

CARLOS

«A set of authenticity criteria for the conservation of historic places in Western Europe»

ALHO

1. *Introduction*

This article is a summary about an European research study in a set of authenticity criteria for the conservation of historic places in Western Europe, although the definition of authenticity for conservation today is very controversial all over the world.

This thesis describes the phases that the study went through in order to achieve a consensus about a set of authenticity criteria for the conservation of historic places and also to demonstrate its contribution to the management of UNESCO World Heritage.

2. *Motivation for research*

The primary motivation was the attraction created by the challenges and opportunities over the last few years in debates about authenticity promoted by ICOMOS (International Council for Monuments and Sites).

The second motivation was the interest of the author in the conservation of the Built Environment, especially in the areas of built heritage. The author

comes from Portugal, and undertook conservation studies in many historic places, such as the historic area of Lisbon, Cascais, Sintra, Óbidos, Beja, Monchique, Guarda, Moura, Monsaraz, Mourão and Oporto.

In general, one of the main causes for the present state of decay of historic places is the lack of appropriate means and tools to deal with the problem. The development of a set of authenticity criteria for the CPH (Conservation of Historic Places) is an important contribution in order to select and define priorities of classification on national and international levels for the World Heritage.

The study of authenticity criteria in Western Europe and their differences could be very useful for the architects, town planners, managers and all member of institutions related to Conservation of Historic Places.

The third motivation was the increasing importance of authenticity in CHP (Conservation of Historic Places) all over the world following the 1993 ICOMOS General Assembly. Meetings were held in 1994, in Bergen, Nara, Naples, Canada and São Francisco in 1996. During these meetings the experts did not achieve consensus about authenticity criteria. From October 1996 the ICOMOS General Assembly proposed to continue the discussion about the use of the concepts of authenticity in order to achieve international authenticity criteria for Conservation of Historic Places.

3. *Background*

Following the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Japan in 1994 experts from ICOMOS have published many articles in scientific magazines on this subject but they have not reached a consensus in the area of historic places.

According to Stovel (1994a) the word "authenticity" appears in the preamble to the Venice Charter (1964) without a definition because most of those involved in the writing of the Charter shared similar backgrounds and therefore broad assumptions about the nature of an appropriate response to conservation problems.

The word "authenticity" gained a measure of formal authority within the World Heritage Committee in the late 1970s, when the Committee included the "test of authenticity" in its Operational Guidelines as a measure of the essential truth of the values established in looking at the cultural criteria (Stovel, 1994a). Since then, the problem has been "what

are the authenticity criteria in effective conservation decision making?" (Lemaire, 1994). This is particularly important today in historic areas in Western Europe, given the growing number of individuals and groups working on conservation of areas (ICOMOS, ICCROM, UNESCO, English Heritage and Europa Nostra) who are expressing considerable unease about the state of doctrinal texts in the field according to Feilden & Jokilehto (1993), Nara (1994), Jokilehto (1994), Jokilehto & Stovel (1994), ICOMOS (1995), Jokilehto (1995) and Cohen (1999).

4. Aims of the Study

According to the philosophy of the Venice Charter on the Conservation of monuments (1964) and the monitoring of a number of case studies, this research has the following:

Scope —Authenticity for the conservation of historic places.

Focus —The development of a set of criteria to assess authenticity in conservation of historic places.

Purpose —To define a set of authenticity criteria to facilitate the conservation of historic places in Western Europe.

5. Scope

What is Authenticity in the Conservation of Historic Places?

