

# Conditional values according to context and scale

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## Introduction

Cultural heritage in urban landscapes often faces a stronger need to legitimize itself than the heritage less affected by development interests due to the pace of change and the economic interests involved concerning land use. This offers an opportunity concerning attention and the access to money, but also a possible threat for the urban heritage concerning land pressure. To balance the demand for both continuity and change a continuous questioning of the methods and criteria used for valuing the heritage affected are required.

The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage values the significance of heritage within the categories of experience value, knowledge value or use value. Value is ascribed to heritage objects or heritage environments due to the criteria authenticity, representativity, scarcity, environment, architectural/artistic quality, identity, technical condition. In addition economic and ecological impacts are considered relative to a new construction (Riksantikvaren 2003). The criteria used for valuation are developed to manage objects or sites, but also environment and landscapes. A broader understanding of the urban setting, including economic viability and opportunity for development, however seems to be neglected. The criteria also indicate that value is intrinsic belonging to the cultural object and not linked to its context. This leaves the heritage objects as static elements which at best are untouched and with limited potential for development. A stronger focus on activation is emphasized in the DIVE-method developed by the Directorate as a tool for Urban Heritage Analysis (Riksantikvaren 2010). The analysis consists of four phases: describe, interpret, value and enable, but the arena of possible intervention is still defined by the heritage values identified in the previous phases and not by the broader urban context. Vulnerability and limits for change are emphasized rather than opportunities for activation and development.

The rationale for doing sectorial assessments, of which cultural heritage is one area, is certainly to avoid the mixing of subjects and to minimize negative impacts, but raises two crucial questions discussed in this paper. How can the criteria for considering heritage value be developed to give a more dynamic account of heritage attributes, and secondly, in what degree can economic value be integrated as criteria for making the most out of heritage value?

Scale is in this paper used to define the geographical context in which the heritage is considered and to illustrate how heritage value is liable to change due to the scale. In addition the value of heritage is questioned as conditional related to economic dynamics and development pressure as part of the urban context.

## Tools and theory

Recommendations from UNESCO on the managing of the Historic Urban Landscapes involve a broader contextual understanding of what constitutes the urban environment (UNESCO 2011). Included in this context is economic processes and economic sustainability thus challenging parts of the urban conservation doctrine and criteria used for valuation, like where to set the limits of

acceptable change (Bandarin & Oers 2012). The recommendation addresses the need to better integrate and frame urban heritage conservation strategies within the larger goals of overall sustainable development and a stronger focus on inter-relationships of physical form, spatial organization, natural features and their social, cultural and economic values.

The contingent character of value as a relative unit means to Herrnstein Smith that value varies according to context (Smith 1988). Given that value is context dependent it makes sense to somehow involve contextual understanding in the criteria for valuation of heritage and identify how the dynamic between contextual factors influence the heritage value. Emphasis in this paper is on the weak connections apparently present between criteria for economic viability and development and criteria as age, authenticity, representativity and scarcity used to value heritage.

Research throughout the last two decades have shown that heritage value produce a premium on property sales in 90% of the studied transactions (Ahlfeldt et al. 2012; Rypkema 2009; Zahirovic-Herbert & Chatterjee 2012). Even if the economic output related to heritage is difficult to isolate this indicates that some heritage attributes make up salable qualities of a property and that heritage and economic values under certain conditions or contexts intermingle (Cebula 2009; Gilderbloom et al. 2009; Licciardi & Amirtahmasebi 2012; Nijkamp 2012; O'Brien 2012). In my own research on transformation of industrial sites in Norway visual attributes represented by industrial buildings (red brick, large windows, rough surface) have been emphasized by developers as attractive resources for development (Swensen et al. 2012). These findings indicating that some heritage attributes are salable and can be drawn upon by the developer as well as the heritage manager still only demonstrate a mutual interest for the same item and is not the result of any relation between the two sets of criteria used for valuation.

