

PRESERVING ICONIC SHOPS: CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM IN BARCELONA AND LISBON

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the preservation of symbolic commercial enterprises in urban settings, focusing on Barcelona and Lisbon. In Barcelona, a comprehensive strategy was implemented between 2021 and 2024, comprising twenty measures to promote and preserve iconic commercial establishments. The city's strategic ambition is to establish itself as a global leader in heritage preservation through the implementation of local legislation and the execution of promotional activities that serve to enhance its commercial landscape. Significantly, in 2015, 228 historical and iconic shops were catalogued with three levels of protection to prevent their conversion into multinational franchises amid rental market pressures. In contrast, Lisbon's commercial heritage encompasses establishments such as Caza das Vellas Loreto, which has been in operation since 1789. Nevertheless, the mounting pressures of the real estate market have led to the closure of numerous historic businesses, thereby reducing their number from approximately 300 to 180 in recent years. The Baixa district, in particular, has been a site of this transition, with traditional enterprises being supplanted by mass-produced merchandise outlets. The findings emphasise the pressing need for effective policies to protect these symbolic commercial enterprises, which are vital to urban heritage. The analysis of Barcelona and Lisbon in the study underscores the pivotal role of local businesses in preserving cultural identity and catalysing sustainable urban development. The implementation of robust preservation strategies is imperative to enhance urban resilience and vibrancy in the context of rapid globalization.

Keywords: Urban Heritage, Cultural Identity, Commercial Enterprises, Preservation Strategies, Social Cohesion

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage is an integral component of urban identity, encompassing the values, traditions, and memories associated with a community. In prominent urban centres such as Barcelona and Lisbon, symbolic commercial enterprises assume a pivotal role in the preservation of this heritage, functioning as repositories of historical and cultural narratives. These establishments, in their role as repositories of historical and cultural narratives, reflect the unique character of their respective neighbourhoods. Moreover, they serve as vital economic engines that contribute to local identity and social cohesion. However, as urban landscapes evolve in response to globalisation, economic pressures, and changing consumer behaviours, the need to protect these iconic businesses has become increasingly urgent.

In Barcelona, a proactive approach has been adopted to safeguard its iconic commercial establishments. Recognising their significance as part of the city's cultural, historical, and architectural fabric, local authorities have implemented comprehensive measures spanning from 2021 to 2024. This initiative encompasses twenty distinct actions, with the overarching objective being to leverage these establishments as catalysts for social cohesion and neighbourhood harmony. This commitment

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positions Barcelona as a global exemplar in the preservation of iconic commerce, supported by local legal frameworks and promotional activities designed to enhance the vitality of the city's commercial landscape.

A seminal decision in 2015 saw the inclusion of 228 historical and iconic commercial establishments in a dedicated catalogue, reflecting the city's commitment to urban heritage protection (Smith, 2016). This catalogue, which offers three levels of protection, forms part of a broader special plan for urban quality protection and promotion. The purpose of this plan is to prevent the transformation of these unique shops into multinational franchises driven by market pressures. Key areas for limited interventions have been identified, including Ciutat Vella, Eixample's central zone, and the historical centres of Gràcia, Sant Andreu, Poblenou, and Poblesec. This targeted approach is driven by a multifaceted commitment to preserving the quality of the urban environment while concurrently underscoring the city's dedication to safeguarding its unique identity in the face of contemporary challenges.

Concurrently, the "Barcelona, Heritage City" initiative has expanded the conventional concept of heritage to encompass elements related to neighborhood identity and the broader fight against climate change. The initiative is organized into four strategic areas: the development of new regulatory tools, the enhancement of knowledge and renovation methods, the strengthening of ties with local citizens, and the promotion of necessary legislative changes. Collectively, these efforts illustrate Barcelona's commitment to viewing its iconic commercial enterprises as vital components of its urban heritage, essential for fostering community engagement and resilience.

In contrast, Lisbon faces a distinct set of challenges concerning its symbolic commercial enterprises. The historic shop Caza das Vellas Loreto, which opened in the bustling Chiado neighbourhood in 1789, stands as a testament to the city's rich commercial legacy. Originally specialising in candles that transformed urban lighting, this establishment remains one of the oldest in a rapidly transforming landscape. Nevertheless, the pressures of local real estate and commerce have resulted in the closure of many historic businesses over the last decade. The number of 'historic' shops in Lisbon has decreased significantly, from around 300 two years ago to just 180 today. In the neighbouring Baixa area, traditional shops face considerable challenges in competing with the influx of mass-produced goods, as evidenced by stores offering Ronaldo shirts of Chinese manufacture.

