
DEVELOPMENT OF A MATRIX FOR ASSESSING VALUES OF NORWEGIAN CHURCHES

Tone Marie Olstad* and Elisabeth Andersen

Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research, Storgata 2, N-0105 Oslo, Norway

(Received 1 September 2017, revised 21 September 2017)

Abstract

The paper describes the process of developing a method for value assessment of church buildings in Norway. Values associated with church buildings are defined and described in three categories: Knowledge values, Experience values and Use value. These categories cover selected cultural heritage values, administrative-related values and user-based values. The aim of this work has been to establish a useful tool, i.e. a value matrix, for expressing the often tacit set of values that can be ascribed to churches as cultural heritage. This value matrix shall contribute to increased understanding and awareness of the values contained in churches as ecclesiastical monuments in use, for those involved in management and activities associated to the churches.

Keywords: church, value, matrix, assessment

1. Introduction

The largest and presumably most important group of cultural heritage monuments in Norway are the churches. More than 60% of the 1622 church buildings are protected in some way. Churches from before 1650 are automatically protected by the Cultural Heritage Act, churches from 1650-1850 are automatically given the status of worthy of protection and about 450 churches dated after 1850 has been selected for protection.

Traditionally, the cultural heritage administration has weighted cultural heritage values based on whether they have significance at the local, regional or national level. National values have usually been determined by the Norwegian Directorate of Cultural Heritage; regional values by regional cultural heritage administration and local values by the municipalities. The users may ascribe values to the churches that may differ from the official values ascribed by the authorities. The values have often been tacit and not expressed. Discussion of values is not new in conservation. Already the Venice charter was concerned with values, as is also the later and much applied Burra charter [International Charter for the Conservation of Monuments and Sites, *The Venice Charter 1964*, http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf, accessed 11.02.2017; The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, *The Burra*

*E-mail: tone.olstad@niku.no, tel.: +4723355000

Charter, 2013 (Burra Charter 1979), <http://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes/>, accessed 11.02.2017]. Concerning the churches, there is a need for a simple and functional value matrix that covers all aspects of these complex buildings, with a standardised set of defined values. An understanding of the values associated to church buildings cultural heritage, is essential for everyone involved in the management or use of churches, and at all levels in society: authorities, owners, congregations and the local society.

The aim of this paper is to present a process for defining and describing the most appropriate parameters to assess a value to the churches. The outcome of the process is a tool, named value matrix, which expresses the often tacit set of values useful to any organisation or person when evaluating churches as cultural heritage.

2. Method

To get an understanding of all values associated with churches, and criteria for assessing heritage values, a multi-professional team of scholars with a long experience in cultural heritage research and with a background in ethnology, architectural history, art history and painting conservation was established. A reference group composed of members from Riksantikvaren (Directorate for Cultural Heritage) in Norway and from the church authorities on a national and regional level assisted the project group.

As starting point, a great number of international publications on the subject, available in the literature, were taken into consideration. We made a comparative study based on literature and information collected during study trips to England and Sweden [1, 2]. In addition we could benefit from work in the Netherlands on attributing values to churches which are transformed to secular use [3].

Deciding on a set of values and describing them was the main part of the process and the goal of the project. The selection of values in our work was based on values referring to different qualities of objects or sites. It was a question of balance between a large number of values, which would make the matrix complicated to use, and a representative number that would still cover all values associated with a church.

We, the team, developed an assessment and validation system based on a systematic and transparent process for analysing a set of values connected with the churches. We used three categories of values: *Knowledge values*, *Experience values* and *Use values*. Each category was divided in subcategories of values. Each subcategory was defined and described in a matrix. The expert group came together regularly to discuss and reconsider the chosen values and their definitions (Figure 1). It is important to have in mind who is the target group. Primarily these value assessments were made for those who manage the churches, but also for all groups associated with the churches. The purpose of this work is also to create greater understanding and awareness of the churches' cultural heritage values on a broader level.

