

Faro Convention Labs

Shaping a healthy neighborhood



co-creation / nature / heritage / well-being

Individual Research Plan
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AR3A010 Research Plan &
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Abstract

This research plan is a part of my graduation project in the context of a Heritage & Architecture studio called Revitalizing Heritage: Faro Convention Labs. This research plan aims to provide an overview of the research design and explain the project's context. Firstly, a short introduction and problem statement will be provided. Secondly, in part of the theoretical framework, the concept of values in heritage will be explained. Finally, the methodology of research focused on gaming will be introduced.

Keywords: co-creation, heritage, nature, well-being, value-based design

“Heritage is not a romantic, nostalgic component of fragmented pasts and memories but rather an essential part of who and what we are, where we have come from and where we are going. Heritage is something that is essential for contemporary and future well-being.”

New and Emerging Challenges to Heritage and Well-Being: A Critical Review, p.1310 [21]

1. Introduction

In times of economic and health crisis and the growing indicators of stress and depression among an increasingly large part of society, we pay significantly more attention to the importance of our mental and physical health. In addition, modern society recognizes more frequently that man is part of nature and needs to stay in touch with it. For this reason, the importance of green spaces in cities that meet our needs to stay in nature and the open air is growing.

Heritage is considered to have a distinctive ability to contribute to physical and mental wellbeing. It shapes our cities and enhances community cohesion. Heritage has a great capacity to develop “personal satisfaction that working in and with the past brings.” [1] If we devote more attention to our health and wellbeing, reconsidering the importance of heritage, we will be able to explore the potential of heritage sites more sustainably. Heritage can enhance individual well-being, as well as social. “It offers the intangible: a sense of rootedness and identity, place and understanding. It can also provide tangible benefits; volunteers at heritage sites feel more confident, and volunteering boosts their social skills.” [1] In a survey described in the Heritage Alliance Report [1], 94% of adults admitted that caring about heritage is very important, underlining the value of heritage for people and their place of living. Research done by National Trust [2] indicates that 74% of the respondents value the presence of nature in areas where they like to spend their time, which positively impacts their well-being. Other research proved that walking in green spaces, considered of high natural and heritage value, significantly reduced feelings of anger, depression, tension, and confusion. Moreover, exploration of the topic showed that community wellbeing is connected to the presence of nature because of stronger emotional attachment to local areas attributed to the nature of the heritage environment. The influence of heritage and nature on well-being is summarized in Figure 1 on page 10.

1.1. Problem statement

The neighborhood of Estação in Faro (see map on pages 8-9), in southern Portugal, was chosen as the graduation project case study. It is due to its location

and the challenges this place faces. The municipality of Faro developed in 2018 rehabilitation program [3] for the city with intense concentration on the center and waterfront. The neighborhood of Estação is part of an area called Frente Ribeirinha, which means riverfront. This area directly borders the Ria Formosa Natural Park. It, therefore, has a privileged territorial and landscape framework that needs recognition during the requalification process of the riverfront. Furthermore, the municipality desires to tackle significant challenges in this area, such as the separation created by the railway. The railway station and tracks are physical obstacles between the city and nature and prevent the population and visitors from enjoying the city’s proximity to the Ria Formosa.

Additionally, the neighborhood of Estação lacks green spaces where citizens can meet and spend time in the public realm. Furthermore, many significant buildings are neglected due to a lack of recognition as heritage. As a result, specific structures in the neighborhood, like Old Mill of Faro, which has been vacant for decades, are falling into ruin.

The neighborhood of Estação is facing two main problems. The first problem is the absence of green areas in the district itself and the physical boundary between the district and Ria Formosa Natural Park. That means that problem revolves around the theme of nature. These second issue consider neglected built heritage. However, the problem of neglected heritage might be more comprehensive than only buildings because intangible heritage, like stories, relationships, and memories, is often forgotten. Therefore, this problem focuses on the neglected tangible and intangible heritage of Estação.

1.2. Relevance

Researchers explain that visiting heritage sites brings beneficial results to the state of our well-being, equal to doing sports or visiting libraries. [4] However, visiting is not the only way to improve our well-being – “heritage offers opportunities for volunteering, involvement in community projects, and treatments for health conditions. It forms an essential part of the built and natural environments.” [1] Heritage provides immense possibilities for connection with each other and ourselves in a more mindful way. We can learn

by discovering “shared histories and identities.” Furthermore, heritage has the “ability to connect places and people. Heritage makes an environment special to its community and pleasurable to experience, which is important for well-being.” [1]

Personal fascination is the driving force for developing the theme of well-being and nature in architecture. Architecture is something far beyond the physical aspects of the building. I strive to understand the connections between our well-being, nature, and heritage in my work. Furthermore, the importance of the co-creation processes in architecture is a fascinating theme. My research is focused on one target group due to the time and logistical constraints of field research in Faro. Therefore, the group I will concentrate on is school-age children. Moreover, it is fascinating to research foreign cultural and architectural contexts and expand my knowledge about the relationship between heritage, nature, and well-being.

