

Perception of Management of Immovable Cultural Heritage in Slovenia and the Role of (New) Localism

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Abstract

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1.01 Original scientific article

Public opinion on management of immovable cultural heritage is shaped by a complex interplay of desires from different population groups that simultaneously aspire to implement localism, participation, and economic development. This article elaborates how the information obtained during public opinion surveys gives rise to many opposing opinions and positions on ways to manage immovable cultural heritage. These often-opposing stances within Slovenian communities can sometimes lead to confusion, exclusivity, resistance to change, passivation, or even open conflict with broader social and developmental consequences. Based on an analysis of data from a 2024 panel survey that included 1,150 respondents in Slovenia, the article suggests orientations for potential changes in heritage policies to provide greater balance between local stakeholders, public authorities, and economic actors.

Keywords: HEI-TRANSFORM project, immovable cultural heritage, localism, new localism, locality, panel survey, public opinion, participation, economic development, heritage management

Izveček

Percepcija upravljanja nepremične kulturne dediščine v Sloveniji in vloga (novega) lokalizma

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek

Javno mnenje o upravljanju nepremične kulturne dediščine se oblikuje na podlagi kompleksne interakcije med različnimi skupinami prebivalstva, ki si hkrati prizadevajo za uveljavljanje lokalizmov, večjo participacijo in gospodarski razvoj. V članku je podrobno opisano, kako informacije, pridobljene prek javnomnenjskih raziskav, razkrivajo številna paradoksalna mnenja in stališča o načinih upravljanja nepremične kulturne dediščine. Ta pogosto nasprotujoča si stališča znotraj lokalnih skupnosti lahko včasih vodijo v zmedo, ekskluzivnost, odpor do sprememb, pasivnost ali celo odprt konflikt s širšimi družbenimi in razvojnimi posledicami. Na podlagi analize podatkov iz panelne ankete iz leta 2024, ki je vključevala 1150 anketirancev v Sloveniji, so v članku oblikovane usmeritve za morebitne spremembe politik upravljanja z nepremično kulturno dediščino z namenom vzpostavljanja večjega ravnovesja med lokalnimi deležniki, javnimi organi in gospodarskimi akterji.

Ključne besede: projekt HEI-TRANSFORM, nepremična kulturna dediščina, lokalizem, novi lokalizem, lokalnost, panelna anketa, javno mnenje, participacija, gospodarski razvoj, upravljanje dediščine

Introduction

Changes in the management, use, and control of immovable cultural heritage often trigger intense debates among different stakeholders within local communities. This highlights the important role and value that heritage has in society and why it contributes so much to the general quality of life. This impact is especially visible in locations where immovable cultural heritage is deeply embedded within the spatial context of the local environment, which evokes close ties with identity, cultural significance, and historical value. From this perspective, immovable cultural heritage serves as a source of pride, a connection to the past, and a key element for shaping local identity. Consequently, decisions about its management in the future inevitably arouse strong emotions and diverse viewpoints from various stakeholders. Due to sensitivity of the processes that seek to balance the interests of different groups in relation to the management of immovable cultural heritage, any unclear approach or radical change can have a strong impact on local development and significantly influence the community's quality of life. For example, decisions that prioritize economic gain over the preservation of immovable cultural heritage can lead to the degradation of historical landmarks, thereby diminishing a place's character and uniqueness. On the other hand, excessively rigid protection policies may hinder necessary development and adaptation of immovable cultural heritage to contemporary needs, which also leads to dissatisfaction among residents and stakeholders.¹ Achieving a balance between conservation and sustainable management of heritage thus remains a challenge requiring a refined approach.²

For these reasons, when it comes to management of heritage, any supposed change must be thoroughly assessed by various stakeholders and supported by appropriate data and contextual analyses. Particularly important stakeholders in this context are the diverse groups of residents living in proximity of locations with different forms of immovable cultural heritage. Local engagement and participation in decision-making processes are therefore crucial for ensuring that cultural heritage remains relevant and beneficial to the community. Public discussions, surveys, and participatory planning are typical tools that can integrate local voices into heritage management.³ The involvement of local residents not only fosters a sense of belonging, connection, and responsibility, but also strengthens the role and significance of heritage projects in ensuring the development of community.⁴ Without public support and consensus, even beneficial initiatives can face resistance and fail.⁵ Although data gathered through public opinion surveys often reveal rather straightforward views and opinions about the management of immovable cultural heritage, they also expose seemingly paradoxical situations in which respondents simultaneously support and reject certain positions regarding the development of cultural heritage.⁶ This contradiction reflects the complexity of heritage management, in which individuals simultaneously value the preservation of historical memory while also desiring modernization and economic growth.⁷ For example, communities may advocate for the

¹ Fischel, "Why Are There;" Barthel-Bouchier, *Cultural Heritage*.

² Kiefer, *The Social Functions*; Leifeste and Stiefel, *Sustainable Heritage*; Wang et al., "How to Achieve."

³ Müller and Stotten, *Public Participation Manual*; Uršič, "Immovable Cultural Heritage."

⁴ Madgin and Lesh, *People-Centred Methodologies*.

⁵ Vecco and Srakar, "The Unbearable Sustainability."

⁶ Soini and Birkeland, "Exploring the Scientific Discourse."

⁷ Uršič, "Immovable Cultural Heritage."

preservation of historic buildings while at the same time supporting large infrastructural projects that could radically alter or endanger those same structures. Such conflicting positions emphasize the need for a careful, context-sensitive, and deeply informed approach to decision-making regarding the use, management, and transformation of immovable cultural heritage.

This article addresses immovable cultural heritage as a general field of analysis that primarily includes material cultural elements such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, and accompanying material cultural heritage (e.g., archival materials, works of art, or artefacts). As such, it refers to immovable cultural heritage as culturally significant, physically fixed assets, whether in architectural, archaeological, or industrial form, whose value is tied to their location and cannot be moved without losing essential meaning. Based on data collected within the HEI-TRANSFORM research project,⁸ the article explores how the perspectives of different population groups toward immovable cultural heritage influence both heritage preservation and community well-being. More specifically, the main research question is based on the presumption that the public perception on how to manage immovable cultural heritage in Slovenia is still too fixated on local issues and relations, which obstructs more progressive use of heritage. From this perspective, the article examines the presence of elements of localism and new localism⁹ among different population groups, and how these may affect the future development, use, and management of immovable cultural heritage in Slovenia. In the context of heritage management, local initiatives are often assumed to be linked to hierarchical, static, and rigid local networks, whereas conceptualizations of new localism suggest a more flexible use of local elements in ways that benefit both the local and broader (global) society. Analyzing this complex dialectical relationship between (traditional, autarkic) localism and new localism in the context of heritage management is therefore particularly important for Slovenia's potential future development—one that incorporates local interests while ensuring balanced progress in conditions of global interconnectedness and increasing exposure to external cultural influences. This raises an additional research question related to the study of the conditions under which an excessively affirmative evaluation of the local environment is established. This local stance potentially encourages autarky and reduces the possibilities for better use of resources and opportunities provided by immovable cultural heritage. The additional research question is therefore aimed at identifying the deficit in elements of new localism that can be observed through opinions of individual groups of the Slovenian population. In addition, by comparing different views on heritage management possibilities, the study highlights key opportunities, obstacles, and challenges that policymakers and heritage experts must address to enhance the effectiveness of policies and measures concerning the development and preservation of immovable cultural heritage in Slovenia.

