Balancing the Limits of Acceptable Change in Reflection

São Luís Heritage Housing policy analysis

Heritage Impact Assessment

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Abstract

This paper presents a heritage impact assessment of the São Luís neighborhood in Faro, Portugal, with a focus on modernist housing. The research aimed to investigate the cultural significance of the neighborhood and contribute to heritage preservation. The study employed a combination of research components, including policy analysis, a gamified survey, and scenario designs. Through a SWOT analysis, the paper reflects on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with each research component. The findings provide valuable insights for policy management decisions and highlight areas for improvement in heritage impact assessments.

Keywords: Limits of Acceptable Change, SWOT-analysis, Policy Analysis, Gamified Survey, Stakeholder Involvement

1. Introduction

The research component of this project is dedicated to investigating and estimating the cultural significance of the São Luís neighborhood in Faro, Portugal, with a specific focus on modernist housing. By conducting a comprehensive exploration of tangible attributes, values, and stakeholder perspectives, the research aims to provide valuable insights for policy management decisions and contribute to the broader field of heritage preservation.

In parallel with the research phase, the project incorporates the development of three distinct design scenarios for one of the houses in the São Luís neighborhood. These design scenarios have been carefully crafted based on the transformation framework derived from the research findings and stakeholder preferences. Each scenario represents a unique approach to striking a balance between preserving the cultural heritage of the area and addressing the need for contemporary adaptation.

This heritage impact assessment specifically focuses on evaluating the potential impacts on the cultural heritage of a modernist building located at Rúa de Emiliano da Costa 35. By thoroughly examining the implications of proposed interventions, this assessment aims to provide valuable insights for decision-makers and stakeholders involved in the preservation and adaptive reuse of heritage buildings in the São Luís neighborhood. Through this comprehensive analysis, the project seeks to contribute to the sustainable and responsible management of cultural heritage, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

2 Methodology

2.1 Results from Policy Analysis, Gamified Survey, and Design Scenarios

The assessment used a comprehensive review of heritage policies at the local, regional, and national levels. These policies were examined to understand their objectives, guidelines, and requirements related to the preservation and rehabilitation of cultural heritage. The tangible attributes, values, and limits of acceptable change (LAC) specified in the policies were considered during the analysis.

The rehabilitation scenarios for the modernist building were analysed and compared based on their alignment with heritage policies. Each scenario was evaluated to determine its adherence to the policies' objectives and guidelines. The analysis focused on the integration of heritage values, preservation of historical identity, and consideration of sustainable design principles.

Identification and documentation of heritage resources: This step involves identifying and documenting the heritage resources present in the project area, including historical buildings, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes, and other relevant elements.

Assessment of the significance of the policies considering the tangible attributes, values and LAC was made.

Assessment of significance: The significance of the identified heritage resources is evaluated, considering their historical, architectural, cultural, or social importance. This step helps in understanding the values associated with the heritage resources and their importance within the broader context.

Redesign models, mitigate impact. Currently practice different than theory.

Impact assessment: The potential impacts of the proposed project on the identified heritage resources are assessed. This includes evaluating direct impacts (such as physical alteration or destruction) as well as indirect impacts (such as changes in the setting, visual impact, or social value).