This phenomenon underscores the imperative for protective measures aimed at preserving symbolic commercial enterprises as cultural touchstones, particularly in the context of rapid urban change. While Barcelona has initiated comprehensive strategies to safeguard its iconic shops, Lisbon grapples with the ramifications of economic pressures on its historic businesses. It is vital to understand these dynamics if effective policies and frameworks are to be developed to protect commercial heritage, thereby ensuring that these enterprises continue to enrich urban life and cultural identity. The present article thus seeks to shed light on the importance of safeguarding symbolic commercial establishments as integral components of urban heritage, exploring the implications for social cohesion, economic vitality, and cultural sustainability in contemporary cities by examining the cases of Barcelona and Lisbon.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The objective of the present study is to explore the role of iconic commercial enterprises in the preservation of urban heritage. The research is conducted with a specific focus on the cities of

Barcelona and Lisbon, where the cultural and historical significance of these businesses as repositories of local identity and tradition is particularly pronounced. The study seeks to analyse the strategies employed by local authorities in these cities to safeguard these symbolic establishments against the pressures of commercialisation and urban development.

The objective of this research endeavour is to undertake a comprehensive examination of the preservation of iconic commercial enterprises as a critical component of urban heritage. The focal cities for this study are Barcelona and Lisbon, with a specific focus on the cultural and historical narratives embodied by these businesses as they reflect the identity and traditions of their respective neighborhoods. The research seeks to evaluate the strategies implemented by local authorities in these cities to safeguard these symbolic establishments against the pressures of globalization, economic shifts, and changing consumer behaviors. The study will therefore analyse the measures adopted by Barcelona and Lisbon in order to highlight effective practices and draw lessons for sustainable urban development.

Barcelona serves as a prime example of proactive policy-making, having initiated a comprehensive programme between 2021 and 2024 encompassing twenty measures aimed at preserving its commercial heritage. This includes the cataloguing of 228 iconic establishments with varying degrees of protection to prevent their conversion into multinational franchises. In contrast, Lisbon presents a case of vulnerability, with a significant decline in the number of historic businesses due to real estate pressures and market dynamics. The comparative analysis highlights the challenges and opportunities in urban heritage preservation and seeks to inform policy frameworks that can balance cultural conservation with contemporary urban needs.

The study also seeks to expand the conventional understanding of urban heritage to incorporate elements such as neighbourhood identity and resilience in the face of climate change. By evaluating the role of iconic businesses in fostering social cohesion, economic vitality, and cultural sustainability, the study underscores their importance in enhancing urban resilience. Ultimately, this research advocates for the development of holistic preservation strategies that align with the broader goals of sustainable urban development and cultural preservation.

3. PLACEMENT WITHIN RELATED STUDIES

The preservation of symbolic commercial enterprises is congruent with prevailing discourses pertaining to cultural heritage, urban resilience, and sustainable development. This study draws upon the seminal contributions of Cros and McKercher (2020), who explored the role of cultural tourism in the sustenance of local identities, and Richards (2018), who underscored the pivotal role of cultural experiences in shaping tourist motivations. The research also draws on the works of Ebejer (2021) and Miočić et al. (2023), who emphasise the critical interplay between architecture, cultural landmarks, and urban tourism.

The proactive measures implemented in Barcelona are situated within a growing body of literature that explores the intersections of urban planning, heritage preservation, and environmental sustainability. For instance, the "Barcelona, Heritage City" initiative is a notable case study in integrating climate change mitigation with heritage preservation. This initiative resonates with the arguments posited by Scerri et al. (2016) and Sedmak et al. (2023), who underscored the potential of

iconic architecture to catalyse sustainable tourism and urban development.

Conversely, the challenges confronting Lisbon's historic businesses resonate with the findings of De Almeida Brito (2017) and Albuquerque (2016), who documented the adverse impacts of real estate pressures on cultural heritage. The decline in iconic establishments in Lisbon is also indicative of broader concerns raised by Aydin and Alvarez (2016) regarding the sustainability of cultural tourism in the face of economic and environmental pressures.

The juxtaposition of the experiences of Barcelona and Lisbon in this study contributes to the discourse on urban heritage preservation by offering a comparative perspective. The study emphasises the necessity of context-specific strategies that address the unique socio-economic dynamics of each city while drawing broader implications for global practices in heritage conservation.

4. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing a comparative case study approach to analyze the preservation efforts in Barcelona and Lisbon. Data collection methods include:

Document Analysis: Primary and secondary sources such as municipal policies, legislative frameworks, and academic studies were examined. Key documents include the "Barcelona, Heritage City" initiative (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2022) and reports on Lisbon's historic shops (De Almeida Brito, 2017; Gonzalo, 2023).

Literature Review: An extensive review of scholarly articles and reports provided insights into the theoretical underpinnings of cultural heritage preservation, urban resilience, and sustainable tourism.

Case Study Comparison: The study systematically compares the strategies adopted by Barcelona and Lisbon, focusing on policy measures, economic incentives, and community engagement initiatives.

Visual Analysis: Photographs and illustrations, such as those from Catalan News (2015) and The Spaces (2017), were analyzed to document the physical and cultural significance of the iconic establishments.

