Living Heritage and Local Sustainability: A Mixed-Methods Assessment of Cultural Development in a Mediterranean Medium-Sized City

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Article

Living Heritage and Local Sustainability: A Mixed-Methods Assessment of Cultural Development in a Mediterranean Medium-Sized City

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of cultural development as a driver of sustainable urban development in Kalamata, a medium-sized city in southern Greece (population ~70,000). Drawing on the UNESCO CDIS framework, SDG 11, the Faro Convention (2005), and the Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation (UNESCO 2011), the research employs an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design integrating a stratified resident survey (n = 517), 49 stakeholder interviews, and systematic cultural cartography (Cultural Map v7, 2026). Quantitative findings reveal moderate cultural satisfaction (M = 3.21/5) with significant geographic disparities (Centre M = 3.1 vs. Eastern zones M = 2.2, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis identifies cultural infrastructure satisfaction ($\beta = 0.41$), digital cultural information access ($\beta = 0.306$), voluntary participation ($\beta = 0.19$), and residential zone ($\beta = 0.168$) as independent predictors ($R^2 = 0.58$). A strong culture–urban development satisfaction correlation (Spearman $\rho = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$) empirically validates the culture-sustainability nexus. The qualitative strand documents Institutional Resilience through Cultural Civil Society (IRCC): a co-evolutionary dynamic between austerity-era institutional contraction (2010–2018) and compensatory voluntary cultural expansion. CDIS triangulation reveals systemic weaknesses in cultural governance and spatial equity alongside strengths in education and civil-society participation. Archival data (GSA-Messenia, 2008) trace spatial inequalities to post-1922 refugee settlement geography. Seven evidence-based policy recommendations are proposed. The study advances replicable mixed-methods model for medium-sized Mediterranean cities.

Keywords: living heritage; cultural sustainability; medium-sized cities; mixed methods; UNESCO CDIS; Faro Convention; social capital; cultural governance; Kalamata; SDG 11; COMUS

1. Introduction

The relationship between cultural heritage and sustainable urban development has become a central axis of global policy discourse. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [1] incorporated culture into the sustainability framework, most explicitly through SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 17 (Partnerships). Simultaneously, international heritage frameworks have progressively shifted from the conservation of discrete built objects towards systemic approaches recognising living heritage practices, intangible cultural assets, and community-based processes as constitutive of urban sustainability [2,3]. This shift, crystallised in the concept of "living heritage"[4,5]), repositions heritage from a noun to a verb: something communities "do" rather than something they "have".

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Medium-sized cities (50,000-250,000 inhabitants) are emerging as particularly important units of heritage governance analysis. Unlike metropolitan centres with established cultural economies, they face a distinctive combination of limited institutional capacity, regional cultural ecosystem centrality, and dependence on civil-society voluntary production. The scholarly literature on cultural sustainability in such cities remains fragmented, with research concentrated on either European capitals [6] or rural heritage contexts [7]), leaving medium-sized Mediterranean cities understudied despite their dense heritage assets and distinctive institutional configurations.

Kalamata, capital of the Regional Unit of Messenia in southern Greece, offers an exceptionally instructive case. The city experienced two foundational disruptions, the 1986 earthquake (destroying ~60% of its building stock) and the 2010–2018 austerity crisis and responded to both through culturally-grounded civic mobilisation. It hosts an internationally recognised Dance Festival (KDC, since 1995, 93% local recognition), submitted a notable candidacy for European Capital of Culture 2021, and has developed one of the densest civil-society cultural networks per capita in the Greek urban system. Most recently, systematic archival and cartographic research produced a Cultural Map (v7, 2026) documenting 100+ resources across 14 UNESCO-aligned categories, validated through cross-referencing with industrial heritage cartography [8]), providing an unprecedented empirical baseline for heritage governance analysis.

This study addresses three research questions: (RQ1) What are the patterns of cultural participation, satisfaction, and perceived accessibility among residents, and how are they structured by social and geographic factors? (RQ2) How have cultural organisations adapted to the compound pressures of austerity and post-pandemic recovery? (RQ3) To what extent does the city's cultural development profile align with indicators of living heritage and local sustainability as operationalised through UNESCO CDIS? The study's contribution is threefold: methodologically, it advances a convergent explanatory sequential mixed-methods protocol integrating resident surveys, stakeholder interviews, and spatial cartography, empirically, it provides the most comprehensive documentation of cultural assets in a medium-sized Greek city and theoretically, it elaborates "Institutional Resilience through Cultural Civil Society" (IRCC) as a distinct mode of heritage sustainability and traces the historical genealogy of spatial cultural inequalities to post-1922 refugee settlement geographies.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Culture as the Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: Possibilities and Critiques

2.1.1. The Theoretical Proposition: From Hawkes to the Agenda 21 for Culture

The proposal of culture as the fourth pillar [9] proposal of culture as the fourth pillar is frequently cited as a self-evident axiom in the literature. A historically layered reading, however, reveals that this proposal belongs to an evolving theoretical and political field of multiple, and not always compatible, theoretical foundations. Hawkes [9] begins from a deceptively simple observation: sustainable development fails if it does not incorporate what gives meaning to human life. Yet the operationalisation of this observation, its conversion into a measurable pillar, carries a central tension that Hawkes leaves unexamined.

The UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) [10] developed in the Agenda 21 for Culture (Barcelona 2002, revised 2010) the theoretically richest proposal for integrating culture and sustainability at urban level: culture is not a pillar alongside the other three, but the horizontal anthropological substrate through which the other dimensions acquire meaning and social legitimacy. This landscape was further enriched [11,12] through their COST network typology distinguishing three modes of the culture-sustainability relationship: culture in sustainable development (culture as a context within which development occurs), culture for sustainable development (culture as an instrument of development), and culture as sustainable development (culture as constitutively identical to sustainability). Each mode presupposes different ontological

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commitments and generates different policy practices, a critical differentiation that the political consensus around the 'fourth pillar' tends to obscure.

Equally important for the methodological orientation of this study is tripartite value distinction [13]: intrinsic value (culture as an end in itself, the value of the experience as such), instrumental value (culture as a means to other ends, economic development, social cohesion, wellbeing), and institutional value (culture as education, national identity, social integration). The policy challenge, Holden argues, is to maintain all three in equilibrium: the disproportionate emphasis on instrumental value, characterising the developmental discourse of the 1990s and 2000s, risks reducing culture to a tool, making it unable to justify its support when its instrumental outcomes are not measurable. This tripartite framework directly informs the study's methodological choice to measure both participation rates (instrumental dimension) and civic attachment (intrinsic-relational dimension) as distinct but interrelated aspects of cultural sustainability.

2.1.2. Critical Review: The Risk of Culturalisation and the Paradoxical Logic of Measurement

The most radically critical challenge to the proposition of the fourth pillar centres on the view that culture has become a 'resource', something managed, maximised, and deployed in relation to other goals [14].

This logic of expediency, the utilisation of culture for external purposes, is unavoidable in the contemporary neoliberal context, yet simultaneously sterilises something fundamental the contestatory, subversive, and critical dynamic of culture [14]. The paradoxical logic this generates is directly relevant to the present study: to defend culture from reduction to a tool, we are forced to measure it, but measurement itself risks reproducing precisely that instrumental logic. This is not a reason to abandon measurement, but a reason to conduct it with critical self-awareness: what the indicators capture and what they systematically miss.

Second, the incorporation of culture as a 'fourth pillar' in governmental frameworks is not neutral, it reveals which conceptions of culture are reinforced (typically institutional, national, commercially viable ones) and which remain invisible. Twentieth-century cultural policy was dominated by a "triangular relationship of trust" between state, professionals, and audience, a relationship that systematically excludes the living heritage practitioners who do not fit any of these roles [13]. Third, the definition of "culture" remains epistemologically loose, covering simultaneously arts, values, institutions, practices, and material objects, a conceptual expansiveness that facilitates rhetorical deployment but impedes concrete operationalisation.

This study addresses these risks in two ways: operationally, by examining empirically whether and under what conditions residents' cultural perceptions correlate with their urban sustainability perceptions; and critically, by maintaining analytical vigilance against the risk of inadvertently reproducing the instrumental logic it seeks to interrogate, specifically by maintaining attention to what the quantitative strand cannot capture.

2.2. From Monument to Living Heritage: Paradigm Shift and Reinterpretation

Understanding "living heritage" as a theoretical category requires examining the paradigm shift it represents, not as a linear evolution but as a radical revision of three foundational assumptions, what heritage is, who decides, and for whom. This revision is not academically sterilized, it carries direct political, administrative, and social consequences for how cities like Kalamata organise their relationship with the past.

2.2.1. The Authorised Heritage Discourse: Colonial Roots and State Interests

The Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) was introduced [4] as an analytical tool for deconstructing the dominant heritage discourse. However, her analysis remains incomplete without connection to the colonial roots of that discourse [15,16]. The dominant heritage framework, focus on "monuments", expert authority, state as primary custodian, was developed by European imperial

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powers in the nineteenth century, and the 1972 UNESCO Convention represented its institutional codification. For Mediterranean societies, this produces a specific effect: state heritage policy tends to privilege ancient and classical heritage, sustaining national continuity narratives, at the expense of medieval, modern, and contemporary heritage connected to communities lived experience.

In the Greek context, this tension is visible: the Ministry of Culture concentrates overwhelmingly on ancient and Byzantine heritage, leaving industrial heritage (19th–20th century), refugee cultural memory (post-1922), and living popular practices in grey zones of institutional responsibility. The present study's finding that only 34.1% of residents spontaneously mention industrial heritage reflects precisely this institutional field of visibility: residents perceive what the state has legitimated them to 'see' as heritage. A further critical dimension [16] concerns the AHD concept of "backward-looking heritage", privileging temporal distance over recent community memory. For Kalamata, this means the 1986 earthquake, a relatively recent traumatic event, is treated by official heritage discourse primarily as an architectural-technical problem rather than as a lieu de mémoire [17] still shaping community identity.

The paradoxical logic of "heritagization": a practice acquires heritage status precisely when it begins to disappear, receiving "a second life as an exhibitionary complex" [18]. The Kalamata silk chain, surviving only at METAXOTA GONOS, occupies precisely this threshold condition: the practice has not yet disappeared but is sufficiently rare to attract heritage interest. Whether institutionalisation through inscription (Policy Recommendation R4) sustains or accelerates this threshold dynamic is a structural tension that cultural policy must explicitly address.

2.2.2. Living Heritage as Dynamic System: Systems Theory and the Limits of the "Life" Metaphor

A systemic model of heritage [5] belongs to the broader "complexity turn" in social sciences [19] living heritage as a complex adaptive system, a network of interactions exhibiting non-linear dynamics, emergent properties, and sensitivity to initial conditions [20]. This has specific theoretical implications. First, "authenticity" is not a property to be preserved but a social attribution of meaning re-constituted in every act of recognition [21,22]). Second, heritage "values" are not immutable essences but outcomes of conflictual social processes.

