Balancing Progress and Preservation of Heritage: Dilemmas in the Historic Cities of Bahrain

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Abstract

It is now known that modernization affects the cultural and architectural heritage of cities like Manama and Muharraq. With rapid urban growth, traditional spaces are being reshaped or replaced, raising concerns about losing valuable cultural identity. In this context, this research examines the challenges faced by historic urban centers of Bahrain. It investigates the ongoing dilemma between conserving historical environments and accommodating contemporary urban needs.

The research employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to gather data. Surveys were conducted among 150 participants representing residents, business owners, youth, and municipal staff. In-depth interviews were held with professionals and community members, while the Pearl Path project was studied to evaluate its impact on heritage conservation. Observations during major cultural events, such as Muharraq Nights and Manama Nights were conducted to gain insights into public engagement with heritage spaces. Secondary sources, including government planning documents, supported the field data.

The research shows that the majority of the participants value heritage preservation and are concerned about its erosion due to modern constructions. In conclusion, the paper recommends adopting urban design strategies that incorporate traditional elements, promoting inclusive urban planning, and supporting adaptive reuse. It concludes that cultural heritage should be seen as a vital asset in shaping the sustainable urban future of Bahrain.

Keywords: Heritage Preservation, Urban Development, Cultural Identity, Sustainable Urban Planning, Community Engagement, Bahrain.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, the Gulf region has witnessed a surge in urban development, driven largely by economic diversification, modernization, and increased global interconnectivity. In Bahrain, this rapid transformation has significantly altered the urban fabric, particularly in historically rich areas such as Manama and Muharraq. These cities are not only central to the urban history of Bahrain but are also home to architectural and cultural legacies that reflect the nation's identity shaped over centuries through trade, especially during the peak of the pearling industry.

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However, the accelerated pace of modernization has introduced complex challenges. Historic districts are increasingly threatened by new developments that often overlook the cultural and social value of existing heritage. While initiatives such as the UNESCO-designated Pearl Path signal recognition of the need for conservation, the broader planning environment frequently favors economic imperatives over cultural sustainability. Public events like Manama Nights and Muharraq Nights show a growing interest in heritage among the citizens and the visitors alike, yet these efforts are often temporary and lack integration into long-term urban strategies.

This tension between preserving cultural heritage and accommodating urban growth demands critical investigation. Understanding how heritage can coexist with modernization is essential not only for safeguarding national identity but also for informing inclusive and resilient urban planning. In this context, this research ascertains the perceptions of people about preservation of heritage and modern developments. Its aim is to explore how Bahrain can strike a balance between development and preservation. Its objectives are:

1. To examine public and expert perspectives,
2. To identify gaps in current conservation practices,
3. To evaluate existing policies, and
4. To propose recommendations that harmonize heritage preservation with sustainable urban growth.

Theoretical Background

This study adopts a multidisciplinary framework that integrates four complementary theoretical foundations: sustainable development, cultural landscape theory, urbanization theory, and place attachment theory. These concepts collectively inform the analysis of how urban growth strategies intersect with the need to preserve the historical urban areas of Bahrain.

It is the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) that articulates sustainable development theory, that promotes a development approach which seeks to fulfill current demands without diminishing future capacities. Within the urban heritage context, this theory encourages strategies that balance growth with the protection of irreplaceable cultural assets. It regards heritage not as a passive backdrop but as a strategic resource essential to fostering inclusive, resilient, and identity-driven development.

In contrast, Sauer (1925) articulates cultural landscape theory, which interprets urban heritage sites as environments shaped through continuous human interactions rather than static relics. This perspective aligns with the nature of the historic districts of Bahrain, where daily life continues within architecturally significant spaces. It reinforces the idea that cultural heritage evolves alongside its community, remaining relevant through lived experience and adaptive use.

Similarly, the urbanization theory contributes a structural understanding of rapid urban expansion, particularly within the Gulf cities experiencing transformations due to oil economies and globalization (Elsheshtawy, 2011). It provides insights into the forces behind planning decisions, land-use changes, and the prioritization of infrastructure over cultural continuity. In fact, this framework helps explain the ongoing friction between large-scale development ambitions and heritage-sensitive urbanism in Bahrain.

