Their premises being a renewed attention to personal feelings with overwhelming marketing

potential (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), the adoption of their criteria by policy makers, planners and designers takes advantage of the loose definition of urban heritage authenticity, which has produced some negative effects in the continuity of building typologies, uses and activities (Guttormsen & Fageraas, 2011; González Martínez, 2016).

For this reason, the evaluation of the heritage authenticity of urban conservation is a major tool to detect potential imbalanced situations. Our contention is that it is necessary to reconcile the interests of heritage with those of the aforementioned industries, confronting their definitions of authenticity. This requires the establishment of a framework based on a set of values that currently apply to urban heritage conservation and their related attributes, conforming an experiential dimension of heritage. The search of this framework departs, firstly, from a review of the effects that non-heritage experiential definitions of heritage are currently having on urban heritage conservation.

3. The effects of tourism-related authenticity on urban heritage: its potential and contradictions

Tourism's search for authenticity goes back to the 1960s, as a reaction of Western societies to the loss of bonds that once existed between the different social classes. Places set aside from modernization offered a refuge for the self (Cohen, 1988; Peterson, 2005). As these spaces gradually became part of Western imaginaries, they started to be recreated for conspicuous consumption; therefore their authenticity was put into question. Theorists like MacCannell already warned against the application of tourist canons of authenticity that favored entrepreneurial success and produced a 'staged authenticity' (MacCannell, 1973).

These canons defined an 'experience-centered' authenticity, for which tourists were spectators, responsible in themselves for distinguishing authentic from fake (MacCannell, 1973). But this was an incomplete assumption, as MacCannell's tourist resembled a scholar rather than a middle class worker on vacation (MacCannell, 1973; Cohen, 1988). The popularization of mass tourism in the 1990s and the rise of non-Western tourists introduced new nuances in the definition of tourism authenticity. Accordingly, different degrees of authenticity could be established depending on the origin, character and education of the tourist (Cohen, 1988, Cohen & Cohen, 2012); as well as on the stereotyped expectations transmitted through mass media (Koontz, 2010).

Urban heritage conservation started to incorporate guidelines that responded to touristic criteria, confirming the new condition of heritage as a 'resultant of dominant contemporary needs and tastes' (Ashworth, 2011). This led to a complete divorce between the objective, 'object-centered' modern notions of heritage authenticity and the subjective, 'experience-centered' notions of tourist authenticity (Guttormsen & Fageraas, 2011).

The attempts of organizations such as ICOMOS and UNESCO to solve this gap have been guided by the will to bridge heritage conservation and economic development by means of tourism, especially in developing countries. The 1996 San Antonio Declaration recognized tourists as legitimate stakeholders for the definition of urban heritage authenticity (ICOMOS, 1996). This important, conceptual step entailed the methodological difficulty of guaranteeing the representation of this ever changing collective, one that has been taken over by tourism operators and administration officials whose definitions of authenticity assume nostalgic clichés (Muñoz, 2010; Rius Uldemolins, 2014).

In the prevailing leisure culture, the tourist gaze extends into the realm of local residents (Cohen, 2010; Fuller & Michel, 2014), complicating things further. In our opinion, a new definition of heritage authenticity should also acknowledge other aspects relating to the experience of the population sectors that do not usually participate in these leisure activities, such as the elderly, minorities, or the underprivileged. Experience should also extend to the active participation of residents in planning and management issues, as well as considering

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