

International Journal of Urban Management and Energy Sustainability (IJUMES)

Homepage: <http://www.ijumes.com>



CASE STUDY RESEARCH PAPER

Analyzing the Components Affecting the Valuation of Architectural Heritage: A Comparative Study of Conservation Models in Europe and Beyond

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 2026-05-27

Revised 2026-06-29

Accepted 2026-07-07

Keywords:

Authorized heritage discourse; comparative conservation; heritage valuation; heritage significance; integrative framework; value typologies

ABSTRACT

Valuation lies at the foundation of the cultural-heritage conservation system: it guides listing, sets intervention priorities, and shapes policy. Yet the field lacks an integrated conceptual framework, and national and international approaches classify and interpret value in heterogeneous, often incomparable ways. This study re-examines the principal global models of architectural-heritage valuation and derives a shared conceptual structure that makes them comparable. The research adopts a qualitative comparative documentary design. A purposively selected corpus of international charters, national heritage laws and guidelines, agency reports, and peer-reviewed literature was subjected to qualitative content analysis using a coding frame derived from established value typologies and refined inductively. Eight European conservation systems were analyzed in depth and compared with a wider set of eleven international systems. Despite terminological and structural differences, valuation systems converge on four interdependent value dimensions—historical-cultural, architectural-aesthetic, social-identity, and economic-functional. Cross-national divergence is not explained by these dimensions themselves but by three cross-cutting mediating structures: the prevailing authenticity regime, the governance structure, and the authorized heritage discourse. These are consolidated into an integrative framework in which the four dimensions are weighted and interpreted through the three mediators to produce heritage significance. The framework offers a comparative lens that explains why similar value categories yield divergent conservation outcomes across nations, and provides a basis for developing more coherent, transparent evaluation models.

DOI: [10.22034/ijumes.2026.2089601.1366](https://doi.org/10.22034/ijumes.2026.2089601.1366)

Running Title: : *The Valuation of Architectural Heritage*



NUMBER OF REFERENCES

40



NUMBER OF FIGURES

02



NUMBER OF TABLES

03

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INTRODUCTION

The valuation of cultural heritage is a foundational operation of architectural conservation. Decisions about what to protect, how to intervene, and how to allocate scarce resources all rest on prior judgements of value. Despite this centrality, the concept of value remains fragmented in the specialist literature: approaches ranging from material authenticity and historical significance to social, functional, and economic worth do not add up to a unified picture. This conceptual diversity produces divergent and at times contradictory interpretations in policy and practice, and reflects the absence of a comprehensive, agreed framework for valuation. Successive developments in international doctrine have shifted the notion of value from a purely material register towards a multidimensional, context-bound understanding. Heritage has been reconceived from an object to be preserved into a relationship to be negotiated among experts, communities, and the state. This shift makes it necessary to reconsider how values are identified, classified, and weighed—and, crucially, why systems that appear to share the same vocabulary of value reach markedly different conservation decisions. Existing value typologies, from Riegl's foundational scheme to the frameworks of the Getty Conservation Institute, have been enormously influential, but they were largely developed within particular national or disciplinary settings and are rarely subjected to systematic cross-national comparison. As a result, the field has many typologies but little comparative synthesis, and few tools for explaining variation across systems. This study addresses that gap. It re-examines the principal global models of architectural-heritage valuation and asks what shared structure underlies them and what accounts for their divergence. Two research questions guide the enquiry: (RQ1) Through which components and dimensions do prominent conservation systems define and assess the value of architectural heritage? (RQ2) What shared conceptual structure can integrate these components, and what explains the diver-

gence in how systems apply them? The contribution is threefold. First, the study consolidates a dispersed literature into a single comparative account of valuation across nineteen systems. Second, it proposes an integrative framework that distinguishes four universal value dimensions from three mediating structures that govern how those dimensions are weighted. Third, it offers a diagnostic lens for policy: by locating a national system within the framework, analysts can identify which values are foregrounded, which are silenced, and where the tensions lie. The remainder of the paper sets out the theoretical framework and literature (Section 2), the methodology (Section 3), the European findings (Section 4), the cross-national comparison (Section 5), the integrative framework (Section 6), and conclusions (Section 7).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