Place attachment theory emphasizes the emotional, social, and symbolic relationships people build with meaningful spaces. In historical urban contexts, this theory highlights how communities associate built environments with personal identity, collective memory, and social cohesion. It stresses that any conservation strategy must recognize and protect the intangible values embedded in place-based experiences (Pendlebury, 2013).

By combining these perspectives, this study reframes heritage not as a constraint but as a foundational component of progressive urbanism. This framework supports planning models that value cultural continuity as a vital dimension of sustainable development and community well-being.

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Review of Literature

Recent scholarship on urban development in the Gulf region reveals growing concerns about the impact of modernization on cultural heritage. Researchers consistently emphasize the tensions between rapid urbanization and the preservation of traditional architecture, community values and place identity. In particular, Bahrain emerges as a critical site for examining this dilemma due to its dense historic cores, active modernization agenda, and symbolic heritage assets like the UNESCO-listed Pearling Path.

Al Buainain (1999) documents the transformation of residential and commercial land in Gulf cities, including the patterns of urban growth that lead to the erosion of traditional spatial forms. He explains that planning policies often prioritize economic expansion over historical continuity, leading to the marginalization of older urban quarters. While his work focuses on Qatar, similar structural patterns appear in Bahrain, where oil wealth continues to drive modern development agendas.

Elsheshtawy (2011) explores this conflict further, showing how the Gulf cities attempt to modernize while simultaneously commodifying their heritage. He argues that the rise of city branding and tourism strategies leads to a "museumification" of historical areas, where preservation becomes selective and largely symbolic. This notion aligns with the recent findings in Bahrain, where heritage initiatives such as Manama and Muharraq Nights serve more as cultural showcases than as long-term conservation mechanisms.

Boussaa (2017) critically evaluates the heritage policies of Bahrain and identifies several persistent challenges. He points out that while the official discourse emphasizes the importance of heritage, actual policy implementation remains fragmented. According to his findings, preservation efforts often exclude local community participation, which weakens both their legitimacy and effectiveness. He states, "Heritage conservation tends to be imposed rather than negotiated, limiting its socio-cultural impact" (Boussaa,2017:41). His work contributes a key insight into the governance-related aspects of preservation, particularly the imbalance between top-down planning and grassroots engagement.

Pendlebury (2013) offers a theoretical lens through his analysis of "authorised heritage discourse," where institutional definitions of heritage often dominate at the expense of community interpretations. He notes that such frameworks result in a narrow understanding of value, primarily focused on architectural and economic dimensions, while neglecting emotional, symbolic, and everyday meanings attached to place. His argument is especially relevant in Bahrain, where heritage zones undergo visual restoration but rarely accommodate original uses or long-term community presence.

Another important contribution comes from the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), which introduces the foundational concept of sustainable development. It establishes that cultural resources, including heritage, must be treated as finite elements essential to intergenerational equity. Though not focused specifically on urban design, this framework heavily influences urban sustainability models and underpins the call for heritage-sensitive planning. Its relevance becomes clearer in light of empirical studies showing that unchecked urban growth in historic cities which often leads to irreversible cultural loss.

Carl Sauer's (1925) cultural landscape theory frames heritage not as a fixed set of objects but as a lived environment shaped by human interaction. This perspective inspires more dynamic approaches to urban conservation, where heritage adapts over time while retaining meaning. His theory informs several recent analyses of the evolving cityscapes of the Gulf, positioning culture as an active force within spatial planning rather than a passive element requiring protection.

Moreover, more recent studies begin to focus on the socio-psychological dimensions of heritage. Place attachment theory, for example, receives increasing attention as a way to assess how residents and visitors connect emotionally with historic spaces. Scholars note that these emotional bonds often form the foundation for public support of preservation policies. Indeed, when people perceive heritage areas as part of their identity or memory, they tend to advocate for protection and sustainable use (Pendlebury, 2013).

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Despite these contributions, several knowledge gaps remain. First, very few studies investigate how heritage and development might function in harmony rather than opposition. Much of the literature portrays the relationship as inherently conflictual, without exploring integrative strategies. Second, existing research often excludes direct input from local residents, who live and work within heritage zones. Their voices remain underrepresented in both scholarly discussions and policy formation. Lastly, while the economic benefits of heritage such as tourism and local enterprise are acknowledged, these benefits are rarely contextualized within broader urban development plans.

