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Revitalizing the local experience of Baleal Beach area

Case Study Analysis and Policy Recommendations

Abstract

The Baleal-Ferrel area has been the protagonist of a significant change in economy: from an agricultural and fishing village in 30 years to a world-class surfing location. This rapid change of scenery has led to the confusing development of the area that needs reorganisation.

The project aims to increase the quality of native inhabitants' lives and improve visitors' stay by decentralising the local experience. The project addresses more social and technical aspects than economic and environmental issues. The main aim is to follow and meet the native inhabitants' needs and desires, connected with public transportation infrastructure, low security, lack of basic facilities and low quality of urban green areas. The key actions focused on reorganising and upgrading infrastructure to meet those expectations by using technical solutions (more materialised aspect of space) to impact the social field (less materialised aspect). It is believed that increasing the quality of facilities and landscape will result in higher well-being and more sustainable tourist flow.

Keywords: Baleal Beach, Portugal, Tourism Destination, Spatial Planning, Policy Recommendations, Sustainability, Quality of Life and Stay

Theoretical and methodological framework

Aim of the report

In the area of Baleal, the destination has encountered several issues regarding development handling the number of tourists. Local stakeholders mention challenges concerning essential functions and needs for tourists to enjoy the goal correctly. The very concept of experiencing a destination begins with the convenience and efficiency of travel, and transport, traffic and parking have been a challenge for Baleal for

years. The number of cars during peak season is difficult to manage, and there have even been cases of breaking in and burglary from the parked cars in the main parking lot.

Another issue mentioned is the lack of elements of infrastructure meeting basic physiological needs, like restrooms, showers, lockers etc. These facilities are an essential part of the development. Chaotic scenes can occur when the destination does not have the basic physiological needs to deal with the tourists during the high season. It affects both the locals and the visitors, turning the experience of Baleal into something negative.

This project aims to provide solutions and measures to better the experience of Baleal, focusing on handling modes of transport and basic physiological needs. We believe that focusing on these issues could significantly improve the handling of tourists and, at the same time, increase the common purpose of developing Baleal profitably and sustainably.

Literature review

The development of countries, cities and rural areas towards a sustainable future is a strict necessity. The current state of the globe, being climate, growth in population, carbon footprint and limited resources force international governments to act. According to evolutionary economic geography, regions evolve over time. Based on this approach, economic landscapes are complex and evolving systems, which are strongly influenced by their past development paths (Boschma & Martin, 2010).

Several initiatives around the world are working to create and develop policies to deal with these challenges. Sustainable Cities 2020 (Cavaco et al., 2015) is a strategy designed by the Portuguese Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy. The development of urban areas is one of the vectors of this spatial planning reform, which has been implemented over the last few years. This reform has also promoted a new way of looking at the city and looking at what already exists.

The tourism industry is producing services in the form of experiences. There is a value co-creation between the actors in the transaction. Central theory on service (eco)systems defines this system as value co-creation among people, technology, value propositions connecting internal and external service systems and shared information (Spohrer et al., 2007).

However, changing and reorganizing areas of flood risk can also cause conflicts in affected societies, while changing already existing and fascinating tourist destinations is a demanding task for city planners. An example can be a project held in the town of Portofino in Italy (Salmona & Verardi, 2001). Despite that, for many regions, like Baleal Beach, reorganization is the opportunity to create more sustainable and better conditions, especially in the social field, which is one of the key fields of sustainable development. Modern cities and tourist destinations expand their territories rapidly and due to that can be exposed to overcrowding and infrastructure inefficiency. The quality of life and quality of stay is an important issue and cannot be reached without providing the infrastructure, which meets the needs of the users (Mandeli, 2019).

Strictly talking about the beach quality assessment and management, a research made by the University of Algarve took quantitative research data on beach users' of many different beaches of the area. The questionnaires express tourists' and locals' need to improve cleanliness, safety and facilities on the beach. The main parameters useful to improve the quality of tourism and local experience could be divided into 5 topics: safety, water quality, availability of facilities, scenery and litter (Semeoshenkova & Williams, 2011). All these parameters have to be considered in the spatial planning and sustainable development processes.