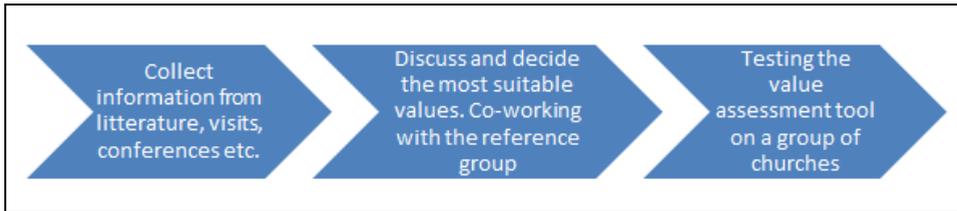


Figure 1. Working process.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Assessing values

Value is a multifaceted term, and, according to Mason and Avrami, representing the Getty Conservation Institute, the noun value has two main senses [1]. On one hand value refers to morals, principles or ethics – ideas that guides actions, and value refers to the characteristics of objects or sites - values as the qualities of objects or sites. This paper deals with values which are selected to define and range churches as cultural heritage objects.

Attributing values to building and other cultural heritage assets has been done since the field of preservation became institutionalised in Norway in the middle of the 1800s. Attributing value to buildings and objects is also the reason to preserve cultural heritage. An object has only the value that is given to it: no-one cares for or pays attention to something that is not deemed to be valuable. Value judgements are created in the human consciousness and can therefore be described as a time-determined, relative assessment based on different parameters, purposes and understandings. However this does not mean that value judgements are random. Value judgements of churches presuppose a relatively long-term durability and therefore set demands on the premises for the assessments. In order for the result of the value judgements to be as credible as possible, the process needs to be transparent. It is therefore important to have the same understanding and knowledge of the value terms that are used in the assessment. The result must also show who made the assessment, the context in which it was made and the purpose of the assessment.

3.2. Value matrix

The main result of the work was the development of a value matrix as a tool for ascribing cultural heritage values to churches. This matrix covers the values established by the project group as the most important for a church. The tool covers selected cultural heritage values, administrative-related values and user-based values defined analytically in relation to each other and in the three different categories: *Knowledge values*, *Experience values* and *Use values* (Table 1).

Knowledge values include knowledge that can be extracted from the church building itself, its interior and inventory. Applying these values requires prior knowledge from various academic disciplines. Experience values encompass more subjective values linked to visual and emotional experiences of the church and its interior. Use value covers values linked to the actual use of the church and to benefits of its use for the local community.

Table 1. The values that have been identified and defined within three categories.

Knowledge values	Experience values	Use values
Architectural history	Aesthetic	Frequency of use
Art history	Architectural	Flexibility
Authenticity	Artistic	Usability
Historic narrative	Acoustic	Attraction
Restoration	Identity	Commercial
Source	Social	-
Archaeological	-	-
Contextual	-	-

Classification of values into three different categories was chosen in order to provide a better understanding of different values' characters and boundaries. Within a national management regime, the category of *Knowledge values* will often be given more weight than *Experience values* and *Use values* in a comparative evaluation of churches. For a church that has local significance, *Experience values* and *Use values* will often play a greater role.

The identified values were explained and described (Tables 2-4). In practice, there can be smooth transitions between the different values, but an attempt has been made to create defined boundaries between them. For example a distinction was made between *Art history value* and *Architectural value*. Strictly speaking, architectural history comes under art history, but in order to assess church inventory independently from architecture, this distinction was considered important. Another example concerns the acoustic space inside the church. In this case, the *Acoustic value* may be considered as Experience value, if based on knowledge of sound and acoustics such as those related to sermons, songs and music. *Acoustic value* however, must also be regarded as a *Use value* in connection with social events or the priest's sermon.

Table 2. Definitions of knowledge values.

Value	Definitions /Criteria used to assess the value
Architectural history value	For assessing architectural history value it is necessary to have knowledge of the development of architectural history. This knowledge is based on cultural, political, economic and technological development, together with knowledge of materials and characteristics of construction elements. The building is assessed on its architectural design and decoration, which often represent one or more historical, stylistic trends or building traditions. The building should ideally be