It is important to emphasize that this article makes an original contribution by addressing a relatively new and under-researched area by empirically combining heritage value analysis with a large-scale survey in a way not previously developed in comparable studies.¹⁰ The article provides first-of-a-kind insight into questions of public heritage interpretation, evaluation, and protection regimes in Slovenia, thereby substantially enhancing its relevance for art historians dealing with immovable cultural heritage. The article has four sections. First, it sets out the conceptual framework by

⁸ *Heritage for Inclusive Sustainable Transformation* (HEI-TRANSFORM), funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS code: J7-4641), see "Heritage for Inclusive Sustainable."

⁹ Strassoldo and Tessarin, *Le radici del localismo*, 287.

¹⁰ European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer* 466.

linking debates on localism / new localism to management of immovable cultural heritage. Second, it explains the methodology and data (the HEI-TRANSFORM panel survey plus supporting secondary sources). The third section presents the empirical findings (key dimensions of heritage value, perceived benefits, and burdens on management of immovable cultural heritage). The fourth section (conclusions) closes by interpreting these patterns in terms of ambivalence and implementation gaps, followed by implications for more participatory, balanced heritage management.

The influence of localism and new localism on shaping public policies

Heritage management is inevitably mediated through local meanings. This makes research on attitudes toward immovable cultural heritage of crucial importance. Timely discovery of public support, resistance, identity characteristics, belonging, perceived benefits, and burdens often determines what kind of heritage protection regimes are politically feasible and how they are implemented on the ground. From a local perspective, heritage is often treated as a place-bound public good tied to identity and community continuity, whereas newer, more global-oriented approaches highlight more flexible, outward-looking uses of local assets linking heritage to tourism, entrepreneurship, and wider economic networks. Attitudes in this regard help explain when people support conservation, adaptive reuse, or development-oriented strategies. Understanding these orientations is directly relevant for policy because it clarifies potential points of conflict and indicates which heritage management arrangements are likely to be trusted. At the same time, studying attitudes provides clues on how to produce more balanced, participatory approaches that can reconcile preservation goals with locally acceptable forms of change. In other words, it helps clarify who the heritage is for and what counts as legitimate change.¹¹

Before analyzing attitudes toward immovable cultural heritage from the perspective of various actors, it is necessary to first more precisely define the differences between localism and new localism to provide sufficient details to detect the special features that are connected to their presence in various local environments. Localism can best be described as the relationship between a place (understood as a relatively small and bounded space) and the social phenomena occurring within it. From the perspective of an observer or actor, this relation is thoroughly evaluated (ideologized) and becomes part of its consciousness.¹² In this way, locality (and space more generally) becomes an essential component in the construction of identity, which contradicts the theories of disappearing territorial determinism by emphasizing the significance of the local in everyday life. Traditionally, localism and rootedness were regarded as backward and part of a conservative value spectrum. Modernization processes appeared to move toward cosmopolitanism, universalism, and increased residential mobility. Territorial attachment—which Tönnies described as part of *Gemeinschaft*—seemed to be dissolving under the influence of the more globally oriented *Gesellschaft*.¹³ Strassoldo explains that, although the disintegration of *Gemeinschaft* has indeed taken place to some degree, it was not fully completed; it did not reach a level that would transform the fundamental building blocks

¹¹ Harvey, *From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism*.

¹² Strassoldo and Tessarin, *Le radici del localismo*, 287.

¹³ Tönnies, *Skupnost in družba*, 31.

of its content.¹⁴ As Strassoldo notes, the process “found its internal limits in some basic human needs and dialectically created its own self-limiting contradictions and self-opposing forces.”¹⁵ The outcome of these processes was the formation of new localism trends in which elements of the old localism combined with globalization processes that introduced new aspects into the local sphere. From this perspective, Mlinar distinguishes old localism from new localism through the analytical dimensions of “connectedness” and “internal characteristics.”¹⁶ On the one hand, connectedness can be analyzed in terms of autonomy—as independence or choice in relation to the external world—whereas internal characteristics are defined by the degree of exclusion or integration of external particularities. Old localism can thus be seen as more closed and less connected compared to the new localism, which is oriented toward choice and openness. Similarly, the two differ in how they exclude or integrate external features; whereas new localism integrates specific externalities, old localism tends to exclude them indiscriminately, even when they could improve the performance of a system.

According to Strassoldo, two additional differences distinguish new from old localism.¹⁷ First, whereas old localism was primordial and less reflective, new localism results from a more conscious and deliberate choice of opportunities offered by the external environment that may benefit the local community. Old localism seemed “necessary and natural,” whereas new localism appears more “voluntary (in terms of choice) and intentional, rational (in terms of benefits for the community).”¹⁸ Second, “old localism sought to reduce contact with the outside world to preserve a closed boundary (area), whereas new localism is highly aware of the rest of the world and open to interaction with it.”¹⁹ In general, new localism can be seen as more open than old localism while still emphasizing the need for certain values to remain present within the local environment.

The concept of new localism introduces fresh perspectives into the debate on heritage management in Slovenia. The first question is the extent to which new localism is present in the use, management, and transformation of immovable cultural heritage within Slovenian local communities. Because local communities must integrate innovations into their environments, this process immediately initiates a dialogue between the forces of old (preserving) and new (adapting) localism. Second, this confrontation between the two forms of localism is nested within the broader question of whether heritage management in Slovenia leans more toward developing heritage that reflects post-materialist values,²⁰ such as sustainability, cooperation, and participation, or whether it tends to preserve rigid, hierarchical approaches and maintain the status quo regardless of external change. If the latter prevails and people tend to pretend that there are no external influences, then this orientation reinforces beliefs related to old localism while neglecting the potential advantages of new localism, in which potentially progressive beneficial (global) effects merge with local values. It is important to note that although this “glocalization process”²¹ is probably already taking place in Slovenia in some form—because the country is part of the economically developed and globalized territory

¹⁴ Strassoldo, “The Meaning of Localism.”

¹⁵ Strassoldo, “The Meaning of Localism,” 7.

¹⁶ Mlinar, “Krepitev in slabitev moči.”

¹⁷ Strassoldo, “The Meaning of Localism.”

¹⁸ Strassoldo, “The Meaning of Localism,” 7.

¹⁹ Strassoldo and Tessarin, *Le radici del localismo*, 46–47.

²⁰ Schwartz, *Universals in the Content; Inglehart, Modernization and Postmodernization*.

²¹ Robertson, *Glocalization: Time-Space*, 173.

north—the extent of these influences remains relatively underexplored. The data presented in this exploratory study provide, for the first time in Slovenia, an analysis of the scope and characteristics of new localism and related values in the context of the development, management, and use of immovable cultural heritage.

