

Regenerating Historic Buildings: Policy Gaps

Authors : Joseph Falzon, Margaret Nelson

Abstract : Background: Policy makers at European Union (EU) and national levels address the re-use of historic buildings calling for sustainable practices and approaches. Implementation stages of policy are crucial so that EU and national strategic objectives for historic building sustainability are achieved. Governance remains one of the key objectives to ensure resource sustainability. Objective: The aim of the research was to critically examine policies for the regeneration and adaptive re-use of historic buildings in the EU and national level, and to analyse gaps between EU and national legislation and policies, taking Malta as a case study. The impact of policies on regeneration and re-use of historic buildings was also studied. Research Design: Six semi-structured interviews with stakeholders including architects, investors and community representatives informed the research. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in the English language. Thematic analysis utilising Atlas.ti was conducted for the semi-structured interviews. All phases of the study were governed by research ethics. Findings: Findings were grouped in main themes: resources, experiences and governance. Other key issues included identification of gaps in policies, key lessons and quality of regeneration. Abandonment of heritage buildings was discussed, for which main reasons had been attributed to governance related issues both from the policy making perspective as well as the attitudes of certain officials representing the authorities. The role of authorities, co-ordination between government entities, fairness in decision making, enforcement and management brought high criticism from stakeholders along with time factors due to the lengthy procedures taken by authorities. Policies presented an array from different perspectives of same stakeholder groups. Rather than policy, it is the interpretation of policy that presented certain gaps. Interpretations depend highly on the stakeholders putting forward certain arguments. All stakeholders acknowledged the value of heritage in regeneration. Conclusion: Active stakeholder involvement is essential in policy framework development. Research informed policies and streamlining of policies are necessary. National authorities need to shift from a segmented approach to a holistic approach.

Keywords : adaptive re-use, historic buildings, policy, sustainable

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