In fact, this review reveals that while the academic field offers strong theoretical and critical perspectives on urban heritage, more empirical, community-focused research is necessary. Bahrain presents a compelling case where official efforts and community values frequently diverge. Thus, a more inclusive and locally grounded approach supported by theory and real-world data remains essential to bridging the gap between preservation and progress.

Research Methodology

This study applies a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative strategies to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how urban development interacts with heritage conservation in the historic districts of Bahrain. The research progresses through five main data collection methods, each selected to address specific aspects of the study objectives and to enable cross-verification of the findings.

1. Surveys (Quantitative Approach)

The first stage involves the distribution of a structured questionnaire to 150 individuals connected to historic areas such as Muharraq and Manama. The survey captures a range of stakeholder perspectives including residents, business owners, youth, and municipal staff ensuring demographic diversity across age and occupation. The questionnaire includes both rating-scale and multiple-choice questions. Topics explore public attitudes toward the importance of heritage, reactions to modern construction in historical zones, personal involvement in preservation activities, and opinions on cultural identity. The data are collected over two weeks in May 2025. Responses are recorded digitally and later categorized for statistical analysis.

2. Interviews (Qualitative Approach)

To complement the numerical data, semi-structured interviews are conducted with urban planners, architects, historians, and long-term residents. A total of ten participants were selected from key locations such as the Manama Souq and the Muharraq Souq. The interviews requested the participants to elaborate on their views freely, while still following a set of guiding themes. The researcher used an interview guide but encouraged open-ended responses to capture deeper insights. Audio recordings are not used; instead, notes are taken by hand during and after the conversations to preserve the natural flow of dialogue and reduce participant discomfort. Topics include the perceived conflicts between development and identity, views on cultural events like Manama Nights, and the role of government in the preservation efforts.

3. Case Study Analysis

The research includes an in-depth examination of the Pearl Path initiative in Muharraq, a national-scale urban heritage project. Planning documents, project evaluations, and community feedback are reviewed to understand the outcomes. This analysis helps assess how heritage-driven projects function in practice, what urban improvements they support, and what limitations such as gentrification or loss of community-use they present. This secondary source data is collected alongside the interviews.

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4. Observational Research

The researcher attended two major public events: Muharraq Nights and Manama Nights to observe spontaneous community interactions with heritage spaces. The method follows a non-participant observation approach, where the researcher does not engage directly but observes from a distance. An observation guide is prepared to track the patterns in visitor behavior, including engagement with installations, guided tours, emotional responses, and group composition. Observations are recorded manually in a field journal, and no photographs or video recordings are taken to respect privacy. Occasionally, layout sketches are drawn to document spatial dynamics and active zones.

5. Secondary Data Review

Government planning reports and demographic statistics are consulted to support the findings. These records provide context regarding policy implementation and land-use trends in heritage districts.

Through this multi-layered approach, the study gathers a balance of statistical evidence and nuanced personal narratives. Each method aligns with the research objective of exploring how the modern developments interact with cultural preservation and how communities experience this balance in everyday life.

Findings

This section presents the core findings of the research using a combination of primary and secondary sources. The data integrates insights from the public surveys, expert interviews, case study assessments, observational research, and official documentation. The addition of photographs taken during heritage events further illustrates how the community members interact with cultural spaces, offering visual validation of qualitative insights.

Survey Results

The quantitative survey captures prevailing community attitudes toward urban heritage conservation across the historic areas of Bahrain. A total of 150 participants are surveyed from districts such as Manama and Muharraq.

Demographic Overview
Age Range: 18–65 years
Gender: 55% female, 45% male
Stakeholder Roles: 40% residents, 30% business owners, 20% youth, 10% municipal staff

The survey reveals the following.

Preservation Priority:
72% identify it as highly important.
15% offer moderate support.
13% view it as less essential.

Views on New Construction:
Negative: 50%
Neutral: 30%
Positive: 20%
Engagement in Heritage Activities:
40% report active involvement
60% have not participated directly

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Effect on Cultural Identity:
>   Negative: 60%
>   Neutral: 25%
>   Positive: 15%

Public Recommendations:
>   Integrate traditional design in modern projects (55 mentions)
>   Enforce protective regulations (40 mentions)
>   Encourage local participation (35 mentions)
>   Promote adaptive reuse (20 mentions)

Interpretation
>   The responses above emphasize widespread concern over the erosion of cultural authenticity, with a majority urging for more inclusive and responsive preservation strategies.