Methodology of the study

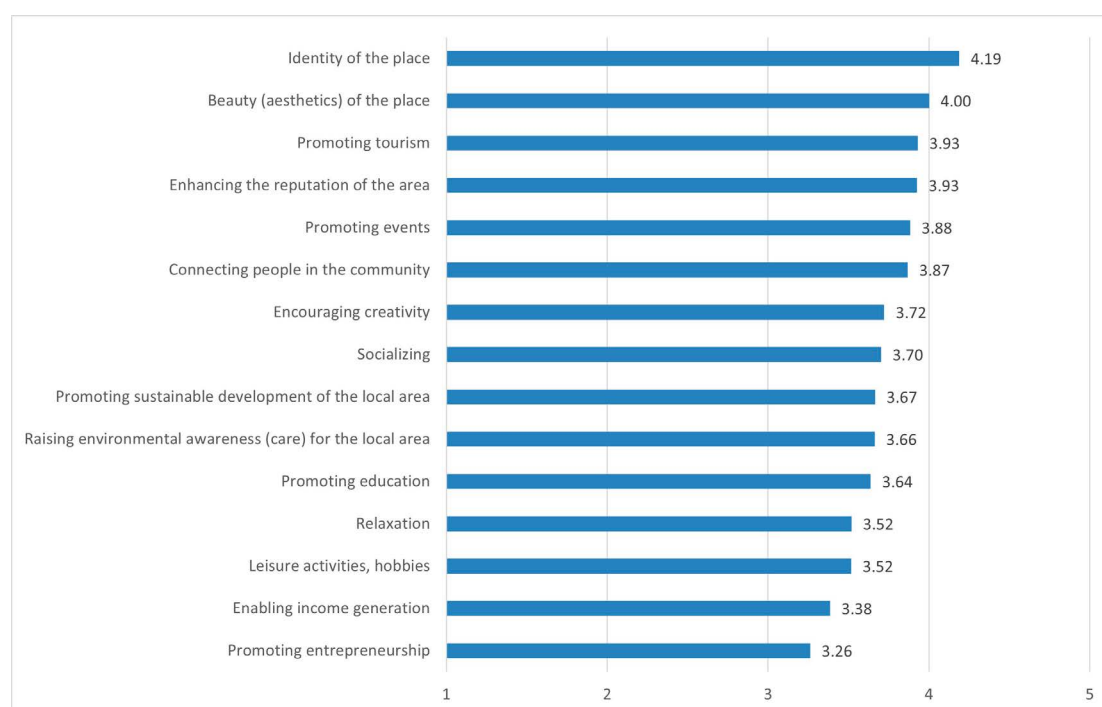
The methodology of study is based on the analysis of a large panel survey conducted as part of the HEI-TRANSFORM research project in Slovenia.²² The key element of the research was a questionnaire addressing the role of immovable cultural heritage within local communities. Respondents were asked about their opinions and views on the current state and future of immovable cultural heritage—including buildings (e.g., castles, manors, and town centers), artefacts, archaeological remains, and other physical heritage objects—both at specific locations and in Slovenia in general. The goal of the research was to obtain data on what respondents perceive as the most appropriate modes of organization and use of immovable cultural heritage, as well as to gain insights into public opinion regarding the potential advantages or disadvantages of recent changes and heritage modernization efforts. The questionnaire was prepared through a series of brainstorming sessions with researchers from various disciplines. First, the basic version of the questionnaire was formed by a group of researchers from the social sciences. This group was comprised of sociologists and social informatics experts. Second, a number of experts from other disciplinary fields were invited to provide comments and calibrate specific parts of the questionnaire. This group involved architects, art historians, ethnographers, cultural anthropologists, geographers, historians, and others. After the calibration, the final version of the questionnaire was prepared by the team at the Faculty of Social Sciences of University of Ljubljana and tested before the field phase. Data were collected through an online survey administered within the JazVem.si web panel, targeting active members of the panel. A quota sampling approach was applied, with prior stratification at the regional level and based on a combination of sex, education, and age groups to ensure balanced representation across key demographic characteristics. The study employed a non-probability quota sample. A higher level of representativeness was achieved through post-stratification weighting of the data. Online data collection took place between January and February 2024. The total number of respondents was 1,150. The data collected were further interpreted using secondary research and sources covering themes on transformation of architectural heritage, archaeological sites, and other prominent forms of immovable cultural heritage. These secondary data provided additional insights and explanatory information allowing the formulation of recommendations on future strategies for heritage management at the local, regional, and national levels.

²² Uršič et al., *Vloga nepremične kulturne dediščine*.

Analysis of perception on the use and management of immovable cultural heritage in Slovenia

The data from the HEI-TRANSFORM panel survey show that at the local level Slovenia is characterized by an exceptionally strong attachment to immovable cultural heritage.²³ Respondents particularly emphasized the importance of heritage as the basic building block of local or place identity. They identify with cultural heritage because of its symbolic, cultural, architectural, and urban features that represent the core of what defines the place, locality, and local community. This pronounced attachment to immovable cultural heritage underscores its vital role in shaping development strategies for towns, cities and spatial planning in general, as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

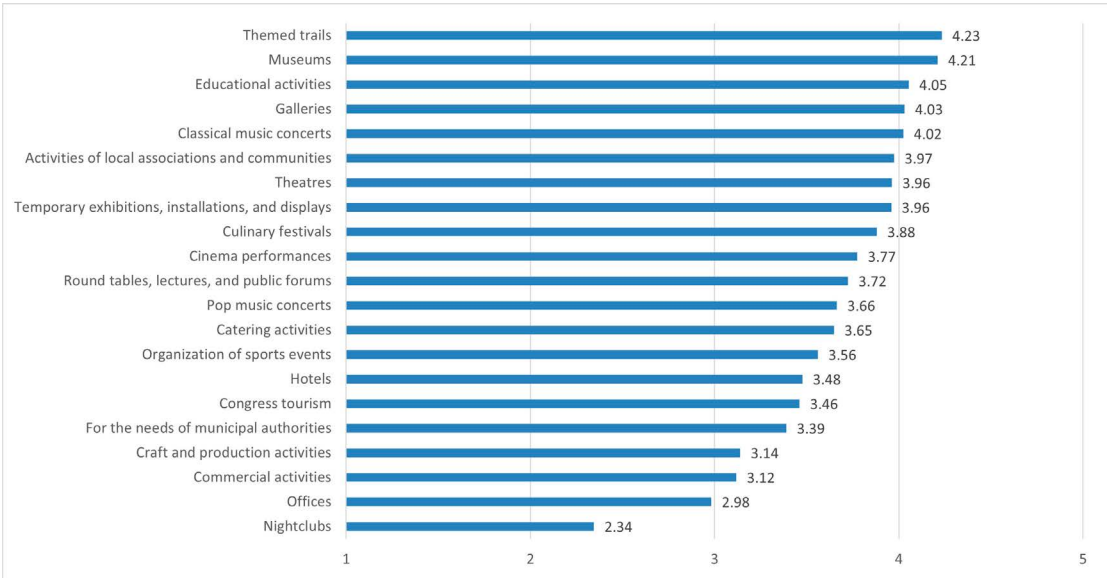
The most important dimension of immovable cultural heritage is therefore the identity of place, followed by the beauty (aesthetic value) of the place and other dimensions. The presence of multiple dimensions, many of which are also related to economic activities (e.g., promoting tourism, generating income, and encouraging entrepreneurship), indicates that, in addition to its symbolic, cultural value (i.e., “cultural capital”),²⁴ immovable cultural heritage is also a form of economic capital. As a symbolic value, cultural capital forms the basis for further networking of leisure activities (e.g., promoting events, connecting people within the locality, encouraging creativity, socializing, raising environmental awareness, and other leisure activities or hobbies), whereas economic capital complements the role of immovable cultural heritage by supporting development of localities (e.g., promoting tourism, making income generation possible, stimulating entrepreneurship, etc.). It is precisely



1. The importance of immovable cultural heritage for various social and community dimensions (Question: How important is immovable cultural heritage in relation to individual dimensions?)

²³ Uršič et al., *Vloga nepremične kulturne dediščine*.

²⁴ Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” 241.