1.3. Research questions

This research plan focuses on individual work and goals however, it is necessary to explain the significance of group work in the whole process. With three other co-students, we will conduct field research in the city of Faro, focusing on the case study of the neighborhood of Estação. The group research question is: How can the values on nature of different generations influence the emotional attachment to Estação, Faro, and support the redesign of vacant buildings? [For the diagram describing the group work and relationships between research and methods, please go to Appendix 1] The group research investigates the local context and local communities’ values. Understanding people’s values, we will learn about what they find important and meaningful in the context of their heritage and nature. The following steps during graduation studio will allow us to implement the value-based design. Personal research aims to expand the personally fascinating themes and complement and deepen the group research. The main research question of the individual analysis is:

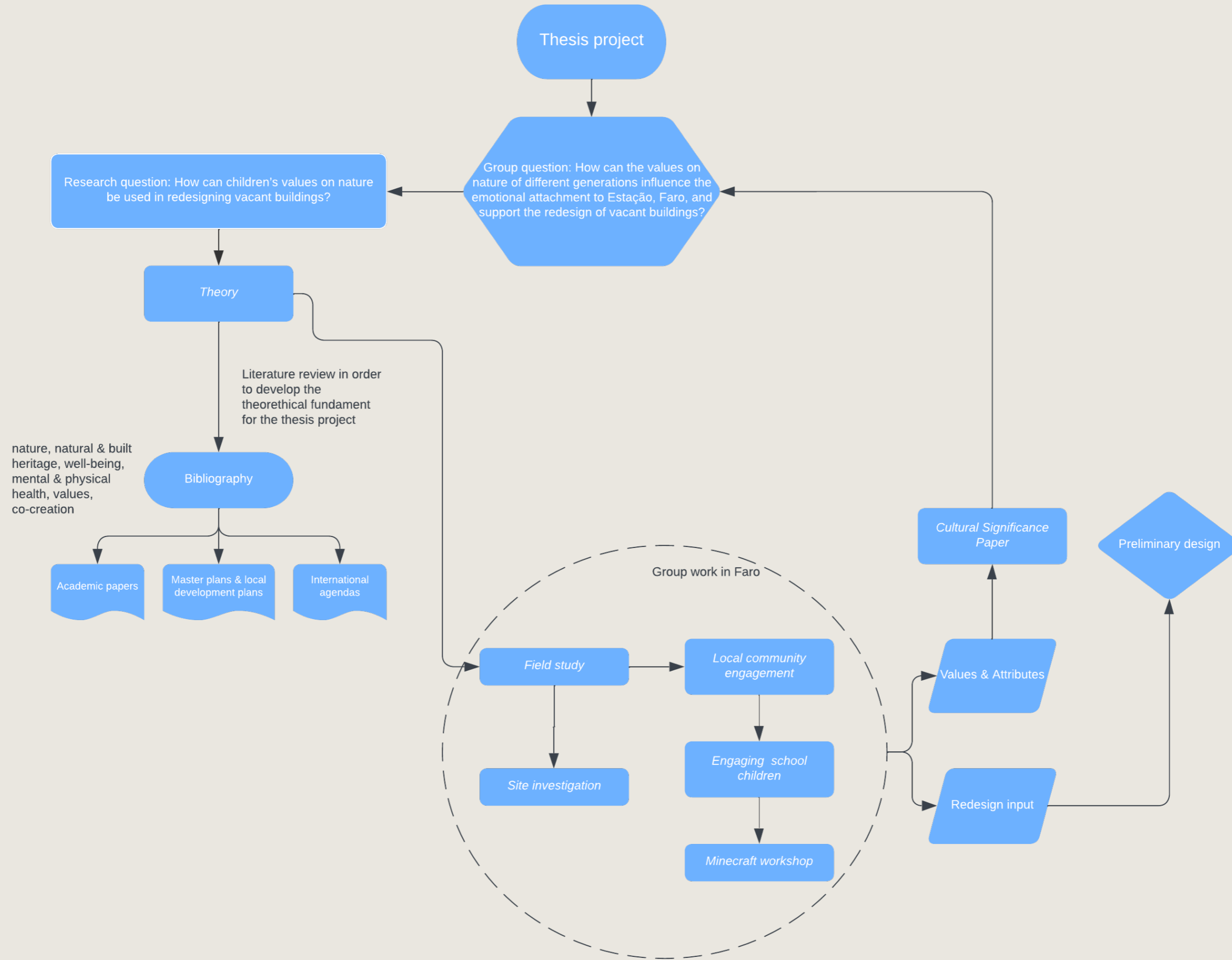
How can children’s values on nature be used in redesigning vacant buildings?

The following sub-questions will allow finding an answer to the main question:

