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Conserving or Not Conserving Architectural Heritage: European Thinking and Local Differences

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Abstract

Architectural heritage and the actions—positive and negative—concerning it, are not only different in each country, but they also change over time. It is widely assumed that this is due to changes in values. However, the more determining factors are education and political systems. These two are intrinsically connected, and affect the making of local and national contexts, which ultimately support, or not, protection and conservation actions. Invariably, in democratic settings with high levels of education, architectural heritage is valued, protected and conserved. Historically—and unlike in other disciplines—in architectural conservation, theory was only defined after successful practice and by the competent professionals who executed it. This is the case of the Venice Charter (1964), still the main reference for practitioners when intervening in architectural heritage. There is a clear relationship between the emergence of literature on the economics of heritage, heritage management and cultural geography, and the recent trends promoting the de-listing of buildings or to allow them to decline to avoid the cost of conservation and maintenance. This literature is used to justify these actions and, ironically, sometimes more funds are spent on digitally documenting buildings and/or talking about them than maintaining them. This is clear evidence of the deviation of the very purpose of conserving architectural heritage, which has been passed to us for our generation to enjoy, and we should do our best to transmit it to future ones. This paper discusses the current situation in Europe concerning architectural conservation, with a particular focus on the Council of Europe Framework Conventions of Granada (1985) and Faro (2005), and the approach and practices in individual countries. It discusses some representative examples, identifying the main theories (and lack of) employed by governments, authorities and professionals and the outcomes. It reflects on the reasons why we have arrived at the current situation of architectural conservation being misunderstood or underrepresented. The paper also defines the need for coordinated policy actions, particularly the formal classification of architectural conservation as a scientific discipline. It presents the need for more research and specialist education in architectural conservation to improve current unregulated and inappropriate practices.

Keywords: architectural heritage; architectural conservation; Faro Convention; Granada Convention; Venice Charter; value; education; classification; terminology

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Academic Editor: Tarek Teba

Received: 22 September 2025
Revised: 15 October 2025
Accepted: 17 October 2025
Published: 30 October 2025

Citation: González-Longo, C. Conserving or Not Conserving Architectural Heritage: European Thinking and Local Differences. *Architecture* **2025**, *5*, 105. https://doi.org/10.3390/architecture5040105

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1. Introduction

Architectural conservation is, by definition, carried out in architectural heritage, i.e., existing buildings considered valuable. It must be carried out critically and respectfully with the original material and design, also considering subsequent additions. Time is a very

important aspect to consider, and thereafter, the importance of historical and archaeological studies in revealing values that are sometimes not immediately apparent. We have a European perspective, as it is in Europe where the intentional developments towards the creation of the discipline of architectural conservation have taken place, and where architectural heritage has specific characteristics, in terms of age, extent and materiality. As David Lowenthal put it: "Europe's ivy-clad monuments and ancient ruins betokened senile evils." [1].

It is commonly considered that the differences in approaches concerning the conservation of architectural heritage are due to changes in values [2]. However, what has changed is the concept of value itself, no longer only those set by Alois Riegl [3], and at the base of all the theory of conservation since. They are also currently confused by economic values, which, as Cesare Brandi [4] noted, is a very bad idea, as it is to focus on technology when talking about architectural conservation, which should be, above all, a cultural action. This new economic value, as confirmed by the presence of culture in the G20 proceedings since 2020, is the result of political systems and education, which, as Brian Levy noted [5], are intrinsically connected, and the making of local and national contexts, which ultimately support, or not, protection and conservation actions. Invariably, in democratic settings with high levels of education, architectural heritage is valued, protected and conserved. Historically—and unlike in other disciplines—in architectural conservation, theory was only defined after successful practice and by the competent professionals who executed it. This is the case of the Venice Charter [6], still the main reference for practitioners when intervening in architectural heritage.