The analysis adopts a thematic approach, identifying key themes such as regulatory frameworks, economic pressures, and community participation. By synthesizing these findings, the research aims to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders involved in urban heritage preservation.

5. THE ARCHITECTURAL AND CULTURAL FABRIC AS A DRIVER FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The preservation of the historical and cultural fabric of a city is of paramount importance for the purpose of attracting tourists and enhancing the overall identity of urban destinations. Architecture, as objectified cultural capital, plays a vital role in shaping the unique sense of place that distinguishes one city from another. Iconic architecture, encompassing buildings, landmarks, and monuments, exerts a particularly potent influence, serving not only as an aesthetic asset but also as a defining characteristic of a location. As Scerri et al. (2016) emphasise, "The iconic architecture (buildings, landmarks, monuments) is particularly alluring as it identifies a place." This dual role of architecture, both as a

scenic element and a primary attraction, underscores its importance in destination marketing and tourism strategies (Figure-1).

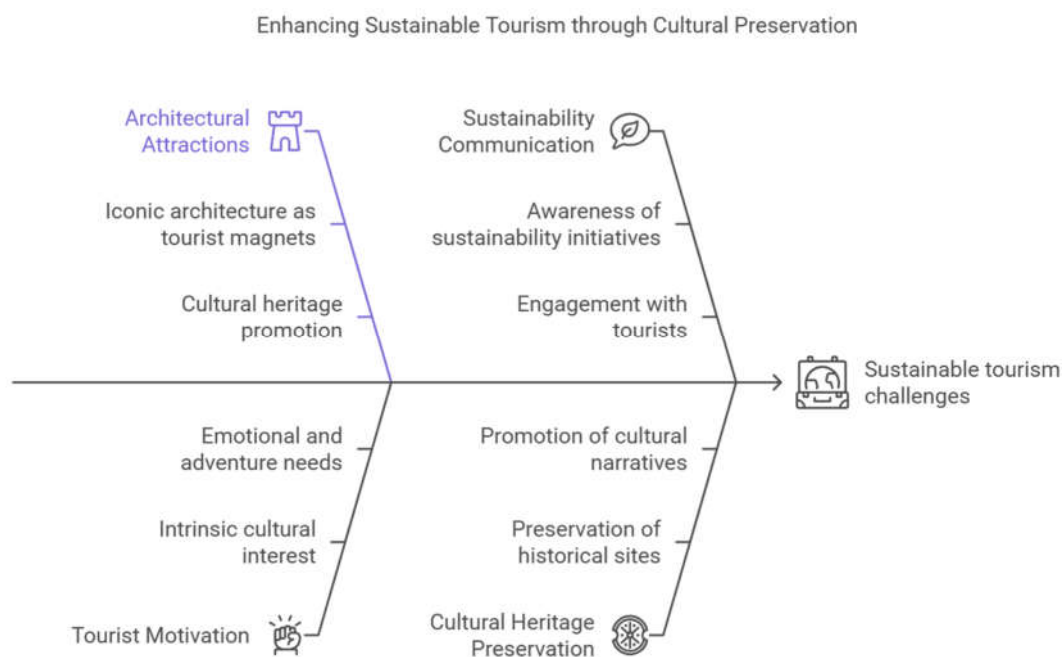


Figure-1: Enhancing Sustainable Tourism through Cultural Preservation

Architectural attractions have been shown to contribute significantly to the cultural narrative of a city, thereby enriching visitor experiences by providing opportunities for enjoyment, entertainment, and education (Ebejer, 2021). Ebejer (2021) offers a definition of architectural attractions as "a site that is of sufficient aesthetic, narrative, and cultural interest to provide for the enjoyment, amusement, entertainment, and education of visitors." The acknowledgement of the function and value of such attractions is imperative for their incorporation into tourism products and city marketing initiatives. The utilisation of architectural attractions, such as UNESCO-protected buildings, as focal points serves to attract tourists and promote cultural heritage (Sedmak et al., 2023).

In recent years, the sustainability of tourism has become a prominent area of research, reflecting growing concerns about the environmental and cultural impacts of mass tourism. While a significant proportion of research has been concentrated on managerial perspectives and the implementation of sustainable practices, the viewpoint of tourists has frequently been disregarded. Aydin and Alvarez (2016) observe that "while the perspective of managers and their actions regarding sustainability have frequently been highlighted, the tourists' perspective has barely been studied." Tourists' evaluations of sustainability are predominantly shaped by their personal experiences, frequently remaining unaware of the broader sustainability initiatives undertaken by destinations. This absence of direct perception engenders challenges for cities seeking to communicate their sustainability initiatives effectively (Oliveira et al., 2023).

