

Governance | Individual communication

IC - (21033) - MEASURING THE CONNOTATIVE MEANING OF THE BUILT HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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Background and objectives

Built heritage preservation practice is based on the objective values easily identified by professionals, yet everyday people associate values linked to experiencing the place. These values and meanings, however, cannot be directly deduced from the heritage site. To uncover these attitudes, the research aims to provide a measurement tool in the form of a semantic differential scale, developed specifically for built heritage.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

We applied the method of the semantic differential, used to measure connotative meanings. Since there is no such known measurement tool for historic environments, we constructed one based on Osgood's methodology. We adapted the study to the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting it online with 360° panoramic photographs of 5 historic sites along 40 adjective pairs. We determined the underlying factor structure (principal component method with varimax rotation) and computed correlation coefficients between the adjective pairs.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

The developed Semantic Differential Scale for Built Historic Environments has been tested on both laypeople and heritage professionals with convenience sampling (213 laypeople: age: M = 51.99 years, SD = 13.992; 78 professionals: age: M = 51.15 years, SD = 13.273) A difference was found in the number and partially the content of dimensions: in the laypeople sample we identified four factors: *evaluation (containing 21 items)*, *complexity*, *intimacy*, and *condition*, while six factors, more balanced in the number of items, emerged among heritage professionals: *arousal-cognition*, *complexity*, *intimacy*, *evaluation*, *condition*, and *authenticity*, suggesting that professionals have subtler and more discerned concepts about built heritage than do laypeople, whose categories of meaning are less refined.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

The research is innovative in developing a measurement tool and studying the connotative meaning of historic places, whose sustainability is key in tackling climate change. The results bring us closer to understanding the values that drive people's behavior and action in practicing good governance of the built historic environment.

Palavras-chave : semantic differential scale, built heritage, historic environment, affective meaning