

MANAGING CHANGES: THE HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Our environment is continuously modernised to accommodate new needs and new ideas, but at the same time it is also where we find much of our cultural identity. Large highways are planned next to Stonehenge and massive dams are constructed in the Near East. How do we consider these complex changes as objectively as possible? The Centre for Global Heritage and Development uses The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) to provide valuable insights.



Developing the Heritage Impact Assessment

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) registered a significant growth in the number of State of Conservation Reports (SCRs) in the early 2000's. These SCRs describe potential threats to World Heritage Sites and were mainly triggered by an explosive increase in the number of large-scale construction and infrastructure works.

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The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), dating from the 1970's, contained a small chapter on *heritage*, but this fell under the responsibility of geotechnical engineers. This no longer matched current developments in heritage management and led to the development of the HIA.

The HIA is a method used by The Centre for Global Heritage and Development to predict both positive and negative effects of a new policy or (infrastructural) development in relation to existing heritage values. It provides advice on how to further enhance the positive effects and maybe even more importantly: how to avoid, limit or compensate the negative effects of possible changes.

Encompassing all heritage values

There are already a number of mandatory measures that have been taken to protect *archaeological heritage*. Based on the Valletta Treaty entities must first have desk research done to determine whether archaeological values may be affected, possibly leading to field research. But large-scale changes in the built environment or infrastructure can also affect other, above ground or intangible heritage values. The development can affect the integrity of a monument (i.e. to what extent the monument is still intact after development), sightlines can be disrupted or the authentic atmosphere of a location can be severely diminished. Furthermore, intangible heritage can be affected by a development; it can cause the loss of rituals and celebrations, or artisanal knowledge. The HIA looks at cumulative impacts; one new high-rise building may not cause much damage to the monument, but it does if that one flat means the prelude to more high-rise buildings.

The HIA goes beyond just looking at potential effects on archaeological values, it takes *all heritage values* into account: archaeology, built, maritime, intangible heritage and cultural landscape. For each identified heritage value, a physical carrier is designated (the so-called 'attribute') and systematically assessed whether these attributes would be affected or changed, to what extent this is acceptable or not. In addition, there is an important role for stakeholder participation.

It is important to note that a HIA is not a conservation tool. The HIA is pro-development, but in a conscientious way, taking into account the historical and social values of a location.

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Benefits from the HIA

Ideally, a HIA would be part of the whole list of mandatory impact assessments for developments. That is not the case *yet*. However, the HIA gives consideration to the potential negative implications of an intervention in the early stages of the process, meaning plans can often still be changed without large (financial) consequences. A plan may be adapted, or the negative impact can be reduced or mitigated. Any positive impact on the heritage will be increased when possible.

Because stakeholders have the opportunity to express their interests, their opinion can be included in the decision-making process. Leading to an increase in local support for the proposed development. The results of a HIA are made available to the general public. The HIA can increase the knowledge about local heritage values and create the opportunity to use heritage as a source of inspiration. In short, by having a Heritage Impact Assessment done by the Global Centre for Heritage and Development in conjunction with and the other mandatory assessments, a developer or policymaker can cover risks and built towards a more objective and rooted proposition.

The Centre for Global Heritage and Development

The Centre for Global Heritage and Development is one of nine joint multidisciplinary centres combining experts from Leiden University, Delft University of Technology and Erasmus University Rotterdam in the so-called *LDE alliance*. The Centre initiates, stimulates and facilitates interdisciplinary and innovative research on heritage in its past, present and future social context. Staff at the Centre for Global Heritage and Development is trained in the HIA method in accordance with ICOMOS standards. Please contact us if you are interested to hear more about this.

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