Expert Interviews
>   Semi-structured interviews involve ten stakeholders comprising architects, planners, historians, and long-term residents of heritage-rich areas.

Key themes that emerged were as follows.
- Persistent conflict between economic ambitions and cultural values
- Temporary nature of awareness events like *Manama Nights*
- Observable decline in the traditional living environments

Notable Observations
- "The government promotes heritage for tourism but may not fully address the needs of residents."
- "New architecture should respect the spirit of the past."

Interpretation
>   These narratives underscore the inadequacy of top-down planning and highlight the desire of the community for more meaningful involvement in shaping development frameworks.

5.3 Case Study: The Pearl Path
>   The Pearl Path in Muharraq exemplifies a high-profile heritage revitalization effort, intended to balance conservation with urban utility.

Findings
- Improved infrastructure and aesthetic enhancement.
- Boosted tourism appeal and international visibility.
- Local community displacement and limited consultation.

Interpretation
>   While the Pearling Path is successful in attracting attention, the project falls short in ensuring social equity. It underscores the necessity of grounding development within community-led frameworks.

5.4 Observational Fieldwork and Visual Documentation
>   Field observations conducted during *Muharraq Nights* (December 2024) and *Manama Nights* (March 2025) offer real-time understanding of public behavior in heritage contexts. These sessions last between two to three hours and align with peak attendance periods.

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Behavioral Insights
- Highest engagement seen at interactive exhibits (craft stations, storytelling corners)
- Families and international tourists display the most curiosity and interaction
- Visitor flow concentrates around illuminated and immersive installations

Photographic Evidence
To complement this analysis, original photographs captured during these events depict families, students, and tourists engaging positively with heritage displays. Images show:

- Children participating in traditional craft workshops (figure 1)
- Families attentively following guided walking tours (figure 2)
- Visitors photographing restored heritage facades (figure 3)
- Big crowds gathering for cultural performances (figure 4)

These visuals affirm findings from the observational guide and further highlight how cultural events when designed thoughtfully successfully bridge modern experiences with historical narratives.

Interpretation
Visual documentation reveals that cultural immersion, when combined with accessibility and interactivity, fosters a deep public connection with historic environments. Such outcomes validate the importance of maintaining emotional, educational, and social links in preservation planning.

5.5 Secondary Data Analysis
Government records and planning reports offer contextual support by detailing demographic and regulatory patterns within heritage districts. Key Findings are as follows.
- Shifts in land use from residential to commercial is ongoing
- Preservation policies are articulated but weakly enforced
- Cultural goals in national strategies often lack actionable enforcement plans

Interpretation
These trends align with both community perceptions and expert critiques, revealing an implementation gap between heritage policy and practice. Stronger governance mechanisms are necessary to align long-term urban development with cultural integrity.

5.6 Supporting Materials and Research Tools
The research is further informed by structured tools and supplemental materials:
- Survey forms ensuring consistency in quantitative responses (Fig. 5)
- Interview protocols to guide expert conversations (Fig. 6)
- Observation templates categorizing behavior by frequency and depth (Fig. 6)
- Photographs serving as visual ethnographic evidence
- Sketches and layout diagrams mapping visitor movement and hotspots (Fig. 7)
These resources collectively reinforce the validity of findings and demonstrate methodological rigor across data types.

Synthesis and Concluding Observations
This multi-method research provides a comprehensive understanding of the tension between progress and preservation. Quantitative data establishes a strong public preference for heritage integration. Qualitative narratives and visual evidence reveal emotional depth and demand for inclusive planning. The case study and secondary analysis identify structural barriers, while observational data, supported by photographs, confirms that cultural events can foster strong public ties to heritage when implemented as part of long-term, participatory urban strategies.

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Fig 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

These events trended on social media,
with hundreds posting videos.

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Source: Heritage Authority via a QR code for participants.

Analysis and Discussion

To examine the complex interaction between modern urban development and heritage preservation in Bahrain, this research organizes its data into thematic categories derived from both quantitative and qualitative sources. The integration of surveys, interviews, case studies, observations, and policy analysis allows for the identification of patterns in behavior, opinion, and cultural engagement, offering a grounded interpretation of how communities respond to heritage pressures in evolving urban contexts.