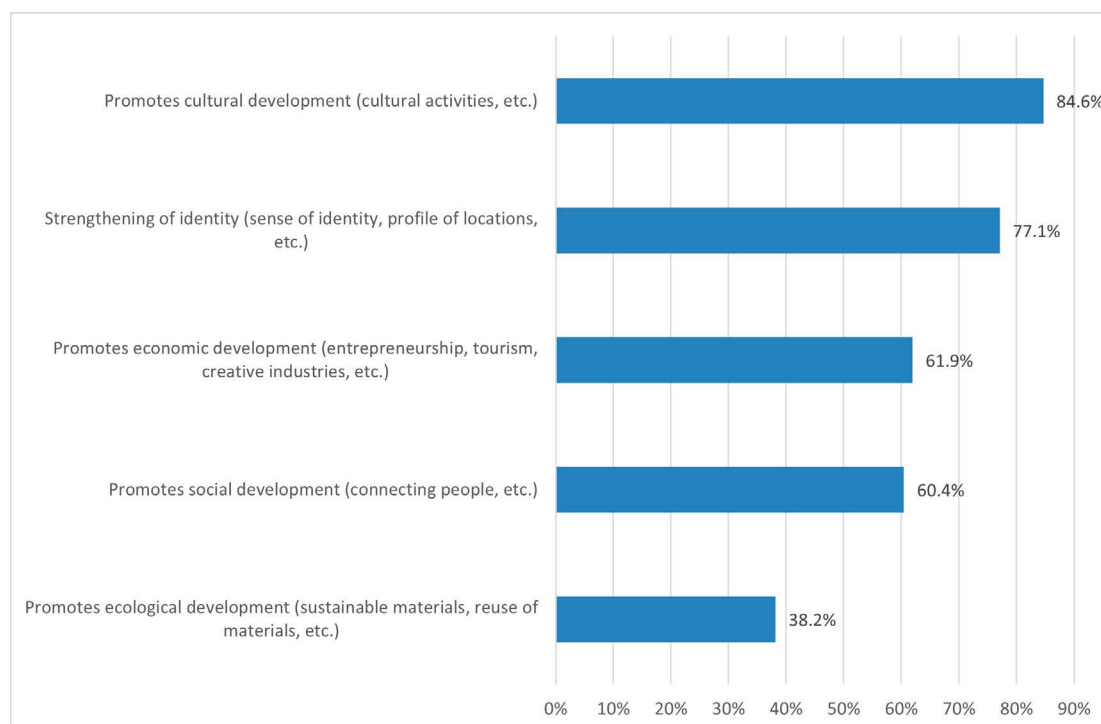


2. Support for the use of immovable cultural heritage for various activities (Question: Buildings of immovable cultural heritage can serve various purposes: they can host exhibitions or galleries, or, for example, offer hotel accommodations. To what extent do you support the use of immovable cultural heritage in your locality for the following activities?)

this dual role of immovable cultural heritage that often causes tensions regarding appropriate future development strategies of places as different interest groups seek different kinds of benefits from the use and management of cultural heritage. This is also evident from a more detailed analysis of respondents’ attitudes toward possible ways of using immovable cultural heritage in their immediate surroundings (see Figure 3).

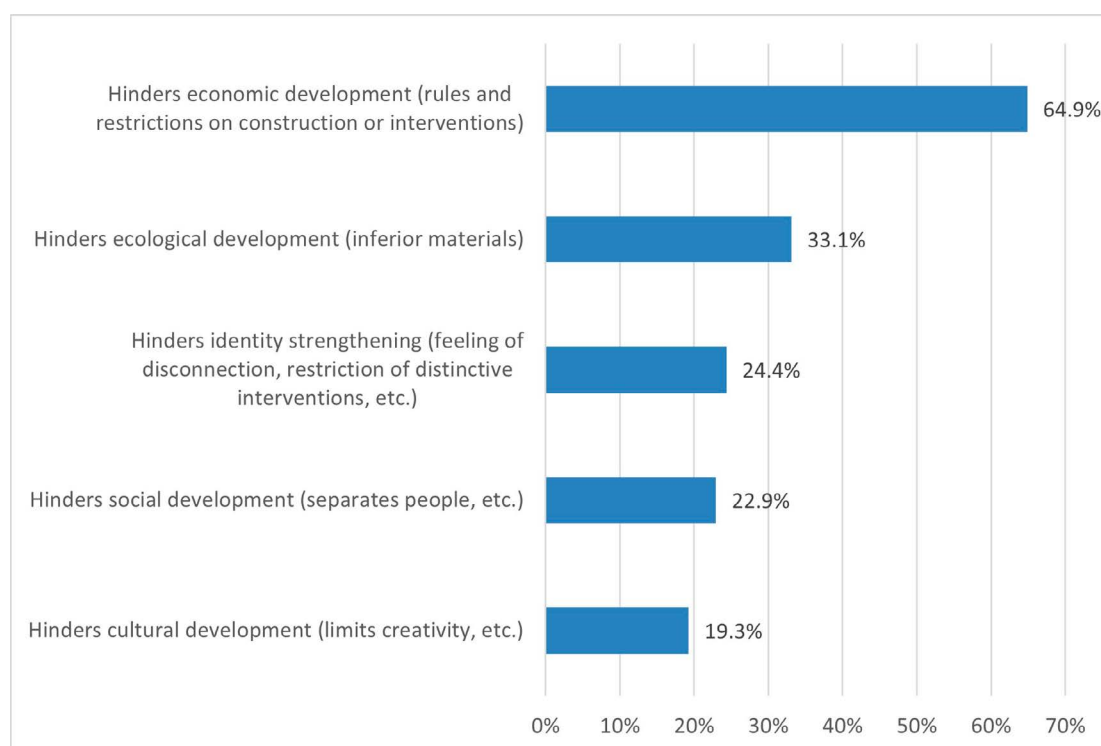
The analysis reveals how respondents perceive the development of their localities and how they evaluate the significance of immovable cultural heritage and its role in local development. The data show what they consider an appropriate way of use, management, and transformation of immovable cultural heritage. Indirectly, these stances reflect their views on the potential development of their locality, including the pace of development and their visions for promoting different types of employment, services, and economic activities related to immovable cultural heritage. Although public and semi-public services dominate the top of the list (e.g., education, local associations, museums, thematic routes, etc.), it is important to note that there is also a strong emphasis on profit-oriented activities linked to local economic development (e.g., hotels, hospitality, conference tourism, etc.). Good insight into how respondents perceive the potential development of their locality and the resulting changes in immovable cultural heritage is provided by responses to the question on the opportunities and burdens that immovable cultural heritage represents for a locality, as illustrated in Figures 3 and 4.

The combination of both questions (Figures 3 and 4) reveals certain characteristics of immovable cultural heritage that respondents sometimes hide by emphasizing or idealizing other characteristics of heritage. When the questions about the opportunities and burdens of immovable cultural heritage are combined, the component of economic development stands out most clearly. Although respondents primarily emphasize the cultural and identity-related aspects of immovable cultural heritage, secondarily they also strongly acknowledge that it can significantly hinder economic development and represent a financial burden. For example, in this context, they point out that