	<p>assessed based on its architectural history periods, building traditions and typology. The building should also be assessed historically based on use of materials, function and construction. The church is assessed in a national, regional and local perspective.</p>
Art history value	<p>Art history is a discipline concerning study of objects, in this context, the church's inventories. It is a study of their historic development and stylistic context: design, format and appearance. The objects are assessed on the basis of art history style periods. This also includes assessing whether an object is of national, regional or local significance. An object's value increases if it was made by a famous artist/craftsman or workshop. The objects are also assessed on the basis of design, e.g. new techniques or use of new material.</p> <p>The distinction between architectural history value and art history value is made in order to be able to weight inventory and architecture separately.</p>
Authenticity	<p>The term authenticity contains a number of aspects. We ascribe the greatest value to <i>material</i> authenticity: this implies authentic original materials. <i>Formal</i> authenticity implies that the form (in the sense of design) is created where the original material has been destroyed. <i>Processual</i> authenticity is closely associated with this and implies that the original has been recreated using the original craft techniques and materials.</p> <p>The term authenticity is generally used primarily about the church or the church interior's degree of originality, and how much of the original construction materials or surface materials have been preserved.</p> <p>The original material's physical condition is significant for the assessment. Original <i>unconsolidated</i> surfaces, for example, will have higher value than original but consolidated surfaces.</p> <p>If it is known that the original surface treatment is preserved under more recent overpainting, or that original constructions have been built over, but they are still <i>in situ</i>, this is of major significance for the assessment.</p>
Historic narrative value	<p>The history of a church also reflects the society around. Multiple periods in the history of the church can be read as changes to the building and the interior. Additions, replacements or removed parts of the building or interior can illustrate liturgical history (changes in liturgical form), church history or social history.</p>
Restoration value	<p>In NS-EN 15898: 2011 restoration is defined as: <i>Measures carried out on a stable or stabilised object to support an understanding of the object, its values and/or use, while at the same time taking account of its significance and the materials and techniques used.</i></p> <p>The aim of church restoration in Norway has often been to restore the interior or the whole church back to an earlier period. Restoration is often characterised by the time when it was carried out and by the person in charge of the work. This may be seen by</p>

	later eyes as successful or less successful.
Source value	Source value is associated with the object’s contribution as a source of historic knowledge. The buildings are, unavoidably, sources of knowledge; the history of techniques and crafts and the history of architecture and style. The degree of authenticity is often very significant for the value as an historic source.
Archaeological value	The archaeological value depends on the scope of existing and often hidden traces of activities from the period before the current church was in use. The assessments are made on the basis of knowledge about whether the current church was erected on the site of earlier churches. The archaeological value is also determined by whether, for example, the current churchyard is placed on a pre-Christian burials site. The church also gets an increased archaeological value if there were graves below the church floor or in the crypt under the church.
Contextual value	Church buildings are often an important part of a landscape, town or village. The majority of churches are located in dominant positions, but nevertheless some churches are more important visual landmarks than others. The church may, for example, terminate an architectural urban axis, or be an element in an historic quarter, or a dominant building on the town square. The significance of the church in the surroundings – as part of the built environment or landscape must be assessed.

Table 3. Definitions of experience values.

Value	Definitions /Criteria used to assess the value
Aesthetic value	Aesthetic values can be the result of development and use of surface treatments over time, including the so-called patina. Aesthetic values can express a time /period and a cultural context. It can appeal to respect for age, appreciation of shape, colour etc. This implies a psychological dimension i.e. a church building or interior can give an experience of holiness and sanctity.
Architectural value	The architectural value is the result of a contemporary appreciation of a building or a work of art that does not have its roots in historical knowledge, but which is based on experience of space and shape; a direct perception of the physical. Architectural value is described as experience value because this form of knowledge is applied to an existing building which is understood through contemporary opinions and appreciation, and not on knowledge of the ideals and intentions/use of in the past.
Artistic value	Artistic value is the result of a contemporary appreciation of a work of art based on the experience of form and expression. Artistic value is described as experience value because this form of knowledge is applied to an existing work of art which is understood through contemporary opinions and appreciation, and not to knowledge of the ideals and intentions/use of the past.

Acoustic value	<p>Acoustics are a significant quality for the experience of the church interior, for church events and the suitability of the space for music.</p> <p>Acoustic value is assessed based on the extent to which the church interior provides a good acoustic experience for the congregation, or other users and visitors. This applies to sermons, readings and singing in the liturgical arrangements, as well as musical experiences in religious ceremonies and other events.</p>
Identity value	<p>Identity value is the feeling and experience of belonging to a place. Identity value is assessed based on the extent to which the church represents a sense of belonging for people through its symbolic dimension. A church can also have identity value for people who are not directly linked to the parish, but for being an important cultural heritage monument, or simply an element in the landscape with strong monumental value.</p>
Social value	<p>Social value is the church's value as a venue for fellowship. Many cultural and social activities are arranged as part of the life of the church. The church's role as a meeting venue represents social value where socialising and fellowship take place.</p>

Table 4. Definitions of use values.