From material fabric to relational value

The valuation of architectural works has travelled from a simple, material approach toward a complex, multidimensional one. In antiquity the motives for conservation were largely functional and devotional; in the Middle Ages religion was the principal axis of value. With the Renaissance, the age of buildings came to signify authenticity and artistic worth, and criteria such as uniqueness, rarity, structural skill, and aesthetic quality became dominant (Lowenthal, 1985). The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries added the evidential value of buildings as documents of social, technological, and constructional development, and in Europe this gave rise to conservation laws and listing systems (Jokilehto, 2002). The first systematic theory of heritage value was articulated by Alois Riegl, whose 1903 essay distinguished commemorative values (age, historical, and deliberate commemorative value) from present-day values (use value, art value, and newness value). Riegl's decisive insight—that these values coexist and frequently conflict, so that conservation is always the management of a value trade-off rather than the application of a

single criterion—remains the conceptual bedrock of the field (Riegl, 1903/1982). Across the twentieth century, international charters progressively widened the circle of recognized values, a trajectory summarized in Table 1. The Athens (1931) and Venice (1964) charters treated heritage chiefly as a historical object to be preserved with

minimal intervention, while the Nara Document (1994) reframed authenticity as culturally relative and foregrounded meaning, memory, and collective identity; the Burra Charter (1999) consolidated the notion of ‘cultural significance’ as the organizing concept of conservation planning. (Tab. 1)

Table 1: The widening of recognized values in international charters

Charter / document	Values foregrounded
Athens Charter (1931)	Historical, aesthetic, scientific, artistic
Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964)	Historical, aesthetic, scientific; archaeological and anthropological dimensions added
Florence Charter (ICOMOS, 1981)	Artistic and historical (historic gardens/landscapes)
Nara Document (ICOMOS, 1994)	Authenticity as culturally relative; cultural diversity; social, functional, and traditional values
Burra Charter (ICOMOS, 1999)	Aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, and spiritual value, unified as ‘cultural significance’

Value typologies in the scholarly literature

Building on Riegl, later scholarship produced a series of value typologies. Feilden (2003) grouped values into emotional, cultural–educational, and functional categories. In cultural economics, Throsby (2001) distinguished economic value from cultural value and introduced the notion of cultural capital, arguing that heritage assets store cultural value irreducible to their market price. The most influential contemporary synthesis is that of the Getty Conservation Institute: Mason (2002), within de la Torre (2002), organized heritage values into socio-cultural values (historical, cultural/symbolic, social, spiritual/religious, aesthetic) and economic values (use and non-use), and set out a methodology for assessing them in conservation planning (see also Avrami, Mason, & de la Torre, 2000; Avrami et al., 2019). In English practice, this literature crystallized in the shift from ‘value’ to ‘significance’, expressed through the four families of

evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal value (English Heritage, 2008). More recently, Fredheim and Khalaf (2016) critically re-examined these typologies, showing that lists of value ‘types’ tend to obscure the questions that actually matter, who attributes value, on what grounds, and with what omissions—and proposing that significance be assessed through a small set of value ‘categories’ combined with explicit attention to how and by whom values are ascribed. Persian-language scholarship has developed parallel schemes: Hojjat (2001) divides value into emotional, historical, and scientific families, and Sameh and Babakhani (2022) separate intrinsic from attributed/relational values, emphasizing the constitutive role of the human observer. Table 2 sets these typologies side by side and shows their partial convergence on a small number of recurring value families. (Tab. 2)

Table 2: Value typologies in the literature and their recurring families (compiled by the authors).