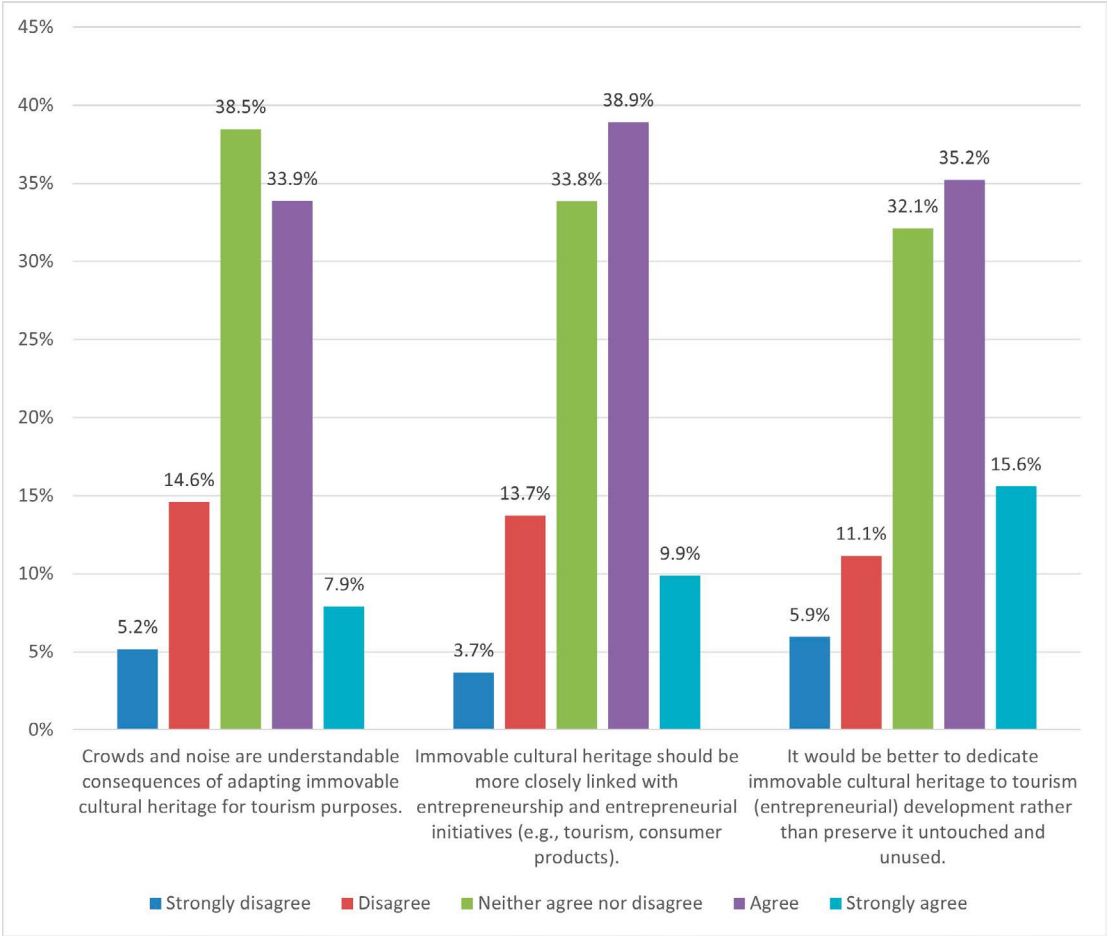
3. Immovable cultural heritage as an opportunity

(Question: Why can immovable cultural heritage be considered an opportunity?)



4. Immovable cultural heritage as a burden

(Question: Why can immovable cultural heritage be considered a burden?)



5. Economic use of immovable cultural heritage
(Prompt: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.)

ecological development is being hampered by the excessive use of certain materials that may not be part of modern construction processes and methods. This statement, from the perspective of the respondents, is complementary with the problematic aspects they observe in relation to economic development. Despite the strong influence that immovable cultural heritage has on shaping the cultural and identity image of individuals and places, it can be confirmed that economic development related to heritage is the second most important component in the structure of the Slovenian value system when it comes to heritage management. Depending on the specific characteristics and local contexts in which individual heritage sites are located, the economic component may even prevail over the needs of the wider community, meaning that the economic interests of certain local actors can potentially outweigh those of less influential or less empowered stakeholders. This is clearly reflected in individual statements expressing a relatively high level of tolerance toward the provision of economic services related to the use of immovable cultural heritage, as illustrated in Figure 5.

As can be seen from Figure 5, the data reveal ambivalence among respondents regarding the economic use of immovable cultural heritage. The largest share of respondents selected the middle option (“neither agree nor disagree”), which indicates caution and restraint in taking a clear position. Nevertheless, it is evident that the proportion of those that agree or strongly agree with the statements is relatively high and ranges from about one-third to almost half of all responses for individual statements. This suggests that there is a considerable level of tolerance within the Slovenian public toward

	House in a secluded area or small village with up to 500 inhabitants	Village, small town, or market town with over 500 to 2,000 inhabitants	Town with over 2,000 to 4,000 inhabitants	Town with over 4,000 to 10,000 inhabitants	Town with over 10,000 to 50,000 inhabitants	Town with over 50,000 inhabitants (Ljubljana, Maribor)
State (ministries, national institutes, other state bodies)	↑ 26.2%	↑ 28.8%	→ 24.1%	→ 23.0%	→ 21.5%	↑ 36.3%
Municipal (city) authorities	↑ 32.9%	↑ 26.3%	↑ 35.2%	↑ 33.8%	↑ 32.6%	→ 22.2%
Interested residents, civil initiatives	↓ 11.0%	→ 13.7%	↓ 9.0%	↓ 12.2%	↓ 7.6%	↓ 9.9%
Neutral intermediary or mediator	↓ 9.8%	↓ 10.7%	↓ 9.0%	→ 14.2%	→ 13.2%	↓ 10.5%
Non-governmental organizations	↓ 1.8%	↓ 1.5%	↓ 1.4%	↓ 3.4%	↓ 2.1%	↓ 1.8%
Experts, scientists	→ 18.3%	→ 19.0%	→ 21.4%	→ 13.5%	→ 22.9%	→ 19.3%

Table 1. Economic use of immovable cultural heritage according to the type of settlement (Prompt: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements (according to the type of settlement).)

the economic exploitation of immovable cultural heritage, particularly in connection with tourism and entrepreneurship. At the same time, however, a non-negligible share of respondents remain skeptical or opposed to such interventions. The strongest support was expressed for the statement that crowding and noise are understandable consequences of adapting heritage for tourism, which indicates a pragmatic attitude toward development, meaning that respondents are willing to accept certain negative effects if they lead to greater economic benefits. For the statement indicating that it would be better to dedicate heritage to tourism development rather than preserve it untouched, the share of those that agreed was somewhat lower, suggesting that complete commercialization of heritage is not generally accepted. This is further confirmed by the high level of neutrality, reflecting the complexity of the issue and possible internal conflicts between valuing heritage as cultural capital and the desire for its economic development. Further cross-tabulation of data revealed differences in opinions among respondents from different types of settlements in Slovenia, concerning both the commercialization of immovable cultural heritage (Table 1) and its use in local areas for various types of activities (Table 2).