This paper follows up from a previous discussion on some pioneering projects in Spain, Italy, France, Great Britain, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Jordan, China and Japan [7,8]. This included the fundamental issues of education, training and professional competence of the architects and other professionals involved in architectural heritage, and the consequences for the decision-making processes. That study highlighted a regression in the discipline of architectural conservation, with a worrying increase in reconstructions, often camouflaged in pseudo-conservation rhetoric.

This new work extracts some of the key considerations in the policy and practice of architectural conservation in Europe today, also identifying trends in the 'dominant' context, and people and organisations that have influenced it the most. It explores the protection, conservation, presentation and use of architectural heritage in a series of countries across Europe. These have been selected based on their ratification, or not, of the Council of Europe Framework Conventions for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada, 1985) and on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro, 2005), also discussing other existing and relevant frameworks. The research is based on the existing literature and publicly available information. The review of all these materials in comparison to specific selected projects in various countries will allow for a comparison and discussion about the policy and existing paradigms of intervention in historic buildings and sites. The discussion of results and conclusions are used to provide recommendations to policy makers.

2. The Rudiments and Elements of Architectural Conservation as a Scientific Discipline

2.1. The Classification Problem

We should start with the basics of where architectural conservation fits, to understand the main problems to be addressed. Despite over a hundred years of effort, architectural conservation is not fully developed as a discipline, and, as it happens with the field of architecture to which it belongs, it does not fit well in FOS07, the Eurostat (the statistical

office of the European Union) standard code list for the classification of fields of science and technology [9]. The fields listed in FOS07 are natural sciences, engineering and technology, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, social sciences and humanities. Architecture and architectural conservation include aspects belonging to all these fields. FOS07 appears now as archived, without referring to any other current documents. It was developed under the supervision of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and it is based on the nomenclature suggested by UNESCO. It clearly needs revision and wider considerations, as only four countries (Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Australia) were involved in its development.

The otherwise negative implications are considerable, including how data are collected and analysed in the absence of a clear classification at the basis of it. Also, the lack of a clear discipline and formal classification affects research funding calls and allocation priorities, resulting in a lack of development of scientific knowledge and literature in the field.

There are also some current trends promoting the separation of architectural heritage in types and typologies (twentieth-century, dissonant, etc.), which needs to be avoided. As Lowenthal stated: "our heritage must also be accepted in its totality, the vile along with the valiant, the evil along with the eminent, the sorrowful as well as the splendid." [1] Of course, there are differences between buildings, technologies, materials and cultures, but these must be considered for specific buildings and sites, not with the aim of trying to standardise solutions. The need is to educate professionals to deal with the complexities of heritage and to create resources to conserve it, not to simplify heritage.

The creation of the programme 'New European Bauhaus' has also created more confusion, as it is believed that architectural conservation should be part of it, but that would be a great paradox, as the original Bauhaus was not interested in conservation or history in general. The 2024 Krakow Declaration 'New European Bauhaus: Heritage & Transformation' reaffirms the concerns of limiting the vision to energy and retrofitting issues, which is clearly biased to the nature and performance of historic buildings and traditional materials. The narratives tend to be populist and activist rather that scientific. The world is certainly transforming, but it is not a question of choosing science or people: science is for people's benefit, in the short and long terms. Unfortunately, some of the initiatives to which large resources are allocated have a very short life and very little tangible outcomes, with perhaps a placebo effect rather than a real positive impact.

2.2. Terminology Issues

Another problem encountered is the lack of a shared glossary for architectural conservation, starting by the very term, which is not consistently used. We find an extraordinary number of different terms, including 'conservation architecture', creating confusion. It is sufficient to consult leading encyclopaedias in two European countries (UK and Italy), to understand the very different approach and interest on the subject. The first edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica [10] had only the entry 'restauration', (in French), as "the art of reestablishing or setting a thing in its former good state". The current Encyclopaedia Britannica online does not have an entry for 'architectural conservation', instead provides this definition for art conservation and restoration:

> "any attempt to conserve and repair architecture, paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, and objects of the decorative arts (furniture, glassware, metalware, textiles, ceramics, and so on) that have been adversely affected by negligence, willful damage, or, more usually, the inevitable decay caused by the effects of time and human use on the materials of which they are made" [11].