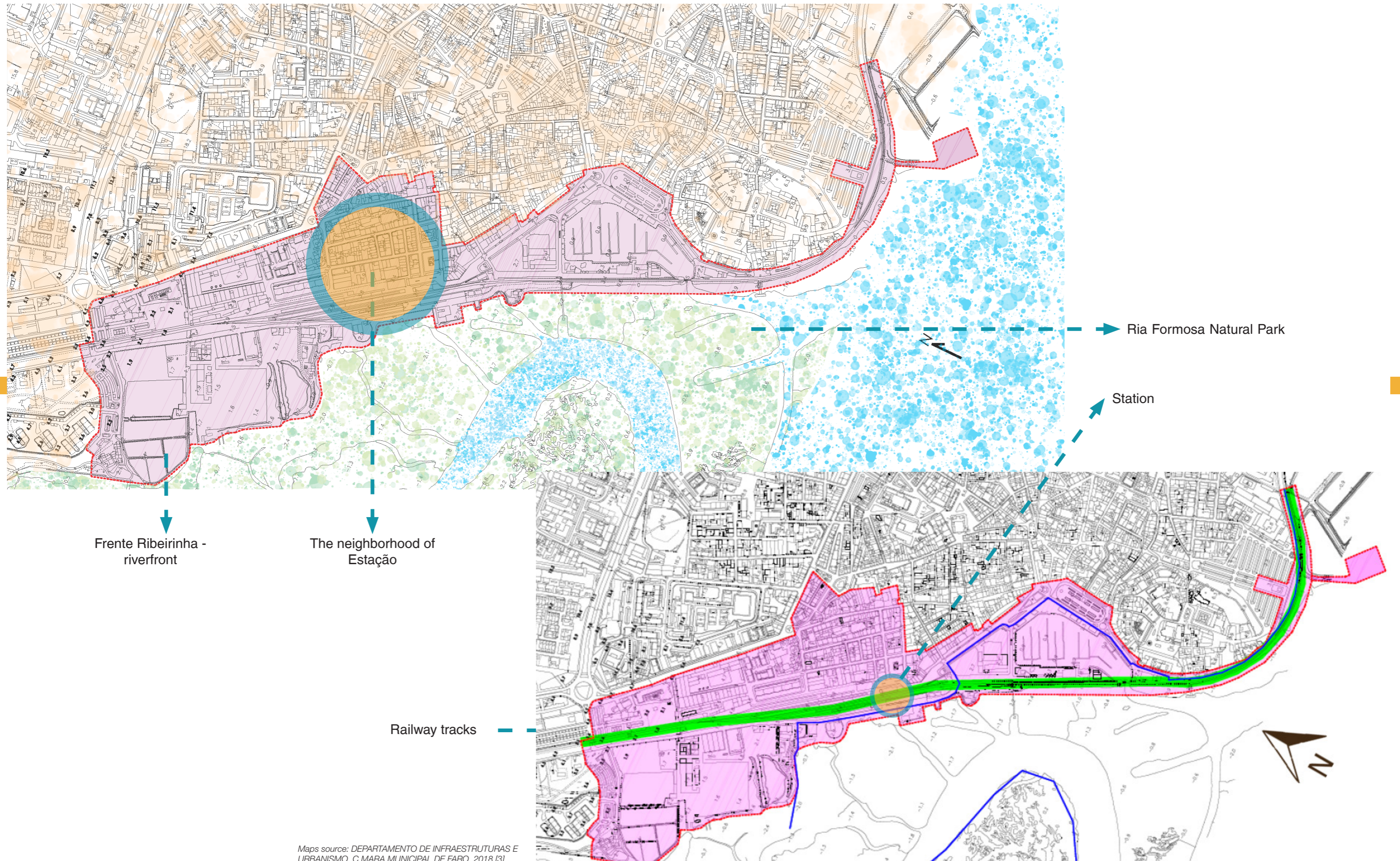
- 1) What are the values of children on nature?*
- 2) What attributes of nature do children prefer to redesign a vacant building?*
- 3) How do those values and attributes enhance children’s well-being?*