Motivation has been identified as a pivotal factor in determining tourist behaviour and engagement with cultural and historical sites. As Dai et al. (2019) suggest, "motivation is determined by a person's emotional, spiritual or physical needs." Within the domain of tourism, motivation signifies the intrinsic motivation that propels individuals to engage in travel, driven by a desire to

acquire knowledge, explore new cultures, escape routine, or seek adventure (Dai et al., 2019). As Dann (1981) describes, "tourist motivation is a state of mind that in a certain way motivates an individual or a group to travel." Among the diverse factors influencing travel decisions, culture stands out as a fundamental motivator. Richards (2018) and Cros and McKercher (2015) emphasise the significance of cultural experiences, reinforcing the idea that cultural heritage preservation not only safeguards historical identity but also attracts tourists seeking authentic and meaningful encounters.

The preservation of a city's historical and cultural fabric is imperative for the promotion of tourism and the preservation of a city's unique identity. Iconic architecture and cultural landmarks function as potent attractors for visitors, enriching their experiences and underpinning sustainable tourism development (Miočić et al., 2023). By effectively communicating sustainability efforts and recognizing the motivational forces that drive tourists, cities can create compelling narratives that celebrate and protect their cultural heritage while enhancing their appeal as vibrant tourist destinations.

6. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6.1. Protecting Symbolic Commercial Enterprises in Barcelona

The city of Barcelona has implemented a series of measures aimed at the protection and promotion of its iconic commercial establishments. These measures are a recognition of the value of these establishments as part of the city's cultural, historical and architectural heritage. The initiative, which is set to run from 2021 to 2024, encompasses twenty distinct measures designed to leverage these establishments as catalysts for social cohesion and neighbourhood harmony (Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.). A central objective of this initiative is to establish Barcelona as a global exemplar in the preservation of iconic commerce, facilitated by local legal policies and promotional activities that enhance the vitality of the city's commercial fabric (Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.).

In 2015, Barcelona's City Council took a significant step by including 228 historical and iconic commercial establishments in a new catalogue dedicated to protecting the city's urban heritage. This catalogue, which features three levels of protection, forms part of a broader special plan for urban quality protection and promotion, the aim of which is to prevent the transformation of these shops into multinational franchises due to rental market pressures (Catalan News, 2015). The plan also identifies specific areas for limited interventions to maintain the urban environment's quality, including Ciutat Vella, Eixample's central area, Sagrada Família, and the historical centres of Gràcia, Sant Andreu, Poblenou, and Poblesec (Catalan News, 2015) (Figure-2).



Figure-2: Barcelona's Heritage Preservation Strategy

Furthermore, the government measure "Barcelona, Heritage City" was introduced, thus expanding the traditional concept of heritage to incorporate elements linked to neighbourhood identity and the fight against climate change. This measure is divided into four strategic areas: the development of new regulatory tools, enhanced methods for knowledge and renovation, stronger ties with citizens, and the promotion of legislative changes (Ajuntament de Barcelonab, 2022). Collectively, these measures underscore Barcelona's commitment to preserving its iconic commercial enterprises as vital components of its heritage.

6.2. Protecting Symbolic Commercial Enterprises in Lisbon

Upon its establishment in Lisbon's Chiado district in 1789, Caza das Vellas Loreto offered a product that represented a technological revolution of its era: the candle. This innovation ushered in an era of easy, mobile lighting, profoundly impacting urban life (De Almeida Britoa, 2017). Presently, candles continue to be a prominent feature of Caza das Vellas Loreto's merchandise, a testament to its status as one of the oldest stores in the rapidly evolving Portuguese capital (De Almeida Britoa, 2017). Nevertheless, over the preceding decade, the pressures on local real estate and commerce in Lisbon have resulted in the closure of numerous historic businesses (De Almeida Britoa, 2017). For instance, the number of 'historic' shops in the capital has declined from approximately 300 two years ago to just 180 today (De Almeida Britoa, 2017). In the neighbouring Baixa area, the presence of 93 stores selling Ronaldo shirts made in China has become a prominent feature, overshadowing the historic shops (De Almeida Britoa, 2017).

7. ECONOMIC POLICIES AND INCENTIVES

7.1. Effective Economic Policies to Protect Historic Commercial Enterprises

The implementation of effective economic policies is imperative for the preservation of historic commercial enterprises, which are of significant cultural, historical, and architectural value to urban areas. A particularly efficacious strategy in this regard is the implementation of smart growth policies, coupled with the preservation of both existing buildings and those of historic significance. This strategy has been demonstrated to contribute to the revitalisation of both neighbourhoods and communities, whilst concurrently ensuring the preservation of their distinct local character and unique characteristics. Furthermore, the refurbishment of existing structures frequently emerges as a more sustainable alternative to site redevelopment, a practice that can prove to be both economically and environmentally advantageous (US EPA, 2024).