Yet the "life" metaphor for heritage carries theoretical problems rarely acknowledged in literature. First, it creates a living/dead dichotomy that does not correspond to reality, decline, dormancy, and forgetting are normal components of the heritage experience, they do not 'kill' heritage [11]). The past is always a "foreign country", access to it is inherently partial, selective, and misinterpretive, regardless of how "living" the heritage practice [23]. Second, the "life" metaphor risks romanticising community agencies: not every community practice is 'living' in the same way, and the theoretical flattening of different participation modes conceals inequalities within communities. Third, and most critically for this study, the metaphor implies that heritage "death" is entirely preventable, a teleological assumption that generates unrealistic policy expectations.

In the context of this study, the systemic approach is deployed critically, it recognises that Kalamata's cultural ecosystem constitutes a complex, non-linear system, IRCC as an emergent property of the interaction between institutional crisis and community resilience, while avoiding the idealist equation of "living heritage" with "community harmony". The institutional fragmentation documented in the qualitative findings is itself a systemic property, not merely a governance failure.

2.2.3. Critical Perspectives: Affective Experience, the Heritage Machine, and Dissonance

A significant critique [24] goes beyond the scholastic observation that 'communities are not homogeneous': the issue is not only representativeness, but the heterogeneity of the heritage experience itself. She proposes replacing community as the organising category with affect, heritage operates primarily at the level of emotional, experiential engagement, not always through rational communal decisions. Affect, as experience, is simultaneously deeply personal and socially constructed [25]). This observation opens analytical space for this study's key quantitative finding: the $\rho = 0.62$ correlation between cultural satisfaction and urban development satisfaction does not

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merely reflect cognitive appraisal, but also a deeper emotional bond with place, referred to as civic attachment [26], which this study redefines as the common underlying factor mediating the culture–sustainability nexus.

The most historically grounded critique [27] concerns the machine patrimoniale, the global machinery of heritage tourist exploitation, is not an external risk that can be avoided but a structural characteristic of contemporary "phantom society". Heritage tourism does not merely consume heritage, it transforms it irreversibly, creating demand for 'authentic' experiences that the demand itself renders impossible. For Kalamata, this means that the tourist valorisation of the silk heritage chain (Policy Recommendation R4) carries contradictory potential: it can finance the continuation of the practice but simultaneously risks 'theming' what makes the heritage "living", its everyday, non-spectacular dimension. This tension is not resolvable by policy design alone; it requires ongoing, participatory monitoring of the kind that COMUS principles prescribe.

The theory of dissonant heritage [28] posits that every heritage promotion implies competition between conflicting narratives for the same field, with invariably some being amplified and others silenced. The application of dissonance theory to Kalamata reveals a particularly rich overlapping dissonance the medieval interpretation of the Castle (Frankish, Venetian) coexists with the Ottoman, the ancient Pharai heritage with postwar urban expansion, industrial memory with social narratives of earthquake recovery and, most critically, the Greek-Orthodox "official" cultural identity with the Armenian, Asia Minor, and Pontic memories of the western settlements, which continue to be treated as supplementary and peripheral by the dominant institutional heritage discourses. The fact that the western zone simultaneously carries the richest intercultural memory and the lowest cultural satisfaction scores (M = 2.2 vs. centre M = 3.1) is not coincidental, it reflects the systematic silencing that certain researchers [28] identify as structurally inherent to all heritage governance.

2.3. UNESCO CDIS: Between Epistemology, Power, and Operational Utility

The UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators represent an ambitious attempt to quantify cultural sustainability, but an epistemologically problematic one requiring critical reading. The foundational tension concerns what some researchers' [29] term commensuration: the process through which qualitatively different phenomena are reduced to a common measurement scale. In the case of cultural sustainability, this means that "sense of local identity", "cultural tourism", and "industrial production of cultural goods" are treated as comparable nodes in a unified analytical framework. This reduction conceals power hierarchies: who determines what is a "dimension"? What phenomena are left unmeasured?

A Foucauldian reading [30] of the CDIS identifies an institutional mechanism of cultural "governmentalization": through indicators, culture becomes administrable, comparable, and evaluable, attributes serving both transparency and institutional control. Crucially, indicators do not merely represent cultural realities, they partially produce them: cultural actors adapt their practices to become 'visible' in measurement systems, while practices that "don't count" tend to be disinvested [11]. In Kalamata's context, this means that voluntary associations' informal cultural production, the backbone of the IRCC dynamic, risks systematic under-counting, because it generates outputs that resist standardised measurement.

Third, the CDIS faces a circularity problem, it measures what UNESCO already values the measurement criteria reflect the values of the same organisation that created the tool. This produces systematic blind spots in capturing phenomena that escape the dominant heritage paradigm. The cultural economy of refugee memory in Kalamata's western settlements, for instance, cannot be captured by any standard CDIS indicator, yet it represents one of the city's most distinctive living heritage assets. Fourth, UNESCO [31] identifies three methodological adjustments required for urban-scale CDIS application, re-scaling (recalibrating indicators for urban populations), proxy indicators (alternative measures where standard indicators are not locally applicable), and participatory validation (involving communities in appraising indicator validity). The present study applies all three: the mixed-methods protocol combined with cultural cartography constitutes

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precisely a participatory validation instrument complementing the limited capacities of the standard CDIS.

Finally, the national-urban scale problem is non-trivial, the CDIS was designed for national-level analysis. Applying it to a city of 70,000 inhabitants, without independent cultural statistics, without a local data system, means that some indicators cannot be calculated (e.g., cultural industries' share of GDP) while others require locally specific proxies. The transparency of this methodological choice is an obligation of the present study and reflects a systemic gap that the corresponding research community has not yet fully addressed.

2.4. Social Capital as Analytical Lens: Theoretical Tensions and Application to Heritage Governance

Social capital theory is one of the most influential, but also most contested, sociological concepts of recent decades. Its use in literature is complicated by a fundamental epistemological issue: two essentially different theoretical traditions employ the same term. In the first tradition [32], social capital is one mode of reproducing social inequality, not a 'virtue' that can be abstractly developed, but a resource unequally distributed across the social field, reproducing the advantages of those who already possess it. In the second tradition [33], by contrast, social capital is a democratic good: it enhances collective action, reduces cooperation costs, and, in strong states, feeds social equality.

This epistemological rupture is not an academic exercise: it determines what we 'see' when examining the voluntary cultural sector of a city. From a Bourdieusian perspective, Kalamata's 24 associations would be interpreted as mechanisms reproducing the social identities of those who benefit from the cultural sector, reproduction that reinforces the already active. From a Putnamian perspective, they constitute an indicator of civic society and a bulwark against social alienation. Both interpretations are valid, but they see different dimensions of the same phenomenon. This study maintains awareness of both: the quantitative strand measures participation rates in the Putnamian tradition (civic engagement); the qualitative strand examines the Bourdieusian question of who is systematically excluded.

The dark side thesis of bonding capital [34,35] provides one of the most substantively critical tools for this study, the density of intra-group ties can produce exclusion of non-members, conformity pressure, and "downward levelling norms" discouraging individual resource accumulation. In the context of cultural heritage, this means that strong heritage communities can develop exclusivities, "living heritage" as a group's acquired entitlement, deterring new participants. In Kalamata, the choral sector, 12 groups with dense internal networks, presents an interesting case, high bonding capital, but insufficient permeability, as reflected in the 9 of 12 choirs without permanent rehearsal space (a barrier that disproportionately affects new, less-established groups).

A critical structural challenge to linking capital [36] reveals that linking capital, in the contemporary neoliberal context, risks connecting communities to market forces rather than enhancing their bargaining power against them. The institutional "'empowerment" that linking promises may operate inversely: rather than giving communities a voice at centres of power, it may incorporate them into structures that impose their own agendas. For the present study, this means that the linking capital deficit, empirically documented in Kalamata (only 16.1% positive evaluation of consultation), is not merely a "technical" connectivity problem, but reflects power relations that determine whose needs can be articulated and heard. Policy Recommendations R2 (Heritage Governance Forum) and R7 (Equity Fund) are responses to exactly this structural linking deficit.

A study of southern European societies [37] identifies that social capital in Mediterranean urban societies has distinctive characteristics: strong bonding in informal structures (church, family, friendship networks), weak bridging between different social groups, and uneven linking according to social class. This "Mediterranean pattern" of social capital, which this study validates with particular clarity, is not a "cultural pathology" but a historically shaped response to paternalistic state structures. Finally, the heritage-specific application of these distinctions [38] provides that in their typology of cultural sustainability, bridging and linking capital constitute necessary, but individually insufficient, conditions for the integration of heritage into sustainable local development. Bonding

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capital without bridging and linking produces vibrant but isolated heritage communities; linking capital without bonding produces institutional frameworks without genuine community investment. The Kalamata IRCC configuration, extraordinarily rich in bonding, moderate in bridging, weak in linking, is the most empirically acute example of this theoretical claim documented in the Mediterranean context.

2.5. The COMUS Framework: Community-Based Urban Heritage Management

The COMUS (Community-based Urban Heritage Management System) methodology, developed through a European Creative Europe programme project, provides an operational framework that translates the Faro Convention's normative commitments into governance practice. It rests on four theoretical pillars, the Faro Convention [39], the Historic Urban Landscape approach [2], systemic management theory, and participatory governance, and is organised around six principles: community-centredness, dynamism, systemic approach, cross-sectorality, participatory governance, and rights-based orientation.

Heritage governance analysis, as developed through COMUS [11], introduces a useful stakeholder typology that this study applies, primary stakeholders, direct users (local community), secondary stakeholders, indirect users (merchants, consumers, tourists, service providers), and tertiary stakeholders, those with institutional influence (governmental and non-governmental bodies, academics, investors). The activation of citizens as primary stakeholders, rather than passive beneficiaries, corresponds to the role transformation documented in the qualitative findings of this study. The COMUS framework is particularly applicable in the Kalamata context given the city's active civil-society heritage organisations, including the cultural organisation 'Dromoi tis Elias' (Routes of the Olive Tree), which presented a digital industrial heritage map [8] at a public symposium on 30 March 2026.

2.6. SDGs and Cultural Heritage: Horizontal Integration and Methodological Challenges

The 2030 Agenda [1] adopts a paradoxical compromise: it acknowledges the importance of culture (SDG 11.4 for heritage; references in SDGs 4, 8, 10) but does not assign an autonomous cultural goal. This reflects a fundamental disagreement between two conceptions: the "horizontal" view (developed countries), treating culture as a dimension permeating all goals; and the "autonomous goal" view (developing countries via UNESCO and UCLG), arguing that invisible incorporation produces invisible results, culture remaining "visible everywhere, measurable nowhere"[40] (p. 215), SDG 11.4 "strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage'" is interpreted in this study in its extended sense [41], encompassing living heritage across six SDGs (4, 8, 10, 11, 16, 17). The SDG 11 tension between equity of access (without exclusions) and effective management (sustainable) is examined through geographic inequality analysis in Section 5.