Other important issues ejected by the local residents are neglected road and public transport infrastructures. Low mobility rate can be a factor seriously limiting the development of tourist destinations, as well as discouraging possible visitors and decreasing the quality of tourists' stay (Prideaux, 2000). However, the mentioned issue affects most local residents, by generating mobility obstacles and decreasing quality of life. Moreover, inefficient public transport connection causes increased usage of cars generating pollution. By reorganizing the public transport system and using urban planning tools, like higher charges for parking areas, or integrated transport tickets it is possible to easily improve people's mobility (Cavallaro, Galati & Nocera, 2019). The second valuable chance for the environment and local society is to organize more ecological transportation based on electric cars and limit pollution (Jachimowski et al., 2013).

Methods

The approach to Baleal's case study involved different moments of work in analysing documents, having field visits, talking with the stakeholders and having group discussions.

The method involved an introduction to the Baleal Beach case study through lectures made by Joao Paulo Jorge and Fernanda Oliveira, and also the analysis of some papers that are useful for understanding for the first time the problems of the area and for understanding what is necessary to focus on during the visit.

After this theoretical introduction, the approach becomes more practical through a direct visit to the case study's area which is useful to see in person the main peculiarities of Baleal Beach previously addressed by documents.

Subsequently, one of the more important parts of the decision-making process was meeting the following stakeholders: Paulo Morais Ferreira (President of the Peniche Surfing Club and the national delegate of the Surfriders Foundation), Maria Simões (Manager of Lagido Supermarket and local accommodation YEY Baleal), Cristina Pereira (Manager of Hostel Baleal à Vista), Pedro Barata (President of Ferrel Parish) and Ricardo Leopoldo (Manager of Peniche Surf Camp). Having a comparison with stakeholders is really important to understand their points of view and the needs of the community.

After this period of time analysing the context, the case study approach becomes more practical through stakeholders and SWOT analysis for having a clear idea of who are the key actors for the project and also what are the positive and negative issues of Baleal Beach. During the stakeholders' analysis, the group worked together trying to identify all the actors involved in the project and their roles. During the SWOT analysis, the main purpose was to find all the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Baleal Beach areas.

The last part of the project was represented by the identification of the policy recommendations that summarize the entire work giving suggestions to the municipality about actions that have to be taken for having a sustainable development process. Policy recommendations were determined by answering 7 questions: what exactly should be done? Where should it happen? Who should conduct the actions? Which group of people could benefit? What resources will be needed? Where will these resources come from? What's the deadline for completion?

Case study analysis

Case study area

Baleal beach is located in the municipality of Peniche and it represents one of the Portuguese seaside tourism destinations. The area consists of a formation of dunes and a tombola system and its location on the Atlantic Ocean makes Baleal beach perfect for wind sports, which transforms the spot into a world-class surfing location. Actually, the access to the beach passes through a large parking area bordering some commercial activities such as cafes and restaurants that overlook the beach. During the period from May to September, the area is involved in the overtourism phenomenon and this caused different problems in traffic (for tourists and locals), security and organization of the infrastructures. Public transport is rare and ineffectively organized, whereas the basic facilities (such as restrooms, lockers and illumination) are also absent in the research area.

