

This synergetic interdisciplinarity was observed during the collection and analysis of the materials to study (through laboratory studies, *in situ* observation), historical and documental research, oral narratives (through interviews), imagery and audiovisual (through observation and recording *in situ*, consultation in physical and online archives). This reflection aims therefore to highlight the potential of co-production of scientific knowledge, also emphasizing and valuing the heritage underlying the technological memory associated with the production of glazed ceramics.

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Challenges in developing a qualitative approach on the perception of tiles decay

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SUMMARY: Among the objectives of the “Old azulejos through new lenses” and “P2I Ceramic” projects, is the aim to understand the perception and information that owners, managers and/or other relevant personalities have about the probable causes of the deterioration of tile panels. That is, how the responsible for the objects perceive the probable causes of the tiles deterioration. On the other hand, they aim to obtain information about the importance that these interlocutors attribute to the tiles under their tutelage or supervision and to the need to adopt preventive conservation and restoration actions to protect them. This instigated the establishment of a dialogue between the sciences that have traditionally studied the deterioration and conservation-restoration of tiles (exact sciences, construction industry, conservation sciences) and the social sciences. The purpose of this work is, from the perspective of the social sciences, to highlight the potential of this interdisciplinary perspective for the study of tile deterioration. In addition to the challenges that arise, the objective is also to highlight the contribution that a qualitative approach to the study can have to the process of construction and innovation of scientific knowledge, considering, in parallel, the contribution to the field of conservation and restoration of tiles heritage.

KEY-WORDS: Tile decay; Conservation; Safeguarding; Heritage; Memory; Meaning and value.

Focusing on studying historic tiles to contribute to their safeguarding, the “Old azulejos through new lenses” and “P2I Ceramic” projects aim to develop methodologies for collecting, acquiring and recording information (history, constitution and state of conservation), for the analysis and monitoring of the deterioration state of tiles that will enable more effective, efficient and conscious action of their safeguard. However, all the possible causes that provoke the deterioration of these tiles cannot, or can be easily, captured through technical and scientific studies, because certain contextual conditions of the use and architectural environments where these tiles are inserted may have also played a role in their deterioration.

One of the objectives of the projects is to investigate these aspects based on the perception that owners, managers and/or similar personalities make of the probable causes of deterioration of tiles. That is, it is intended to capture how these interlocutors perceive [1] the conditions of construction, use and maintenance of the spaces in which these tiles are located, the knowledge of previous occurrences (such as flooding and water infiltrations) and to identify what they point out as likely contributions to deterioration (Figures 1 – 3).

However, it is also important to better understand the importance (meaning and values) that these interlocutors attribute to the tiles under study, because this aspect also interferes with the extent of care that is or can be taken by preventive conservation and the possibility and type of restoration

interventions that could be considered. In order to fulfill this purpose, it is planned to question the respective interlocutors using a qualitative approach. This methodological strategy points out the potential contribution of the Social Sciences to the construction and innovation of scientific knowledge, by adding a more dialoguing and interdisciplinary approach and action perspective in the field of conservation and restoration of tile heritage.



Figure 1. Lack of maintenance, loss of tiles and unappropriated interventions.



Figure 2. Effect of decay. Glaze lacunae at the edges of the tiles.

Through the development of open and semi-structured interviews on specific topics, information will be obtained that will then be object of content analysis, with respective systematization and hierarchical categorization. At the same time, this survey procedure will be integrated by a short questionnaire that will include an evaluation scale on the importance and meaning of the tiles as assigned by the interviewees, as well as an evaluation and hierarchy of the probable causes of deterioration based on the perception and knowledge of the situation by the referred participants.



Figure 2. Lack of maintenance, loss of tiles and unappropriated interventions.

It is expected that the knowledge obtained, in addition to being integrated into the broader set of results of the “Old azulejos through new lenses” and “P2I Ceramic” projects, will also contribute to raise awareness and empower the project team and related professionals for the potential resources of qualitative methodologies and, as such, of the Social Sciences, for the conservation and restoration of tiles heritage. At the same time, it is foreseen that the knowledge obtained may contribute to the achievement of a broader purpose of science communication to raise awareness for the conservation and safeguarding of the historic tiles to the specific (e.g. owners, managers and/or similar personalities) and general audiences.

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