2.7. UNESCO CDIS: Analytical Instrument and Critical Limitations

The UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators [31] represent an ambitious attempt to render the contribution of culture to development measurable across seven dimensions (economy, education, governance, social participation, gender equality, communication, heritage). The framework provides comparative clarity and operational definitions. However, it is not without theoretical problems. First, it over-represents measurable (primarily economic) dimensions at the expense of difficult-to-quantify dimensions such as social cohesion or identity (Throsby 2010) [42]. Second, it was designed primarily for national-level analysis, and adaptation to urban scale requires methodological adjustments [31]. Third, the framework embeds a normative assumption, that greater cultural "integration" automatically yields development, that requires empirical testing. This study uses CDIS as an analytical framework with awareness of these limits, selectively applying relevant dimensions (participation, access, perceived value).

2.8. Historic Urban Landscape and Social Sustainability

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The UNESCO HUL Recommendation [2] provides the dominant framework for heritage management in urban environments, transcending the classic distinction between “historic areas” and “contemporary city” by recognising every city as layered by overlapping temporal strata. Critically, it has been observed [43] that HUL risks remaining rhetorical without concrete governance tools and financing mechanisms. In cities with weak institutional capacity, such as many Greek medium-sized cities, HUL implementation requires prior institutional strengthening [44]. Furthermore, HUL inadequately addresses the 'losers': the promotion of a historic area frequently entails “noble displacement” (gentrification) of less wealthy residents, a social dimension examined in this study through geographic inequality analysis. The tension between urban sustainability, cultural preservation, and social equity constitutes, ultimately, the basic theoretical hypothesis that this study submits to empirical testing: in Kalamata, does heritage function as a factor of social cohesion and equity, or primarily as a resource for already-privileged social groups?

2.9. Social Capital and Cultural Sustainability

The tripartite distinction [33] between bonding capital (dense intra-group solidarity ties), bridging capital (ties connecting heterogeneous groups), and linking capital [45], vertical ties between communities and institutional power structures) offers a productive analytical lens for cultural production in medium-sized cities. In this study's context, bonding capital corresponds to the identity relationship with living heritage; bridging capital to access to the cultural ecosystem beyond one's immediate neighbourhood and linking capital to the gap between cultural aspiration and institutional capacity for participation. The absence of linking capital leads to “institutional distance”, communities possess the will but not the institutional connections to access public resources, the primary structural obstacle documented in both quantitative and qualitative strands.

3. Study Area: Kalamata: Urban and Heritage Context

3.1. Stratigraphic Reading: A City of Multiple Times

Understanding Kalamata requires a stratigraphic reading: the city simultaneously carries multiple chronological layers that do not succeed but overlap each other. The Byzantine, Frankish, Venetian and Ottoman presence is expressed in the Castle morphology and the Old Town churches. The commercial prosperity of the 19th century is visible in the neoclassical buildings and the urban fabric, 69.6% of residents recognise the city's neoclassical buildings. The interwar industrial heritage survives in the Municipal Railway Park, the first thematic railway park in Greece, as well as in the operation of the flour factory around 1926 under the name Messina Roller Mills «Evangelistria»[46](p.347). Post-war reconstruction after the 1986 earthquakes forms the most recent, but already historical, layer.

This stratigraphic reading is not only physical: it is also social and cultural. Kalamata hosts associations of diaspora Cretans, Asia Minor Greeks and Pontic Greeks, communities that brought their own cultural layers. The contact of these layers with each other and with the indigenous Messenian tradition creates a multicultural urban substrate, less visible than the archaeological, but equally critical for understanding the city's 'living heritage'.

3.1.1. Commercial Prosperity and Refugee Settlement: Social Cartography of the City

Stratigraphic reading acquires particular analytical weight when combined with two critical historical phases: the commercial prosperity of the 19th century and the refugee settlement after 1922, which shaped the social geography that continues to influence current spatial inequalities.

During the commercial era (1850–1930), Kalamata experienced significant economic prosperity through trade in figs, raisins, and silk. The port constituted the hub of this activity, and this economic prosperity left an indelible architectural marke, the splendid neoclassical buildings of the old port and the new harbour, including buildings attributed to Ernst Ziller, the Saxon architect who shaped

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Greek urban architecture. These buildings constitute living heritage of commercial memory not yet fully exploited as a cultural identity element.

The refugee settlement (1921–1947) brought to Kalamata a large number of refugees from Asia Minor and Armenian genocide survivors, whose settlement was not random but reflected, and reproduced, existing social hierarchies. Archival data from the GSA-Messenia publication [47] document four refugee settlements with precise metric and chronological data (Table 1).

Table 1. Refugee Settlements in Kalamata: Archival Data GSA 2008.

Settlement	Location	Area (m²)	Founded	Dwellings	Authority
Analepsi (W.Coast)	NW of Castle (western)	16,359	1914	150	Ministry of Welfare
Kordia (Armenika)	W. coast near Slaughterhouses	27,000	1914	69	Ministry of Welfare
Ag. Ioannis (Avramiou)	Central-W (Frangopigado)	28,055	1922	68	Hellenic Open University
Eastern Coast (Nikitara)	E of Castle	—	1922+	—	Private / Hellenic Open University

Source: Militsi-Nika, A. & Theofilopoulou-Stefanouri, Ch. (2008). GSA of Kalamata/Messenia. ISBN 978-960-86137-5-1, pp. 60–68.

The spatial distribution followed an explicit social logic: the three western settlements, Analepsi, Kordia/Armenika, Ag. Ioannis/Avramiou, received the poorest refugees, initially in temporary structures. In Kordia approximately 200 Armenian families (600–700 persons) settled between 1921 and 1947 [48,49]. The eastern settlement (Nikitara) received middle-class refugees of better economic standing, who developed the eastern seafront for tourism and recreation from the 1950s-1960s onwards. Notably, refugees' immediate cultural response is documented in the GSA archives: the cultural association "Vosporos" was founded in 1932 (Eastern Coast) and the Neighbourhood Association of the Western Coast simultaneously, evidence of bonding social capital from the first moment of settlement [50]).

3.1.2. Kalamata's Urban Architectural Heritage: Spiliopoulou's Typology

Kalamata's architectural heritage constitutes a distinct and analytically significant stratum of its cultural landscape, documented systematically in the Cultural Map v7 under Category A5 (22 entries, 21% of the total catalogue). This category captures the architectural heritage of the city's commercial prosperity (1850–1930), what Spiliopoulou [51] calls its "belle époque" (Interwar period), a period that left an architectural imprint of exceptional quality, comparable, in its Art Nouveau / Jugendstil–Wiener Secession examples, to contemporary buildings in European cities. The fact that 69.6% of residents spontaneously recognise the neoclassical buildings of the city constitutes the highest single-item tangible heritage awareness score in the survey, confirming that the architectural heritage substrate generates the strongest publicly recognizable presence of any category in the Cultural Map.

Six architectural types of buildings spanning the period 1850–1930 have been systematically identified [51]: (1) pre-classicist/early classicist (transition from traditional vernacular to neoclassicism), (2) classicist/mature classicism (dominant type 1850–1880, including the main commercial and civic buildings of the historic centre), (3) late classicist, (4) eclectic (Renaissance, Baroque, Mannerist, rustique, Gothic/Arabic influences), (5) Art Nouveau/Jugendstil–Wiener Secession (comparable to coeval European capital examples) and (6) interwar (1920–1940, modernisation of the architectural idiom. Buildings attributed to Ernst Ziller, the Saxon architect who left a decisive mark on neoclassical urban architecture of the newly established state, are among the

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most significant examples of Category A5. This typological range documents Kalamata's commercial prosperity as architecturally embedded in the urban fabric at a density and quality that has rarely been systematically analysed in the context of Greek medium-sized city heritage governance.

The critical institutional backstory of Category A5 is inseparable from the 1986 earthquakes. In March 1986, months before the September earthquakes, a systematic scientific survey of the city's buildings was conducted. From this survey, 350 buildings were identified as architecturally significant, of which 99 were subsequently designated as protected monuments by the Ministry of Culture and an additional 50 by the Ministry of Environment, the Municipality purchased and restored 23 buildings [51] (pp. 720-721). In 1996, the city was awarded the Europa Nostra Prize for the conservation of its historic centre post-earthquake, international recognition of a remarkable heritage governance achievement. In 2025, the Municipality of Kalamata completed the digitalisation of 225 buildings from the 1986 survey, creating a unique digital archive that captures the pre-earthquake city as it was precisely before the rupture event. This archive represents a rare instance of institutional heritage memory and constitutes the empirical backbone of Category A5 in the Cultural Map v7.

A distinctive feature of the A5 category is its dual-use character: several of Kalamata's most important living cultural institutions are simultaneously architectural heritage buildings. The Municipal Philharmonic (Ypapantis 25, Archontiko Tzane, established 1890) is simultaneously a Category A5 heritage building and a Category G2 cultural education institution, a lieu de mémoire of 130+ years of musical education embedded in a building of rare architectural value. Similarly, the Municipal Conservatory (Vilehardouinou Street) operates in a heritage building that combines architectural and educational heritage functions. These dual-use buildings illustrate what Spiliopoulou [51] describes as the bipolar system of the city's cultural landscape: the Castle–Aristomenous-OSE Station-Port axis functioned historically as a unified system of economic flow (production → transport → export), and its contemporary incarnation as the primary cultural axis of the city directly overlays this historical geography. The living cultural production of 2026 occupies the same spatial footprint as the industrial-commercial production of 1880–1930, a palimpsest that the Cultural Map makes cartographically legible for the first time.

In terms of the AHD critique [4], Category A5 occupies an analytically revealing position. Unlike Category A4 (industrial heritage), which the state largely fails to recognise, architectural heritage has received systematic institutional attention, designation, restoration, and the Europa Nostra award. Yet this very institutional recognition paradoxically renders it less visible to heritage communities, the designation process converts living buildings into statutory objects, managed by professional heritage authorities, with limited community participation in interpretation and use. The 69.6% recognition rate among residents is not primarily the result of community-driven engagement with the heritage but of its physical presence in the daily urban environment, recognition without community ownership. This distinction, between awareness and civic attachment to architectural heritage - is one of the gaps that the CDIS Cultural Governance weakness (only 16.1% positive consultation evaluation) directly expresses.