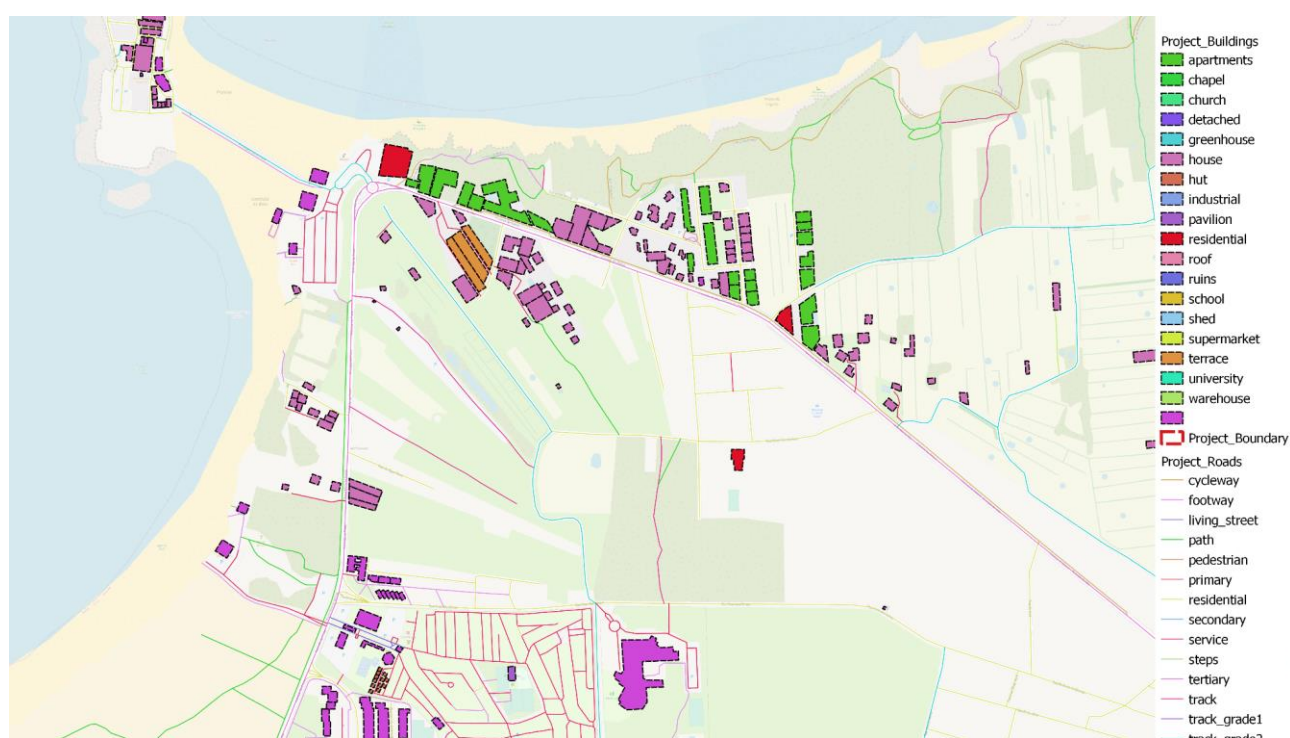


Figure 1: The area of Baleal.

Source: unknown.

There are taxi services available in the area, with a central taxi station located in Peniche. However, Taxis are costly. For instance, a ride from central Ferrel to central Peniche, covering around 8.4 km, costs an average of 10 Euros. Car rental services are available in Peniche and Baleal, but a valid driver's license is required, and also, the payment of a caution fee is necessary in the event of damages caused to the vehicle. There is one shop in Ferrel that rents out automatic motor scooters, as well as motor homes, and caravans. However, there are a few conditions such as the requirement of a valid driver's license, being above 18 years old, and paying a caution fee of 500 Euros (wild side campers). There are bicycle and skate rentals available throughout the Peninsula, namely by surf camps, and hostels. E-bicycle rental So far, Bukubaki Eco Surf resort, situated in Atouguia da Baleia, is the only place which offers electric bicycle rental services to tourists

in the region. The bicycles have fat tires as the name suggests, the “Fantic Fat E-bikes” are built for off-roading and nature paths, ideal for exploring the coastal zone (Bukubaki) (Pourgive, 2020).

Stakeholder analysis

The stakeholder analysis is a process used to have knowledge about the main actors that are involved in a project. Through this approach, it is possible to understand the power and interest that every stakeholder could have during the decision-making processes. Stakeholder analysis is essential for the success of the project, understanding the main interests, influences and interrelations of every actor.

The first step of this tool has been to identify the main stakeholders involved in the project: 1) Water sports fans (firstly surfers but also scuba divers, windsurfers, kite surfers, parasailer), 2) Tourists, 3) Local residents, 4) Government, 5) Tourism industry, 6) Land and property owners, 7) Commercial owners, 8) Transport companies, 9) Investors, 10) Teenagers and children (locals and tourists), 11) Elderly people (locals and tourists), 12) Municipality.