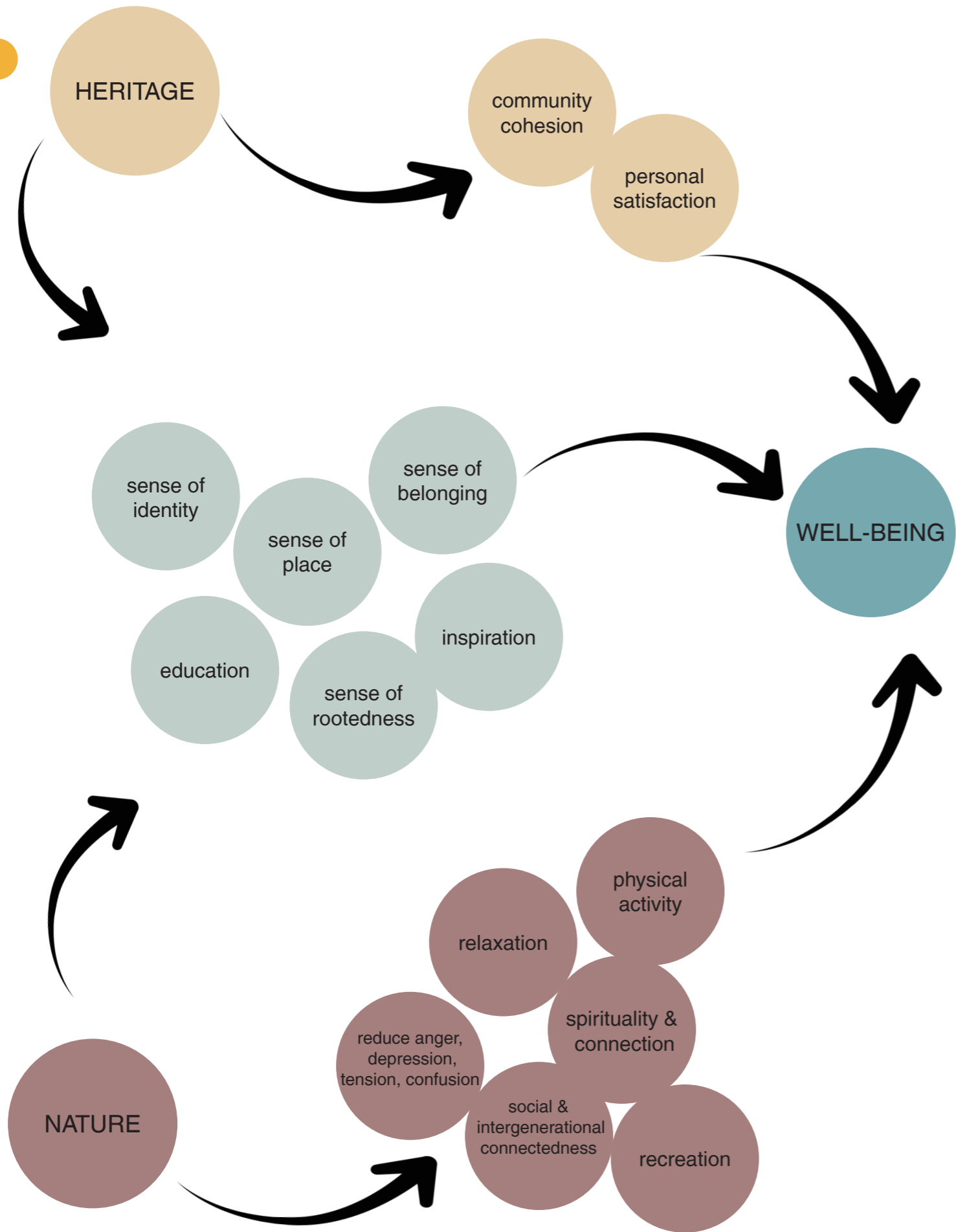
Research structure



Map of Faro - fragment



Influence of heritage and nature on well-being



2. Research framework

This chapter focuses on the key concepts and definitions according to the main research question. Additionally, the core idea of the studio related to values will be explained.

2.1. Definitions

The World Health Organization defined *health* in 1948: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." [5] A short time ago, in 2020, WHO expanded the definition by stating that health and well-being "are influenced by a range of biomedical, psychosocial, social, economic and environmental factors that interconnect across people in differing ways and at different times across the life course." [6]

However, the definition of *well-being* is not always straightforward, so for this paper, I will use the definition of Tchiki Davis: "Well-being is the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity. It includes having good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose, and ability to manage stress." [7] Historic landscapes and elements of nature, like rivers and parks, have a therapeutic influence on human well-being. Additionally, nearby living heritage "is associated with higher life satisfaction and quality of life," which validates the idea that well-being and health are inextricably linked. Moreover, they depend on our connection to nature. [6]

Co-creation is a term describing the process of creating something together. From the design perspective, engaging future users helps develop "more relevant and usable products and services." Involving citizens in the design process of the urban development or a building can provide complex and more meaningful solutions for the design, increasing the quality of the environment we live in. [8] Co-creation has become increasingly essential for architects because it enables dialogue with users, which was not always the case.

2.2. Values

Understanding what values people hold and how they shape their perspective on nature, heritage, and their place of residence is a fundamental aspect of this work. In the context of heritage, it is often believed

that those objects placed on the heritage list are essential, and those not on the list become invalid. [9] Values are most often used in one of two senses: first, like morals, principles, or other ideas that serve as guides to action (individual and collective); and second, about the qualities and characteristics seen in things, in particular the positive traits (actual and potential). This research is concerned with values understood as characteristics. [10] The values and significance of heritage are determined by experts, such as government institutions, architects, or historians, and the future of a given object may depend on their decisions. However, researchers point to a change in the modern understanding of what can be seen as a monument. [11] Cultural significance is defined as: "aesthetic, historical, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places, and objects. Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups." [12]

The concept of cultural significance determines the value of cultural heritage for past, present, or future generations, which are as follows: aesthetic, historical, scientific, and social. [13] However, Pereira Roders expanded the list of values with additional ones: economic, political, age, and ecological, and assigned other secondary values to them. [9] Values answer the question WHY?. Why do we value heritage? The values framework (Figure 2) shows all considered values for this paper. More detailed division and explanation of the values are shown in appendix 2.

The question WHAT? is answered by the attributes. [14] According to the attributes taxonomy made by Veldpaus, attributes are divided into tangible and intangible. The tangible attributes are divided as follows:

- asset: building, building elements, urban elements, natural element
- area: ensemble, context, setting, area
- landscape: landscape, layering

Intangible attributes are the following:

- product: concept, artistic tend, relations to context, character

3. Methodology

- practice: use, function, knowledge, traditions, customs, relation to meaning, community, people

A table with those attributes and definitions can be found in appendix 3. Values assigned to heritage create a wide spectrum of meaning that heritage can provide to communities. We associate our heritage with diverse aspects, which creates complex vocabulary, which “provides us with a common language and insight that enables us to communicate on a deep level and express ourselves in a unique way to the outside world.”[15]

Using games in the research process aims to explore stakeholders’ values of different ages and occupations. Gaming is a participatory method that enables co-creation in redesigning the urban landscape. Both sides can learn by engaging the local community in research about values and the redesign process. We, as future architects, can learn to understand the needs of people better. Citizens can learn about the importance of the quality of their living environment and enable them to be part of the design process. [16]

