

The Heritage & Architecture value assessment:

A critical reflection on its use and outcome

I INTRODUCTION

The architectural discipline is inherently multifaceted in its approach. No single approach will give you all the answers you are looking for^{1,2}. This means that as an architect or architecture student, you are constantly switching between different disciplines and, most of the times, even if it's subconsciously, switching between different methods which are related to these disciplines. From my personal experience as an architecture student, I have noticed that more often than not the research that you are conducting in your project is following the logic of wanting to have certain results to start your design process. The focus then lies on dividing the research into different topics, concerning different disciplines, to gather as much information as possible. Often this leads to a very elaborate end result in which many things are covered but where purposeful conclusions are difficult to make. If you would be more aware of the methodologies you are using, a more conclusive research with more depth and purpose will be more likely to follow³.

This is also the valuable experience gained in the course. We set up our research methods more deliberately with the preferred goal in mind. This may sound basal but is imperative to do during a graduation where it's important to legitimize your decisions. We also made it a habit to periodically reflect on our process and tweak it accordingly. This allowed us to be flexible to the needs of the research which is vital in a complex creative process such as the (heritage) graduation.

The topic of my thesis greatly relates to the Heritage Graduation Studio analysis. This elaborate analysis was done in a structure provided by the Studio and is subdivided in the themes architectural design (AD), Building technology (BT) and cultural value or value assessment (CV). AD and BT are themes which are unmistakably related to all architecture studios but value assessment is specific for the heritage discipline. This inherent relationship between the existing and past (cultural) values of a heritage project and its redevelopment stands at the core of this thesis. Being inexperienced with this value assessment, I started reading up on the Heritage & Architecture chair and its approach to this topic. Following their logic and using the guidelines provided by the Studio we set up an approach for our research.

The value assessment greatly influences the course of the project as its conclusions will serve as argumentation for proposed interventions^{4,5}. This begs the question: **how has the Heritage Graduation Studio's value assessment shaped the starting points for the design phase?**

II RESEARCH-METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

My value assessment analysis was based on the structure provided by the Studio. The analysis was done in a group setting. Our approach was to keep the division between the themes. The AD and BT themes would give us general 'dry' information through which we would understand the buildings. This data would form the basis for the value assessment. Having this data we would use several methods,

1 Ray Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd., 2015), 21.

2 Erica Avrami, Randall Mason and Marta de la Torre (eds), *Values and Heritage Conservation* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2000), 10.

3 Randall Mason, 'Assessing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodological Issues and Choices', in Marta de la Torre (ed), *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2002), 14.

4 Leo Hendriks and Jan van der Hoeve, *Guidelines for Building Archeological Research* (Den Haag: Cultural heritage Agency, 2009), 3.

5 Paul Meurs, *Heritage-based design* (Delft: TU Delft - Heritage & Architecture, 2016), 52.

as advised by the Studio, to make a value assessment. From this assessment we would visualize conclusions dilemma's that would arise between conflicting values, in diagrams. As mentioned before, the value assessment will greatly influences the design phase as it highlights opportunities and limitations for the project. For the conciseness of this paper I will focus on the method of the 'cultural value matrix' which aimed to visualize the tangible and intangible values of a built heritage project.

BRAND +	RIEGL +	AGE value	HISTORICAL value	INTENTIONAL COMMEMORATIVE value	NON INTENDED COMMEMORATIVE value	USE value	NEW-NESS value	(relative) ART value	RARITY value [+]	OTHER relevant values [+]
SURROUNDINGS / SETTING [+]										
SITE										
SKIN (exterior)										
STRUCTURE										
SPACE PLAN										
SURFACES (interior) [+]										
SERVICES										
STUFF										
SPIRIT of PLACE [+]										

Figure 1: Cultural value matrix⁶.

The cultural value matrix has been developed recently by the Heritage department at the faculty of Architecture at TU Delft. It connects on one axis the tangible/intangible elements of a 'built artifact', based on Stewart Brand's layer framework with on the other axis their respective values based on Alois Riegl's dialectic value set, see figure 1. Stewart Brand's 6 layers (site, skin, structure, space plan, services and stuff) represent the current physical state of the artifact to which 3 layers have been added (surroundings, surfaces and spirit of place)⁷. The Rieglian values (age, historical, intentional commemorative, non-intended commemorative, use, newness and art value) are chosen because they depart from jargon used in legislative or conservation documents which makes them free for interpretation⁸. Rarity value is added because it has been a (growing) criterion in recent years for conservation^{9, 10}. A specific layer (row) is linked to a specific value (column) in isolation to ensure an objective and detailed assessment not cluttered by external factors. It's a guide to identify heritage

6 Marieke Kuipers and Wessel de Jonge, *Designing from Heritage: Strategies for Conservation and Conversion* (Delft: TU Delft - Heritage & Architecture, 2016), 87.