According to the review of relevant research and theories, presented at the Nara Conference (1994), "Authenticity" can be defined as something that sustains and proves itself, as well as having credit and authority from itself (Oxford English Dictionary, Fitzgerald, 1849). Authenticity refers to something creative, an authorship, something having a deep identity in form and substance (Jokilehto, 1995). It means something specific and unique, and is different from "*identical*" which refers to universal, representing a class, reproduction, replica, copy, or reconstruction (Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition, OED2). While in many cases authenticity can relate to the "*original creative source*", it is also a relative concept, and, according to modern value judgements, it can relate to historical continuity in the "life" of the heritage resource (Jokilehto, 1995). This includes interventions in different periods of time, and the way that these have been integrated in the context of the whole (Tschudi-Madsen, 1985). The relative significance of each period in the whole should be established through a historical-critical process, in order to form the basis for treatments (Stovel, 1995b). Authenticity can be understood as a condition of the

heritage resource, and can be defined in the artistic, historical and cultural dimensions of this resource. These dimensions can be seen in relation to the aesthetic, structural and functional form of the object or site, in relation to its material and technology, as well as in relation to its physical and socio-cultural context (Jokilehto, 1995).

According to Jokilehto (1995) the experts at Nara Conference (1994) achieved a consensus expressed as Jokilehto sums up in the general view as follows, *“the existence of authenticity in a heritage resource and its context will be the basis for the measurement of relevant cultural values, on the other hand, the identification of parameters for the specification of pertinent authenticity will also depend on these values. Considering today’s society, its character and the problems it faces in relation to its own identity and authenticity, it will be most important to take great care to maintain the authenticity of existing heritage resources from the past. They will form a reference for future memory, and will therefore need to be conserved with due respect for relevant issues. The dynamic conservation management of the built environment, and the approach to authentic living traditions requires an appropriate process. Such traditions are becoming rare in the present-day world, and although they should themselves provide the required knowledge and skills for their continuation, they will also need support in general planning and management in order to make it feasible for them to keep their authentic creative capacity”*.

The author used the consensus above as the main frame for the development of this research.

6. Focus / Propositions

The research question is “what are the parameters of authenticity criteria for conservation of historic places?” As stated by Stovel (1994b) the best definition for Conservation is Feilden’s (1993) quotation: “Conservation seeks to prolong the life of cultural property and if possible to clarify the historic and artistic message without loss of authenticity.” According to Feilden & Jokilehto (1993) in order to maintain authenticity in Historic Places, the best way is to guarantee the effective treatments with efficient criteria for conservation. Until today (1999), ICOMOS encouraged several initiatives in order to define authenticity criteria for Conservation of Historic Places all over the World but did not achieve consensus between the different cultural perspectives (Stovel, 1995b). As stated by Stovel (1994a) it is vital to achieve consensus about authenticity criteria for Conservation of Historic Places in different cultural regions in order to contribute for the World common authenticity criteria for Conservation of World Heritage.

In line with Jokilehto's definition of authenticity (1995), as one of the main conclusions from Nara (1994) agreed by the participants, the research was based on the propositions used by the US National Parks Service (1991) which constitute the basic parameters to assess authenticity in historic places. The author's intention is to achieve a new authenticity criteria for Conservation of Historic Places in Western Europe in order to contribute to the development of Knowledge.

7. Purpose / The Objectives of the Research

In the last ten years much has been written about authenticity in monuments and nowadays the concept of "monument" includes not only the isolated building with historical value, but also all the buildings and areas that due to their exceptional character which represent some significant period in the evolution of human beings (UNESCO, 1985).

This notion has been enlarged in the recent concept of "cultural landscape" as defined by UNESCO (1994).

Bearing in mind the philosophy of International Charters and Conventions on the preservation process of historic places proposed by UNESCO (1985) and ratified by most European countries, this study reflects on a set of criteria as a way to assess authenticity for the conservation of historic places building from the assumptions of the Venice Charter on Restoration, in 1964.

Thirty years later, in 1994, the ICOMOS (Stovel, 1994a) reflected upon the evolution of the use of the concept of authenticity for World Cultural Heritage in many meetings with the aim to achieve some consensus at the Nara Conference.

Since then, and to date, much has been written about "authenticity" in historic buildings and sites. On its importance, Linstrum (1996) makes the following remark: *"Authenticity is fashionable; we think it is important, otherwise we would not be spending three days discussing it."*

Both the theoretical debates about monumental buildings and the studies of practical urban areas carried out in European historical cities, show the need to define a set of authenticity criteria as a means to elect priorities and to have a real intervention in each respective historic area.