3.1. Minecraft as a tool to engage local communities

The United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) is the United Nations program for sustainable urban development. This agenda aims to support socially and environmentally sustainable cities with a solid emphasis on the importance of public space. From the perspective of UN-Habitat, public space is very often underestimated by the urban authorities. “Good public spaces enhance community cohesion and promote health, happiness, and well-being for all citizens.” [17] In 2012, UN-Habitat started an innovative partnership with the Swedish computer game company Mojang AB, which developed the computer game Minecraft. In this project, called “Block by Block,” UN-Habitat implements “Minecraft as a community participation and engagement tool in the design” [17]. The workshops engage the local community to provide their perspective on their neighborhood and provide input for architects to develop more inclusive designs. The “Block by Block” methodology creates an opportunity to embrace the ideas and needs of “the communities to turn neglected urban spaces into vibrant places that improve quality of life for all.” [17] Minecraft as a tool for visualization and collaboration in communication with the local community enables more accessible discussion about the project concept. Using games as a medium can provide possibilities for opening a debate between different community members, which very often is not easy because of the generation gap.

There is relatively small research done about engaging children through Minecraft or other geogames in design processes. Nevertheless, the potential of this tool is already recognized

by some academics. One of the examples is an experiment executed in Brazil, which was focused on engaging children in the co-design process of urban development and testing the possibilities of Minecraft as a tool to enable the dialog between them and the architects. A study in Brazil showed that the use of Minecraft made it possible to motivate and involve children in the city planning process. Children quickly found themselves in the virtual version of their city built into the program. The most important conclusions drawn from this experiment are that children consciously consider nature as one of the components of the environment in which they live and value the ability to walk around their city. In addition, the experiment confirmed that Minecraft could be used as a tool to engage residents in discussions about the future of their place of residence. [18] A similar approach will be taken in field research in Faro.

3.2. Workshop with children

A workshop with children will be conducted at primary school Dom Afonso III. The estimated time is around 5 hours. The group will consist of 12 children. The first part of the class will introduce participants to the topic and explain the workshop’s purpose. The second part will be about re-designing a vacant building in Minecraft. The workshop structure was created based on the publication “Using Minecraft for community participation” [19] and the Heritage Gaming Method - Minecraft Workshop presentation made by dr. Bruno de Andrade [20].

Part one, approx. 1 hour:

1. Conversation with children about the context of the research, the district, and their view on public space and nature.

2. Each child will be given a set of cards with pictures of different places in the neighborhood, focusing on nature, vacant buildings, and public spaces. The purpose of the cards is to learn about the values and attributes essential to children. Each set of cards will be marked with a symbol assigned to the child’s name. This will make it easier to track the relationship between children’s values and their proposals for change.



Figure 2, Value framework by Ana Pereira Roders [9]

“Minecraft is easy to use, and people of all ages, backgrounds and education levels can pick it up quickly. It is a surprisingly effective—and cost-effective—way to visualize a three-dimensional environment in a format designed for rapid iteration and idea-sharing. Minecraft helps neighborhood residents model their surroundings, visualize possibilities, express ideas, drive consensus, and accelerate progress.”

“Block by Block.” n.d. Block by Block. <https://www.blockbyblock.org/>. [17]

Part two, about 4 hours:

3. Children will be divided into six teams of two. One assistant is provided for each team, but this aspect and the number of assistants depends on the organizational capacity during the field research in Faro.

4. Each team will work on a pre-selected, vacant building. Potential facilities will be selected based on an on-site survey and the range of empty buildings in the district.

5. In the first round, each child will be able to work on the project for 20 minutes.

6. In the second round, six teams will be combined into three groups based on discussion with all participants. Essential in this part is the ability of children to discuss their proposals and defend them by using convincing arguments.

7. In the third round, we will combine the proposed ideas into one project with all children participating in the study.

The activity aims to determine which values are important for children and what attributes they pay attention to. An essential element of the workshop is to check whether the children will be able to redesign the building in their district based on their values. The information obtained in this study will be used to compare the results of the studies of other students with other groups and will serve as the basis for the project during the MSc 3 and MSc4 phases.

3.3. Ethics

Research involving human subjects, in this case, underage children, requires ethical and responsible discernment. As a university student, I must prepare the following documents before my field research: Ethics Review checklist, Data Management Plan, and Informed Consent form. These documents consider the possible risks associated with the study, the exact plan, and how the data obtained in the survey will be used. The preparation of the HREC application (Human Research Ethics Committee) is the next step in preparing the research described here.

In addition, due to work with children and the awareness of the responsibility it entails, it will be necessary to obtain the consent of the school and parents to conduct the study and ethical use of the results.