Author / framework	Value families proposed
Riegl (1903/1982)	Commemorative (age, historical, deliberate commemorative) vs present-day (use, art, newness) value

Feilden (2003)	Emotional (wonder, spiritual, symbolic); cultural–educational (documentary, archaeological, rarity, aesthetic, architectural, landscape, scientific, technological); functional (use, economic, social, political)
Throsby (2001)	Economic value vs cultural value (aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, symbolic, authenticity); ‘cultural capital’
Mason / Getty (2002)	Socio-cultural (historical, cultural/symbolic, social, spiritual/religious, aesthetic); economic (use, non-use: existence, option, bequest)
English Heritage (2008)	Evidential, historical, aesthetic, communal value (unified as ‘significance’)
Fredheim & Khalaf (2016)	Age/associative, artistic/architectural, evidential/informational, functional/economic value, assessed with explicit attention to who ascribes value
Hojjat (2001)	Emotional (aesthetic, symbolic, spiritual, wonder); historical (continuity, identity, antiquity, rarity, architectural); scientific (documentary, archaeological)
Sameh & Babakhani (2022)	Intrinsic (environmental, social, cultural, historical, artistic) vs attributed/relational (affective, scientific, functional)

The politics of valuation: Authorized heritage discourse

A purely typological reading of value is incomplete, because valuation is never a neutral technical act. Smith’s (2006) concept of the authorized heritage discourse (AHD) shows that dominant institutions tend to privilege monumental, aesthetically distinguished, expert-defined fabric, thereby naturalizing some values while marginalizing others, industrial, working-class, minority, or contemporary heritage. Pendlebury (2013) traces how this discourse becomes embedded in the very assemblage of conservation planning. Read together with Riegl’s insight into value conflict and the Getty emphasis on stakeholders, the AHD supplies the critical dimension of this study’s framework: differences among national systems are, in large part, differences in whose values are authorized.

Research gap

Three gaps emerge from this review. First, although value typologies abound, they are seldom compared systematically across national systems. Second, the literature explains what values exist but rarely why the same value categories are weighted so differently in different countries. Third, the critical (AHD) and typological (Getty, Riegl) strands are seldom integrated into a single operational model. This study re-

sponds by proposing a framework that unifies four recurring value dimensions with three structuring mediators, and by testing its explanatory purchase against nineteen conservation systems.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative comparative documentary design, appropriate to a research question that is interpretive and cross-national rather than statistical. It is not a quantitative or mixed-methods study; its aim is conceptual synthesis, not measurement. The design has five stages, summarized in (Fig.1).

Corpus and source selection. The corpus comprised four source types: (i) international charters and conventions; (ii) national heritage laws, statutory guidance, and listing criteria; (iii) reports of heritage ministries, agencies, and international organizations; and (iv) peer-reviewed scholarly literature. The principal inclusion criterion was a direct focus on the valuation of architectural heritage—that is, sources that explicitly use the concept of ‘value/valuation’ or provide an explicit classification of architectural-heritage values. Sources that addressed conservation only technically, without engaging value, were excluded. This criterion aligned the corpus with the research aim and privileged

credible, official, or peer-reviewed material. *Two-tier purposive sampling.* Cases were sampled purposively in two tiers. Tier A comprised eight European systems, England, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Germany, examined in depth as long-established and doctrinally influential conservation traditions that span the material-centered, socio-functional, and economic poles of practice. Tier B comprised a wider international set of eleven systems (the United States, China, Japan, South Korea, India, Mexico, Australia, Canada, Poland, Turkey, and Iran) used to test the breadth and limits of the European pattern. Tier B systems were analyzed at the level of documented valuation logic rather than exhaustively, and appear principally in the comparative synthesis.

Qualitative content analysis. Each source was coded for its aims, definitions of value, conceptual structure, value types, and assessment/classification procedures. The coding frame was deductive in origin its top-level categories were

the value families recurring in the typologies reviewed in Section 2 (Riegl; Mason/Getty; Fredheim & Khalaf) and was refined inductively as system-specific codes emerged (for example, ‘valorization’ in France, ‘representativeness’ in Sweden, ‘asymmetric federalism’ in Italy). Coded material was then compared across systems to identify similarities, differences, and shared principles, and finally synthesized interpretively into the framework presented in Section 6.

Trustworthiness and limitations. The analysis relies on documentary and secondary sources rather than fieldwork, so it captures the codified logic of valuation rather than its day-to-day administrative practice; the single-label characterizations in Table 3 are deliberate analytical simplifications of internally plural systems and should be read as dominant tendencies, not exhaustive descriptions. English-language sources predominate for Tier B, which may under-represent internal debate in those systems. These limits are revisited in Section 7.