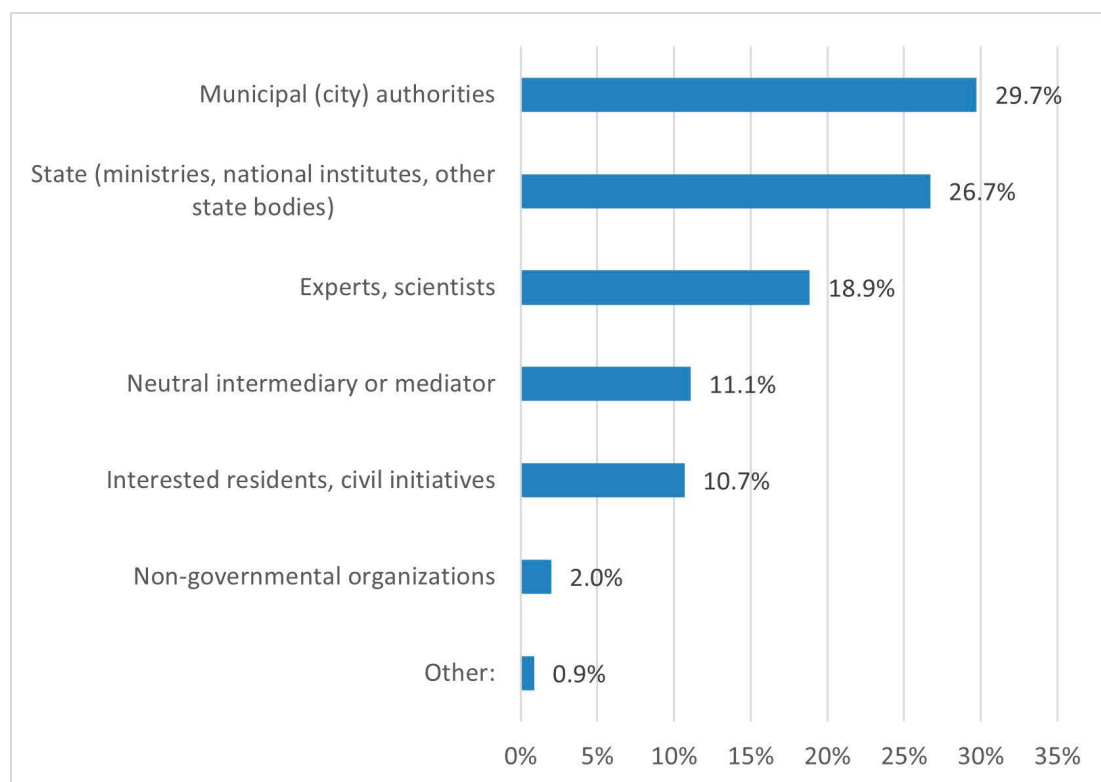
At the general level, the data in Table 1 indicate that attitudes toward the commercialization and involvement of entrepreneurial initiatives in the management of immovable cultural heritage vary according to the type of settlement. Residents of less densely populated areas (isolated houses, hamlets, and small villages) are more inclined toward the integration of public-private partnerships (PPPs) and the inclusion of economic activities such as tourism, hospitality, and entrepreneurship in heritage maintenance and use. These respondents expect that greater integration of heritage management with entrepreneurial activities will help optimize the maintenance of immovable cultural heritage and increase financial benefits for local communities. They primarily view heritage as an opportunity for economic development, job creation, and additional income. In contrast, residents of larger towns and cities (e.g., settlements with more than 50,000 inhabitants) tend to be more cautious and often express reservations toward intensive commercialization of heritage because they give priority to its cultural, symbolic, and identity-related roles. This difference also reflects diverging development priorities: in smaller localities, heritage is a key source of local vitality, whereas in

	House in a secluded area or small village with up to 500 inhabitants	Village, small town, or market town with over 500 to 2,000 inhabitants	Town with over 2,000 to 4,000 inhabitants	Town with over 4,000 to 10,000 inhabitants	Town with over 10,000 to 50,000 inhabitants	Town with over 50,000 inhabitants (Ljubljana, Maribor)
Galleries	3.82	3.88	4.09	4.05	4.10	4.25
Museums	4.10	4.12	4.18	4.22	4.22	4.40
Cinema performances	3.65	3.70	3.89	3.95	3.73	3.70
Catering activities	3.70	3.61	3.72	3.76	3.63	3.44
Hotels	3.49	3.40	3.63	3.66	3.46	3.28
Commercial activities	3.18	3.17	3.24	3.28	2.97	2.85
Offices	3.16	2.94	3.06	3.11	2.98	2.68
Craft and production activities	3.26	3.14	3.33	3.25	3.03	2.89
Theatres	3.83	3.77	4.11	3.99	3.99	4.10
Educational activities	4.06	3.95	4.15	4.14	3.96	4.09
Themed trails	4.23	4.19	4.30	4.26	4.12	4.30
Classical music concerts	3.85	3.97	4.13	4.04	4.03	4.13
Pop music concerts	3.64	3.67	3.81	3.78	3.54	3.49
Organization of sports events	3.71	3.56	3.75	3.76	3.32	3.25
Culinary festivals	3.86	3.91	3.97	4.06	3.79	3.66
Activities of local associations and communities	4.05	4.10	4.12	3.94	3.75	3.79
For the needs of municipal authorities	3.58	3.45	3.57	3.47	3.24	3.07
Congress tourism	3.40	3.41	3.66	3.67	3.42	3.28
Temporary exhibitions, installations, and displays	3.92	3.93	4.06	4.00	3.85	4.02
Round tables, lectures, and public forums	3.72	3.65	3.79	3.80	3.66	3.70
Nightclubs	2.34	2.40	2.32	2.38	2.41	2.19

Table 2. Use of immovable cultural heritage according to the type of settlement (Question: To what extent do you support the use of immovable cultural heritage in your locality for the following activities (according to the type of settlement)?)

urban environments it is mainly seen as a space for heritage protection and support for sustainable use. It is important to note that a certain degree of ambivalence prevails across all types of settlements because many respondents adopt neutral positions, indicating the complexity and sensitivity of heritage commercialization.

Table 2 complements other data, in which respondents from less densely populated areas (e.g., isolated houses, hamlets, or small villages) more frequently emphasize the need for further involvement and cooperation between the economic (private) sector and the management of immovable cultural heritage (e.g., various hospitality activities, hotels, commercial activities, offices, and craft and production activities) than respondents from more densely populated areas (settlements with over 50,000 inhabitants). This reinforces the view that, when examining the relationship between the commercialization (commodification) of immovable cultural heritage and its preservation or use for the development of cultural activities and the improvement of quality of life, one is dealing with a highly sensitive issue. The topic raises numerous questions concerning future development, which



6. Decision-making in cases of potential management disputes (Question: In your opinion, who should be responsible for decision-making in the event of potential disputes in the management or inappropriate treatment of immovable cultural heritage?)

can easily affect the expectations of specific groups within local communities and can potentially lead to conflicts (see, e.g., the numerous NIMBY, or “not in my backyard,” cases in Slovenia).²⁵ Because of these problematic aspects, most respondents prefer to take a neutral stance (a kind of status quo), which results in a contradictory position of ambivalent statements: a situation characterized by simultaneous support for (financial) dependence on the state and aspirations for greater financial benefits from commercialization, and at the same time aspirations for independence from the state in terms of decision-making on the management, use, modification and development of immovable cultural heritage. Further data from Table 2 support these interpretations because they place municipal and state authorities in a central position regarding judgements on potential disputes in the management or inappropriate treatment of immovable cultural heritage.

Unlike other public opinion surveys,²⁶ which focus on broader developmental areas (e.g., mobility, infrastructure development, sustainable development, etc.) and place experts and scientists in key decision-making positions, in the case of the panel survey on management and use of immovable cultural heritage, the municipality and the state are perceived as the most important actors.²⁷ These data can be interpreted as a result of the strong connection between local identity and heritage,

²⁵ Dvornik Perhavec and Kamnik, “From Resistance to Acceptance.”

²⁶ Uršič et al., *Končno poročilo o rezultatih*; Hočevár et al., *Prostorske in okoljske vrednote*.

²⁷ Uršič et al., *Vloga nepremične kulturne dediščine*.

which manifests in a particular form at the local level following the idea that every place has its own distinctive features that make it recognizable and unique in relation to other places, local communities, or the state. The consequence of this strong sense of uniqueness of place is also exceptionally strong support for localness (localism) and a high level of local aspiration for empowerment in potential heritage management. This stance aligns well with the position of the state, which acts in the background as the key financial supporter and therefore holds substantial power in adjudicating disputes related to the management or inappropriate handling of immovable cultural heritage. In contrast to more general national development issues, which tend to appear relatively abstract and distant (i.e., “out of sight, out of mind”), the issue of immovable cultural heritage, through its physical presence and embeddedness in place, is perceived as an explicitly local matter—one about which the local community desires to have the decisive voice.