To sum up the presence of this very real problem in the Conservation of Historic Areas in Western Europe, theoretical and practically oriented

research work has been developed based on a literature review of the material available on this subject and by using a selection of case studies of historic centres in European cities which serve to support this issue.

8. *Research outline*

In order to establish a “set of criteria on authenticity for Conservation of Historic Places” the research design is shown in figure 1.1.

First, the initial literature survey based on the Venice Charter (1964), The Nara Conference Proceedings (1994), The San Francisco Conference (1996) and other important charters and conventions (UNESCO, 1985) provided the researcher with strengths and weaknesses which pointed out the importance of this research subject. The scope of the research on which authenticity is based are the principles and the agreement about this concept in the Venice Charter (1964) and the spirit in which conservation of monuments and sites is developed until today. From the Nara Conference Proceedings (1994), it is possible to conclude the need for a new set of criteria to assess authenticity for Conservation of Historic Places based in practical and theoretical by orientated studies (Stovel, 1995b).

Based on relevant research and theories, and the views of the “sounding board of experts”, the four case studies in Europe constitute the practical material to analyse the seven criteria proposed. These case studies are used as examples to create the theoretical framework and build theory. Having the theoretical framework from literature and relating it to the practical experience in the four case studies from north and south of Europe, a set of five authenticity criteria is defined and creates the model of the research.

In order to test and validate the proposed set of five criteria, the degree of consensus among twenty panellists, drawn from interdisciplinary Western European organizations related with conservation for the built heritage was explored using development of the Delphi Process in three rounds. The Delphi Study aims to achieve consensus on the definition of authenticity criteria among the panellists and to rank the criteria in order of importance. This process is located in Fig 1.1.