1. Quantitative Analysis: Survey Responses

A total of 150 respondents participate in the structured questionnaire. The sample includes 40% residents, 30% local business owners, 20% youth, and 10% municipal staff, offering a broad range of perspectives connected to heritage neighborhoods.

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A. Perceptions of Heritage Preservation Importance
Respondents are asked to rate how important they consider heritage preservation: The results are as follows.

Table 01: Importance of heritage preservation
Source: Survey

Response Level	Percentage
Very Important (5/5)	72%
Moderately Important (3–4)	15%
Less Important (1–2)	13%

As can be seen, an overwhelming majority (72%) indicates that public concern for preserving historical identity remains high. Cultural heritage is not only valued symbolically but seen as vital for community integrity.

B. Attitudes Toward New Development in Heritage Zones
Participants express diverse views on modern construction within historic areas:

Table 02: Responses and Respondents
Source: Survey

Response Type	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Negative	50%	75
Neutral	30%	45
Positive	20%	30

As can be seen, half of the participants hold a negative view toward new construction projects, indicating anxiety over the potential loss of cultural authenticity and disruption of traditional aesthetics.

C. Community Involvement in Heritage Activities

Table 03: People's Participation
Source: Survey

Participation	Percentage
Yes	40%
No	60%

The majority has not engaged in heritage initiatives, suggesting either limited awareness or lack of accessible participation mechanisms. This gap points to an opportunity for policy frameworks to become more inclusive and grassroots oriented.

D. Perceived Impact on Cultural Identity

Table 04: Impact on Community Identity
Source: Survey

Impact Type	Percentage
Negative	60%
Neutral	25%
Positive	15%

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As can be seen, a significant portion (60%) reports negative impacts of modern development on cultural identity. The erosion of traditional symbols and the rise of uniform architecture contribute to this sense of disconnection.

E. Community Recommendations (Open-ended)

The most frequent suggestions include:

- Blending traditional elements with modern architecture (55 mentions)
- Enforcement of heritage protection laws (40 mentions)
- Encouraging community involvement in planning (35 mentions)
- Adaptive reuse of historic buildings (20 mentions)

These responses suggest a demand for hybrid solutions that integrate old and new, and a strong call for participatory planning methods

2. Qualitative Analysis: Interview Themes

The insights from ten semi-structured interviews offer a nuanced understanding beyond numerical data. Thematic coding of handwritten interview notes reveals three recurring concerns:

A. Conflict Between Economic Priorities and Cultural Continuity
All interviewees mention a misalignment between development policies and heritage values. A senior planner states that, "development should complement the past, not replace it," emphasizing the need for cultural integration rather than cultural substitution.

B. Cultural Events as Short-Term Visibility
Eight participants recognize events like Manama Nights and Muharraq Nights as positive awareness tools, yet also express concern that these initiatives lack long-term strategy. Events serve a celebratory purpose but do not resolve the deeper issue of physical and social displacement.

C. Displacement of Traditional Communities
Seven respondents highlight the gentrification effect of new projects. Local vendors and families often vacate heritage areas due to rising rents and altered zoning. A resident from Manama laments that "the government focuses on tourism, not the people who live in these old towns."

These perspectives emphasize that successful heritage planning requires more than architectural restoration it demands cultural inclusion and policy alignment.

3. Case Study Reflection: The Pearl Path
The Pearl Path project in Muharraq functions as a national symbol of heritage-driven development. Document analysis reveals a dual outcome as follows.

Table 05: Outcomes, Impact and Observations
Source: Survey

Impact Category	Positive Outcomes	Negative Observations
Public Space	Improved walkability and tourism appeal	Limited access for local vendors
Aesthetic Restoration	High-quality architectural rehabilitation	Commercialized visual identity
Community Engagement	Museum programming and guided tours	Inadequate consultation with residents

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While the project improves visual and economic appeal, it tends to exclude long-standing community voices. The path attracts visitors but alters the everyday life of those historically rooted in the area.