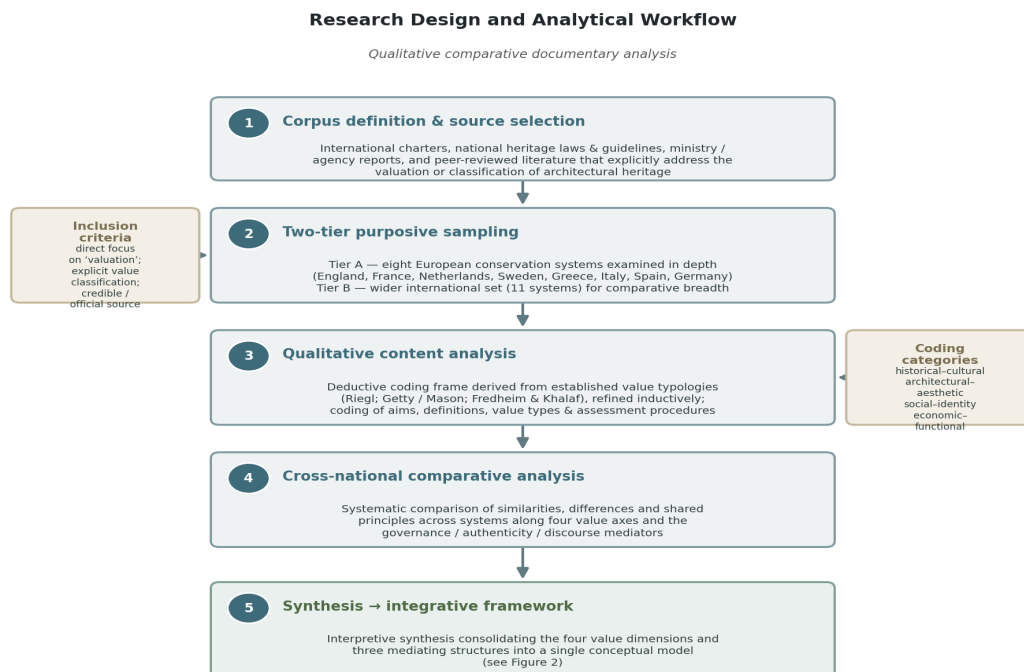


Figure 1: Research design and analytical workflow.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

This section presents the eight Tier-A systems, each read for its dominant value logic, its governance arrangements, and its characteristic tension. The accounts are deliberately compact; the granular comparison is carried by (Tab. 3).

England

English practice grew from private and civic initiative, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (1877), the National Trust (1895), and early statutory listing under the Ancient Monuments Act (1882) and the Town and Country Planning Act (1947) (Jokilehto, 2002). Listing criteria administered by the responsible department combine age, historical period, architectural quality, authenticity, and social and aesthetic dimensions. Age operates as a strong heuristic, buildings from before the early nineteenth century are, in effect, presumptively eligible, while post-war and industrial heritage enter the register only selectively (Historic England, 2016; Pendlebury, 2013). From the 2000s, English policy shifted from 'value' to 'significance', defined through evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal value, with a required statement of significance before intervention (English Heritage, 2008). The system is thus doctrinally progressive and participatory in rhetoric, yet in practice remains expert-led and shaped by aesthetic and development priorities, an instance of the authorized heritage discourse (Smith, 2006).

France

The French system is centralized and rooted in the Revolution, when nationalized Church and aristocratic property placed conservation under state responsibility (the 1793 commission; the conservation laws of 1887 and 1913) (Jokilehto, 2002). Its early logic privileged monuments associated with the monarchy, Church, and national narrative, marginalizing industrial and popular heritage. Historical and artistic value, authenticity, and integrity remained the first layer of assessment. From the 1970s the criteria widened

to admit scientific, identity, and functional values and, more recently, 'valorization'—the economic and social activation of heritage through adaptive reuse and labels such as those recognizing remarkable contemporary architecture (Ministère de la Culture, 2021). The characteristic tensions are elitism/selectivity in listing and the conflict between material authenticity and functional change.