3.2. The Economic Identity as Cultural Resource

Kalamata's economic history is partly cultural. The cultivation of olives, fig production, silk weaving, the celebrated "Kalamatiano" silk handkerchief — and later raisin export shaped technical knowledge, work rituals, markets, and social structures that constitute intangible heritage under the UNESCO Convention [52]. The fact that 50.9% of contemporary residents identify agricultural products as the most exploitable heritage element is not romanticism: it reflects the enduring vitality of this connection in collective memory. Traditional music and dance is similarly identified by 27.9% of respondents as a key cultural tourism resource.

3.3. The 1986 Earthquake as a Paradigmatic Event

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The 1986 earthquakes constitute, from a cultural perspective, a "rupture event" [53], a violent interruption of continuity forcing a society to reinvent its relationship with place, buildings, and memory. The post-earthquake reconstruction, guided by the 1985 urban development plan, produced a remarkable outcome: 350 buildings surveyed in March 1986, 99 designated as protected monuments by the Ministry of Culture, 50 by the Ministry of Environment [51], and the Europa Nostra Prize in 1996 for historic centre conservation. Crucially, the cultural strategy adopted post-earthquake, establishing DIPETHE, the Dance Festival [54], the Municipal Cultural Development Enterprise , was deliberate, not symptomatic: culture was consciously chosen as the instrument of social healing and urban reconstruction [55].

3.4. The Austerity Period as Resilience Test

The 2010–2018 economic crisis tested Kalamata's cultural ecosystem severely. Qualitative data document organisational contractions, budget cuts, and growing dependence on voluntary labour. Yet the crisis did not produce collapse, it revealed a remarkable resilience connected to communal rootedness and social bonds. Post-2015 recovery is evident, 56% of cultural organisations participating in the study were founded after 2000, new festivals emerged, and tourist arrivals increased. This recovery is not coincidental, it reflects a city that has invested for decades in cultural identity and possesses social capital for recovery.

3.5. Contemporary Changes and Structural Tensions

The contemporary city faces four parallel dynamics. Tourism development offers opportunities for living heritage promotion but risks "theming", stereotypical heritage reproduction for tourist consumption with parallel degradation of lived cultural life [27,56]. Digital transformation: 82.8% of residents obtain cultural information through social media, 67.5% desire a dedicated municipal cultural application, a market signal as yet unanswered. Demographic aging, identified by 30.2% as the most serious future problem, creates a dual challenge, the oldest age group bears the main weight of intangible heritage transmission but records the lowest cultural satisfaction (negative age-satisfaction correlation, Spearman $\rho = -0.19$). Urban regeneration projects are evaluated primarily as technical interventions (72.9%, "more walkable city"), not as interventions enhancing social cohesion or living heritage (5%, "very much" social cohesion from urban planning).

The cultural ecosystem exhibits three structural tensions: concentration versus decentralisation (majority of actors in the historic centre, peripheral zones underserved), voluntarism versus professionalism (much cultural activity dependent on voluntary labour without sustainability guarantees), and institutional inadequacy versus dynamic initiatives (strong civic base, weak coordinating governance). The Cultural Map v7 (2026), cross-validated with the olivetreeroutes industrial heritage cartography (March 2026), documents 100+ resources across 14 categories, providing the cartographic grounding for these tensions.

4. Methodology

4.1. Epistemological Foundation: Pragmatism as Methodological Basis

The mixed methodology is not epistemologically neutral. It rests on a pragmatist philosophy of science [57], which rejects the ontological dualism between quantitative (objectivist/positivist) and qualitative (constructivist/interpretivist) approaches. Pragmatism argues that the criterion for method selection is not ontological compatibility but functional value for answering specific research questions [58]. The research questions of this study require different methodological strategies: (RQ1) What is the level of cultural satisfaction and which factors predict it? answered quantitatively? (RQ2) How do cultural actors perceive the role of heritage in urban development? answered qualitatively? (RQ3) Does living heritage function as a factor of urban cohesion in Kalamata? answered through triangulation.

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4.2. Research Design: Explanatory Sequential Mixed-Methods

An explanatory sequential design [58] was adopted: the quantitative phase precedes and constitutes the "base", while the qualitative phase was designed to explain, elaborate, and enrich quantitative findings, especially unexpected or contradictory ones. This sequencing does not imply hierarchy, qualitative data do not "test" quantitative findings but engage them dialogically through triangulation [59,60]. The sequential design was selected because the absence of prior systematic empirical research on cultural satisfaction in Kalamata necessitated first mapping the field (quantitative phase) before selecting the thematic axes of interviews (qualitative phase). Quantitative findings, particularly the identification of geographic inequalities, served as "entry keys" for the qualitative sampling design.

4.3. Quantitative Strand: Survey Design, Sampling and Analysis

The questionnaire (48 items, five sections) covered sociodemographic characteristics, cultural perceptions and living heritage awareness, cultural participation and visit patterns, urban sustainability and social cohesion perceptions, and attitudes towards the European Union. A 5-point Likert scale was used for evaluation items; a five-point frequency scale for visit frequency. The instrument underwent pilot testing (n = 30), resulting in revision of 8 items for clarity and content validity.

A stratified random sample of 517 residents (aged 18+) was surveyed through face-to-face administration between March and December 2022. Stratification was by residential zone (five zones: Eastern, Western, Northern, Southern neighbourhoods, Centre), with quotas set proportional to the 2021 Census (ELSTAT) distribution. Within each stratum, individuals were selected through systematic random sampling from door-to-door registers. The final sample (N = 517) achieves a passive error of ±4.3% at 95% confidence level. Overrepresentation of women (67.5%) and higher-educated respondents is noted, a recognised limitation, as the literature documents higher cultural participation rates among both groups [61].

Statistical analysis was conducted in SPSS 26.0. Normality was tested with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion; given non-normal distributions, non-parametric tests were used throughout: Mann-Whitney for two-group comparisons, Kruskal-Wallis for multiple groups with Bonferroni post-hoc corrections for multiple comparisons, and Spearman coefficients for association analysis. For identifying independent predictors, multivariate linear regression (stepwise) was applied with logarithmic transformation of the dependent variable. Significance level: $\alpha = 0.05$ (two-tailed).

4.4. Qualitative Strand: Interviews and Thematic Analysis

Forty-nine semi-structured in-depth interviews (45–60 minutes each) were conducted with a purposive sample [62] between June 2021 and February 2023, 25 representatives of cultural associations, museums, festivals, and performing arts organisations and 24 stakeholders (municipal officials, regional administrators, academic researchers, media representatives, civil society actors). Selection criteria ensured diversity of organisation type, founding period (pre- and post-2000), cultural sector, and stakeholder category. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent, fully transcribed, and verified by two independent researchers.

Thematic analysis followed six-phase reflexive methodology [63,64]: familiarisation, initial code generation, theme search, theme review, theme definition and naming, and writing. Rather than discovering themes "out there" in the data, reflexive thematic analysis acknowledges that themes are constructed through researcher-data interaction, consistent with the constructivist ontology underlying the living heritage theoretical approach. Thematic saturation was reached at approximately the 38th–40th interview, reinforcing the reliability of qualitative analysis. Quality was assured through specific [65] criteria: credibility (member checking, triangulation), transferability (thick description), and dependability (independent coding).

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4.5. Cultural Map Methodology

The Cultural Map of Kalamata (v7, 2026) was developed through the biocultural map of Kalamata [66], iterative fieldwork, archival research [67], systematic cross-referencing with municipal databases (including the digitalised 1986 survey of 225 historic buildings, [68]), and expert consultation. The map classifies resources across 14 UNESCO-aligned categories. The final version was cross validated against the olivetreeroutes industrial heritage cartography (30 March 2026), identifying 15 shared sites, 7 new entries for the Cultural Map, and significant corrections to existing records. The Cultural Map functions as both research output and analytical instrument for Section 7 triangulation.

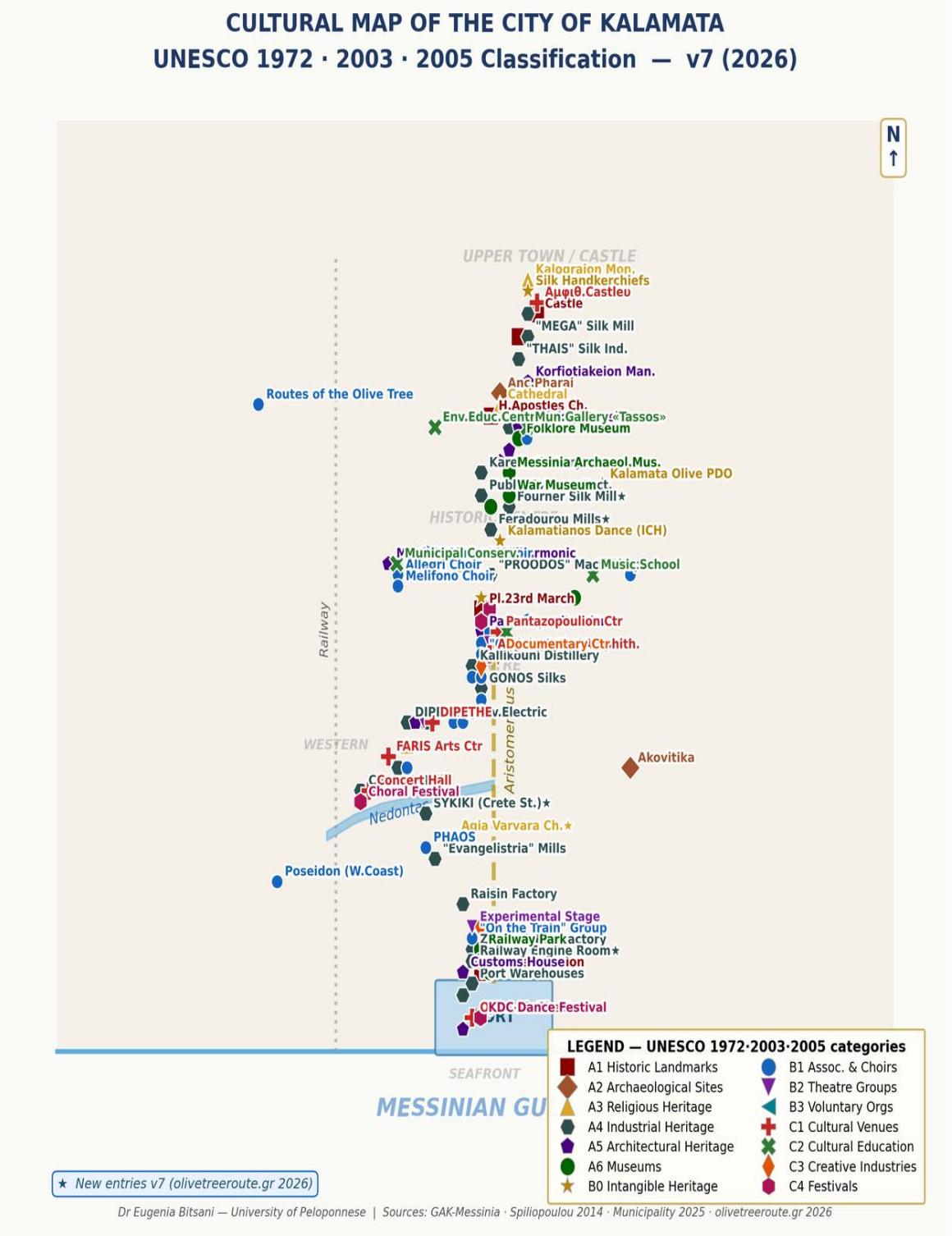

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Figure 1. Cultural Map of the City of Kalamata, UNESCO 1972·2003·2005 Classification (v7, 2026). Source: Authors' own elaboration. 14 categories: A1–A6 Tangible Heritage; B0–B3 Intangible and Voluntary Heritage; G1–G4 Contemporary Cultural Production. All 100+ resources cluster within the pre-earthquake historic urban core. Cross-validated with biocultural map of Kalamata (BItsani, 2025) and olivetreeroutes (March 2026). N arrow indicates north.