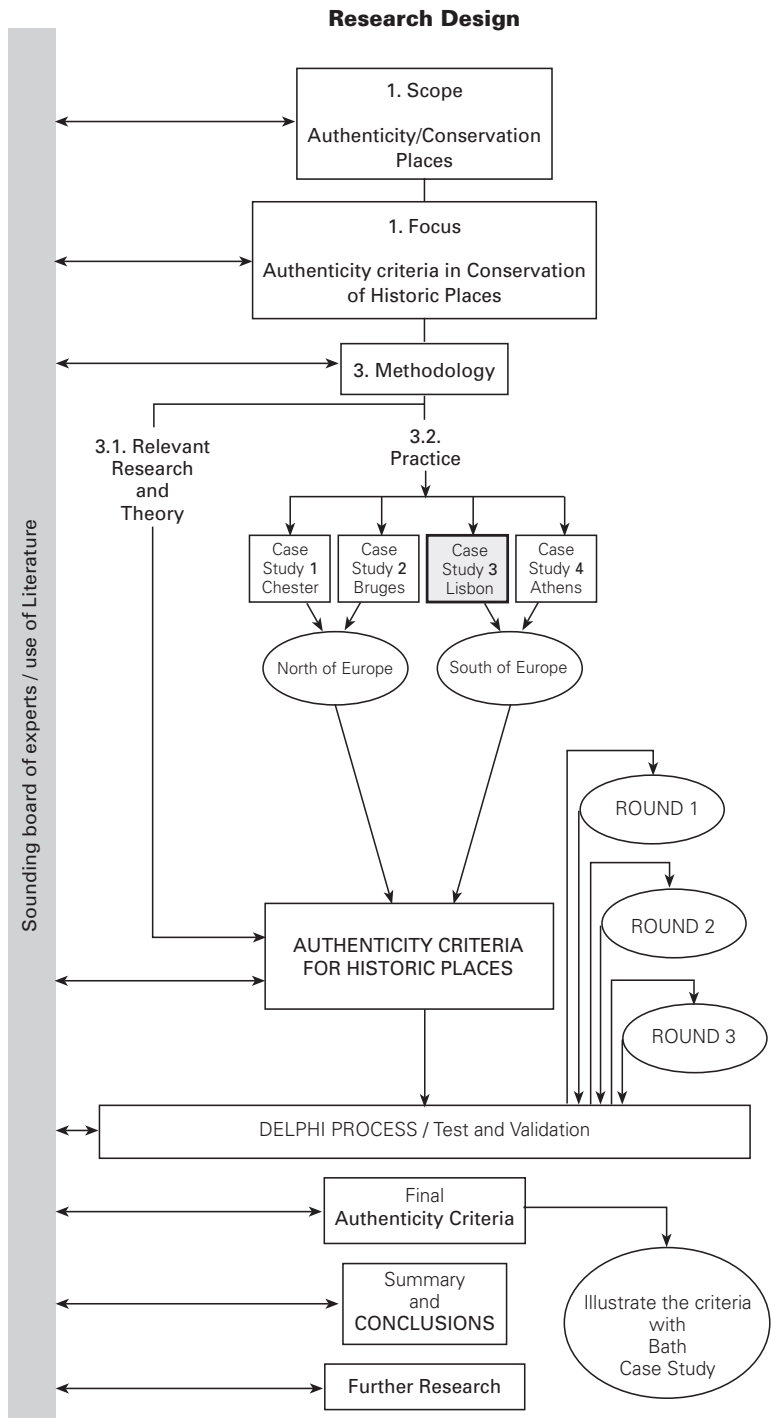


FIGURE 1.1
Research Design

Bibliographical references

- Cohen, N. (1999). *URBAN CONSERVATION*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press.
- Feilden, B. M. & Jokilehto, J. (1993). *MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR WORLD CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES*. Rome: ICCROM.
- Jokilehto, J. (1994a). «Questions about Authenticity». In: *CONFERENCE ON AUTHENTICITY IN RELATION TO THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION. PREPARATORY WORKSHOP*. Larsen, K. E. and Marstein, N. (Eds.). Pp. 9-25. Norway: Riksantikvaren.
- Jokilehto, J. (1995). «Authenticity: a general framework for the concept». *PROCEEDINGS, CONFERENCE ON AUTHENTICITY IN RELATION TO THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION, NARA, JAPAN, NOVEMBER, 1994*. Pp. 17-34, Tapir, Norway. UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS.
- Jokilehto, J. & Stovel, H. (1994). *ICOMOS, Viewpoints*. «The debate on Authenticity». *ICCROM NEWSLETTER, XXI*. Pp. 6-8.
- Lemaire R. (1994). «Quelle doctrine de Sauvegard pour demain?». *ARTICLES OF MEMBERS. SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL ICOMOS 3*. Pp. 50-53. ICOMOS 1994.
- Linstrum, D. (1996). *THE PAST AND PRESENT OF AUTHENTICITY IN CONSERVATION. A LESSON IN AUSTRALIA*. Unpublished paper 1996. Sydney.
- Stovel, H. (1994a). «Notes on Authenticity». *ARTICLES OF MEMBERS. SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL ICOMOS 3*. Pp. 63-68. ICOMOS 1994.
- Stovel, H. (1994b). «Conservation Techniques: Buildings». *SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL ICOMOS 3*. Pp. 20-22. ICOMOS 1994.
- Tschudi-Madsen, S. (1985). «Principles in Practice: Reflections on the Conservation of Wooden Architecture». *ICOMOS INFORMATION 4*. Pp. 18-24.
- UNESCO (1985). *CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF UNESCO CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO, (1994). «Global strategy for a Representative World Heritage List», in relation with the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. *BUREAU OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE. EIGHTEENTH SESSION, UNESCO. HEADQUARTERS. PARIS, 4-9 JULY 1993. REPORT OF THE RAPPORTEUR*. Pp. 53-57. Paris: UNESCO.
- US Parks (1991). «How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation». *NATIONAL REGISTER BULLETIN 15*. National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240.
- Venice Charter (1964). *ICOMOS 1994. SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL, THE VENICE CHARTER-LA CHARTE THE VENISE 1964-1994*. Paris: ICOMOS.