4. Observational Analysis: Cultural Events

During Muharraq Nights and Manama Nights, observational data focuses on real-time public engagement with heritage spaces. A prepared observation guide categorizes interaction types:

Table 06: Visitor Behaviour
Source: Survey

Visitor Behavior	Frequency
Taking photos	High
Participating in guided tours	Moderate
Conversing with local guides	Moderate
Ignoring installations	Low
Engaging in performances	High

The highest engagement is observed in interactive and sensory-rich experiences—craft stations, music performances, and illuminated exhibits draw attention and curiosity, particularly from families and tourists. School groups show educational interest, while older visitors often express nostalgia

Visitor movement generally gravitates toward aesthetically vibrant zones, suggesting that visual design and ambiance play a key role in attracting attention. This finding highlights the importance of not just preserving buildings but also curating the environment in a way that invites public interaction.

5. Triangulation and Interpretation

By cross-referencing surveys, interviews, observations, and case analysis, several patterns become clear:

- The public strongly values heritage but feels excluded from decision-making.
- Government-led efforts often focus on aesthetics and tourism, while community participation remains low.
- Cultural events generate temporary enthusiasm, but lack policy integration.
- Visual and experiential elements play a key role in heritage engagement, suggesting that future strategies should combine physical conservation with emotional storytelling and interactive public programming.

The analysis confirms that Bahrain's approach to heritage preservation reflects both promising efforts and critical challenges. While restoration projects and cultural events raise visibility, they do not always ensure sustainable community inclusion. Data points toward the need for bottom-up engagement, stronger enforcement mechanisms, and planning models that allow heritage to evolve without erasure. By understanding how people interact with and feel about their heritage, urban strategies can shift from symbolic preservation to functional, inclusive conservation that keeps the past alive within the future city.

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Conclusion

The research findings illustrate a clear and measurable gap between the intentions of heritage preservation efforts and the lived experiences of those affected by urban development in the historic districts of Bahrain. Through an integrated analysis of survey responses, interview themes, case study reflections, and direct observation, the study reaches several grounded conclusions.

First, community value for heritage preservation remains consistently high, as reflected in survey data where 72% of respondents rank it as very important. However, this expressed value is not mirrored in active participation, with 60% reporting no involvement in heritage-related initiatives. This contrast highlights a significant disconnection between appreciation and access—people recognize the cultural importance of heritage but appear to lack meaningful opportunities to engage in its preservation.

Second, public attitudes toward modern development in heritage zones lean strongly toward concern or resistance. Half of all the survey participants express negative views on the new constructions in historic areas, while 60% believe that such developments harm cultural identity. This pattern is reinforced by interviews with local planners and residents who describe the erosion of traditional character and the displacement of communities. These responses demonstrate that, from a grassroots perspective, development projects often neglect social and cultural continuity in favor of economic and visual appeal.

Third, findings from the Pearl Path case study and observational data at Manama and Muharraq Nights reveal that while restoration projects and cultural programming increase visibility and attract tourism, they do not always foster sustained community integration. Public interactions at these events center on visual and experiential elements—such as illuminated displays, live performances, and guided tours—but the temporary nature of these events does not contribute to long-term engagement or influence urban policy. Moreover, the Pearl Path project, though celebrated for enhancing aesthetics and accessibility, limits commercial activity for the local vendors and lacks adequate community input during planning.

Fourth, a clear pattern of exclusion from heritage governance emerges. Interviews show that decisions related to conservation tend to be top-down, often designed without thorough consultation with local communities. The result is a sense of alienation among those who reside in or have historical ties to the area. This dynamic diminishes the potential for inclusive, sustainable urban development.

Finally, the data suggest that interactive, well-designed public spaces play a key role in activating heritage awareness, but they must be accompanied by policy shifts that enable shared ownership, regulatory enforcement, and accessible engagement models. Mere restoration without public participation appears insufficient to sustain the cultural vibrancy of historic urban cores.

In conclusion, the evidence gathered throughout this study indicates that heritage conservation in Bahrain must move beyond symbolic efforts and toward participatory, community-anchored planning. Only through inclusive governance, adaptive reuse, and genuine dialogue with stakeholders can a balance between preservation and progress be effectively maintained.

Ethical Considerations: This research involved interviews. All participants were adults and engaged voluntarily. Verbal informed consent was obtained prior to interviews, with clear explanation of the study's objectives. No identifying information has been disclosed, and pseudonyms were used in reporting. The study involved non-vulnerable populations and non-invasive methods; therefore, formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) clearance was not required as per institutional policy.

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Data Availability: The data can be provided upon a formal request to the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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