Interestingly, the encyclopaedia notes as the related key people Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, Sir George Gilbert Scott, James Wyatt and William Burges, with no mention of John Ruskin or William Morris.

The Italian encyclopaedia Treccani displays instead a very elaborated selection of terms and the distinction between architectural conservation (*restauro*) and preservation (*conservazione*) [12]. It also includes the very detailed appendices of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* by Michele Cordaro et al., providing the context of the debates over time, and those by Giorgio Torraca, about conservation technology [13].

The use of the term 'cultural heritage' or 'heritage' for everything does not help either; it is certainly not the same to set policies to conserve a building than, for example, to preserve traditional dance. Both are very important, and both are culture, but they require completely different actions, professional competences, skills, methods and instruments. Thereafter they clearly belong to a different scientific discipline, and they have different education, policy and practice needs. While dance requires safeguarding and transmission, a building requires active material protection and conservation. Even a painting is very different than a building, which have the additional requirements of safety, functionality and comfort that no other cultural heritage has. This is one of the most challenging aspects, especially today, with challenging issues relating to energy and climate change.

The meaning of 'European heritage' is also problematic, as it does not have defined content, but there are related initiatives, such as the new European Heritage Label sites. These, together with World Heritage sites, have the danger of fragmenting heritage and/or bringing excessive focus on few sites. This has the consequent danger of exploitation, neglecting also other heritage sites, rather than integrating and enjoying all.

2.3. Education and Training

Perhaps the greatest barrier to developing architectural conservation as a discipline is the fact that there is not a clear structure of professions and professional profiles required for architectural conservation, and education and training designed and delivered in accordance. There is also the fast pace of development of technologies requiring adaptation and transformation of some ways of delivering education and training. Despite the great quantity of heritage/conservation-related courses, they do not provide a clear path to the professions. However, students are attracted by the discipline; as it happens in the architectural field in general, as it is a very vocational choice. On the other hand, despite that the profession of architect was established before others (for example, archaeologist), and that it is officially recognised in more countries, I would argue that archaeologists' formation prepares them better. This is fundamentally due to the opportunities that they have—during and immediately after their studies—to participate in archaeological excavations. Students of architectural conservation and graduate architects unfortunately do not have the same opportunities to participate in ongoing architectural conservation projects, and we need to think how this could be made possible.

It is also necessary to educate policy makers, professionals and the wider public to understand that architectural heritage sites are not "untouchable" museum artefacts. Buildings, archaeological sites and other architectural heritage sites are inhabited and/or receive visitors. Consequently, they must have adequate provisions for their functionality, the comfort of their users and minimise energy consumption, without damaging them. The 2013 reform of the Technical Building Code in Spain [14] requires architects to have a thorough understanding of the construction and structural characteristics of buildings, but this is not enough. Architects are the competent professionals to design buildings, and, with adequate training, they can become conservation architects able to deal with scientific

methodologies, develop the rigour to deal with historic buildings, and have the ability to design new, high-quality architectural structures within and next to it, in harmony.

3. Guidance and Policy Issues: How We Arrived Here

It is difficult to understand how we have arrived at this situation with a discipline that naturally emerged in the eighteenth century, just like archaeology, but with very different outcomes and indeed some conflicts in the way. Until then, architects approached architectural projects in the same way, whether constructing a new building or adding to an existing one, this action was reserved for the most skilful of the architects and builders, and only for reasons of economy and ancestral pride. With the development of archaeology and history as disciplines, and indeed the awareness of the values involved, the approach to historic buildings changed forever [15].