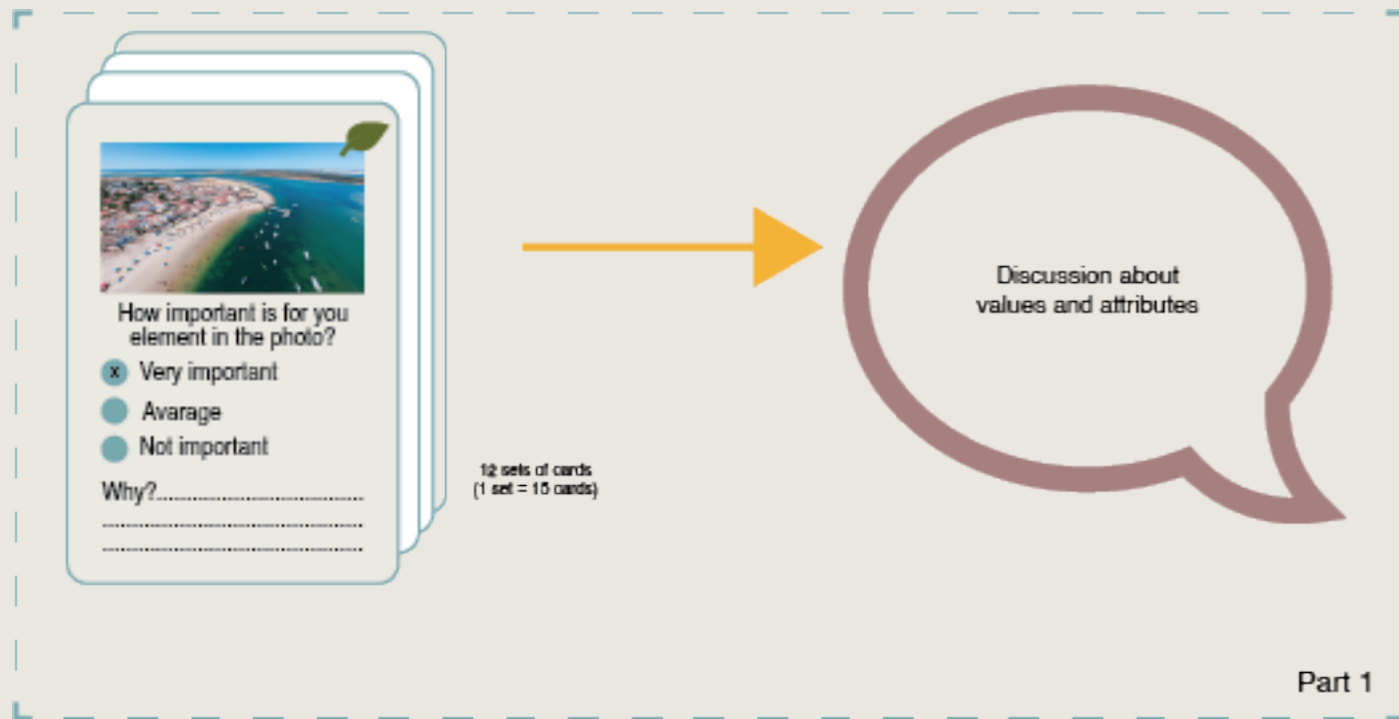
*Block by Block Workshop, Beirut, Lebanon (July 2016)
Source: <https://www.blockbyblock.org/>*



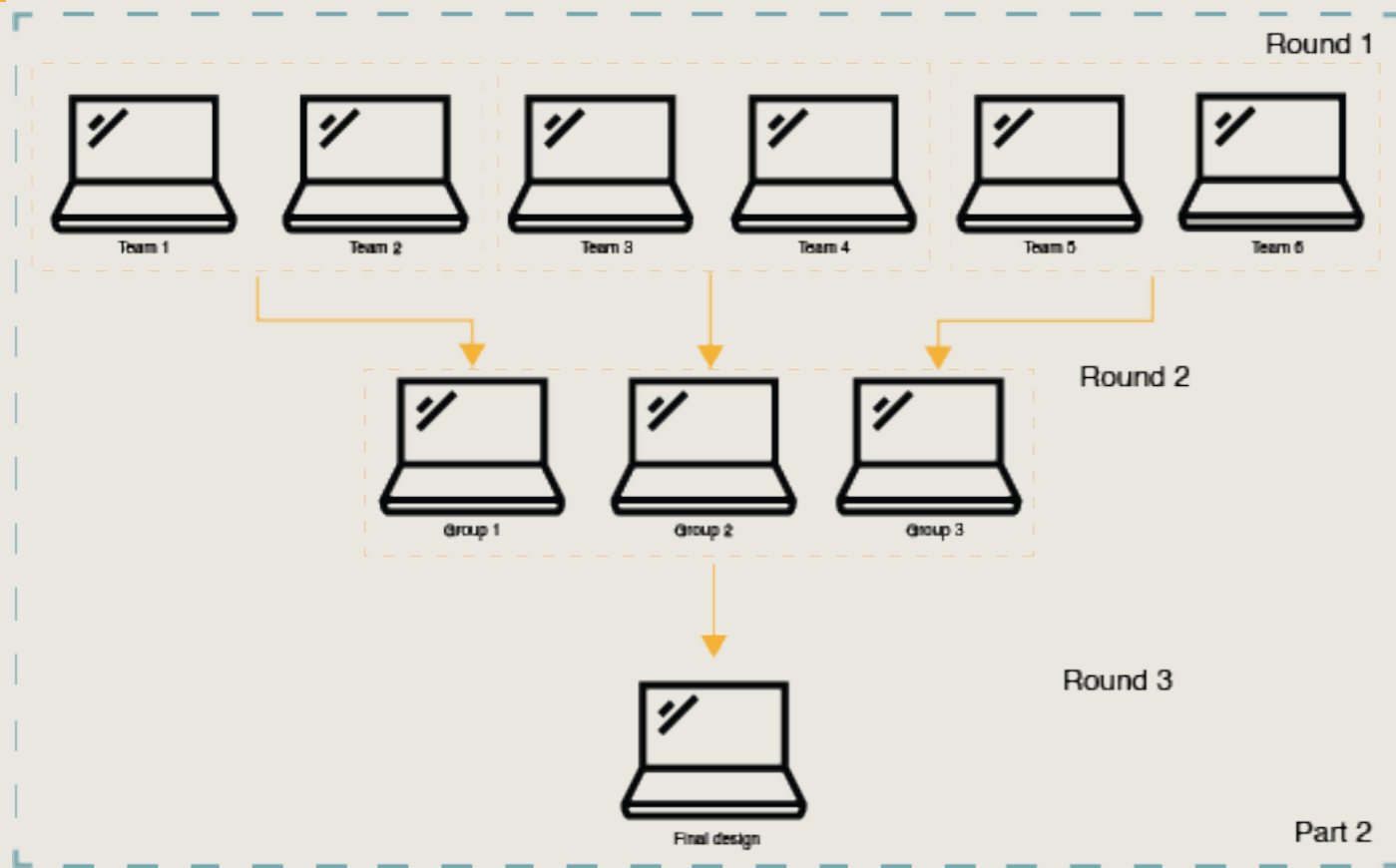
*Block by Block Workshop, Johannesburg, South Africa (December 2015)
Source: <https://www.blockbyblock.org/>*

