

Cultural Heritage Management

Assignment 3

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1. World Heritage Site: The Historic Centre of Rome (Italy)

Key Heritage Values

The Historic Centre of Rome, inscribed in 1980 (and extended in 1990), holds Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) as a unique ensemble of cultural layers spanning three millennia. Its key values include: (a) its role as the heart of the Roman Empire, which shaped Western law, governance, and engineering; (b) its centrality to early Christianity, evidenced by ancient basilicas and the Papal seat; and (c) its influence on Renaissance, Baroque, and modern European art and urbanism (UNESCO, n.d.).

Attributes Expressing Values

The attributes are tangible and spatial. The Roman Forum and Colosseum express imperial power and engineering. The Pantheon demonstrates concrete technology and religious continuity. St. Peter's Basilica and the Vatican City (a separate enclave) embody Christian spiritual authority. Renaissance palaces (e.g., Palazzo Farnese) and Baroque fountains (e.g., Trevi Fountain) express artistic flourishing. Moreover, the urban fabric – street layouts, piazzas, and walls – integrates these monuments into a living city.

Authenticity and Integrity

Authenticity: Rome's authenticity is high but complex. Original materials (travertine, marble, brick) are largely genuine, though many structures have undergone restorations (e.g., the Colosseum's missing inner arena). The form and design remain legible, and the city continues its original function as a capital and religious center. However, 20th-century traffic and modern interventions slightly blur the historic setting.

Integrity: Integrity is largely intact. All essential attributes lie within the buffer zone. The site includes the complete historical stratigraphy from ancient to modern times. Threats include mass tourism, air pollution, and development pressures, but Italian heritage laws and UNESCO monitoring maintain the wholeness of the site. The ensemble is of adequate size to represent its OUV.

References

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2. Authenticity Beyond Material Originality: Ise Grand Shrine (Japan)

Ise Grand Shrine (Ise Jingū) is a Shinto complex rebuilt every 20 years under the ritual of Shikinen Sengū – a practice that challenges Western notions of authenticity tied to original materials. Instead, authenticity here resides in the faithful repetition of form, technique, and spiritual continuity.

Procedural and Immaterial Authenticity

The shrine's structures (e.g., the Naikū or Inner Shrine) are completely demolished and rebuilt on an adjacent plot using identical dimensions, joinery, and materials (Japanese cypress). The correct transfer of construction knowledge from master carpenters (miyadaiku) is paramount. Authenticity is thus process-based rather than object-based (Fowler, 2003). What matters is the unbroken chain of ritual acts, not the survival of ancient wood.

Spiritual and Functional Authenticity

The shrine's authenticity also lies in its living function. Ise is not a ruin or museum; it hosts daily rites for the sun goddess Amaterasu. The act of renewal symbolizes death and rebirth, core to Shinto cosmology. Therefore, a 4-year-old building is considered as authentic as a 1,200-year-old tradition because it performs the same spiritual role and embodies the same kami (divine essence) as its predecessor (Bunkachō, 2018).

Contrast with Material-Centric Views

Under the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), which recognizes cultural diversity, Ise's practice is fully authentic. The traditional Japanese view prioritizes design, technique, and intangible meaning over material permanence – a valid alternative to the Western preference for aged fabric.

Conclusion

Ise Grand Shrine demonstrates that authenticity can be understood as the faithful transmission of knowledge, ritual, and form through time, rather than the preservation of original substance.

References

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