The substantial developments and reflexions during the twentieth century are sadly not very present in many current practices, more in line with the nineteenth century work of Viollet-le-Duc and his promotion of reconstructions. Paradoxically, some of those who claim to use the 'le-Duc approach' do not consider his work in depth. If they did, they would soon realise that he employed a great degree of creativity and innovation in his work and that his scope was not to fake the past and stop history, as we witness many times today.

UNESCO is perhaps the organisation that people have in mind when talking about heritage, because of the World Heritage (WH) list, but their purpose is wider: to strengthen our shared humanity through the promotion of education, science, culture, and communication. Preserving heritage is one of their culture action challenges: there are 1248 properties in the UNESCO World Heritage List, 235 of which are natural, and 196 State Parties have ratified the 1972 World Heritage Convention. UNESCO Culture | 2030 Indicators are a collection of a variety of data from relevant institutions, intending to consider the contribution of culture across the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). They intend to link them together, allowing for the aggregation of data across different goals in accordance with UNESCO's work. But they also note the lack of reliable data collection, measurement and monitoring processes as an obstacle for revealing the importance of cultural heritage and creativity [16]. With the existing classification, and the absence of architectural conservation in it, no reliable data can be collected.

Eurostat (the statistical office of the European Union) does not list cultural heritage as a theme, only culture under the 'Population and social conditions' theme. There, the economic and social aspects of culture are noted. A new data set is included: statistics on online visits on Wikipedia to UNESCO World Heritage sites are taken as a measure of "cultural consumption of world heritage." Looking at the data collected, it becomes apparent that the contribution to the economy of cultural heritage is the main interest. Its nature, condition and conservation are not considered, and thereafter it is treated as a product for consumption rather than a cultural asset to be looked after.

Many countries seem to be looking at the European Commission (EC) concerning cultural policies, but the fact is that each EU country is responsible for their own cultural policies. The large investment of funding of EC in culture programmes may confuse this fact, with the consequences in some countries to have an over-reliance on European policies and funding that are only intended to help countries address common challenges. Instead, capacity should be created in each country, understanding the local characteristics, needs and opportunities.

The EC clearly shows in its website dedicated to its EU Policy for cultural heritage the utilitarian use they give to cultural heritage as "a shared source of remembrance, understanding, identity, dialogue, cohesion and creativity", and as "resources inherited

from the past in all forms and aspects" [17]. It goes on to say how cultural heritage also incentivises the cultural and creative sector. In conclusion, cultural heritage is not the object of the work, but the catalyst of social and economic benefits. The EC makes clear that policymaking in cultural heritage is the responsibility of each of the member states and their regional and local authorities, but that the "EU is committed to safeguarding and enhancing Europe's cultural heritage. It does so through a number of policy areas and programmes" [17]. As mentioned before, the first thing to question is if there such a thing as 'Europe's cultural heritage'.

Paradoxically, there is the perception of great importance of heritage because of the multiplication of people interested on it and the extensive use of the word. What we have seen in the last 20 or so years is the emergence of the figure of the heritage consultant, which has a variety of meanings, but not a clear professional competence, and, critically, no professional liabilities. In the worst cases, these professionals are called to act as a sort of alibi for projects involving conservation carried out by no specialist teams. It is also a real issue when advising governments and organisations, ultimately informing or even writing policy or guidelines for other, regulated, professionals to follow. Heritage consultancy, as many other types of consultancies, are not regulated, and thereafter we would question their suitability to tackle the challenges and complexities of architectural conservation, which also involve critical safety issues.

Architectural conservation is an integral discipline and is part of the wider field of architecture. To properly conserve a building or historic complex, it is not enough to simply repair its physical elements; rather, a quality architectural project is required, one that helps to interpret the existing building and site, provides appropriate conservation and carefully adds a new layer. To achieve this, we must train architects in the knowledge of historical architecture, who can use drawing as a tool, design new, high-quality architecture and collaborate with other conservation professionals.