Furthermore, historic buildings can function as anchor institutions, symbolising a community's dedication to honouring its heritage and valuing its distinct character and sense of place (US EPA, 2024). Preserving these structures enables cities to leverage the benefits of prior investments in infrastructure and development, thereby encouraging growth in already-developed areas. This focus on existing assets can provide stability and attract new economic activities, creating a thriving environment for historic commercial enterprises (US EPA, 2024).

In addition to preservation efforts, economic incentives such as tax credits, grants, and low-interest loans have proven effective in other cities for safeguarding historic commercial enterprises from the pressures of the real estate market (US EPA, 2024). These incentives can be adapted to align with the particular requirements of cities such as Lisbon, with a focus on supporting the restoration and adaptive reuse of historic properties. By reducing the financial burden on property owners and businesses, these measures can ensure the continued viability of historic commercial enterprises and their contribution to the local economy and community identity (US EPA, 2024).

7.2. Incentives for Preserving Historic Businesses in Urban Areas

The efficacy of economic policies and incentives in safeguarding historic commercial enterprises in diverse urban contexts has been well-documented. These strategies have the potential to be adapted for cities such as Lisbon, with a view to preserving their cultural, historical and architectural heritage.

A notable initiative is the National Trust Preservation Funds grant programme, which awards funding to nonprofit organisations and public agencies primarily for planning preservation projects. This funding is critical in ensuring the success of various preservation efforts, with some programs even focusing on specific fields or regions (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2025). Another significant programme is the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Programme, which is administered by the National Park Service in partnership with State Historic Preservation Offices and the Internal Revenue Service. This program provides a 20 percent federal tax credit to property owners who undertake substantial rehabilitation of historic buildings for commercial or income-producing use while maintaining their historic character (U.S. National Park Service, 2024b) (U.S. National Park Service, 2023). Since its inception, the programme has leveraged over \$131 billion in private investment to preserve more than 49,000 historic properties and has generated significant economic activity, including job creation and GDP growth (U.S. National Park Service, 2024a).

In addition to the aforementioned programmes, urban revitalisation projects incorporating mixed-use developments in redevelopment zones have been effective in transforming downtown areas. The impact of these projects is multifaceted, encompassing the augmentation of local business activity and the attraction of new investments. Furthermore, these initiatives have been observed to engender a concomitant rise in property values, whilst concomitantly fostering heightened levels of community engagement and enhancing both infrastructure and public spaces (Guzzo, 2024). Notable reports in this regard include "Untapped Potential: Strategies for Revitalization and Reuse" underscore the most effective strategies for promoting building reuse, developed through a partnership between the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Urban Land Institute. This report presents a range of policies, incentives, and tools that can be used to unlock the hidden potential of older buildings, thereby contributing to urban revitalisation (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2017).

By adapting these proven economic policies and incentives, cities like Lisbon can effectively protect their historic commercial enterprises from the pressures of the real estate market, ensuring the preservation of their unique cultural, historical, and architectural heritage (Urban Land Institute, 2017).

8. PRESERVATION MEASURES

8.1 Measures to Preserve Symbolic Commercial Enterprises in Barcelona

The government of Barcelona has initiated a series of measures with the objective of preserving and promoting its iconic commercial establishments between 2021 and 2024. The eighteen measures, when considered collectively, are intended to transform this type of commerce into a catalyst for change, thereby highlighting the uniqueness and richness of the city's commercial fabric to the world. The strategy is underpinned by a commitment to fostering social cohesion and harmony within neighbourhoods through these initiatives (Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.-b) (Council, n.d.).

A fundamental objective is to establish Barcelona as a leading example in the preservation of iconic commerce via local legal policies and increased vitality for commerce. This objective is outlined in a comprehensive roadmap that also includes the promotion of these establishments (Council, n.d.). The plan also aims to develop tools and methods to objectively and systematically evaluate the state of iconic establishments, aiding the promotion of relevant municipal policies. The inclusion of iconic establishments in these municipal policies is intended to ensure their competitiveness and continued relevance in the local commerce landscape (Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.-b) (Council, n.d.).

Moreover, a European municipal alliance has been established, incorporating cities such as Paris, Rome, and Lisbon, to collectively preserve and protect iconic shops and businesses. This alliance is governed by local authorities and was formalised through the signing of the Barcelona Declaration during the first International Meeting on Iconic Shops in European Cities. The declaration emphasises the crucial role of local governments in safeguarding these establishments and underscores the necessity for local-level alliances (Barcelona Cat, 2023).

8.2. Measures to Preserve Symbolic Commercial Enterprises in Lisbon

The city of Lisbon, which is among the most ancient in the world, possesses a profoundly rich historical tapestry, significantly influenced by the civilisations of the Phoenicians, Romans, Visigoths, Suevi, Moors, and Christians (Sustain Europe, 2020). The city currently has a population of 2.8

million, with approximately 10% of the population being non-native to Portugal (Sustain Europe, 2020). The multicultural nature of the city is attributed to its history and strategic location (Sustain Europe, 2020).