7 Ibid, 86-87.

8 Ibid, 86-87.

9 Ibid, 86-87.

10 Leo Hendriks and Jan van der Hoeve, *Guidelines for Building Archeological Research* (Den Haag: Cultural heritage Agency, 2009), 17.

values and dilemmas objectively. This analytical nature of isolating tangible/intangible elements and showing visual relationships without hierarchies facilitates an unbiased assessment which is vital in current conservation investigations^{11,12}. The field of heritage conservation is filled with different parties, from art historians to archaeologists to government agencies, all with their own approaches and interpretations of values. There is however a limited body of knowledge on their relationships and its impact on the value assessment^{13,14}. There is a need for a conceptual framework which connects these different disciplines on various levels (economic, cultural, political and social to name a few) to establish a method by which they can all contribute to the field^{15,16,17}. The cultural value matrix could serve as such a framework. It offers a common language with "typologies" of heritage values where various perspectives can be compared and discussed. Moreover this discussion can help to understand different valuing processes and built on existing knowledge. It can offer a starting point for practitioners and can be used as comparison for the evaluation of other heritage projects¹⁸. This does however bring with it certain challenges. Firstly, different disciplines have different interpretations of values which problematizes breaking them down into a common language^{19,20}. Secondly values are constantly changing, whether new generations/times emphasize different ones²¹ or new developments within the field change current and past views²².

III RESEARCH-METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The cultural value matrix is a fairly young method of value assessment. The field of heritage conservation however has long been dealing with the methodological issue of how to approach value assessment. The key theories and documents and their development will be briefly explained to put the value matrix in a broader context. The debate on heritage conservation started in the 19th century and can broadly, even till this day, be categorized into 2 methodologies: the ethics and aesthetics. The biggest figures in this debate were Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and John Ruskin. Viollet-le-Duc was an advocate for the aesthetics perspective which sought to **restore** the **original image** of the built artifact and its "stylistic unity" using documentation and research. The ethics perspective, headed by John Ruskin, sought after the **conservation** of the built artifact in respect to its original fabric and its **original idea**. They advocated careful repairs and interventions with an "honest expression"²³. These perspectives are better known as conservation (ethics) versus restoration (aesthetics).

Alois Riegl continued on these methodologies late 19th century when he came up with his dialectic value set, the one on which the cultural value matrix is based. He argued for the consideration of more social values, such as the emotional connection with built heritage²⁴. He introduced values such as

11 Paul Meurs, *Heritage-based design* (Delft: TU Delft - Heritage & Architecture, 2016), 49.

12 ICOMOS, *Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties* (Paris: ICOMOS, 2011), 7.

13 Erica Avrami, Randall Mason and Marta de la Torre (eds), *Values and Heritage Conservation* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2000), 10.

14 Randall Mason, 'Assessing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodological Issues and Choices', in Marta de la Torre (ed), *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2002), 5.

15 Avrami, Mason and De la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation*, 10.

16 Leo Hendriks and Jan van der Hoeve, *Guidelines for Building Archeological Research* (Den Haag: Cultural heritage Agency, 2009), 19.

17 Mason, 'Assessing Values in Conservation Planning', 6.

18 Ibid, 9.

19 Ibid, 9.

20 Meurs, *Heritage-based design*, 115.

21 Ibid, 35.

22 Hendriks and Van der Hoeve, *Guidelines for Building Archeological Research*, 17.

23 Marieke Kuipers and Wessel de Jonge, *Designing from Heritage: Strategies for Conservation and Conversion* (Delft: TU Delft - Heritage & Architecture, 2016), 67.

24 Ibid, 68.

intentional commemorative, use, and art value. Most important was his introduction of the age value (the natural process of decay of a built artifact has to be conserved) opposed to the historical value (the conservation of the original fabric in its current state)^{25,26}.

