

RESTORATION VERSUS INSTORATION AND TRANSSTORATION

2012
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This Ph.D. thesis is about 'attitudes' and their role as defining and instrumental tools in the architectural field.

The hypothesis of the thesis is that architects and other building professionals today use 'attitudes' as the foundation of their valuation of architectural heritage and thus as the basis of their decision to either intervene or not intervene in objects of architectural heritage. 'Attitudes' are viewed as objectively valid instruments used to decide what to value and how to intervene.

My hypothesis further states that the attitude as architectural instrument has been ontologically dumped. The objective validity given to this instrument is achieved through consistent and distinct verbalisation, and not through an embedding in real scientific work. Therefore my starting point for the study is the following: There is a randomness in the way certain attitudes are given objective status in our field, and we have yet to apply scientific parameters to the discussion and definition of the attitude as a defining element in our professional work. An epistemological relationship has become an ontological claim.

This hypothesis challenges a common understanding of the attitude-instrument as being objectively valid. I want to uncover 'the veil of scientific consensus' which seems to be attached to the current status and use of the instrument. I do this by raising the research question: What characterizes attitudes as a professional decision-making instrument?

I study my hypothesis and research question from three different theoretical perspectives.

Initially, I examine what characterizes the concept of architectural heritage. Then I look closely into attitudes and their theoretical anchor. Finally, I investigate the architectural language that serves as the attitude's media. In this theoretical framework, I examine how three important architectural theorists present their positions on architectural heritage, on its valuation and on the possibility of intervention. My primary focus is on Johannes Exner; secondarily on Viollet-le-Duc and John Ruskin. The analyses uncover themes applying to the anatomy of the attitudes – more specifically the structure and implicit elements of the attitude.

This empirical ground provides - together with the theoretical framework of understanding - an informed basis for developing and answering the primary research question and hypothesis of the research project.

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The first purpose of the research project is to accommodate an increasingly multidisciplinary architectural professional practice by making a contribution to the understanding of a core concept – the attitude as architectural instrument – that is both central to our profession and at the same time very implicit. Through exploration and tangible fixation of the implicit instrument and the methods of the architectural discipline of architectural heritage, I hope it will become more inclusive rather than exclusive in an interdisciplinary context.

The second purpose of the research project is to explore this important architectural tool to provide insight into what it really is we build our practice upon. Through this exploration, I want to contribute to the establishment of a basis for rethinking and further developing the discipline's central theoretical and methodological framework.

Altogether, the research project is an attempt to provide the concept of 'attitude' as an architectural instrument, a theoretical body, functional structure, and a language. The project is a contribution to how the instrument of attitudes can be understood, managed and communicated more clearly - both professionally and interdisciplinary.