

Cultural Heritage Management
Assignment 2
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Honestly, when I first learned about heritage management, I thought it was just about keeping old buildings from falling. But the more I read, the more I realised there's a real tug-of-war between two very different mindsets: the conventional way and the value-led way.

The conventional approach is what most people probably imagine. Experts—architects, historians, archaeologists—decide what's important. They focus on the physical stuff: original materials, authentic details, structural accuracy. Take the Parthenon in Greece. For years, restoration decisions were made by a small group of specialists who prioritised getting every stone historically correct (Mason, 2002). Local communities? They barely got a say. It's not that this approach is bad—it's just, well, a bit top-down.

Then there's the value-led approach, which I personally find way more interesting. Instead of asking "Is this original?", it asks "Why does this matter to people?" Heritage becomes alive, not frozen. A great example is the Fuzhou historic warehouses in China. Rather than sealing them off, managers worked with local artists and residents to turn them into creative spaces. Another one that sticks with me is the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor in the US, where descendants themselves decide what to preserve—often cultural practices, not just buildings (Fredheim & Khalaf, 2016).

So, which works better today? Look, I think the value-led approach is generally more effective. Our world is diverse and democratic. People don't want to be told what to care about. Value-led management builds community pride and adapts to change (Smith, 2006). That said, I can't totally dismiss the conventional method. For something super fragile—like ancient ruins

that could crumble if touched you still need expert control. But for most sites? Yeah, value-led wins. It's just more human. That said, the conventional method still has a role—for fragile archaeological remains where physical authenticity is paramount, expert-led preservation is non-negotiable. But for the vast majority of heritage sites, effectiveness is measured by public meaning, not just material permanence. A blended approach, with values at the core, feels like the only honest way forward.

References

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