The ideas of Ruskin’s conservation and the historical value introduced by Riegl show many similarities; the current state of the artifact and conservation in line with the original idea are fundamental to both. This methodology has been echoed in the 20th century through international guidelines such as the Athens Charter from 1931 or the Venice Charter from 1964 (see article 3: “The intention in conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as works of art than as historical evidence”²⁷). It continues to influence heritage values today^{28,29}.

Lastly we will look at the Nara Grid, an assessment (matrix) based on the international guideline of the Nara document on Authenticity from 1994 and article 3 of the Venice Charter. Similar to the cultural value matrix, the Nara grid aims to visualize relationships between aspects and dimensions of heritage as formulated in article 13 of the Nara Document on Authenticity³⁰. These can be compared to the ‘elements’ and ‘values’ formulated in the cultural value matrix. The practical implementation of the Nara Grid has given some promising results. For instance, in the case of the redevelopment of the Saint Barbara Church in Brussels, the Nara Grid was used alongside a method called M&S, which aimed to attribute values, primarily to the physical fabric of the church, by giving them a grade of importance³¹. The methods turned out to complement each other as the Nara Grid identified the social values, missed in the M&S method. It also showed the more complex relationship between heritage values, primarily the intangible elements that define the character of a heritage site³².

Table 1. The Nara Grid based on the Nara Document on Authenticity

Aspects ↓	Dimensions →	Artistic	Historic	Social	Scientific
	Form and design				
	Materials and substance				
	Use and function				
	Tradition, techniques, and workmanship				
	Location and setting				
	Spirit and feeling				

Figure 2: The Nara Grid³³.

25 Marieke Kuipers and Wessel de Jonge, *Designing from Heritage: Strategies for Conservation and Conversion* (Delft: TU Delft - Heritage & Architecture, 2016), 68.

26 Alios Riegl, 'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Essence and Its Development', in Nicholas S. Price, M. Kirby Talley and Alessandra M. Vaccaro (eds), *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1996), 73.

27 ICOMOS, *International Charter for the Conservation of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964)* (Paris: ICOMOS, 1964), 2.

28 Kuipers and De Jonge, *Designing from Heritage*, 67.

29 Koenraad van Balen, 'The Nara Grid: An Evaluation Scheme Based on the Nara Document on Authenticity', *Journal of Preservation Technology*, 39, no. 2-3 (2008), 39.

30 Ibid, 40.

31 Ibid, 43.

32 Ibid, 44-45.

33 Ibid, 40.

This leads me to my own approach in using the cultural value matrix. Every heritage project is different and requires a specific tailoring of relevant values^{34,35}. Reflecting on Riegl's value set, we made minor adjustments to the value structure of the matrix. We added a column for aesthetic value. This value is implicitly incorporated into the age value³⁶ and in the art value. We argued that our object of study, which originally was built primarily with its aesthetic in mind (a manor from the 19th century with great architectural detail, materials and decorations) needed this value to be made explicit. Furthermore we applied a color coding to the attributed values, a technique used by multiple disciplines in the field of conservation^{37,38}. It serves as a hierarchical component to assess the levels of importance for every value, which deepens the value assessment and is the next step towards meaningful conclusions³⁹. As mentioned before, the matrix is an objective tool to assess values to tangible/intangible elements of the built artifact but it does not make a statement about their importance concerning conservation or intervention. This is required in my research because the aim of the matrix is to generate statement on the most important values which will be translated into starting points for the design.

IV POSITIONING

To further elaborate on my approach, I will discuss it in light of the talk given by Jorge Hernandez, who gave an introduction to heuristics and dissected the research/design process in a conceptual way. He states that the traditional interpretation of a project follows the order of starting a question (1) (research phase), which leads to a design (2), which needs to be technically drawn (3) and lastly presented (4). He argues that all steps are defined by research and should be approached in that way to essentially develop the architectural discipline. The question is the purpose (why do you do something? > research), the design is form (how do you shape something? > research), the technical drawing is the technique (how do you make something? > research) and presenting is communication (how do you explain something? > research). I will argue that my own research approach, specifically looking at the cultural value matrix, essentially follows this logic. I will explain this by putting the matrix in the broader context of my research and comparing it to the position of Hernandez.