**Examples of Minecraft workshops,
executed by Block By Block**

Workshop structure



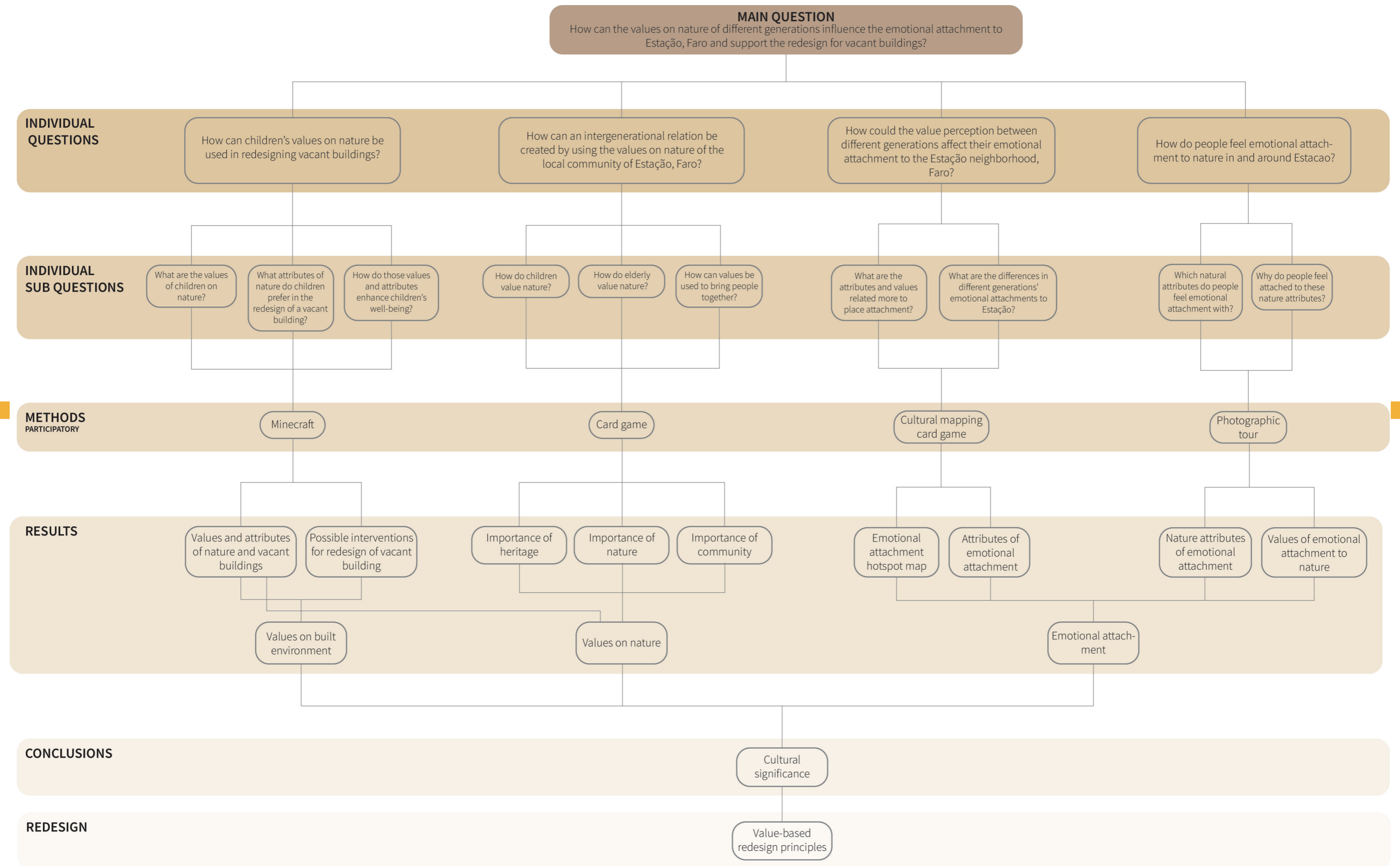
18



19

4. Appendix 1

Structure of the group research, own diagram



5. Appendix 2

Values

Source: Tarrafa Silva, Ana, and Ana Pereira Roders. 2012. Review of CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT and HERITAGE (IMPACT) ASSESSMENTS. In . https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323783537_Cultural_Heritage_Management_and_Heritage_Impact_Assessments.

