

Cultural Values Change in the Rehabilitation of Historic Schools in Portugal

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This thesis is dedicated to my family

Despite the importance of the preservation of the historic built environment for the benefit of present and future generations, there is a lack of knowledge of the effects of architectural rehabilitation decisions on the cultural significance of historic buildings. Architectural heritage conservation literature has focused almost exclusively on providing principles and guidelines, describing intervention methodologies, and discussing predicted impacts of design on material values. This thesis argues that a focus on the actual effects is needed if the sociocultural sustainability of historic buildings significance is to be achieved. Supported by an extensive literature review and informed by personal insights from the researcher's everyday practice, an adapted model of the Theory of Change based on Weiss (1995) was designed, providing a tool to evaluate the effects of rehabilitation on cultural significance [ERECS].

Using a selection of six recently rehabilitated historic secondary schools in Portugal (*liceus*), this research investigated architectural decisions and their effects on the cultural values of this building typology for education, focusing on three objectives, corresponding to three stages of interventions: understanding the existing cultural significance, identifying the design strategies applied and assessing the short-term effects of design decisions on the cultural values. Stressing the role of stakeholders in rehabilitation processes, data were collected from the buildings and architectural projects, the decision makers in the conservation process, and the school community.

Although confirming that the evaluation of the effects of architectural decisions on cultural values is a complex task, the findings demonstrate that the historic *liceus* have historical, architectural and sociocultural values, and whilst strategies did not value social values, material cultural values were generally considered and preserved, contributing to the enhancement of intangible values. The implications of this theory-based and evidence-based research highlight the importance of evaluating actual effects for cultural heritage theory, architectural conservation practice and heritage management policy.