The Netherlands

Dutch practice is pragmatic and functional, treating historic buildings as capacities for meeting present challenges housing, climate, urban development rather than as objects fixed in the past (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2021). Adaptive reuse is a central strategy, and landscape and environmental value is a structural criterion: buildings are assessed in relation to the man-made Dutch landscape, and a fine building in an incongruous setting may score lower than a modest one that sustains the cultural–natural system. Economic justifiability and cost–benefit reasoning is integrated into assessment, and participatory mechanisms support decisions. The characteristic tension is dependence on market and functional justification.

Sweden

The Swedish system fuses international conservation principles with participatory democracy, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Historical value extends beyond age and aesthetics to encompass everyday life, labor, women's history, and migration, and is assessed through indicators of narrative capacity, representativeness, and comparability. Ecological value and alignment with sustainability targets are explicit criteria, and the heritage of the indigenous Sámi is recognized as an inseparable part of national heritage. Community participation—through citizens' committees and multipurpose reuse—is treated as constitutive of value. The characteristic tension is residual centralization in some macro-level decisions.

Greece

Valuation in Greece is deeply intertwined with identity and politics. Historical value is measured less by age than by a building's place in the official narrative of classical continuity and the 1821 independence movement, which long marginalized Ottoman and, until recently, Byzantine heritage (Hamilakis, 2007; Yalouri, 2001). Archaeology occupies a central institutional position, producing high scientific standards but also extensive constraints on urban change. Symbolic value pre-eminently the Acropolis generates strong public resistance to reuse or adaptive restoration, while tourism supplies revenue at the cost of commercialization and pressure on carrying capacity. Living religious heritage (for example Mount Athos) aligns Greek practice with the international concept of social value.

Italy

The Italian framework is multidimensional but internally bifurcated between qualitative-cultural and quantitative-economic logics. Cultural value (historical, artistic/architectural, scientific/archaeological, social/functional, environmental) is assessed by specialists and provides the legal precondition for any economic valuation; the concept of total economic value and contingent-valuation methods are then used to price non-use values (Navrud & Ready, 2002). Critics note that such methods are sensitive to cognitive and emotional bias and that reducing incalculable cultural value to a monetary figure distorts what it measures (Carson & Groves, 2007). Institutionally, the division between central-government conservation and local valuation produces an 'asymmetric cultural federalism' and a paradox whereby the country with the densest heritage under-invests in it (European Commission, 2021; OECD/ICOM, 2019).

Spain

In Spain, historical value expresses the coexistence of Roman, Islamic, and Christian layers—the Alhambra and the Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba

being paradigmatic—while artistic value spans Andalusian Islamic architecture, Gothic, and Catalan modernism. Regional cultural diversity gives heritage a strong identity function, reinforced when historic spaces host living ritual and social practice. Economically, heritage anchors the tourism industry, with the Bilbao 'Guggenheim effect' exemplifying heritage-led development alongside warnings about over-tourism. Governance is decentralized across the state, autonomous communities, and local bodies, structured by a three-tier legal classification; the characteristic tensions are coordination complexity and inter-regional inequality (Castaño & Ruiz, 2019).

Germany

German valuation is scientific, documentary, and townscape-oriented. Historical and documentary value can outweigh aesthetics: the remains of the Berlin Wall receive the highest protection for their symbolic and evidential role despite physical simplicity. Artistic value (Cologne Cathedral, the Bauhaus buildings), scientific/research value (the timber-framed town of Quedlinburg), and urban/townscape value (Neuschwanstein in its Alpine setting; the Zollverein industrial complex) are all recognized, together with growing social/cultural and ecological dimensions. The federal structure sixteen Länder each with their own heritage law and offices delivers scientific rigour but poses coordination challenges across jurisdictions (Rieger-Jandl & Lanzinger, 2023).

Cross-national comparative analysis

Read across all nineteen systems, the material organizes itself along the four value dimensions introduced in Section 2, while the divergences track three mediators authenticity regime, governance structure, and authorized discourse. This section develops each in turn; Table 3 consolidates the comparison.

Historical and symbolic value

How historical value is defined encodes each society's politics of memory. England anchors it

in age and period; the United States, by contrast, ties it less to antiquity than to a place's capacity to narrate social, political, and cultural development, admitting sites of difficult history and using heritage for critical re-reading of the past (Kaufman, 2009). Between these poles, historical value is frequently harnessed to national narrative: in Greece to classical continuity, in China to political legitimacy and cohesion foregrounding official narratives while unofficial or minority histories fade (Svensson, 2019). France's trajectory from monarchical–ecclesiastical monuments toward industrial and working-class heritage shows the same axis being widened under social pressure.