Value	Definitions /Criteria used to assess the value
Frequency of use	<p>The value of frequency of use is about how much support there is for activities that take place in association with the church. These can include purely social events and cultural arrangements to a greater or lesser extent. The size of the congregation can be one measure of frequency of use, but all attendance at various social arrangements and cultural activities that take place in association with the church.</p>
Flexibility	<p>The value of flexibility is about the suitability of the church for spatial adaptations to changes in liturgical practice and new activities that are part of church services. This include minor adjustments to the church interior to major adaptations to allow room for new activities. A relatively high degree of flexibility may be required, for example, when church services are designed to include specific groups such as children and families, or special arrangements for young people.</p> <p>Flexibility is assessed primarily on the opportunities that the existing interior space allows for adaptations for reforms to the church service and the involvement of members of the congregation in liturgical practices. It concerns how spaces can be used and how the interior can be adapted within the church's existing limitations and premises.</p>
Usability	<p>The value of usability is about the extent to which the church can accommodate new functions associated with church life. Here, usability is distinct from flexibility as described above as it applies to functions that impose greater physical requirements on the church interior to allow opportunities for different social and cultural activities. The church's changing interface with society is also changing the requirements on the church.</p>

	Usability is assessed on the basis of the opportunities that the church building allows for new functions that require space and facilities. For example, increased parish work with social measures linked to meals and /or social care mean that there is need for a kitchen. Cultural arrangements such as concerts and performances require large spaces, changing rooms and access to toilets.
Attraction value	Attraction value is referred to the ability of the church to attract visitors who are not initially members of the congregation or the local community, for example pilgrims and tourists. A number of churches are important pilgrim destinations, and others have the potential to be an attraction for many people beyond the congregation and the local community.
Commercial value	Commercial value is based on the church's income potential derived from different arrangements associated with the church.

A change of status, management responsibility or ownership of the Norwegian churches, may lead to changes of the relative weight of knowledge, experience and use values. The tool developed within the present research is flexible in order to take into account these possible future changes in churches.

4. Conclusions

The definition of the value of a church by a selected and standardised set of defined values is highly relevant for the management and conservation of churches at all levels: for national and regional authorities, owners, congregations and the local society.

The tool developed in the present work was tested on various selected churches. The proposed model seems to work well on a national level. If assessment, based on the developed tool, is made on a limited number of churches, a cross-disciplinary team is recommended for evaluation. Ideally it should be the same team that make assessment of all churches. In practice, this cannot always be achieved, but it is a requirement for the future use of the results of the assessment that some of the team members are the same from church to church. The greatest need is for expertise in Architecture, Building technology, Art history and conservation, especially in relation to *Knowledge values*, as these assessments require a relatively high degree of professional expertise. Expertise in Sociology and Ethnology may also be necessary for the *Experience* and *Use values*.

Value judgements are created in the human consciousness and can therefore be described as a time-determined, relative assessment based on different parameters, purposes and understandings. However this does not mean that value judgements are random. Value judgements of churches presuppose a relatively long-term durability and therefore set demands on the premises for the assessments. In order to make the result of value judgements as credible as possible, the process needs to be transparent. The result must show who made the assessment, the context in which it was made, the purpose and the value

concepts that were used as starting point and the explanations or definitions of the value terms that are used in the assessment.

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank our colleagues in the project group at NIKU: senior researcher, architect Lars Jacob Hvinden-Haug and researcher, ethnologist Knut Fageraas for fruitful discussions. We would also like to thank the members of the reference group for their interest in the project.

References

- [1] R. Mason and E. Avrami, *Values and Challenges of Conservation Planning. Management planning for Archaeological Sites*, Proc. of the International Workshop organised by the Getty Conservation Institute and Loyola Marymount University 19-22 May 2000 in Corinth - Greece, The Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles, 2002, 13-26.
- [2] R. Mason. *Assessing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodological Issues and Choices*, in *The Getty Research Report. Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage*, The Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles, 2002, 5-30.
- [3] M. van Schijnde and M. de Beyer, *Guidelines on ways of dealing with Religious objects*, Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht, 2012, online at <http://www.religieuserfgoed.nl/assets/Uploads/Guidelines-on-Ways-of-Dealing-with-Religious-Objects-1.1.pdf>, accessed 11.02.2017.