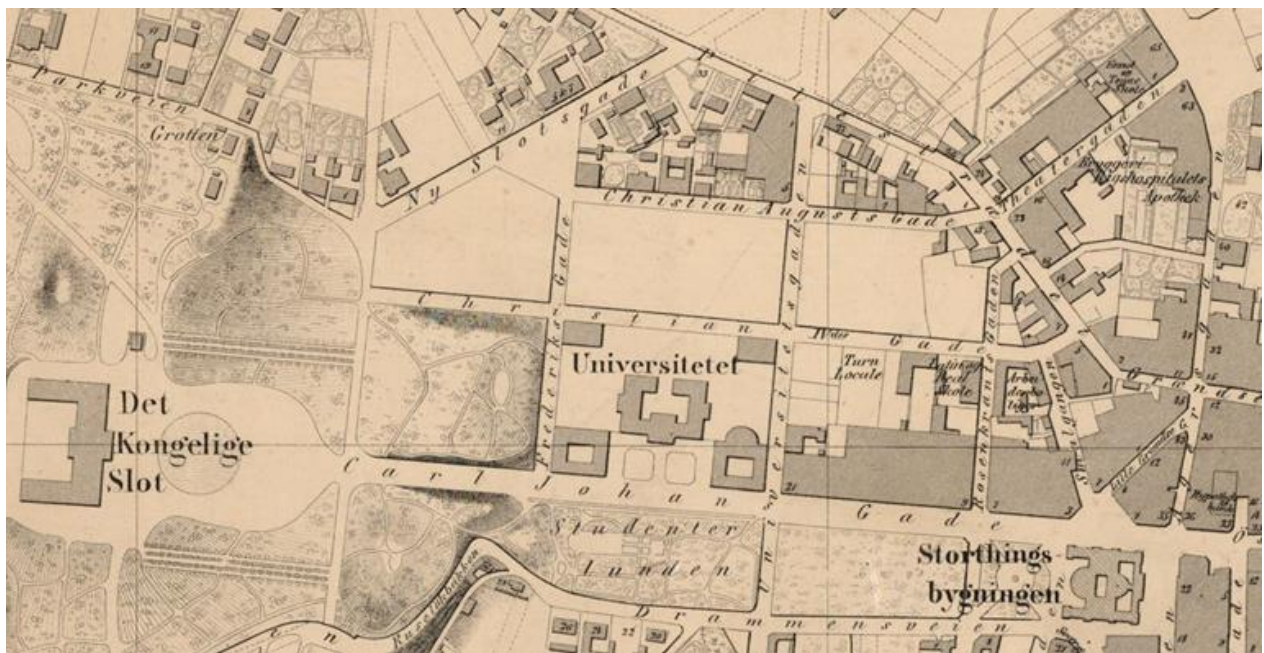
The contextual understanding seems relevant as a critique (or development) of the prevailing management practice often treating heritage values per se on narrow cultural premises, but leaves a practical challenge in how to develop the management tools according to context. Without changing the management tools, UNESCOs recommendation can be read as just another expansion of what can be regarded heritage. My aim is not to make the context another heritage object, but to add context as a relevant criteria in the valuation of heritage. The governance arrangements for a contextual understanding of the urban heritage must be different from a site based approach. Similar sites/objects might have different locational relationships and different local perceptions of the economic benefit that can be derived from the site. Different degrees of consensus, imperfect relationships and potentially incompatible goals affect the opportunities of the site (Pendlebury et al. 2009) and make the qualities represented by heritage negotiable.

### **Case: Tullinkvartalet/Oslo**

A recent assessment performed for an urban development project in Oslo illustrate how a contextual valuation of heritage based on the prevailing criteria can be solved by the use of scale, but also illustrate how the criteria used are of little value concerning the development opportunities of the site. The site make up a fragmented building structure concerning age, architectonic quality and uniqueness, and prioritizing of heritage value is done focusing on the buildings, the block/neighborhood and the superior city structure respectively.

The objective of the development initiative is to strengthen the University in the inner city by integrating part of an adjacent block in the university structure. The block referred to as

Tullinkvartalet as well as the University are part of the inner city close to the castle as laid out in the city plan from 1838 and thus make up an historic piece of the city which by this plan constituted its role as the financial, industrial and administrative capital of Norway.