4. From Venice to Faro via Granada: Exploring Implementation

4.1. Venice Charter

The Venice Charter is a key reference for architectural conservation theory and praxis [6]. It was written by a group of practitioners in 1964, and it is clearly oriented to buildings. It was the outcome of a conference chaired by Piero Gazzola addressed to architects and technicians, but with contributors from multiple disciplines, including Harold James Plenderleith, a leading conservation scientist. This very concise Charter, despite some translation issues to be considered, is unsurpassed because of its contents and clarity. Before that, there were pioneering interventions that are paradigms of good and critical conservation practice, such as the intervention of Giacomo Boni at S. Maria Nova in Rome between 1900 and 1907 [15] and that of Torres Balbas' in the Alhambra of Granada between 1923 and 1936 [18].

4.2. Granada Convention

The 1985 Granada Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe established the concept of 'integrated conservation', with architectural heritage integrated into spatial and urban planning. It has been ratified and entered into force in all members of the Council of Europe, apart from Albania, Austria, Iceland, Monaco and San Marino, although some countries submitted some qualifications. The Council of Europe (CoE) is the human rights organisation for Europe and includes 46 countries. It has a specific action in cultural heritage—which they call a field—to promote diversity and dialogue through access to heritage and to have a sense of identity, collective memory and mutual understanding. Article 20 of the Convention states that a Committee of Experts

shall monitor the application of the Convention; however, it seems it has not been carried out since 2010, when the Cultural Heritage and Landscape Steering Committee of the Council of Europe (CDPATEP) started to monitor the Granada Convention, in light of the approaches to heritage management set out in Faro Convention (2005). This monitoring was carried out by the former Director of English Heritage's London Region [19], who also influenced the conservation principles used by English Heritage today, based on the concept of conservation as managed change [20]. These principles went through consultation in 2018, but no revision has been completed yet. They have great influence, and they are included as guidance in documents such as the Heritage Statement Template for the City of Westminster Council.

4.3. Faro Convention

The Convention of Faro in 2005 put the focus on people and human values [21], deviating from the Venice and Granada conventions to focus on the actual interventions. However, despite the reference in multiple documents and policy to the Faro Convention, and the compelling fact that it appears in the culture and cultural heritage section of the CoE website under the 'Standards' section, the reality is that, since being adopted by the Council of Europe, it has only been signed by 30 countries out of the 46 that belong to the CoE. The CDPATEP set the standard and has also a monitoring role. They use the HEREIN database and a case study approach that is open to all states, independently of the ratification of a specific convention. The CoE and others greatly promote the Faro Convention, and there is a written Action Plan, and even a joint project with the EC, "The Faro Way: enhanced participation in cultural heritage" aiming to encourage the Faro Convention principles to increase the role of communities in heritage governance.

The sixteen countries that have not signed the Faro Convention are Andorra, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Monaco, Sweden, Türkiye and the United Kingdom. Two of the original signatories in 2025 have not ratified it (Albania and Bulgaria); Cyprus signed in 2021, Netherlands in 2024 and Romania in 2025. Examples of the implementation of the Faro Convention have been provided [22], but we need some further discussion on the reasons why countries are not ratifying the convention, or why it was ratified much later. For example, Slovenia signed the Convention in 2006 and ratified it in 2008 while Belgium signed it in 2012 and ratified it in 2022, Italy signed in 2013 and ratified in 2020 and Spain signed in 2018 and ratified it in 2022, France, the UK and Sweden have not signed it. The Swedish National Heritage Board, the central administrative agency since the seventeenth century, the oldest in the world in cultural heritage and cultural or historic environments, produced a detailed paper in 2014 analysing the Faro Convention and recommending signature [23]. Cultural heritage protection and management in Sweden aims to preserve and manage sites of historical, architectural or archaeological significance and to empower cultural heritage as a force in the evolution of a democratic, sustainable society. They noted that until then, the Faro Convention was mainly ratified by countries with a recent history of conflict.