As explained before, my first step was the analysis of the building; the AD and BT reports which helped to understand the project. This can be seen as Hernandez' first step of the question; what is it we are working with? Secondly I synthesized the information using the matrix; shaping the information in a visual framework for assessment. The third step can be compared to the technique Hernandez described; the actual method of assigning a significance to the values by color grading them and elaborating on them through explanatory text and pictures. The final step was the presentation of the conclusions from the matrix in simple icons which quickly communicated the most important aspects of the value assessment. This research approach proved to be very analytical, setting up the consecutive steps with a specific purpose in mind.

Essentially this is an adaptation of the methodology of Kuipers and De Jonge. They defined these steps as 'chrono mapping' (analysis), 'value mapping', 'mapping levels of significance' and defining

34 ICOMOS, *Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties* (Paris: ICOMOS, 2011), 7.

35 Randall Mason, 'Assessing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodological Issues and Choices', in Marta de la Torre (ed), *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2002), 11.

36 Alios Riegl, 'The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Essence and Its Development', in Nicholas S. Price, M. Kirby Talley and Alessandra M. Vaccaro (eds), *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1996), 73.

37 Leo Hendriks and Jan van der Hoeve, *Guidelines for Building Archeological Research* (Den Haag: Cultural heritage Agency, 2009), 21.

38 Paul Meurs, *Heritage-based design* (Delft: TU Delft - Heritage & Architecture, 2016), 51.

39 Nicholas Clarke and Marieke Kuipers, 'Introducing the Heritage Value Matrix: Connecting Matter and Meaning in Built Heritage', in IMAATe 2017, *Paper for international conference Intangibility Matters. International Conference on the values of tangible heritage*. (Lisbon: IMAATe, 2017), 215.

dilemma's⁴⁰. I adopted these steps as they provided great structure to the complex process of value assessment. This complex nature is why I used an analytical framework, such as the matrix, which has the ability to, as objectively as possible, show these complexities and relations between tangible and intangible values in a visual way^{41,42}. Furthermore the analytical component of my approach strengthens my position as its structure and logic are clearly defined, lending transparency to the research⁴³. I alter the statement made by Meurs that an architect should not make the value assessment but should be performed by an unbiased third party⁴⁴ as I believe that, from the view of my capacity as a student, the architect should have an extensive knowledge on the project, necessary to assess the value instead of interpreting other people's work.

Putting this in the larger context of the architectural discourse, my research approach aims to tackle the changing role of the architect. His role is contested in current discourse which is changing from being a specialist to being a manager who guides the process and combines contributions from different disciplines⁴⁵. Looking at heritage, and more specifically the value assessment, the architect has to conform to views from different disciplines. The cultural value matrix does not aim to incorporate the value assessments of all disciplines, but it can be a method in which their interpretations of these values can be voiced. Clarke and Kuipers formulated this well when they said the rapidly changing role of the architect to "ethical researcher" requires him to communicate his observations of the intangible/tangible aspects more⁴⁶. The matrix can serve as a visual communication tool which aims for greater participation.

To conclude, my research approach was based on an analytical structure which aimed to provide a clear, objective assessment of the subjective and complex heritage values, vital to heritage conservation. This approach succeeded in the way that it provided a logic behind the methods and visualized the research (value assessment) to make it communicable to the tutors, resulting in discussion and participation. Secondly it succeeded in showing the relations between tangible and intangible heritage aspects, expressing their values which were able to be transformed into useful starting points for the design. This leads me to my research question of how the value assessment shaped starting points for the design. The analytical and visual nature of this method proved to strengthen the starting points as it showed opportunities and limitations of the project through highlighting important or conflicting values. This is vital in heritage to substantiate design proposals.

40 Marieke Kuipers and Wessel de Jonge, *Designing from Heritage: Strategies for Conservation and Conversion* (Delft: TU Delft - Heritage & Architecture, 2016), 73.

41 ICOMOS, *Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties* (Paris: ICOMOS, 2011), 7.

42 Randall Mason, 'Assessing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodological Issues and Choices', in Marta de la Torre (ed), *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2002), 9.

43 Ray Lucas, *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd., 2015), 8.

44 Paul Meurs, *Heritage-based design* (Delft: TU Delft - Heritage & Architecture, 2016), 33.

45 Kuipers and De Jonge, *Designing from Heritage*, 23.

46 Nicholas Clarke and Marieke Kuipers, 'Introducing the Heritage Value Matrix: Connecting Matter and Meaning in Built Heritage', in IMArTTe 2017, *Paper for international conference Intangibility Matters. International Conference on the values of tangible heritage*. (Lisbon: IMArTTe, 2017), 208.