4.5.1. The Cultural Map v7: Spatial Structure and Cartographic Significance

The Cultural Map of Kalamata (v7, 2026), reproduced as Figure 1, constitutes both a primary research output and a critical analytical instrument. It documents 100+ cultural resources across 14 UNESCO-aligned categories: six built/tangible heritage categories (A1–A6), four living heritage and voluntary sector categories (B0-B3), and four contemporary cultural production categories (G1-G4). This classification is not merely taxonomic: it operationalises the UNESCO conceptual framework at city scale, enabling the CDIS domain triangulation presented in §7.6.

The dominant cartographic finding, visible upon inspection of Figure 1, is the complete spatial concentration of all 100+ resources within the historic/pre-earthquake urban core. The post-earthquake residential zones, eastern coastal strip, western Bournias-Asprokhoma area, and northern expansion, contain zero permanent cultural resources across any of the 14 categories. This finding provides the cartographic grounding for the quantitative geographic inequality result (Centre M=3.1 vs Eastern M=2.2), transforming what could appear as a statistical artefact into a documented structural reality confirmed by three independent data sources.

The Aristomenous Street axis emerges as the primary cultural spine of the city, concentrating G1 cultural venues, A4 industrial heritage, G3 creative industries, and G4 festivals. This spatial linearity reflects the historical commercial axis of the nineteenth-century city, confirmed by GSA-Messenia archival records [47], the geography of 2026 living cultural production directly overlays the geography of 1880–1930 commercial industrial production. The OSE Railway Park cluster (southwestern quadrant) represents a distinct adaptive-reuse node: the convergence of A4 industrial heritage, G1 cultural venues, B2 theatre groups, and G3 documentary film production in a single complex, exemplifying the HUL Recommendation's potential but also its governance fragility.

The cross-validation with olivetreeroutes [8] produced methodologically significant results: 15 of 22 sites shared (68% convergence), confirming cartographic robustness, 7 newly documented sites added to Cultural Map v7, 4 Cultural Map sites absent from olivetreeroutes. The B1 category analysis reveals nine of twelve choirs as "nomadic", without permanent rehearsal space, documenting a structural vulnerability of the voluntary cultural sector that Policy Recommendation R6 directly addresses.

4.5.1a Category A5 in the Cultural Map: Spatial Distribution and Dual-Use Analysis

Category A5 (Architectural Heritage) constitutes the second largest category in the Cultural Map by entry count (22 entries, 21% of total), yet it is the category most thoroughly integrated into the everyday physical experience of residents, its buildings are visible street-level features of the historic centre, unlike the archaeological sites of A2 or the intangible practices of B0. Spatially, A5 entries cluster along three axes: the Aristomenous Street commercial spine (civic and commercial buildings of the classicist and eclectic types), the Ypapanti–Kastrou zone (the oldest residential fabric, including the pre-classicist and early classicist types), and the port–seafront area (the late classicist and Art Nouveau buildings of the commercial prosperity era, including the former Customs House/Ntouána and the Gymnasium of the Seafront).

The 1986 digital archive (225 buildings, digitalised 2025) enables a historically unique spatial comparison: Category A5 can be mapped against the pre-earthquake building stock, revealing which buildings survived, which were demolished, and which were restored under the post-earthquake recovery programme. This comparison demonstrates that the Europa Nostra Prize was not simply a recognition of isolated restoration acts but of a systematic governance framework, the combination of the March 1986 survey, the designation process, and the municipal acquisition programme, that

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constitutes one of the most complete post-disaster heritage management cases in southern Europe. The fact that this institutional achievement is largely unknown outside specialist heritage circles, and that 34.1% of residents fail to identify industrial heritage spontaneously while 69.6% identify neoclassical buildings, reflects the asymmetric visibility produced by differential institutional investment: what the state has systematically preserved is what residents can see.

The dual-use buildings (A5 + G2) documented in the Cultural Map are particularly significant for the CDIS Cultural Education domain: they demonstrate that architectural heritage is not merely a passive container of cultural activities but an active co-producer of cultural value. The Municipal Philharmonic's 130-year presence in the Archontiko Tzane building does not simply use the heritage building , it constitutes the building's primary living heritage function. The building and the institution are analytically inseparable: to discuss the architectural heritage of Ypapantis 25 without the Philharmonic, or the musical education tradition of the Philharmonic without its architectural setting, would impoverish both. This co-production logic, which the Cultural Map makes explicit through the dual categorisation (A5 + G2), is absent from most heritage governance frameworks, which treat built fabric and cultural institutions as separate policy domains.

4.6. Triangulation Protocol and Ethical Considerations

Triangulation [59,60]) is used as methodological triangulation, the confrontation of quantitative and qualitative findings for validation but also for revealing differences and contradictions. The mechanism followed four stages: (a) comparison of quantitative and qualitative findings per thematic axis, (b) identification of convergences, (c) identification of divergences, (d) interpretation of divergences as research data, not as “errors”. Cultural Map spatial data constitute a third triangulation source, as documented in the geographic inequality analysis (Section 7.3). Ethical protocols followed the Helsinki Declaration and GDPR (2018), informed consent, anonymisation, right of withdrawal, encrypted data storage.

5. Results I: Quantitative Findings

5.1. Cultural Perceptions and Heritage Identification

Residents demonstrate strong identification with Kalamata's tangible heritage: 83.4% identify the historic centre and Castle as primary cultural landmarks, 71.2% spontaneously mention the Kalamatianos dance, 69.6% recognise the city's neoclassical buildings , the highest single tangible heritage awareness score in the survey, consistent with the systematic institutional investment in architectural heritage documentation since 1986 [51,68]. Industrial heritage awareness is markedly lower: only 34.1% mention industrial heritage sites spontaneously, rising to 61.7% when prompted, suggesting awareness dependent on institutional mediation[4]. When asked to define “cultural heritage”, 54.7% prioritise the intangible dimension (traditions, music, dance, gastronomy) over the tangible (38.2%), inverting the typical Mediterranean heritage survey pattern, consistent with the dominance of festival-based associational cultural life.

A significant finding: 61.7% of respondents rate the contribution of cultural heritage to local development as “very much”, the strongest single response, while 0% responds “not at all”. This virtually unanimous recognition of heritage as a development tool (distributed equally across all geographic zones and social strata) confirms empirically the bonding social capital dimension, cultural heritage functions as the most equitably distributed cultural identity resource across the city. The agricultural products and traditional foods of the region are identified as the most exploitable heritage element by 50.9% of respondents, with traditional music and dance at 27.9%.

5.2. Cultural Participation and Accessibility

Cultural participation levels are moderate: 63.8% attend at least one cultural event per month, with significant variation by age (18–35, 74.1%, 56+, 48.3%) and educational level (tertiary, 79.2%,

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primary, 41.6%). The Dance Festival (KDC) records 93% local recognition and 71.3% attendance rate, DIPETHE 58.9%, Concert Hall 54.2%. Museum and heritage site attendance is lower, 48.7% annually, with significant geographic variation (historic centre residents, 67.3%, peripheral neighbourhoods, 31.2%). Economic barriers are reported by 65.2% as "important" or "very important", despite the predominantly free or low-cost nature of many events reflecting compound effects of reduced household incomes and heightened price sensitivity post-austerity. Geographic barriers are cited by 43.6% of peripheral neighbourhood residents.

5.3. Satisfaction with Cultural Services and Infrastructure

The mean overall cultural satisfaction is M = 3.21 (SD = 0.89) on a 5-point scale. Satisfaction is highest with major festival programming (M = 3.78), Concert Hall (3.64), and KDC (3.71). It is notably lower with cultural information accessibility (2.89), geographic event distribution (2.67), and youth provision (2.71). A strong positive association exists between cultural participation frequency and overall satisfaction (Spearman $\varrho = 0.52$, $p < .001$), suggesting participation as a reinforcing mechanism-consistent with the participatory heritage management literature.

Geographic disparities in satisfaction are statistically significant, historic centre residents report M = 3.1 vs. Eastern zone residents M = 2.2 (Mann-Whitney U, $p < .001$, Bonferroni-corrected). This differential mirrors the Cultural Map's spatial asymmetry, the western coastal zone hosts only one active cultural association and no permanent cultural venue among the eight in Category Γ1- a structural heritage equity deficit. Importantly, a strong positive correlation exists between cultural satisfaction and urban development satisfaction: Spearman $\varrho = 0.62$ ($p < .001$). This is the study's most powerful empirical finding, validating the basic theoretical hypothesis: culture is not an isolated sector but an inseparable element of perceived quality of life.

5.4. Social Sustainability and Participatory Governance Perceptions

On social sustainability, 72.3% consider that cultural activities do not reach all social groups equally. Only 5.0% rate the contribution of urban planning to social cohesion as "very significant", only 16.1% consider citizen consultation in planning decisions "sufficient", and 83.9% express desire for permanent participation mechanisms in cultural planning. These consistently low participatory governance scores constitute one of the most coherent cross-method findings and directly indicate the linking social capital deficit. On urban regeneration, 72.9% agree that recent works improved walkability-confirming the physical dimension of the heritage-led recovery legacy. However, the same respondents score the participatory dimension minimal, confirming a technocratic rather than community-centred sustainability mode [69].