Architectural–aesthetic value and the authenticity regime

Architectural–aesthetic value is universally recognized but evidenced differently depending on the prevailing authenticity regime. Germany couples' aesthetic and technical quality with documentary value, protecting even plain buildings that are the sole witness of a period. Japan interprets authenticity through process and the spirit of place rather than original material: the periodic reconstruction of the Ise shrine locates value in the continuity of construction skills and ritual, not in the persistence of matter (Coaldrake, 1996). Poland shows how political history conditions this axis, with much communist-era architecture classified as 'unwanted heritage' (Springer, 2011), while Mexico's value scheme fuses pre-Columbian and colonial layers. The Nara Document's culturally relative authenticity is the doctrinal hinge across these cases.

Social and cultural value

Social value acquires meaning through a building's role in contemporary life, collective memory, and local identity, but the mechanism varies. Sweden and the Netherlands link it to active civic use and participation; South Korea to systems of thought and modern historical experience; India to religious and ritual function, where continuous

community use sustains value but may diverge from official criteria of material authenticity (Harrington, 2018). Social value therefore proves to be context-bound rather than universal formed in one system through participation, in another through modern history, in a third through ritual.

Economic and functional value

The tension between intrinsic and instrumental value is sharpest on the economic axis. Some systems attempt to quantify intangible worth Italy through total economic value while critics hold that deep cultural meanings cannot be reduced to a monetary index (Throsby, 2001). Others emphasize observable economic function: Australian evidence that listed properties can appreciate faster than comparable non-listed ones is used to justify conservation (Lennon & O'Connor, 2014), and Canada steers owners through tax incentives and subsidies (Government of Ontario, 2021). Here market logic, if properly directed, becomes a support for conservation rather than only a threat.

The governance mediator

Governance structure shapes who assign value. Centralized systems (China; and, in the Tier-B set, Egypt) achieve coordination but can restrict local participation and render monuments 'untouchable', discouraging owners from maintenance (Elshahed, 2021; Svensson, 2019). Decentralized systems (Spain, Canada) are responsive to local need but risk unequal resources and standards, with wealthier regions out-spending poorer ones (Castaño & Ruiz, 2019). Two failure modes recur at the extremes: over-sacralization, which freezes heritage out of everyday life (Greece; Egypt), and over-instrumentalization, which sacrifices authenticity to tourism revenue and produces inauthentic reconstruction (China) (Oakes, 2013). Between them, systems such as the Netherlands and South Korea keep heritage in use by admitting adaptive reuse under the safeguard of preserving key values.

Table 3: Comparative synthesis of valuation across nineteen conservation systems (Compiled by the authors; single labels denote dominant tendencies, not exhaustive descriptions).

System	Governance model	Dominant value axes	Central tension
England	Expert-led; institutional discourse	Historical, architectural	Neglect of contemporary/industrial heritage; participation vs expert control (Smith, 2006)
France	Centralized	Historical, artistic, functional	Elitism/selectivity; authenticity vs reuse (Ministère de la Culture, 2021)
Germany	Federal (16 Länder)	Historical, artistic, documentary	Coordination across state laws (Rieger-Jandl & Lanzinger, 2023)
Netherlands	Human-centered, functional	Social, functional, environmental	Dependence on market/economic justification
Sweden	Community-centered, democratic	Social, historical, ecological	Residual centralisation in macro decisions
Greece	Centralized, sacralizing	Historical, archaeological, symbolic	Sacralisation; neglect of non-classical heritage (Yalouri, 2001)
Italy	Central conservation / local valuation	Economic, historical, artistic	Commodification; regional inequality (Navrud & Ready, 2002)
Spain	Decentralized (autonomous communities)	Historical, artistic, social	Coordination complexity; regional inequality (Castaño & Ruiz, 2019)
United States	Decentralized, society-oriented	Historical, social, civic	Development prevailing over conservation (Kaufman, 2009)
Canada	Decentralized, finance-oriented	Social, historical, architectural	Unequal resources; legal complexity
Australia	Multi-level, integrative	Historical, aesthetic, social, economic	Market value vs heritage value (Lennon & O'Connor, 2014)
China	Centralized, ideological	Political, economic, symbolic	Commodification; erasure of unofficial narratives (Svensson, 2019)
Japan	Process-oriented	Spiritual, historical, processual	Aligning with material-based Western standards (Coaldrake, 1996)
South Korea	Identity-based	Cultural, historical, technical	Symbolic reconstruction vs material authenticity
India	Religious, integrative	Cultural, religious, historical	Official vs local understandings of authenticity (Harrington, 2018)
Mexico	Multidimensional, symbolic	Cultural, historical, tourism	Tourism pressure; loss of local fabric
Poland	Legalistic, Centralized	Historical, architectural, scientific	Neglect of 'unwanted' and modern heritage (Springer, 2011)
Egypt	Centralized, bureaucratic	Political, historical	Sacralisation; weak local participation (Elshahed, 2021)
Iran	Centralized	Historical, artistic, social	Legal ambiguity; single undifferentiated value classification