Table 1: The cultural values (ICOMOS Australia, 1999; Manson, 2002; Pereira Roders, 2007; English Heritage, 2008)

	Secondary Values	References
Social	Spiritual	beliefs, myths, religions (organized or not), legends, stories, testimonial of past generations;
	Emotional, individual	memory and personal life experiences;
	Emotional, collective	notions related with cultural identity, motivation and pride, sense of “place attachment” and communal value.
	Allegorical	objects/places representative of some social hierarchy/status;
Economic	Use	the function and utility of the asset, original or attributed;
	Non-use	the asset’s expired function, which has its value on the past, and should be remained by its existence (of materials), option (to make some use of it or not) and bequest value (for future generations);
	Entertainment	the role that might be have for contemporaneous market, mainly for tourism industry;
	Allegorical	oriented to publicizing financially property;
Political	Educational	the education role that heritage assets may play, using it for political targets (e. g. birth-nations myths, glorification of political leaders, etc.);
	Management	made part of strategies and policies (past or present);
	Entertainment	it is part of strategies for dissemination of cultural awareness, explored for political targets;
	Symbolic	emblematic, power, authority and prosperous perceptions stem from the heritage asset;
Historic	Educational	heritage asset as a potential to gain knowledge about the past in the future through;
	Historic-artistic	quality of an object to be part of a few or unique testimonial of historic stylistic or artistic movements, which are now part of the history;
	Historic-conceptual	quality of an object to be part of a few or unique testimonial that retains conceptual signs (architectural, urban planning, etc.), which are now part of history;
	Symbolic	fact that the object has been part/related with an important event in the past;
Aesthetical	Archaeological	connected with Ancient civilizations;
	Artistic	original product of creativity and imagination;
	Notable	product of a creator, holding his signature;
Scientific	Conceptual	integral materialization of conceptual intentions (imply a conceptual background);
	Evidential	authentic exemplar of a decade, part of the History of Art or Architecture;
	Workmanship	original result of human labour, craftsmanship;
Age	Technological	skillfulness on techniques and materials, representing an outstanding quality of work;
	Conceptual	integral materialization of conceptual intentions (imply a conceptual background);
	Workmanship	craftsmanship value oriented towards the production period;
Ecological	Maturity	piece of memory, reflecting the passage/lives of past generations;
	Existential	marks of the time passage (patine) presents on the forms, components and materials;
	Spiritual	harmony between the building and its environment (natural and artificial);
Ecological	Essential	identification of ecological ideologies on its design and construction;
	Existential	manufactured resources which can either be reused, reprocessed or recycled;

6. Appendix 3

Attributes

Source: Veldpaus, L. (2015). Historic urban landscapes: framing the integration of urban and heritage planning in multilevel governance. Technische Universiteit Eindhoven.

Type	Category	no.	Taxonomy definition	Definition as used in policy analyses tool
Tangible attributes	asset	1	Building Element	Parts of buildings e.g. Detail, parcel, facade, roof, material, or colours.
		2	Building	Entire buildings
		3	Urban Element	Man made elements in the urban landscape e.g. A square, bridge, street furniture, quay side, or public art.
		4	Natural Element	Natural (or designed) green elements, flora or fauna, water elements, etc.
	area	5	Ensemble	A group of buildings or specific urban ensemble or configuration.
		6	Context, Setting	The buildings or elements surrounding, supporting, contextualising the actual heritage.
		7	Area	A district in a wider (urban) landscape, a specific combination of cultural and or natural elements, e.g. a neighbourhood, urban fragment, urban structure, townscape, route or park.
	site (landscape)	8	Layering	Illustrative of the evolution or development of human society and settlement over time, a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment.
		9	Landscape	Every part of the landscape is considered to be of value, and all attributes get a level of significance.
Intangible attributes	product (asset related)	10	Concept, Artistic Trend	The ideas behind the design or place, e.g. Period, style, design ideology (often related to, or represented by, a tangible heritage asset)
		11	Relation(s) to Context (Location)	The relation with another connected element, location, place, or environment (relation object – object).
		12	Character	The character or image, as supported by specific design, e.g. Typology, morphology, layout, composition and proportion, as well as, atmosphere e.g. Tranquil, lively, urban, rural.
	practice (social)	13	Use, Function	The specific (typical, common, special) use or function of a place or environment.
		14	Knowledge, Traditions, Customs	The (local) practices, traditions, knowledge, customs of a community or groups (often related to a location or tangible results, tools / instruments).
		15	Relation(s) to Meaning (Association)	Human associations with a place, element, location, or environment (relation men – object).
	process	16	Community, People(s)	A community or society itself (its members, or specific individuals / groups) and/ or their cultural identity or diversity.
		17	Planned Processes / Development	The process of managing, the type of strategy or approach (instead of the result) is what is valuable.
			18	Unplanned Processes / Evolution

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