In 2008, Lisbon became the first European capital to implement participatory budgeting on a municipal scale, allowing citizens to allocate parts of the Council's budget to community-benefiting projects (The Centre for Public Impact, 2021). With the city's growing focus on environmental goals, further solidified by winning the European Green Capital Award in 2020, Lisbon has shifted its participatory budgeting towards green initiatives. This green participatory budget exclusively supports proposals designed to create a more sustainable, resilient, and environmentally friendly city (The Centre for Public Impact, 2021).

While these measures are chiefly concerned with environmental sustainability, they also play a role in preserving the symbolic commercial enterprises that are vital to Lisbon's cultural, historical, and architectural heritage. By engaging citizens in the decision-making process and allocating funding to projects that enhance community spaces, Lisbon ensures that these enterprises remain integral to the city's evolving identity.

9. "BARCELONA, HERITAGE CITY" INITIATIVE

9.1. Local Business Response

The "Barcelona, Heritage City" initiative has elicited a multifaceted response from local businesses and the community. This initiative, which aims to expand the conventional definition of heritage to encompass aspects related to local identity and climate change mitigation, has garnered support from diverse stakeholders within the city (Colomer & Pérez, 2024).

Activist groups across Barcelona have played a crucial role in advocating for the preservation of cultural heritage, equitable access to green spaces, and affordable housing, addressing concerns related to green gentrification (Link, 2022). These community-driven efforts have brought to light instances of environmental injustice and underscored the necessity for systemic changes to protect and enhance local neighbourhoods (Link, 2022)(Figure-3).

Lisbon's Sustainable Development Strategy



Figure-3: Lisbon's Sustainable Development Strategy

Furthermore, the initiative encourages grassroots participation, with the aim of creating an emotional link between residents and their urban environment. By centring on the preservation and enhancement of the urban landscape, the initiative fosters a more orderly, rational, and harmonious image of the city, which is pivotal to enhancing the quality of life for its inhabitants (Ciutat Patrimoni, n.d.).

The implementation of stringent contractual stipulations for heritage restoration initiatives, including the utilisation of natural materials, recycling, and the assurance of fair labour practices, underscores the commitment to environmental sustainability and social responsibility. These measures have been designed to support environmental and economic sustainability, whilst also aiming to improve labour conditions in the heritage sector (Forum of Mayors 2024, n.d.).

9.2. Community Involvement

The "Barcelona, Heritage City" initiative has garnered widespread support and active involvement from local businesses and the community. This programme is notable for its reinterpretation of heritage, incorporating popular and working-class urban elements, thereby fostering an emotional connection with everyday life (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2022a). A key tenet of the initiative emphasises the reuse of the urban environment, marking a departure from conventional urban expansion. Local enterprises have been identified as playing a crucial role in this endeavor by participating in the preservation and promotion of this redefined heritage. Their active involvement is instrumental in fostering an inclusive community identity, a prerequisite for the success of the initiative and the cohesion of the city's neighborhoods (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2022a).

9.3. Cultural and Historical Impacts

The cultural and historical repercussions of the loss of symbolic commercial enterprises in cities such as Barcelona and Lisbon are profound and multifaceted. In Lisbon, these venerable establishments, many with a history dating back over a century, have been a living testament to the city's transformative events, ranging from political upheavals such as the fall of the monarchy and the period of dictatorship to natural calamities like earthquakes, fires, and floods (LisbonGo, 2022).

These establishments are living testaments to the resilience and continuity of the local community, preserving stories that span generations and epochs (Atlas Lisboa, 2024).

The city's heritage shops, designated as Lojas com História, fulfil a function that extends beyond mere commercial activity; they act as custodians of traditional crafts and local culture. These establishments facilitate a tangible connection to Lisbon's past, offering unique products and traditional craftsmanship that evoke a sense of nostalgia and cultural pride (Gonzalo, 2023). The loss of these shops would not only result in the loss of these unique goods, but also a severance from the city's historical narrative, which they help to perpetuate (LisbonGo, 2022).

Commerce Square, a historical landmark, exemplifies the role of commercial spaces in contributing to the city's historical and cultural fabric. This vibrant square has evolved from a market hub to a metropolitan centre, encapsulating the layers of Lisbon's history and modernity (Gonzalo, 2024). The preservation of such spaces is imperative for maintaining the city's identity and continuity, serving as a reminder of its storied past while accommodating contemporary life (Gonzalo, 2024).

The loss of these symbolic commercial enterprises in Lisbon would therefore be a significant cultural and historical loss, resulting in the erasure of the physical embodiment of the city's rich heritage and the disruption of the continuity of its communal identity (Atlas Lisboa, 2024) (Gonzalo, 2023).