How civil society sees the role of formal authorities in the management of immovable cultural heritage is an important element of governance models, which can be either more vertical (hierarchical) or horizontal in terms of distribution of power. The character of the relationship between civil society and formal authorities largely affects how heritage is managed and reflects the value system concerning the use and development of immovable cultural heritage in specific places. In terms of this relationship between the public and formal authorities, it should be emphasized that, in the case of Slovenia, most respondents understand it as a threefold structure—as a cross-relation between the local community, municipality, and state. At the local level, the municipality is regarded as part of formal authority, whereas, in the relationship between the state and the municipality, the municipality is viewed as part of the local community and thus representing local interests. This threefold structure highlights the strong significance of localism and new localism in Slovenia, in which the state is often perceived as an external element and the municipality as an element in between, depending on the given situation. In such unclear, chaotic circumstances, local interests have the edge and sometimes prevail over the needs of broader society. This tendency is also visible in Table 3, in which respondents’ answers regarding decision-making in cases of disputes are presented according to the type of settlement.

	House in a secluded area or small village with up to 500 inhabitants	Village, small town, or market town with over 500 to 2,000 inhabitants	Town with over 2,000 to 4,000 inhabitants	Town with over 4,000 to 10,000 inhabitants	Town with over 10,000 to 50,000 inhabitants	Town with over 50,000 inhabitants (Ljubljana, Maribor)
State (ministries, national institutes, other state bodies)	↑ 26,2%	↑ 28,8%	→ 24,1%	→ 23,0%	→ 21,5%	↑ 36,3%
Municipal (city) authorities	↑ 32,9%	↑ 26,3%	↑ 35,2%	↑ 33,8%	↑ 32,6%	→ 22,2%
Interested residents, civil initiatives	↓ 11,0%	→ 13,7%	↓ 9,0%	↓ 12,2%	↓ 7,6%	↓ 9,9%
Neutral intermediary or mediator	↓ 9,8%	↓ 10,7%	↓ 9,0%	→ 14,2%	→ 13,2%	↓ 10,5%
Non-governmental organizations	↓ 1,8%	↓ 1,5%	↓ 1,4%	↓ 3,4%	↓ 2,1%	↓ 1,8%
Experts, scientists	→ 18,3%	→ 19,0%	→ 21,4%	→ 13,5%	→ 22,9%	→ 19,3%

Table 3. Decision-making in cases of potential management disputes according to the type of settlement (Question: In your opinion, who should be responsible for decision-making in the event of potential disputes in the management or inappropriate treatment of immovable cultural heritage, according to the type of settlement?)

Table 3 shows how respondents from various settlement types voice differences in opinions regarding who should have the key role in adjudicating disputes over heritage management. In smaller settlements (e.g., isolated houses, hamlets, or small villages), the greatest support is given to the municipality because residents perceive the local government to be the closest representative of their interests and an actor that best understands local circumstances. The data also indicate that more densely populated areas tend to support a stronger role of the state, whereas less densely populated areas show greater support for the role of municipalities in dispute resolution. Unlike the findings that showed that rural areas are more associated with the approval of commercialization (i.e., introduction of economic activities in heritage management), in the case of decision-making the situation is reversed, with rural areas leaning more toward the effects of local protection and prevention of interference in internal local matters.

Based on the data presented, with regard to decision-making processes, less densely populated areas can be more strongly associated with the effects of old localism, whereas more densely populated areas can be linked with the tendencies of new localism. Similar can be said in relation to views on commodification or commercialization of heritage management, in which the situation is reversed, with rural and less densely populated areas turning toward new localism trends and urban areas turning towards localism. This divide and contradictory position in terms of different themes associated with heritage management reflects the tension between local particularistic values and universalistic global orientations present in Slovenian society, which is characterized by a general low-density of population and a dispersed settlement system with a small number of large cities and a large number of minor settlements.²⁸ In smaller settlements, social spaces are more often shaped by parochial values, based on close social ties among individuals (e.g., acquaintances and neighbors). These bonds are formed and renewed through everyday interactions and shared belonging.²⁹ Such values tend to protect local communities from external influences, which often leads to resistance to universal approaches that are characterized by the loosening of local hierarchical structures and a greater emphasis on individualization.³⁰

Despite the occasional presence of elements of new localism in both less and more densely populated areas, the common foundation in both contexts is a shared ambivalence toward the management of immovable cultural heritage. Each group of stakeholders seeks or advocates for particular advantages in heritage governance that bring quick benefits in terms of a potentially improved nearby area, sociopolitical standing, or financial gain. This is not about pursuing broader social or developmental traits, but rather about incrementalist approaches aimed at achieving short-term beneficial effects. For example, in the context of developing entrepreneurship in relation to immovable cultural heritage, areas with lower population density may seem to advocate for elements of new localism, but detailed data also show weaker links with high culture and sustainable development orientations. Similar ambivalences can be observed in more densely populated areas, indicating a strong presence of localisms with occasional elements of new localism. This mixing of both tendencies, without clear differentiation between rural and urban areas, corresponds to the structure of the Slovenian urban system, characterized by a high degree of settlement dispersion, a small number of

²⁸ Mlinar, *Individuacija in globalizacija*; Uršič and Hočevar, *Protiurbanost kot način življenja*; Uršič, "Urbanisation History of Slovenia;" Uršič, "Immovable Cultural Heritage."

²⁹ Lofland, *The Public Realm*, 10–11.

³⁰ Uršič and Hočevar, *Protiurbanost kot način življenja*.

larger towns, and the absence of strong urban cores (million-plus cities) typical of other countries. These spatial structures in Slovenia partially overlap with specific value systems, which have been described in greater detail in the literature.³¹

Conclusions

This article analyses the perceptions of different groups of stakeholders regarding the use, management, and development of immovable cultural heritage in Slovenia. The data show that, within the Slovenian context, there are significant discrepancies between the wishes of individual stakeholder groups and the possibilities for their practical implementation from the perspective of municipal and state structures. Moreover, discrepancies also exist within individual stakeholder groups, where ambivalent situations arise and support may shift toward certain measures while their practical implementation is simultaneously rejected.

These inconsistencies are closely linked to specific elements of (new) localism, which both hinder and promote the realization of a more balanced preservation and development of immovable cultural heritage in Slovenia. At the micro (local) level, certain elements of localism actually obstruct actions that could lead to the faster development of local cultural, social, and economic capacities related to heritage management. At the macro level, the formal system of cooperation in heritage management either does not allow or fails to successfully establish mechanisms for adequate stakeholder inclusion in heritage governance processes. It is important to emphasize that the problem of obstruction or the inhibition of optimization in heritage management within local communities is not intentional, but rather contextually triggered (*sui generis*). From this perspective, it is a consequence of a deficient systemic institutional structure, which, given its capacities, deals with heritage management at the local level mostly sporadically and incrementally, and does not support long-term, recurring consultative processes among various local stakeholders. In this regard, the Slovenian case is a typical example of a still “immature sociopolitical system”³² that in principle may advocate public development and stakeholder cooperation, yet lacks adequate support mechanisms and financial structures for detailed implementation.³³ Within this constellation, local communities employ forms of old localism as a “weapon” (materialized in the form of NIMBY initiatives) to prevent undesired consequences for their current lifestyles or overall quality of life. Elements of new localism (e.g., recognizing and implementing global economic potentials of immovable cultural heritage, emphasizing content creation within heritage sites through cooperation, participation while integrating principles of sustainable development, etc.) are indeed present, but, due to systemic shortcomings and obstructions, they fail to evolve further and thus do not possess sufficient transformative capacity to activate or force progress and implement a more sustainable heritage developmental agenda at the local level. These shortcomings include the inability of the political and institutional system to recognize and create a trustworthy environment that makes it possible to achieve more balanced outcomes that would satisfy all stakeholders. These problematic aspects suggest that local actors are not sufficiently equipped with information and know-how or

³¹ Uršič and Hočevar, *Protiurbanost kot način življenja*.