5.5. Regression Analysis: Predictors of Cultural Satisfaction

The regression model explains 58% variance in overall cultural satisfaction- exceptionally high for survey-based heritage satisfaction research (Table 2). Two findings stand out. First, the dominant predictor is satisfaction with cultural infrastructure ($\beta = 0.41$), reflecting the centrality of tangible cultural venues. Second, and critically, the second strongest predictor is successful access to digital cultural information online ($\beta = 0.306$)- stronger than residential zone ($\beta = 0.168$) and educational level (ns). Digital access functions as a "gateway",those who find cultural information participate more and report greater satisfaction. Informational opacity excludes potential participants- directly connected to the CDIS digital access indicator. This finding was not anticipated by the theoretical framework and constitutes an empirically emergent contribution of the study. The geographic zone effect ($\beta = 0.168$) remains significant after controlling of all other factors, confirming that spatial location exerts an independent effect beyond its mediation through infrastructure and accessibility.

Table 2. Stepwise OLS Regression: Predictors of Overall Cultural Satisfaction (n = 517).

Variable	β (std.)	SE	t	p	95% CI

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Satisfaction with cultural infrastructure	0.41	0.06	6.83	< .001	[0.29, 0.53]
Digital cultural information access (finding info online)	0.306	0.07	4.37	< .001	[0.17, 0.44]
Voluntary cultural participation	0.19	0.05	3.80	< .001	[0.09, 0.29]
Residential zone (central vs. peripheral)	0.168	0.06	2.80	.005	[0.05, 0.29]
Age (negative effect)	−0.09	0.04	−2.25	.025	[−0.17, −0.01]
Educational level (ns)	0.06	0.05	1.20	.231	[−0.04, 0.16]

$R^2 = 0.58$ | Adjusted $R^2 = 0.57$ | $F(6,510) = 117.5$, $p < .001$. Note: Standardised beta coefficients. Logarithmic transformation is applied to dependent variables. SE = robust standard error. Residential zone: 1 = historic centre/adjacent, 0 = peripheral. ns = not significant. Source: Authors' own elaboration.

6. Results II: Qualitative Findings

6.1. Institutional Resilience Through Cultural Civil Society (IRCC)

The qualitative data document a consistent narrative of institutional contraction during the 2010–2018 austerity period, characterised by severe municipal cultural budget reductions, staff redundancies, and suspension of major projects. Key informants describe a "double crisis": simultaneous erosion of public cultural funding and private sponsorship. A municipal cultural officer summarized, Between 2012 and 2016 we lost approximately 40% of our operating budget. We had to choose what to keep alive and what to let go. The festivals survived because they had external funding and international partners. The smaller associations were largely on their own (Interview 7).

Against this backdrop, the qualitative data document countervailing civil-society expansion. The period 2010–2018 saw the founding of new cultural associations- including the internationally active Allegri choir (2012, members from 10 European countries), new theatre groups, and documentary film organisations. 56% of participating organisations were founded after 2000. This compensatory dynamic is theorised as "Institutional Resilience through Cultural Civil Society" (IRCC), communities intensify internal cultural production when vertical linkages to institutional funding and governance are severed. IRCC explains, but does not validate as sustainable, the Kalamata cultural ecosystem's capacity to maintain output under institutional stress.

6.2. Heritage Governance: Fragmentation and Collaborative Potentials

Heritage governance exhibits pronounced fragmentation between multiple authorities: the Ephorate of Antiquities of Messenia (archaeological sites), the Ministry of Culture (architectural heritage), the Municipality (cultural programming), and the University of Peloponnese (research). Informants consistently describe this multi-authority configuration as producing coordination failures. The director of a heritage documentation organisation observed, "The industrial buildings have no single owner". Each authority has its own priorities and timelines. Getting them to agree on a common strategy for the Aristomenous axis took three years and still hasn't produced any action (Interview 19).

Despite these challenges, the qualitative data identify emerging collaborative configurations. The cross-validation between the Cultural Map and the olivetreeroutes industrial heritage cartography [8] was described as a model of inter-institutional knowledge-sharing unprecedented at this scale. The Dromoi tis Elias organisation has developed a digital heritage trail (mobile app, QR-code signage, treasure-hunt format) received strong endorsement at the March 2026 symposium - a concrete operationalisation of COMUS principles.

6.3. The Silk Heritage Chain and Cultural Tourism Disintermediation

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The silk heritage chain documents the full spatial and temporal extent of Kalamata's most distinctive heritage asset, from the Kalograion Monastery (where nuns taught silk weaving and produced the city's silk handkerchiefs, inscribed on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory, 2024), through four silk mills (Stasinopoulos "MEGA", Malevris 'THAIS', Fourner, Historic Centre workshops), to the single surviving active enterprise, METAXOTA GONOS (Maizonos 5 & Vassilissis Amalias). An informant at GONOS observed, 'We get visitors who want to see how silk is made, to understand history. But there is no coordinated offer, no trail, no interpretation, no connection to the monastery or the old factories. Each one is isolated" (Interview 31). This isolation exemplifies the linking capital deficit: strong bonding capital within the silk heritage community, insufficient bridging to other cultural actors, negligible linking to governance structures capable of developing an integrated heritage product.

6.4. Digital Engagement and Generational Transition

Cultural organisations report that digital communication has both expanded reach and generated "cultural disintermediation", audiences engage with heritage content digitally without necessarily visiting physical sites or joining associations. The strategic implications are contested, some informants see opportunity for international reach extension; others express concern about erosion of participatory cultural life in favour of passive digital consumption. The demand for a dedicated municipal cultural information platform (endorsed by 67.5% of survey respondents) is supported by informants as a re-mediation tool, provided it is designed as interactive rather than broadcast. The Chapel of Agia Varvara (1918, corner of Kanari and Euripidou Streets), sole surviving structure of the 'Zanou and Ros' wine and spirits factory complex (1906-1950), destroyed in 1958 and rebuilt after the 1986 earthquake, now an active pilgrimage chapel, exemplifies digital heritage opportunity, a physical site with deep industrial memory, minimal digital presence, and high emotional resonance for the surrounding community.

7. Discussion: Triangulation and Theoretical Interpretation

7.1. Living Heritage and Urban Sustainability: Empirical Validation and Limits

The strongest quantitative finding, the high correlation between cultural satisfaction and urban development satisfaction (Spearman $\varrho = 0.62$, $p < .001$), empirically validates the basic theoretical hypothesis: culture is not an isolated sector but an inseparable element of perceived quality of life [9,70]. However, interpretation requires caution, the correlation is bidirectional. We cannot causally conclude that cultural investment leads to urban development. Qualitative data suggest that both dimensions are fed by a common underlying factor, the sense of "civic attachment"[26], the collective sense of belonging to the city. This concept, mediating between cultural participation and urban satisfaction, constitutes an original theoretical contribution of the study, civic attachment as the social capital substrate that makes the culture-sustainability nexus operational.

7.2. Digital Access as the Participation Gateway

Among the most unexpected regression findings is that successful access to digital cultural information online is the second strongest predictor of satisfaction ($\beta = 0.306$) , stronger than residential zone ($\beta = 0.168$) and educational level (non-significant). This finding has significant policy and theoretical implications. Theoretically, it directly connects with the CDIS digital access indicator [31], informational opacity excludes potential participants, a new dimension of cultural exclusion that overlaps with but is not reducible to geographic and socioeconomic exclusion. The finding also reveals the risk of "digital inequality", those without digital access or digital literacy are progressively excluded from cultural information, creating a new layer of disadvantage that crosscuts the geographic inequality. The Agia Varvara Chapel and the Akovitika archaeological site exemplify the

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two faces of this inequality, the former has growing digital visibility through local heritage networks; the latter remains virtually invisible in digital cultural cartography.

7.3. Geographic Inequality: Structural, Informational, and Historical

The regression results show that residential zone explains part of the satisfaction variance (Centre M = 3.1 vs. Eastern M = 2.2, $p < .001$, Bonferroni-corrected β std. = 0.168). Triangulation with the Cultural Map spatial analysis reveals the full picture (Table 3):

Table 3. Triangulation of Geographic Inequality - Convergence of Three Sources.

Data Source	Finding	Interpretation
Quantitative (regression)	Centre M=3.1 vs Eastern M=2.2 (p<.001 Bonferroni). Geographic zone β=0.168 (independent predictor).	Residents of new zones express systematically lower satisfaction from cultural infrastructure.
Qualitative (interviews)	'Our activities are centrally located; residents of peripheral zones struggle to participate.' (Informant Θ, 2022)	Actors themselves recognise the spatial gap as a reach problem — confirming the quantitative finding.
Spatial analysis (Cultural Map 3)	37/37 cultural actors clustered exclusively in the historic/pre-earthquake urban core. Eastern, western, northern zones: zero permanent cultural infrastructure.	Spatial distribution mirrors the pre-earthquake city structure. Post-1986 expansion was residential, not cultural.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The convergence of all three sources is theoretically significant, this is not a random spatial distribution, but a structural geographic inequality reproduced through institutional inertia. The concept of "landscape inertia" [26] is particularly explanatory here: living heritage "anchored" historically in specific urban spaces and did not "follow" the population into new zones, confirming that targeted decentralisation policies based on Faro's "local ownership" principle [39,71] and COMUS principles are required. Comparative experience from other Mediterranean cities (Matera, Guimarães) shows that decentralisation of cultural life requires parallel investment in community processes, digital information infrastructure, the second strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.306$) and programmes strengthening the sense of local ownership. Otherwise, new infrastructures risk remaining unused, reproducing spatial inequality in a new form.

7.4. The Material Upgrading / Participatory Governance Gap

The most critical finding from an urban governance perspective, while 72.9% recognise the physical improvement of the city from regeneration works, only 5% rate the contribution of urban planning to social cohesion as "very significant", and only 16.1% evaluate citizen consultation positively. This reflects a deeper contradiction, Kalamata applies a "technocratic" model of urban sustainability [69], physical improvement without commensurate participatory governance, rather than the 'community-centred' model required by the Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation [72]. Living heritage remains underexploited as a participatory governance mechanism, despite 83.9% of residents expressing desire for permanent participation mechanisms in cultural planning. This gap between material upgrading and participatory governance constitutes the primary governance deficit that both the Faro Convention and the COMUS framework address.

7.5. Social Capital as Supplementary Interpretive Framework

7.5.1. Bonding Capital: Living Heritage as Identity Bond

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The virtually unanimous rating of heritage as a development tool (61.7% “very much”, 0% “not at all”), distributed equally across all geographic zones and social strata, constitutes the study's most robust bonding capital indicator. This finding has significant theoretical consequences it empirically confirms that the relationship with living heritage is the most equitably distributed dimension of the cultural ecosystem, a common identity ground that transcends social stratification. Residents may not necessarily share the AHD's object-centred heritage definition, but they converge on a community-centred valuation of heritage as a developmental and identity resource[4].

7.5.2. Bridging Capital: Cross-Sector Cultural Connections

Bridging capital, ties connecting heterogeneous groups, is evident in the cross-institutional collaborations around major festivals, particularly the KDC, and in emerging collaborative heritage documentation initiatives [8]. However, bridging capital is geographically uneven, it operates primarily within the historic centre's dense cultural network, with much weaker cross-community connections between peripheral zones and the cultural core. The Allegri choir (founded 2012, members from 10 European countries) exemplifies exceptional bridging capacity, international in scope, yet locally rooted in the Ano Poli neighbourhood.