10. THREATS FROM REAL ESTATE MARKET

10.1. Historic Commercial Enterprises in Lisbon under Threat from Real Estate Market

The Lisbon real estate market has undergone significant changes in recent years, with substantial implications for the city's historic commercial enterprises. A pivotal factor underpinning this phenomenon is the escalating costs associated with property acquisition and rental in both the Portuguese capital and its environs (WithPortugal, 2025). This rise in prices has exerted considerable pressure on traditional businesses that have long been integral to Lisbon's cultural and commercial identity (De Sousa Rebelo et al., 2024).

Lisbon's status as a favoured destination among Europe's capitals has been attributed to its capacity to attract talent and entrepreneurs from across the globe, a strategy that has been effectively leveraged to foster economic growth and development (De Sousa Rebelo et al., 2024). The city's competitive edge lies in the vibrant communities of like-minded individuals it fosters (Nomera Capital, n.d.). Nevertheless, this inflow of new residents and businesses, while advantageous to the overall economy, has intensified competition for real estate. This has resulted in a surge in property values, which has had a detrimental effect on the viability of long-established commercial enterprises.

This challenge is further compounded by the complexity of Lisbon's territorial definitions, which vary between the city municipality, the Lisbon District, Área Metropolitana de Lisboa, and Grande Lisboa (WithPortugal, 2025). This complexity can impede the ability of these enterprises to navigate the regulatory and market landscapes, exacerbating the challenges they face in maintaining their operations.

The forces of urbanisation and economic development, while vital for Lisbon's growth, also pose significant threats to the very businesses that contribute to its unique cultural and historical fabric. In order to protect these enterprises, it is essential to develop a nuanced understanding of real estate market dynamics and to demonstrate a commitment to preserving the city's rich heritage whilst navigating the pressures of modern economic development.

10.2. Lisbon Heritage Businesses Facing Real Estate Pressures

The city of Lisbon has recently experienced a notable increase in its real estate market, attracting significant attention from global investors and exerting considerable pressure on its historic commercial enterprises.

Among these, Caza das Vellas Loreto is noteworthy as one of the oldest stores in the Chiado neighbourhood, having opened in 1789. Initially, it specialised in the sale of candles, which were regarded as a technological revolution at the time, as they introduced mobile lighting to the city (De Almeida Brito, 2017b). However, in recent years, Lisbon's local real estate and commerce have experienced considerable strain, resulting in the closure of numerous historic businesses. Two years ago, there were approximately 300 such 'historic' shops in the capital, but today only about 180 remain (De Almeida Brito, 2017b).

The pressures on these heritage businesses are further exemplified by the situation in the neighbouring Baixa area, where the presence of approximately 93 stores selling mass-produced Ronaldo shirts from China is overshadowing traditional shops (De Almeida Brito, 2017b).

The economic allure of Lisbon's unique cultural identity and rich history has been a significant factor in driving its real estate boom (De Carvalho, 2023). This influx of investment has precipitated a surge in property values, particularly in the vicinity of historic monuments such as churches, palaces, and iconic stone architecture, all of which exert a distinct influence on the housing market (Albuquerque, 2016).

As Lisbon continues to experience growth and attract further investment, it is imperative to strike a balance between the development of the real estate market and a deep appreciation for the city's cultural and economic heritage (De Carvalho, 2023). Maintaining this balance is essential to preserving the unique identity that has made Lisbon so special (De Carvalho, 2023).

10.3. Challenges in Implementation

The implementation of the "Barcelona, Heritage City" initiative was met with several challenges, primarily in the process of updating the traditional concept of heritage to incorporate aspects related to neighbourhood identities and the mitigation of climate change. The initiative sought to introduce novel regulatory instruments, enhance knowledge and renovation practices, foster improved relationships with citizens, and promote legislative changes. These objectives necessitated a multifaceted approach to strike a balance between the preservation of historical elements and

contemporary needs (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2022b).

A critical challenge was the addressing of environmental injustices within the urban landscape. Activist groups across Barcelona fought for affordable housing, equitable access to green spaces, and the preservation of cultural heritage in the face of green gentrification. However, local community perspectives were frequently disregarded in the city's progressive urban sustainability visions. The creation of a critical mapping tool documented these struggles and highlighted 13 cases where residents pushed for necessary changes in their neighborhoods (Link, 2022).

The city's historical evolution, spanning from pre-Christian Roman times through the Cerdà plan to the 1992 Olympics, provided a distinctive historical context for the initiative. However, this legacy also posed a challenge in integrating modern urban sustainability efforts, such as reclaiming streets for mixed-use public spaces or "superblocks," into the existing historical fabric of the city (Roberts, 2019).

The Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Plan of 2013, which sought to enhance urban green spaces and increase resilience to climate change, also presented challenges. The plan's objectives included the preservation of natural heritage, the prevention of the disappearance of species and habitats, and the assurance of connectivity between green spaces. However, achieving these objectives necessitated a delicate balancing act with the preservation of historical commercial enterprises (Interlace Hub, 2023).