³² Kos, *Praktična sociologija*, 21.

³³ Coombe and Weiss, “Neoliberalism, Heritage Regimes;” Cantillon and Baker, “Career Volunteering.”

do not have the financial, institutional, and human resource capacities to understand and address the challenges they face.

Based on the findings presented, it is possible to formulate some general public policy recommendations for cultural heritage management in Slovenia:

1. Institutionalization of continuous participatory governance. To counteract the impact of one-off consultations, a new, repeatable consultation cycle for immovable-heritage decisions should be standardized. It should provide clear rules on who is included (e.g., residents, owners, NGOs, entrepreneurs, and experts) and how the input produced is used.
2. Adopting a more values-based management framework in municipal and state practice. Before major interventions, a thorough preemptive accumulation of data and analysis on heritage values (e.g., identity, aesthetics, everyday use, social cohesion, economic potential, and perceived burdens) should be collected and translated into management objectives and indicators. This would directly link public perceptions to evaluation of protection regimes and help prevent policies that over-privilege either market logic (over-commodification) or rigid protection (development lock-in).
3. Accelerating maturation of the sociopolitical system in heritage management. Due to an immature sociopolitical system in which division of responsibilities between municipalities and the state allows “blame shifting” and stalled decisions, it is necessary to formulate empowered third-party (e.g., regional) mediators. These mediators should have the capacity to both build municipal capacity and provide support for implementation of specific state projects involving immovable cultural heritage.
4. Creating a balanced heritage-use strategic policy that is not only based on adaptive reuse but also protects livability in local environments. In cases of strong pressures for commercialization of immovable cultural heritage, a clear set of criteria regarding binding mitigation and benefit-sharing measures should be established (such as monitoring/enforcement plans and reinvestment of a portion of revenues into local services and heritage maintenance) so that local communities experience tangible gains rather than only costs.

To conclude, this research has identified some key factors and influences that guide the use, management, and governance of immovable cultural heritage. However, there is clear evidence that more in-depth studies are needed to explore how the necessary changes can be implemented—through a combined analysis of the legislative system, the functioning of institutions, analysis of social and cultural capital, and analysis of the value system in Slovenia in relation to heritage studies. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of how immovable cultural heritage is perceived and valued in various social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. It also provides detailed information on relations between various stakeholders at the local, regional, and state levels, which opens opportunities to produce more informed decisions on how to improve existing practices in pursuit of more balanced heritage management. The research thus emphasizes the importance of a holistic and participatory approach to heritage governance. The interplay between historical preservation, economic development, and social well-being requires careful guidance, and the insights from the study can inform future spatial planning strategies for managing immovable cultural heritage in ways that respect both the past and the future. By establishing inclusive dialogue and integrating diverse perspectives, communities can ensure that their cultural heritage remains a source of pride, identity, and inspiration for future generations.

Limitations of the study

Several methodological limitations should be acknowledged. The study was based on a non-probability quota sample drawn from active members of the JazVem.si online panel. Although stratification by region, sex, age, and education and subsequent RIM weighting were applied to improve demographic balance, the absence of random selection means that full population representativeness cannot be guaranteed.

In addition, the use of an online panel may introduce self-selection bias because individuals that participate in web surveys may differ systematically from the general population, particularly in terms of digital access, civic engagement, and interest in public issues. Finally, the cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported attitudes limit causal interpretation and may be influenced by social desirability effects.

These limitations do not invalidate the findings, but they suggest caution in generalizing the results and highlight the need for complementary methodological approaches, including qualitative case studies, longitudinal research, and probability-based sampling designs in future studies.

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Percepcija upravljanja nepremične kulturne dediščine v Sloveniji in vloga (novega) lokalizma

Povzetek

Vsaka sprememba pri upravljanju, uporabi in urejanju nepremične kulturne dediščine vodi do ostrih razprav med različnimi deležniki v lokalnih skupnostih. To kaže na izjemno vlogo in pomen nepremične kulturne dediščine za družbo in kakovost življenja na splošno. Pomen dediščine se močno odraža v lokalnih okoljih, ki so zaradi tesne družbene povezanosti še posebej občutljiva in vezana na identiteto, kulturne in zgodovinske značilnosti nepremične dediščine. Zaradi občutljivosti procesov, ki si prizadevajo uravnovežiti interese različnih skupin v zvezi z nepremično kulturno dediščino, lahko vsako morebitno napačno dejanje vpliva na lokalni razvoj in znatno zmanjša socialno kohezijo v skupnosti. Zaradi tega se mora vsako načrtovano spremembo v upravljanju kulturne dediščine temeljito preučiti z vidika različnih družbenih skupin. Čeprav informacije, pridobljene z raziskavami javnega mnenja, razkrivajo številna mnenja in stališča o upravljanju nepremične kulturne dediščine, razkrivajo tudi nekatere na videz paradoksalne situacije, ko respondenti hkrati sprejemajo in zavračajo določene razvojne smeri. Te teme so v članku ponazorjene prek analize podatkov iz projekta HEI-TRANSFORM, ki je bil izveden v obdobju od 2022 do 2026. Metodologija temelji na analizi velike panelne ankete (velikost vzorca (N) = 1150 oseb) izvedene na območju Slovenije v letu 2024. Podatki iz panelne raziskave so dopolnjeni s sekundarnimi podatki iz obstoječe literature ter informacijami iz različnih raziskav, ki zajemajo arhitekturno dediščino, arheološka najdišča in drugo reprezentativno nepremično kulturno dediščino v Sloveniji. Pomembno je tudi poudariti pomen analize specifičnih posebnosti upravljanja nepremične kulturne dediščine v Sloveniji. V zvezi s tem se v članku domneva, da so pobude upravljanja nepremične kulturne dediščine v Sloveniji pogosto povezane s pojavom »lokalizma«, ki ga pogosto opisujejo kot rezultat hierarhičnih, statičnih in togih lokalnih omrežij.

Lokalizme v Sloveniji izzivajo trendi »novega lokalizma«, ki nakazujejo bolj fleksibilno uporabo lokalnih elementov na načine, ki koristijo tako lokalni kot širši (globalni) družbi. Analiza kompleksnega dialektičnega odnosa med (tradicionalnim, avtarkičnim) lokalizmom in novim lokalizmom v kontekstu upravljanja dediščine je še posebej pomembna za potencialni razvoj Slovenije zaradi teritorialno-političnih posebnosti. Z preseganjem lokalizmov oziroma integracijo novega lokalizma se skuša obstoječi razvoj nadgraditi na način, ki vključuje lokalne interese, hkrati pa zagotavlja uravnotežen napredek v pogojih globalne medsebojne povezanosti in vse večje izpostavljenosti zunanjim kulturnim vplivom. S primerjavo različnih pogledov na možnosti upravljanja dediščine avtorja v članku izpostavljata ključne elemente, priložnosti, ovire in izzive, ki bi jih oblikovalci politik in strokovnjaki za dediščino lahko obravnavali, da bi povečali učinkovitost politik in ukrepov v zvezi z razvojem in ohranjanjem nepremične kulturne dediščine v Sloveniji.