4.4. Some Recent Cases in Belgium, Italy, France and the UK

The fact that countries have signed or not Faro convention does not seem to have any implications. For example, the Government of Belgium supports activities with UNESCO at the World Heritage Centre, as part of the General Trust Fund (FUT). In terms of interventions, there are interesting ones such as the Het Steen, a medieval fortress in the old city of Antwerp converted in a Cultural Hub and Cruise Terminal. There was an architectural competition in 2016, with 31 entries, and the winner was the architectural firm

noAarchitecten. The practice lists this project in their website as historic context/re-use, removing in the intervention a 1950s addition by the city architect André Fivez, that they considered inadequate [24]. Although the concept for the project was to "strengthen the old with the new", the new seems to have been privileged.

We find quite different approaches in Italy, in particular at the *Sala delle Cariatidi* in the Royal Palace of Milan [25]. The room was damaged during a bombing raid in 1943, with the loss of its roof, and it was subsequently abandoned. The conservation and presentation decision was to maintain its ruined appearance, but there was previously the functional need to reconstruct the ceiling, which imitated, in a simplified way, the destroyed one. The walls were investigated, analysed and assessed for their consolidation and protection, without altering their aspect of a ruin. It was, however, necessary to fill some *lacunae* (missing parts) with new bricks of very different dimensions and positions, to which lime wash were applied to blend with the existing. Sculptures, capitals and other tile decorations were also integrated, always considering the totality of the buildings and its architectural composition.

A very current issue in Italy and in Roman archaeological sites and museums in particular is mass tourism. They seem to be undergoing a process of 'rebranding' to attract more visitors. The narratives around the just re-opened Crypta Balbi as an 'open construction site' do not communicate well that in fact the site has already had an exceptional conservation and design intervention by the architect Maria Letizia Conforto. Signs and new exhibition displays have been added, removing the previous ones, but it is not clear how the new intervention relates to the previous, substantial and paradigmatic one. The wider use for the community is, however, not new: Giulio Carlo Argan created the '*Estate Romana*' (Roman Summer) back in 1978, opening many sites for performances, for the enjoyment of locals and tourists.

Considering the central role that France has currently in leading EC-funded cultural heritage projects, and the existence of a Faro Convention Network in that country, it is surprising that they have not signed it. The reconstruction of Notre-Dame after the 2019 fire seems to have also influenced the reconstruction of other significant French buildings. As it happened, a century earlier in Venice, after the collapse of St. Mark's Tower, the decision to rebuild Notre-Dame was political and very swift, as it was the restoration that has just been completed, at a cost of approximately €700 million (340,000 people from 150 countries made donations). The Ministry of Culture displayed efficient project management, as they handled all contracting matters. Important in accelerating the restoration process was the existing national network of the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and project leaders, expanded with universities, which faced many challenges regarding the varying timescales required for scientific research and restoration work [26].

The formidable display of resources has somehow obscured the actual reflection about the project, from an architectural conservation point of view. Despite the dramatic and devastating fire and the significant loss of Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc's spire, Notre-Dame had largely survived. The building has been rebuilt to its pre-fire appearance, but a very refreshed one of pristine and clean surfaces. Clearly, to turn a building to its former condition is materially impossible for many reasons, not only because of the destruction of the original material and many details, but also because new archaeological remains have emerged during the work that require a new presentation. Similar materials and the same techniques can be used, but the building will not be the same, despite the current narratives about the intervention and the extensive publicity being conducted to promote it. There should have been more extensive and scientific preliminary research and discussions about the intervention criteria to be used and more clarity in the result about what is new and what is old.