7.5.3. Linking Capital Deficit: The Governance Gap

The linking capital deficit, weak vertical ties between civil-society cultural communities and institutional decision-making structures, is the most consistent cross-method finding. It manifests in three dimensions: participation deficits (16.1% positive evaluation of consultation), governance fragmentation (multi-authority coordination failures), and resource access asymmetries (peripheral communities without institutional advocates). A community typology emerges from the data: Type A (“Peripheral disconnection”, absent bonding and linking, exemplified by western zone communities), Type B (“Active but disconnected”, strong bonding, weak linking, exemplified by most voluntary associations) and Type C (“Institutionally integrated”, strong across all three forms, exemplified by KDC and DIPETHE). The policy challenge is Type A, B, C progression, building the linking capital that connects vibrant civil-society cultural production to governance structures and resource flows.

7.5.4. Two Embedded Case Studies

Case Study 1: Akovitika - Peripheral Heritage without Community

The Akovitika archaeological site (12 km west of the centre), at the mouth of the Pamisos river, represents one of the region's most significant ancient settlements. Yet the site remains in a state of neglect and abandonment, without institutional promotion, signage, or connection to the city's cultural life. The Cultural Map documents the western zone as a “dead zone” in the cultural ecosystem. This is a common, heritage without a community to defend it, and without institutional links to compensate for this absence[73]. The case empirically confirms the structural geographic inequality (§7.3), the weak linking capital of the western zone (Type A community typology), and the violation of SDG 11.4 objectives (Table 4).

Case Study 2: Ancient Pharai / Ypapanti - Digital Mobilisation as Living Heritage

Archaeological finds of the ancient city of Pharai were identified in the historic Ypapanti neighbourhood. A decision to construct an underground car park that would permanently cover the finds triggered a broad civil mobilisation, organised primarily through social media, that reversed the decision. This case empirically validates: the central finding of §7.2 (digital access as participation gateway), the living heritage concept [4], heritage “becomes” exactly when it is threatened by community action, Type B, C transition (a community that was “active but disconnected” acquired linking capital through mobilisation), and the insight that the “right to the city” is not given but won through collective action[74]. Critically, the case also reveals a systemic weakness, participation

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should not depend on crises and confrontations but be institutionalised as a permanent governance mechanism, exactly what 83.9% of residents request (Table 4).

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Two Embedded Case Studies.

Dimension	Akovitika (Western Zone)	Ancient Pharai / Ypapanti
Geographic location	Peripheral western zone (~12 km from centre). Outside cartographic scope of cultural ecosystem.	Historic centre. Within high cultural concentration zone.
Heritage status	Neglected, unpromoted archaeological site. Absent signage and institutional management.	Archaeological finds of ancient Pharai. Threatened by underground car park construction.
Social capital type	Type A: Weak bonding + linking. Absent institutional advocates.	Type B → C: Active but disconnected → mobilisation → linking capital acquisition.
Digital dimension	Absent digital visibility. Low awareness. Not promoted through social networks.	Social networks as primary mobilisation tool. Confirmation of β=0.306 digital access.
Policy implication	Urgent institutional promotion + peripheral heritage mapping. Linking capital strengthening for western zone.	Institutionalisation of permanent participation mechanisms — community action should not depend on crises.

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on local documentation and theoretical framework.

7.5.5. Historical Genealogy of Spatial Inequalities

The GSA Messenia archival data (Militsis-Nika and Theofilopoulou-Stefanouri 2008) [47] allow tracing the genealogy of current spatial inequalities with precision, the finding Centre M = 3.1 vs. Eastern M = 2.2 ($p < .001$) is not only a geographic phenomenon, it is the contemporary expression of a social hierarchy crystallised in the 1920s. The initial spatial hierarchy (poor refugees → west, middle-class → east) became entrenched, the eastern seafront developed for tourism (1950s–1960s+) while western zones remained working-class. Yet refugees' immediate cultural response, founding associations Vosporos (1932) and the Western Coast Neighbourhood Association, documents strong bonding capital from the first moment, functioning defensively (mutual aid) rather than as instruments of institutional influence. In social capital terms, the western zone inherited historically weak linking capital, while the eastern zone inherited stronger bridging capital through its commercial/bourgeois settlement class.

One hundred years later, the intercultural memory, Greek, Armenian, Asia Minor, Pontic, accumulated in the western settlements constitutes unexplored cultural capital. Its exploitation as living heritage [5,48,49]) could function as bridging capital, connecting different community identities around a shared narrative of uprooting, survival, and settlement that belongs to all city residents. The three-fold documentation confirms historical continuity, spatial hierarchy, tourist development (east), municipal temporary interventions (west) without structural change.

7.6. CDIS Triangulation: Kalamata's Cultural Sustainability Profile

The triangulation reveals a city with significant strengths in cultural education and civil-society participation, moderate performance in heritage documentation and communication, and systemic weaknesses in cultural governance and cultural economy (Table 5). This profile corresponds to what we term the "civic vitality / institutional deficit" configuration, a cultural system whose productive energy resides in civil society rather than formal institutions. Kalamata's cultural sustainability is structurally dependent on voluntary labour and informal networks that cannot be assumed persist over time. The IRCC dynamic, while a remarkable achievement, is not a substitute for the enabling

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governance framework called for by the Faro Convention and COMUS, but rather a compensatory response to its absence.

Table 5. CDIS Domain Triangulation: Kalamata Cultural Sustainability Profile.

CDIS Domain	Quantitative Signal	Qualitative Signal	Cultural Map	Assessment
Cultural Heritage	34.1% unprompted industrial awareness, 61.7% prompted, ϱ=0.62 culture-urban satisfaction	Governance fragmentation, silk chain isolated	37 industrial sites, ICH 2024	Moderate
Cultural Participation	63.8% monthly; β=0.306 digital access, β=0.19 voluntary participation	IRCC: strong civil society compensates institutional deficit	24 assoc., 12 choirs, 7 theatre groups	Moderate-Strong
Cultural Governance	5% cohesion; 16.1% consultation, 83.9% want permanent mechanisms	Multi-authority fragmentation, no integrated heritage strategy	No single authority governs industrial axis	Weak
Cultural Education	High institutional coverage, Music School; 10 Γ2 orgs, Municipal Philharmonic 1890	Municipal Conservatory flagship, strong youth choral sector	10 Cat. Γ2, 12 choirs	Strong
Cultural Economy	61.7% heritage=development, 65.2% economic barriers, 50.9% rural products	Limited creative industry base, silk chain underdeveloped	GONOS sole surviving enterprise, SYKIKI cooperative (1929)	Weak
Communication & Infrastructure	82.8% of social media, 67.5% want app, 93% KDC recognition	Digital disintermediation, demand for integrated platform, olivetreeroute.gr initiative	KDC international, 9 festivals documented	Moderate-Strong

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

8. Conclusions, Policy Recommendations, and Theoretical Contributions

8.1. Synthesis: Reading Findings Against Each Other

8.1.1. RQ1: The Tri-Layered Architecture of Cultural Exclusion

The regression model (R^2 = 0.58) identifies four independent predictors whose combined interpretation reveals the structural architecture of cultural inequality. The dominant predictor, satisfaction with cultural infrastructure (β = 0.41), confirms tangible investment as the primary lever. The model's most theoretically generative finding is the second predictor: successful digital cultural information access (β = 0.306), operating independently of, and more powerfully than, residential zone (β = 0.168) and educational level (non-significant). This produces a tri-layered exclusion geography, those lacking physical proximity to cultural venues, those lacking digital access to cultural information, and those lacking economic means to participate (65.2% report economic barriers). These layers are correlated but not identical; they can accumulate cumulatively or operate independently, a finding with precise implications for targeting policy interventions.

Critically, the non-significance of educational level, contrary to the standard participation literature [61], requires explanation. Two interpretations emerge from triangulation. First, Kalamata's homogeneously high festival attendance (KDC,71.3%, DIPETHE, 58.9%) may suppress the educational gradient that typically stratifies participation in fee-based prestige venues. Second, the

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cultural ecosystem's IRCC-driven dependence on free voluntary production may democratise access in ways institutional provision does not. This is the study's most counter-intuitive finding, institutional deficit may produce participatory equality in access, while reinforcing inequality in infrastructure quality.

The civic attachment construct the common underlying factor behind ϱ = 0.62, constitutes the interpretive bridge across all three RQs. Residents do not evaluate cultural life and urban development as separate domains but as dimensions of a single sense of belonging. For peripheral zone residents who do not share the spatial experience of the historic core, both cultural satisfaction and urban development satisfaction are systematically lower, not because of objectively worse living conditions, but because the spatial organisation of cultural resources excludes them from the collective urban experience that generates civic attachment. This confirms landscape inertia thesis at the micro-level of individual satisfaction data[26].

8.1.2. RQ2: IRCC - Achievement, Fragility, and Its Political Implications

The IRCC dynamic is empirically demonstrated through convergent evidence, 40% budget cuts during 2010–2016 combined with new organisational founding in the same period, 56% of organisations founded post-2000, qualitative accounts of "choosing what to keep alive", and nine of twelve documented choirs without permanent space. Three sources of structural fragility are documented. First, voluntary labour fatigue: accounts of cultural workers maintaining both cultural product and organisational infrastructure simultaneously, without institutional support, across a decade. Unlike northern European context [75], where state withdrawal was partial and regulated, Kalamata's withdrawal was sudden, deep, and unaccompanied by enabling alternatives. Second, spatial concentration risk, IRCC production is geographically bounded in the historic core where social capital is densest. Peripheral zones, most affected by institutional withdrawal, have the least IRCC capacity, exacerbating pre-existing inequalities. Third, governance fragmentation, the multi-authority configuration creates structural barriers to linking capital that no amount of civil society vitality can overcome.

The most theoretically important implication concerns IRCC's relationship to the Faro Convention. The Convention calls for public authorities to 'create enabling conditions' for heritage communities (Article 12). The IRCC dynamic inverts this logic: heritage communities create their own enabling conditions, compensating for absent public frameworks. This inversion is not a success story, it is a symptom of governance failure. Celebrating IRCC risks legitimating the structural deficit that necessitates it.