RESULT AND CONCLUSION

The comparison supports a single organizing claim: across systems, architectural-heritage value converges on four interdependent dimensions, but the weight and interpretation of each are governed by three cross-cutting mediating structures. Figure 2 renders this as a three-layer model.

The core is heritage significance—not a fixed property of the object but the negotiated synthesis that ultimately drives listing, grading, intervention, and resource allocation. The inner layer holds the four value dimensions (the ‘what’): historical-cultural (age, evidential, documentary, associational, memory, national narrative); architectural-aesthetic (artistic quality, style, technical innovation, rarity, integrity of fabric); social-identity (communal, symbolic, spiritual, sense of place, living heritage, participation); and economic-functional (use, adaptive reuse, tourism, cultural capital, sustainability). These four recur, in different vocabularies, across Riegl, the Getty scheme, and Fredheim and Khalaf, and were confirmed inductively across the nineteen systems. The outer layer holds the three mediating structures (the ‘how’) that explain divergence. The authenticity regime (material-based versus process/spirit-based, after Nara) determines how each value is evidenced contrast Germany’s documentary materialism with Japan’s process authenticity. The governance structure (centralized versus decentralized; expert-led versus participatory) determines who assigns value and with what coordination and equity. The authorized heritage discourse (after Smith, 2006) determines whose values count and which narratives are foregrounded or silenced visible in Greece’s classical narrative, China’s political framing, and the marginalization of industrial or ‘unwanted’ heritage in England and Poland. Inputs (charters, national narratives, scholarly typologies) feed the model from above; conservation outcomes issue from below, and significance statements feedback to reshape the discourse. The framework’s analytic value is that it separates the

universal from the variable. The four dimensions answer RQ1: they are the shared components of valuation. The three mediators answer RQ2: they explain why systems sharing those components reach divergent decisions. Used diagnostically, the model locates a system by asking which dimensions it foregrounds and how its three mediators are set revealing, for instance, that England and Greece differ less in their value vocabulary than in their discourse and authenticity settings. It also identifies the two recurring pathologies as extreme mediator settings: over-sacralization (a rigid discourse that freezes reuse) and over-commodification (an economic-functional dimension unchecked by social and historical ones)

This study set out to explain the components of architectural-heritage valuation across global conservation models and to derive a shared conceptual structure. Two findings answer the research questions. First, despite terminological and institutional diversity, valuation converges on four interdependent value dimensions historical-cultural, architectural-aesthetic, social-identity, and economic-functional (RQ1). Second, the pronounced divergence among systems is produced not by these dimensions but by three mediating structures the authenticity regime, the governance structure, and the authorized heritage discourse which determine how the dimensions are evidenced, by whom they are assigned, and whose narratives prevail (RQ2).

The comparison shows valuation to be inseparable from national discourses, political priorities, and social change. England’s period-based criterion marginalizes post-war heritage; Greece’s classical narrative long excluded Ottoman fabric; France’s initially elitist system widened under social pressure; and the China-United States contrast heritage as instrument of legitimacy versus heritage as means of critical historical learning illustrates how the same historical axis can be set to opposite ends. The most resilient systems are not those that maximize a single value but those that balance the four dimensions and avoid extreme mediator settings.