Time is very important in architectural conservation, as it involves complex activities that often require preliminary research and studies that can take months or even years. The previous major intervention in Notre-Dame was carried out by Viollet-le-Duc, together with Jean-Baptiste Lassus, over a period of 25 years (1844–1869). Their project included a preliminary report prepared in 1843, addressed to the Minister of Justice and Worship, explaining their intervention criteria and proposals. They stated that "restoration can be more disastrous for a monument than the ravages of the centuries and popular fury" [27] No mention of this report or approach has been made during the recent intervention. It is also worth noting that Lassus and Le-Duc included new elements in the building, using traditional craftsmanship but with a contemporary design. Above all, they called for prudence and discretion in the intervention [27], which remains a pertinent approach in all architectural conservation projects today. This approach is what has allowed architectural heritage to survive to the present day, as adapting to contemporary needs is the most sustainable option. However, this criterion has not been followed in the last intervention of clear restoration, where the fundamental objective was to return the building to its pre-fire appearance.

This approach is also common in the UK, with cases such as St Edmundsbury Cathedral in which a new 45 m high Millennium Tower was completed in 2005, under the Patronage of King Charles, then the Prince of Wales. Like Macron in Notre-Dame, he took a personal interest in the project. Shortly after, in 2008, English Heritage published their definition of conservation as 'managing change' [20]. This has further evolved to the point that the word 'conservation' is actively cancelled today in some projects in United Kingdom, as exemplified in the ongoing intervention in the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, London [28], described in the official website as a "Restoration and Renewal Programme", with a focus on safety-critical works, including fire and utility services, although the conservation of the building's structure, including masonry is mentioned. The documentation of the building in the form of a BIM model is also central in the project. There is, however, little public information about the new knowledge acquired and how it is informing the building's intervention and presentation. At the same time, the UK is one of the few countries with conservation registers and conservation accreditation schemes for architects and other professionals involved in architectural conservation.

Robert Maguire [29] summarised almost 30 years ago, what had happened in the precedent 30 years of building development in the UK, by gradual and unintentional polarisation, which he describes as an "understandably human sort of mess". He reckoned that it resulted in two understandings of the word conservation in the architectural field, with the same root but with two different philosophical positions, forced apart by historical pressures. The first position is that of retaining and, where necessary, adapting or adding to old environments, in such a way that a fresh entity is created to serve modern life, in which the old is respected and valued for its contribution. The second position promotes the retaining of old environments, creating conditions in which they may survive unchanged into the future; this implies that users must accept the limitations on their way of life that such a restriction of change imposes. Maguire goes on to make a very important observation: that this split has affected education. He explains that both philosophies were taught to the new generations of professionals, but with no adequate explanation of the doublethink they are expected to put into practice. He found it essential that we should try to find a way back to a more unified philosophy of conservation, so to avoid the struggles of conservation officers and planners to accommodate both approaches in real-life as well as political pressure. Sadly, it does not seem that we are in a better position now, and indeed it is even more challenging due to energy challenges.

Interestingly, in many of the projects discussed, it is unclear who leads the architectural project and who makes the final decisions regarding the intervention, from a cultural and intellectual perspective. There is also a lack of discussion about the significance of the buildings and their presentation, from an art history, architectural and critical perspective, when it should be at the heart of the intervention and integrated in the overall conservation project. Technological capabilities and the interest in modernising buildings are always emphasised rather than the architectural heritage, the main reason of their conservation. This is a significant decline compared to projects carried out 30–40 years ago, and it is worrying that the trend is solely toward modernization or retrofitting, without integrating it into an architectural and cultural project. In an architectural conservation project, the architectural heritage must always be the priority.

5. Conclusions: In Search of the Epistemology of Architectural Conservation

> "It is imperative to demonstrate that the past is not a frill or an extra to be enjoyed or dispensed with on impulse. We need to remind ourselves, so as to persuade others, that consciously informed use of heritage is essential to civilized life" [1].

Cultural heritage is not a field, but an economic sector, with many fields within it that need to be identified and structured, including architectural conservation. Cultural heritage is an appropriate overarching term for looking at the impact of the sector in society, but not for studying the requirements of protecting or conserving architectural heritage, or to educate for it. It also does not help with the need to integrate it within wider issues such as sustainability.