8.1.3. RQ3: CDIS Profile and the Deep Structure of Governance Exclusion

The "civic vitality / institutional deficit" configuration documented through CDIS triangulation must be read historically rather than as natural. The Cultural Governance weakness (5% social cohesion contribution from urban planning, 16.1% positive consultation) reflects the structural absence of participatory governance mechanisms traceable to pre-democratic administrative traditions of the Greek state. The 83.9% demand for permanent participation mechanisms represents a century-long frustration with exclusion, whose spatial expression is traceable, through GSA archival records, to the 1922 refugee settlement geography. The Cultural Economy weakness reveals the gap between cultural production capacity and economic valorisation capacity, the silk heritage chain exemplifies extraordinary heritage density alongside minimal economic infrastructure, the AHD's systematic exclusion of commercial heritage producing exactly this outcome.

8.2. Seven Evidence-Based Policy Recommendations

Each recommendation is grounded in specific evidence from all three strands, with explicit acknowledgement of implementation challenges and successful metrics.

R1: Industrial Memory Arc Heritage Trail (2026–2027)

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Foundation: 34.1% spontaneous vs 61.7% prompted industrial heritage awareness, β = 0.306 digital access, 15 shared sites with olivetreeroutes, Chapel of Agia Varvara (1918) as documented lieu de mémoire of demolished "Zanou and Ros" factory complex.

Challenge: The multi-authority configuration means a trail crossing municipal, state, and private properties requires coordination agreement historically requiring 3+ years. The olivetreeroutes precedent, a civil-society initiative already operational, provides the anchoring partnership that bypasses the coordination bottleneck.

Metrics: Trail operational within 18 months; 10% increase in prompted industrial heritage awareness within 3 years, at least 2 new COMUS primary-stakeholder community partnerships formed.

R2: Unified Heritage Governance Forum (2026–2028)

Foundation: 16.1% positive consultation, 83.9% demand for permanent mechanisms, multi-authority failures across 24 qualitative interviews, no single authority holds mandate for the Aristomenous industrial axis.

Challenge: Forums without formal decision-making authority and resource allocation powers reproduce existing hierarchies [36]. The Forum must be established by municipal ordinance (not merely advisory), with civil-society representatives having voting rights, not merely consultative status.

Metrics: Forum established within 18 months; first integrated Heritage Management Plan adopted within 3 years; 25% increase in positive consultation (16.1% - 20%) within 4 years.

R3: Cultural Infrastructure in Western Coastal Zone (2027–2030)

Foundation: Cultural Map v7: zero permanent resources in western zone, satisfaction gap Centre M=3.1 vs Eastern M=2.2; historical genealogy traceable to 1914–1922 refugee settlements [47], (Analepsi 150 dwellings, Kordia 69, Ag. Ioannis 68, all western), Armenian community (200 families)[48] as undocumented intercultural heritage asset.

Challenge: The risk [28] that a new centre imposes a dominant heritage narrative excluding subaltern memories must be managed through co-design with western zone communities, not institutional heritage professionals. COMUS participatory validation methodology provides an operational framework.

Metrics: Satisfaction gap reduced from 0.9 to ≤0.5 within 5 years; Category B1 entries in western zone from 1 to ≥4 within 5 years.

R4: Silk Heritage Chain ICH Inscription (2026–2027)

Foundation: 27.9% identify traditional music/dance as key tourism resource, 50.9% agricultural/craft products, silk chain documented across four mills, one monastery, one surviving enterprise (GONOS), Kalamatiano handkerchief ICH-recognised 2024.

Challenge: The heritagisation paradox[18]: formal inscription may accelerate commodification. Inscription must explicitly protect GONOS as a living commercial enterprise, with provisions for apprenticeship, raw material access, and price protection against tourism-induced inflation.

Metrics: Inscription submitted within 12 months, at least 2 workshops/year at Kalograion and GONOS within 3 years, at least one additional silk enterprise within 5 years.

R5: Municipal Digital Cultural Platform (2026)

Foundation: 82.8% of social media information use, 67.5% request dedicated app, β = 0.306 makes this the most cost-effective single intervention, acting on the second strongest predictor through purely digital infrastructure investment that operates independently of geographic location.

Challenge: The CDIS governmentality critique [30], a platform that counts only official resources makes IRCC informal production invisible. Design must include participatory community contribution features, not only institutional content broadcasting.

Metrics: Platform launched within 12 months; 40% resident awareness within 2 years, ≥500 user-contributed entries within 3 years, digital satisfaction sub-score (currently 2.89) increased to ≥3.3.

R6: Performing Arts Centre for Nomadic Choirs (2027–2029)

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Foundation: 9/12 choirs (75%) lack permanent rehearsal space; OSE Railway Engine Room (Category A4 v7) as adaptive-reuse candidate, Pantazopoulion currently serves as informal rotational hub, a coordination arrangement demonstrating both demand and linking capital deficit.

Challenge: The dark side of bonding capital [34], 12 organisations with strong internal identities will need governance arrangements that require rather than merely permit cross-choir collaboration, shared programming, inter-choir concerts, joint administrative support.

Metrics: Facility operational within 30 months; all 9 nomadic choirs with regular scheduled access within 6 months, inter-choir festival in Year 1, at least one new choir founded within 3 years.

R7: Cultural Participation Equity Fund (2026 onwards)

Foundation: 65.2% economic barriers; 43.6% geographic barriers, historical genealogy establishes current inequalities as century-long, not incidental, Faro Article 4 on the right to cultural heritage engagement as rights-based normative grounding.

Challenge: Fund must be framed as fulfilling a right, not as charity [36]. Eligibility criteria must be administratively light and co-designed with residents to avoid stigmatisation. Evaluation should track geographic satisfaction gap reduction, not merely individual beneficiary counts.

Metrics: Fund operational by Q4 2026, ≥500 subsidised participations in Year 1, satisfaction gap reduced from 0.9 to ≤0.6 within 4 years, economic barrier reporting reduced from 65.2% to ≤55%.

8.3. Theoretical Contributions

First: Urban-scale CDIS operationalisation: The study advances a convergent mixed-methods protocol integrating large-scale surveys, stakeholder interviews, and systematic cultural cartography with three urban adaptation requirements (re-scaling, proxy indicators, participatory validation) [31]. Cultural Map v7 functions as the participatory validation instrument. This replicable model is directly applicable to comparable Mediterranean urban contexts.

Second: Institutional Resilience through Cultural Civil Society (IRCC): IRCC advances beyond Zimmer and Freise [75] by specifying the conditions of fragility (sudden withdrawal, spatial social capital concentration, multi-authority governance fragmentation) and differs from Florida's [76] creative class thesis in operating despite institutional absence rather than requiring institutional enabling conditions. IRCC is admirable; it should not become grounds for accepting the structural deficit that necessitates it.

Third: Historical genealogy of spatial cultural inequalities: The study connects 1922 refugee settlement social cartography [67] to 2022 survey satisfaction data, establishing a concrete causal mechanism, not merely a spatial correlation, spanning a century. This methodological approach (archival social cartography and contemporary survey) opens comparative research avenues for other post-refugee Mediterranean cities.

Fourth: Civic attachment as mediating variable: The study provides the most rigorous empirical evidence of civic attachment as a mediator between cultural participation and urban sustainability satisfaction ($\rho = 0.62$), advancing a theoretically developed framework [26] into quantitative heritage satisfaction research. Heritage engagement is not merely culturally valuable but constitutively connected to democratic urban citizenship.

Fifth: Mediterranean social capital typology: The empirically documented configuration of strong bonding, moderate bridging, and weak linking capital in Kalamata's cultural governance system Mediterranean pattern, historically conditioned by paternalistic state structures, not culturally pathological [37]. IRCC, geographic inequality, and governance fragmentation are all expressions of this single underlying configuration, enabling systematic comparative analysis.

8.4. Limitations, Reflexivity, and Future Research

Temporal limitations: Survey conducted in 2022 (first full post-pandemic year) may reflect a rebound effect inflating cultural participation and satisfaction beyond structural equilibrium. Digital access figures (82.8% social media, 83.5% successful online search) may reflect pandemic-accelerated

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digital adoption not yet at long-term equilibrium. Longitudinal replication in 2025 and 2028 is essential.

Sample composition: Overrepresentation of women (67.5%) and higher-educated respondents has directional implications, the literature shows both groups report higher cultural participation [61], meaning current 63.8% participation likely overestimates population-level rates. Perspectives of lower-educated and male residents are structurally underweighted. Future research should use face-to-face quota sampling stratified by gender and education, not only residential zone.

Spatial resolution: The five-zone geographic stratification based on municipal administrative boundaries masks finer-grained intra-zone inequalities. The Eastern zone M=2.2 aggregates the tourist-developed coastal strip and the infrastructure-deficient inland expansion zones, sub-zone analysis would reveal greater internal heterogeneity than the centre-periphery gradient suggests.

Generalisability: The IRCC configuration has been documented in a city combining specific enabling characteristics: strong post-earthquake identity narrative, internationally recognised festival, active university presence, and time-bounded (2010–2018) austerity. Theoretical generalisability requires comparative case studies of Mediterranean cities with similar austerity trajectories but different heritage assets, civic histories, and institutional configurations.

8.5. Closing: Catastrophe, Resilience, and the Limits of Admiration

Kalamata has demonstrated, twice in four decades, an extraordinary capacity to mobilise cultural resources in response to systemic crisis. The 1986 earthquake destroyed its architectural heritage, the austerity decade eroded its institutional cultural infrastructure. In both cases, civil society generated creative responses, and, in the case of the Dance Festival, achieved international recognition far exceeding what might be expected from a city of its size.

Yet this study's most uncomfortable finding is that the same qualities that generate admiration, extraordinary voluntary commitment, compensatory resilience, civic vitality in the face of institutional absence, function simultaneously as grounds for continued governance neglect. As long as civil society compensates effectively for institutional failure, there is reduced institutional pressure to address the structural deficits that make compensation necessary. The IRCC dynamic, celebrated as civic achievement, risks becoming the legitimating condition for continuing underfunding, spatial inequity, and governance fragmentation.

The western settlements' intercultural memory, Greek, Armenian, Asia Minor, Pontic, accumulated since the 1920s, documented in the GSA archives since 1932, and largely unexplored by formal heritage policy, constitutes the most underutilised cultural capital this study identifies. One hundred years after the first refugee associations were founded in Kordia and Analepsi, this memory remains institutionally invisible, spatially marginalised, and analytically absent from heritage governance. To leave it unexplored is not an oversight. It is a governance choice.

What remains to be built is not more cultural output, of that, Kalamata already has an extraordinary supply. What remains is the governance architecture to connect that output to the equitable, participatory, spatially just, and historically informed framework that the Faro Convention, the HUL Recommendation, the CDIS, and COMUS collectively envision, and that Kalamata's civil society has been constructed, without institutional support, for a century.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
IRCC	Institutional Resilience through Cultural Civil Society
CDIS	Culture for Development Indicators Suite
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
AHD	Authorized Heritage Discourse
COMUS	Community-based Urban Heritage Management System
HUL	Historic Uran Landscape
G.S.A.	General State Archives - Archives of Messinia County.

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