Oslo 1860 with Tullinkvartalet as the five corner block located north of the University (Naeser/Oslo City Archive)

The project proposed involves demolition of a building structure originating in the 1850s representing a rather rare specimen left in the inner city with three layers of buildings on the parcel - a front building facing the street, a middle building and a back building. Also two back buildings of a former industrial complex of high architectonic quality are being demolished in the proposal. The two building complexes are not legally protected, but acknowledged of significant value by the municipal heritage management office. Between Tullinkvartalet and the University the National Gallery and the Historic Museum, constructed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, make up a neighborhood of monumental buildings together with the protected University buildings.

### Valuation by context

The initiative to complement the existing building structure involve contact with the heritage qualities represented either on building level, block level or city level. The economic value attached to both the buildings and the land thus affect whether the developer engage in the area and thus contribute to an economic input that can be valuable to keep the area attractive and activate the heritage qualities represented. On the other hand the aim for highest and best use of the area might affect heritage elements, like the small 1850s structure, not fitting into the proposal.

In analyzing the city area the contextual understanding of the urban landscape is crucial to how the heritage attributes are valued. On management level the use of scale seems a useful tool to identify which qualities to prioritize. As a challenge to the prevailing conservation doctrine the broader context of whether economical sustainability and developer interests influence the valuation process is raised by introducing *potential* as a dynamic criterion. This can help identify what the contribution of the heritage qualities can be due to each scale and the overall aim for development.

A major question is how to balance the considered positive effect of the initiative due to a stronger anchoring of the University in the city center and the negative effect of the new structure due to eradication of historic structures as well as the visual and spatial effects for the remaining neighborhood. The new university building needs a certain capacity/floor-space to house the required functions. This space is possible to obtain without the removal of the mentioned buildings/heritage objects. To make the project economically sustainable the developer claims the necessity of a higher density also in parts of the block not earmarked for the University which is the reasoning for the proposed demolition. This might seem a rather common clash between economic and heritage value. Given that the University is regarded the most important heritage object involved, both functionally and as a built structure, the area would lose a possibility of strengthening this historic landmark if the project doesn't turn out interesting enough for the developer.

Does the value of the other buildings affected by the initiative change given this context or is it just a question of scale to prioritize between values? Adding potential as a dynamic criterion for valuation might identify how the context influences the value of the heritage elements and actually enable them as part of the context. As in the DIVE-method the heritage values can be organized in a matrix helping out the priorities.

Value \ Scale	City	Neighborhood/Area	Block/Buildings
<b>Priority of heritage elements</b>	University National Gallery Historic Museum 1838 City plan	Corner buildings of block University National Gallery Historic Museum	3 corner buildings 1850-structures Industrial complex
<b>Cultural criteria for valuation</b>	Significance for the city Legibility of city structure Architectonic quality	Visibility Sense of place Architectonic quality	Scarcity/Uniqueness Architectonic quality Representativity Authenticity Age
<b>Potential in project</b>	Consolidation of university	Activation of public space Articulation of 'university axis'	Quality of new structure

Fig 1: Scaling and prioritizing of heritage values represented at the site in Oslo due to cultural criteria and potential

Identifying potential can also show how the economy of a project has consequences for the realization of heritage value. Valuation of heritage based on the prevailing criteria misses an opportunity following the potential for development of the area and the present economic interest. Identifying potentiality factors to integrate the development perspective can also show the gap between the value criteria normally used for valuation of heritage and a more dynamic approach to the same attributes.

**Conclusion**

For the practical management of the initiative a scaling of values clarifies which priorities have to be done. This is not new to impact assessments, but inspired by the DIVE-method the heritage values can be organized in a matrix helping out the priorities. The focus on how to enable the heritage elements is still too static in the method lacking a contextual understanding of how to value heritage elements as resources for the desired and possible development of an area or a site. This value is not defined by heritage criteria only, but also by sustainability factors as economic aspects (as well as social and environmental aspects not treated in this paper) and how to identify the contribution the heritage elements can deliver in obtaining other aims.

Approaching heritage qualities by identifying the potential they represent as a resource to obtain the overall goal for an area or a city can contribute to make the heritage more dynamic. Understanding the context thus seems mandatory for how to value the heritage elements involved.

## Litterature

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