Moreover, the initiative confronted logistical and ethical challenges related to restoration projects (Interlace Hub, 2023). The implementation of stringent conditions imposed on contractors, including the utilisation of natural-based materials, the reuse of wood, the recycling of materials, and the enforcement of fair labour practices, were deemed pivotal in ensuring the sustainable preservation of heritage assets. These requirements were designed to enhance the environmental and economic sustainability of restoration projects, whilst concomitantly improving labour conditions within the sector (Forum of Mayors 2024, n.d.).

11. RESULTS

The findings reveal significant contrasts between the preservation strategies of Barcelona and Lisbon. Barcelona's multi-faceted approach, characterized by comprehensive cataloging, legislative measures, and community-oriented initiatives, has positioned the city as a leader in urban heritage preservation. The inclusion of 228 historic shops in a protection framework underscores the city's commitment to safeguarding its cultural identity. Moreover, the "Barcelona, Heritage City" initiative illustrates an innovative integration of heritage preservation with environmental sustainability and social cohesion.

Lisbon, however, faces considerable challenges. The number of historic businesses has dwindled from approximately 300 to 180 over the past decade, largely due to real estate pressures and the influx of mass-produced goods. Iconic establishments such as Caza das Vellas Loreto struggle to maintain their relevance amidst these dynamics. The lack of robust regulatory frameworks and economic incentives has exacerbated these vulnerabilities, highlighting the urgent need for targeted preservation strategies.

11. DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis underscores the critical role of proactive policy-making in preserving urban heritage. Barcelona's success demonstrates the efficacy of integrated strategies that address

cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions. The city's emphasis on community engagement and legislative support offers valuable lessons for other urban contexts.

Conversely, Lisbon's experience highlights the risks of neglecting cultural heritage in the face of market pressures. The city's historic businesses serve as custodians of collective memory and cultural identity, and their decline represents a significant loss for urban heritage. This underscores the necessity of adopting holistic preservation strategies that balance economic growth with cultural conservation.

The study concludes by advocating for adaptive policies that prioritize the unique socio-economic dynamics of each city while fostering international collaboration in heritage preservation. By leveraging the lessons from Barcelona and Lisbon, urban planners and policymakers can develop more effective frameworks to protect iconic commercial enterprises and ensure their contribution to sustainable urban development.

CONCLUSION

The preservation of symbolic commercial enterprises in urban environments, as demonstrated by the cases of Barcelona and Lisbon, underscores the critical intersection between cultural heritage and sustainable urban development. A comparative analysis reveals that while both cities recognise the intrinsic value of their historic businesses, their approaches diverge in response to unique economic, social, and political pressures.

Barcelona's proactive and multi-faceted strategy, implemented through a series of targeted measures from 2021 to 2024, exemplifies a comprehensive model for urban heritage preservation. By cataloguing 228 historic shops and introducing multi-level protection frameworks, Barcelona has positioned itself as a leader in safeguarding iconic commercial establishments. These initiatives are not merely reactive but form part of a broader vision to enhance social cohesion, bolster neighbourhood identity, and promote environmental sustainability. The "Barcelona, Heritage City" initiative is indicative of a forward-thinking perspective that integrates cultural preservation with contemporary urban challenges, including climate change and gentrification.

In contrast, Lisbon's experience underscores the vulnerabilities faced by historic commercial enterprises in the absence of robust regulatory frameworks and economic incentives. Despite the city's rich commercial legacy, economic pressures and real estate market dynamics have precipitated the closure of many historic businesses, eroding the cultural fabric of neighborhoods such as Baixa and Chiado. While iconic establishments such as Caza das Vellas Loreto persist in their operations, the prevailing trend underscores an imperative for the formulation of policies that are designed to mitigate the deleterious impacts of globalisation and urban renewal initiatives on local businesses.

The juxtaposition of Barcelona's and Lisbon's preservation efforts highlights the necessity of adopting holistic and adaptive strategies that reflect the socio-economic realities of each urban context. The effective implementation of preservation strategies necessitates a collaborative approach that engages local governments, community stakeholders, and private enterprises. This collaborative model has been demonstrated to be effective in preserving commercial heritage whilst also fostering economic resilience and enhancing the quality of urban life.

Furthermore, the study illustrates the broader implications of preserving historic commercial enterprises beyond their economic value. These establishments act as custodians of collective memory,

embodying the cultural narratives and identities that define the character of urban spaces. The preservation of these enterprises is of paramount importance in ensuring the distinctiveness of cities, particularly in the face of the homogenising forces of globalisation.

The experiences of Barcelona and Lisbon offer valuable insights into the complexities of preserving urban commercial heritage. It is therefore incumbent upon policymakers to recognise the multifaceted roles of historic businesses in shaping urban identity, so that more effective strategies can be crafted to ensure the longevity and vibrancy of these vital cultural assets. The preservation of symbolic commercial enterprises is not only a matter of conserving the past but also an investment in the future sustainability and resilience of cities.

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