Contribution and implications. The integrative framework offers heritage authorities a diagnostic tool: by making explicit which dimensions are foregrounded and how the three mediators are configured, it supports more transparent, comparable, and self-aware significance assessment, and helps identify blind spots typically contemporary, industrial, minority, or everyday heritage before they harden into policy.

Limitations and future research. The analysis is documentary and interpretive; it captures codified valuation logic rather than administrative

practice, and the single-label characterizations of Table 3 simplify internally plural systems. English-language sources predominate for the wider international set. Future work could test the framework through in-depth national case studies and stakeholder research, operationalize the three mediators as assessable variables, and examine how emerging concerns climate adaptation, digital documentation, and contested or 'difficult' heritage reweight the four dimensions in practice.

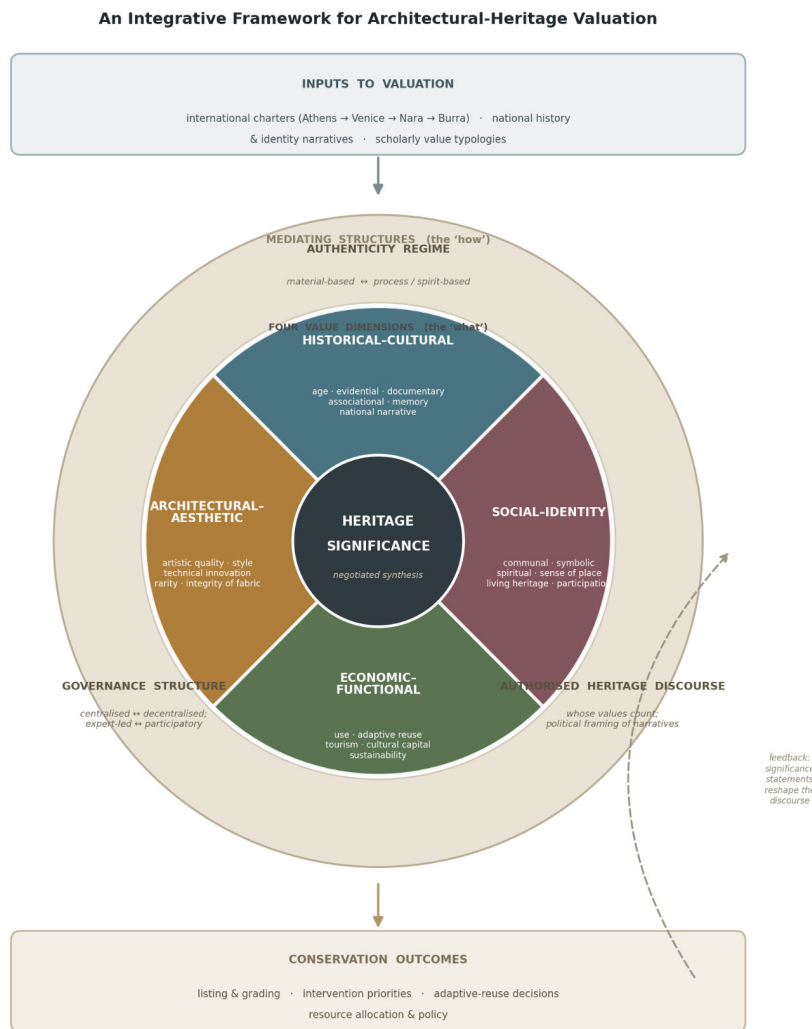


Figure 2: An integrative framework for architectural-heritage valuation: four value dimensions mediated by three structuring factors, converging on heritage significance.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Yazdanparast,H , Abdi Ardekani,H ,and Aliabadi,M. (2026). Analyzing the Components Affecting the Valuation of Architectural Heritage: A Comparative Study of Conservation Models in Europe and Beyond (e735602). *International Journal of Urban Management and Energy Sustainability*, 7(1), e735602

DOI: [10.22034/ijumes.2025.735602](https://doi.org/10.22034/ijumes.2025.735602)