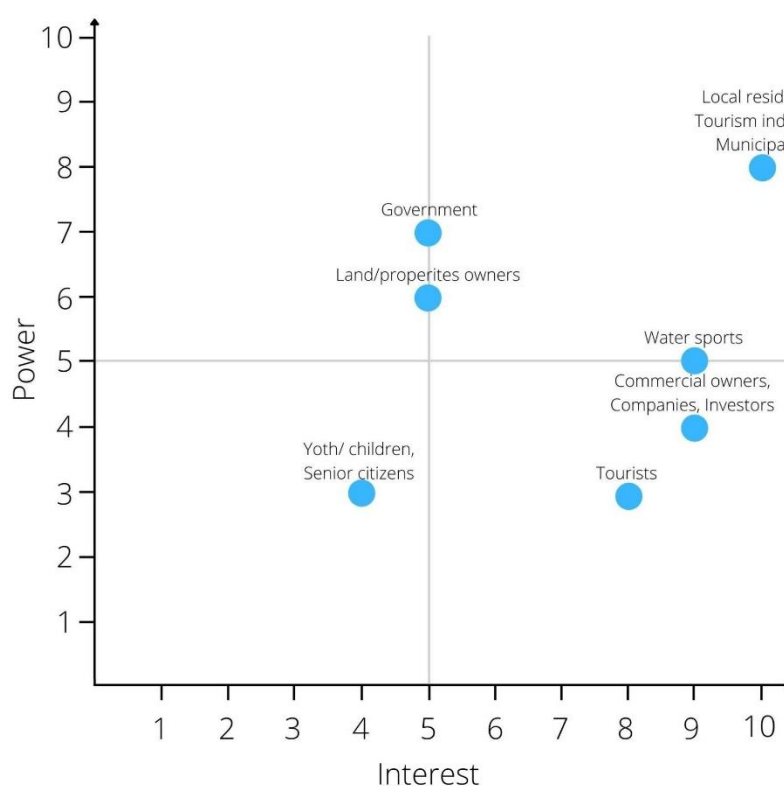


Figure 2: Stakeholders' influence and interest.

Source: own elaboration.

After having identified the main actors, we had specified for every stakeholder the score of parameters connected with the influence and interest that each type of actor has in the project. This process is useful to understand what type of stakeholders we are working with. There are four different types of stakeholders that have to be managed during the decision phases:

- MONITOR people who have low interest and low influence (elderly people, teenagers & children);

- KEEP INFORM people who have high interest and low influence (tourist, transport companies, investors, commercial owners, water sports fans);
- KEEP SATISFIED people who have low interest and high influence (government, land & property owners);
- KEY PLAYERS people who have high interest and high influence (municipality, tourism industry, local residents).

SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis in perspective of transport infrastructure allowed to identify strengths:

- Transport Industry as a necessity – The constant flow of tourists, local people and students going somewhere increases the need for the transportation sector and creates an opportunity. The need for transportation is one of the strengths of the transportation industry.
- Proximity to other tourist destinations – The proximity of the Baleal region to other touristic areas (e.g. Óbidos) increases the need for the transport industry. This is another strength of the transport industry.
- Less competition between transport companies/ start-ups – In the Baleal region, transportation contributes to the transportation sector as it belongs to the municipality and there is only one company in the region. Being a company in the region also contributes to cheap transportation prices. This is another strength of transportation.

weakness:

- Insufficient transport infrastructure – One of the weaknesses of the area is that the roads in the Baleal region are uneven and there are no subways or trains to ease the traffic in peak season.
- Improper parking space – One of the biggest problems of the Baleal region is the lack of sufficient parking areas and the use of the magnificent area right next to the beach as a parking area is one of the weaknesses of the regional transportation.
- Safety Issue (car theft) – Based on the interviews with the local people, the presence of vehicle theft in the Baleal area, especially during the peak season, shows that the area is not safe. This is a weakness of the region in terms of both transportation and safety.
- Low demand for public transport – Low demand for public transport indicates another weakness of the region. (e.g. tourists, locals and students in the area).
- Uneven balance between Public and Private enterprise – Disputes about transportation between private companies and the municipality negatively affect the transportation sector. This is also one of the weaknesses of the transport sector.

opportunities:

- Expansion of Tourism Industry – The growth of the tourism sector and the high number of tourism activities to be carried out. It creates an opportunity for the transportation industry.
- Connectivity between other tourist destinations – The connection between the Baleal region and other tourist areas. For E.g. Obidos provides an opportunity for the development of the transport sector.

- Use of renewable energy for vehicles – Public transportation vehicles using renewable energy in order to reduce the damage caused by gasoline vehicles to the environment creates an opportunity for the Baleal beach area. Thus, it will contribute to a sustainable environment.
- Scope of planning improvement – A good regional planning for the Boreal region will both relax transportation and be an opportunity to fix the bad traffic in the region.

threats:

- Too Many Private Vehicles – The abundance of personal vehicles in the Baleal region causes heavy traffic, transportation problems, parking problems, environmental pollution and noise pollution. For this reason, it poses a great threat to the sustainable structure of the city.
- Underdeveloped Nearby Scenic Destinations – The lack of use of very scenic areas in the Baleal region poses a threat to the region.
- Possible Sea Level Rise And Natural Disasters – The air temperatures that will rise due to climate change and the water levels that will rise accordingly pose a great threat to the Baleal region.