It all starts with the problem of classification in research, education and policy. A priority for policy makers is to revise the classification of scientific disciplines and the inclusion of architecture and architectural conservation clearly within it, rather than as a sub-field in which architecture and conservation (in general); architectural conservation it is not present now at all. Statistics and the decisions that they inform are based on inadequate and very limited data and ignoring existing research and experience currently invisible to policy makers.

There is also a degree of incoherence, or perhaps bipolarity, exemplified by the lack of formal ratification and implementation of the much-quoted Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (2005), which actually provides only high-level principles rather than imposing specific actions. The 1985 Granada Convention, ratified by almost all countries of the Council of Europe, lacks implementation and somehow it seems to have been engulfed by the Faro Convention, with the subsequent loss of specific developments in architectural conservation. This needs to be addressed at international and national levels.

To write conventions such as Faro is important, but what is vital is that there are political will and structures in place to be implemented, starting by creating capacity for the education and training of the professionals involved in carrying out the work that the Venice Charter and the Granada Convention so well described. The Faro Convention rightly put the focus on people and human values, but it seems to have diluted the specific needs and scope concerning architectural heritage within the large cultural heritage 'pot'. We would argue that we need a clearer taxonomy, not only of scientific disciplines, but also of what architectural heritage is in individual countries, in Europe and beyond. Above all, knowledge and professional competence should inform policy, to avoid generic policies and practices that are not only not helping the conservation of architectural heritage, but in many instances damage it.

High-profile public projects, such as Notre-Dame, have a highly political content, and additional efforts must be made to focus attention on the importance of a scientific approach,

the real needs of the building and on the excellence of the architectural conservation project, which includes the use of cutting-edge technologies, heritage science, and, of course, architectural design. Archaeology seems to be prioritised over architecture in many instances now and this is probably due to the professional profiles involved in the decision-making process. This also needs to be reviewed case by case, depending on the individual building or site. The historical tension between the two disciplines is well known, and it seems to be heightened today, especially if one visits cities like Rome. In many instances, it seems that very old approaches have returned, when archaeological value prevailed and historic buildings and sites became static artefacts that created idealistic images or documents of the past. It is disheartening that the experiences and advances in architectural conservation over the last century are ignored. This can only be reversed by research and education.

Society today is continuously evolving, and the digital transformation of recent years has also changed our world, especially regarding the importance of images and immediacy. This has undoubtedly changed the value system underlying the attribution of significance to architectural heritage, but the short-term economic value of heritage should not be a priority, and, in fact, it could damage it irreversibly. Architectural conservation should not be subject to the beliefs or limited resources of the time; instead, future generations must be considered. The cultural needs and ethical principles that founded architectural conservation have been replaced by the need to attract tourism to create a short-term economy. We need to stop and think what we are currently doing before it is too late.

A starting point could be if architectural conservation is formally classified as scientific discipline by UNESCO, in liaison with the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and involving all the European countries and beyond. It is very important that all countries are consulted. The economy around architectural heritage should be created by supporting education and professional development in the relevant professionals rather than just bringing tourists to sites that are beyond their capacity to receive them.

At the heart of all, there is the need for political will, at local, national and international levels, in a coordinated way, to promote appropriate education actions and projects incorporating the training of students and emerging professionals. This should be in addition to the provision of the necessary funding for the maintenance, monitoring and assessment of architectural heritage. The best interventions in architectural conservation are those with a cultural and scientific approach, with effective collaboration between the experts in different disciplines, and with decisions based on knowledge and experience, looking at the specific building, site and larger context. This should be placed within the framework of a quality architectural project carried out by appropriately trained specialist architects and other professionals, who also know how to communicate the significance of the architectural heritage and the reasons for the intervention to a wide audience. We should, as our predecessors did, continue to effectively conserve architectural heritage in all its integrity and with cultural and ethical coherence, for the benefit and enjoyment of contemporary and future generations.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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