Strengths	Weaknesses
Integration of Scales	**Lack of Long-Term Monitoring:**
The integration of multiple scales (national, municipal and area) in the policy analysis allows for a comprehensive assessment of impacts across different levels. For example, it enables the evaluation of how national heritage policies align with local preservation efforts and municipal development plans.	The methodology may lack a mechanism for long-term monitoring and evaluation of policy outcomes. Without continuous monitoring, the effectiveness of implemented policies and the sustainability of heritage management efforts may be challenging to assess over time.
Policies in practice	**Subjectivity in interpreting denominators:**
The design scenarios illustrate the practical implementation of heritage policies, demonstrating how they can shape the development and preservation of cultural heritage. The case study showcased the application of the methodology in a real-world heritage project.	The subjectivity in interpreting denominators used in the assessment may introduce biases and inconsistencies in the evaluation process, potentially undermining the objectivity of the findings
Comprehensive assessment	**Subjectivity in interpreting denominators:**
The analysis considers a wide range of impacts, including the tangible attributes, values, and Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC). This holistic approach ensures a thorough understanding of the potential effects on heritage resources and their broader significance.	The subjectivity in interpreting denominators may introduce biases and inconsistencies in the evaluation process, potentially undermining the objectivity of the findings.
Stakeholder involvement:	**Challenges in Data availability and quality**
The gamified survey involving both the community and experts ensures a diverse range of perspectives are considered. This participatory approach promotes inclusivity and helps in identifying the priorities of different stakeholder groups. For example, engaging residents and heritage professionals in the decision-making process enhances community ownership and fosters collaborative heritage management.	The assessment faces challenges in accessing and ensuring the quality of relevant data sources. Limited access to data, fragmented collection processes, and inconsistent data quality may compromise the accuracy and reliability of the analysis. For instance, the incomplete drawings hindered the analysis of the current situation.
Integration of limits of acceptable change	**Limited stakeholder representation**
By incorporating the concept of Limits of Acceptable Change, the methodology provides a framework for evaluating policy impacts within predetermined boundaries. This helps in ensuring that policy changes are within acceptable limits and avoids undesirable consequences.	Despite stakeholder involvement, the gamified survey involved only two stakeholder groups, potentially leading to the overlooking of certain perspectives and interests.
Applied methodology has multiple uses	**Limited consideration of intangible heritage**
The heritage impact assessment methodology developed in this paper can be applied to other heritage projects, providing a valuable framework for evaluating impacts and designing appropriate implementation.	The focus on tangible attributes and physical impacts may result in an inadequate consideration of intangible aspects of cultural heritage, such as traditional practices and social customs.

Opportunities	Threats
Methodological Versatility	**Contextual Specificity**
The developed methodology exhibits versatility by being applicable to various aspects, including heritage policy evaluation through document analysis and policy inventory. Additionally, it facilitates participation in policy development through engaging tactics like the gamified survey.	The analysis in this paper is based on a specific case study, which may limit the generalizability and applicability of the findings to other contexts and heritage projects. Caution should be exercised when extrapolating the results to different situations, as each case may have unique circumstances and requirements.
Enhanced stakeholder engagement	**Resource and time constraints**
The participatory nature of the methodology promotes active engagement and collaboration among stakeholders, leading to increased trust, transparency, and cooperation in policy development and implementation.	Limited resources and time constraints may pose challenges to conducting a comprehensive and in-depth heritage impact assessment. These limitations can impact the depth and breadth of the analysis, potentially compromising the accuracy and thoroughness of the assessment.
Adaptive policy design	**Limited awareness and understanding:**
By incorporating the concept of limits of acceptable change, the methodology enables the development of adaptive policies that can effectively respond to changing circumstances and needs. This flexibility allows for continuous improvement and adjustment of policies over time, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness.	There may be limited awareness and understanding among stakeholders, policymakers, and the public about the importance of cultural heritage management and policy. This lack of awareness can hinder the prioritization and effective integration of heritage considerations in decision-making processes. Awareness campaigns and educational initiatives can help address this challenge.
Using perspectives of different stakeholders' policy in practice	**Lack of stakeholder consensus**
Scenarios, limits of acceptable change, and involving local government feed discussions, allowing for the integration of diverse stakeholder perspectives in policy development and decision-making. The integration of diverse perspectives and interests presents an opportunity for collaboration and knowledge sharing.	The methodology's reliance on subjective opinions and the potential for conflicting viewpoints among stakeholders may pose challenges in building consensus. Disagreements and divergent interests can hinder the decision-making process and impede the effective implementation of policy changes. Efforts should be made to facilitate dialogue, foster mutual understanding, and find common ground among stakeholders to overcome this challenge.
Integration of Cultural Heritage into Sustainable Development Frameworks	
The assessment provides an opportunity to integrate cultural heritage considerations into broader sustainable development frameworks, promoting the recognition of heritage as an asset in achieving sustainable and resilient communities.	
Advancements in Technology and Data Analysis	
The use of advanced technologies, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing, can enhance data collection, analysis, and visualization, improving the accuracy and efficiency of heritage policies and safeguarding efforts.	

3. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis highlights the strengths of integrating multiple scales in policy analysis, enabling a comprehensive assessment of impacts across different levels. The practical implementation of heritage policies through design scenarios demonstrates their influence on cultural heritage development and preservation. The analysis ensures a thorough understanding of impacts by considering tangible attributes, values, and Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC). Stakeholder involvement through a gamified survey promotes inclusivity and collaborative heritage management.

However, weaknesses such as the lack of long-term monitoring and subjectivity in interpreting denominators should be addressed to enhance the analysis's objectivity and sustainability. Challenges in data availability and quality need to be overcome to ensure accurate and reliable assessments. Efforts should also be made to increase stakeholder representation and consider the intangible aspects of cultural heritage.

The opportunities lie in the methodological versatility, enhanced stakeholder engagement, adaptive policy design, integration of heritage into sustainable development frameworks, and advancements in technology and data analysis. However, contextual specificity, resource and time constraints, limited awareness, and the potential lack of stakeholder consensus should be considered and addressed for successful implementation and impactful results.

4. Discussion

The SWOT analysis see appendix reveals several strengths of the methodology, such as its integration of scales, practical application in heritage projects, comprehensive assessment approach, and stakeholder involvement. These strengths contribute to a more holistic understanding of heritage impacts and promote inclusive decision-making processes.

The analysis also identifies weaknesses and limitations, including the lack of long-term monitoring, subjectivity in interpreting denominators, challenges in data availability and quality, limited stakeholder representation, and limited consideration of intangible heritage. These weaknesses highlight areas where improvements or additional measures are needed to ensure the accuracy, objectivity, and inclusivity of the assessment.

4.1 Limitations

Limitation Monitoring and review: Once the project is implemented, monitoring and review processes are put in place to ensure that the proposed mitigation measures are effectively implemented and that any unforeseen impacts are addressed promptly.

The SWOT analysis provides a snapshot of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the methodology. However, it may not capture all possible factors or nuances associated with each aspect. Further research and analysis may be necessary to explore these factors in more detail.

The analysis relies on the information and perspectives available at the time of assessment. As new developments or changes occur, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats may evolve, requiring periodic reassessment.

5. Conclusion

To address subjectivity in interpreting denominators, clear guidelines should be developed, providing explicit criteria for assessment. This reduces ambiguity and ensures consistency across different assessors. Engaging multiple experts in the evaluation process and encouraging consensus-building discussions can further enhance objectivity and minimize individual biases. Additionally, incorporating quantitative indicators wherever possible can support more objective and transparent evaluations.

To enhance stakeholder representation, targeted outreach efforts should be undertaken to engage marginalized communities, minority groups, and organizations with specific expertise in cultural heritage. Participatory platforms, such as online forums and workshops, can facilitate open dialogue and collaborative decision-making. Establishing partnerships and networks with relevant organizations and community groups can expand stakeholder engagement.

To improve the generalizability and applicability of the methodology, conducting comparative studies across different heritage projects or contexts can identify commonalities and core principles. Developing an adaptability framework that outlines key considerations and potential modifications for different contexts will help practitioners tailor the methodology accordingly. Continuous validation, refinement, and feedback loops from practitioners and stakeholders will contribute to its ongoing improvement.

Leveraging technological advancements, capacity-building initiatives should be provided to enhance practitioners' technical skills in utilizing advanced technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing. Collaboration with data experts, research institutions, and agencies can ensure access to reliable data sources. Exploring automation and specialized software tools can streamline data collection, analysis, and visualization processes.

The assessment includes a comprehensive review of the building's historical significance, architectural value, and cultural importance. By analysing various scenarios for rehabilitation, this assessment seeks to inform decision-making processes and ensure the preservation and sustainable management of the building's heritage.