Regarding the perspective of facilities infrastructure in the Balleal area, no strengths could be identified. The lack of showers on the beach, the absence of sitting areas and the absence of toilets are the biggest proofs of this. On the other hand, SWOT analysis in the perspective of facilities infrastructure allowed to identify weakness:

- Not organized – Toilets, showers and other facilities to be built in the Baleal area need to be organized by the municipality. This situation can be considered a weakness in terms of the possibilities of the region.
- Underdeveloped – The lack of toilets, showers and seating areas on Baleal beach indicates poor facilities in the area.
- Unbalanced between public and private – Disputes and disagreements between municipalities and private companies show one of the weaknesses of the Baleal region.
- No system for safe keeping – The lack of an arrangement on the Baleal beach where people can entrust their personal belongings is another weakness of the region.
- No information – The lack of signposts or informative direction regarding facilities in the Baleal area shows the weakness of facilities in this regard.

opportunities:

- Business opportunity – By combining the initiative of developing the facilities from the government officials with private investors, it leads to business opportunities for the private actors wanting to get on board with the project.
- Big demand – The increase of visitors during the tourist peak season is considerably high. The amount of visitors that need basic facilities leads to a significant increase in demand.
- Design opportunity – From a landscaping and architectural perspective, designing and creating the physical structure for the facilities is a good opportunity for turning the service product into something extraordinary. Looking at similar domestic or international projects, can lead to some ideas on how to develop this further.
- Satisfying the basic needs of visitors – Currently the facility infrastructure is on a very low level, providing a better one would increase the satisfaction of tourists' stay, as well as encourage visitors to come again. The adjustment of the basic hygiene infrastructure is also a key aspect in case of developing bigger tourist flow in the future.

- Reducing pressure on restaurants and bars – The current situation of the non-existent WC facilities puts unfairly high pressure on the local bars and restaurants when it comes to dealing with the daily visitors to Baleal. Developing and constructing the facilities for this will reduce this pressure and also lead to a better hygienic situation for both the commercial owners and the visitors.

threats:

- Increase ocean level – The air temperatures that will rise due to climate change and the water levels that will rise accordingly pose a great threat to all of the facilities.
- More tourists lead to bigger costs of maintenance – The arrival of too many tourists to the area will cause more destruction of the facilities. For this reason, more care will be needed and it will bring about an increase in the financial opportunities to be allocated to these facilities.

Policy recommendations

Innovative traffic flow management policy creates alternate and expansive traffic flow systems by diverting and reorganising traffic by using the existing roads. The solutions can be but are not limited to, creating one-way traffic, restricting vehicular traffic during certain times of day, and proposing alternate existing roads for traffic diversion.

Establishment of the not existing public facilities, improvement of that one already existing and maintaining the infrastructures in a good condition. The main basic facilities that are needed to provide consist of a sufficient number of public toilets, showers, lockers and benches. The area also needs to improve its pedestrian accessibility to more social groups (such as disabled, old and young people) and improve the safety and hygienic condition of the area.

Table 1: Policy implications addressed and explained.

Problem/Issue	Approach	Policy Recommendation	Beneficiaries	Time Frame
Crowded beachfront filled with cars and inefficiency of public transport	Calmness and tranquillity being the assets of Baleal beach, the assets to be conserved for the prolonged safety and well-being of the beach and the local residents	Innovative traffic flow management by reducing and diverting the number of private vehicles and improving public transport network with public-private partnership at Baleal beachfront.	Local resident; Local business; Children; Senior Citizen; Tourists	Pilot project of Avenida de Praia stretch to be finished by the end of upcoming low tourist season
Insufficient Public facility infrastructure	Public facilities caters to basic human needs and helps to have a great experience at the Baleal beach	Establishment, Improvement and maintenance of Public facilities by providing a sufficient number of restrooms, increasing universal accessibility of	Local residents; Local business; Children; Senior Citizen; Tourists	Simultaneous progress along with the above policy and to be finished by the end of the upcoming low tourist season

Problem/Issue	Approach	Policy Recommendation	Beneficiaries	Time Frame
		pedestrian and light vehicle network and improvement in safety and hygiene.		

Source: own elaboration.

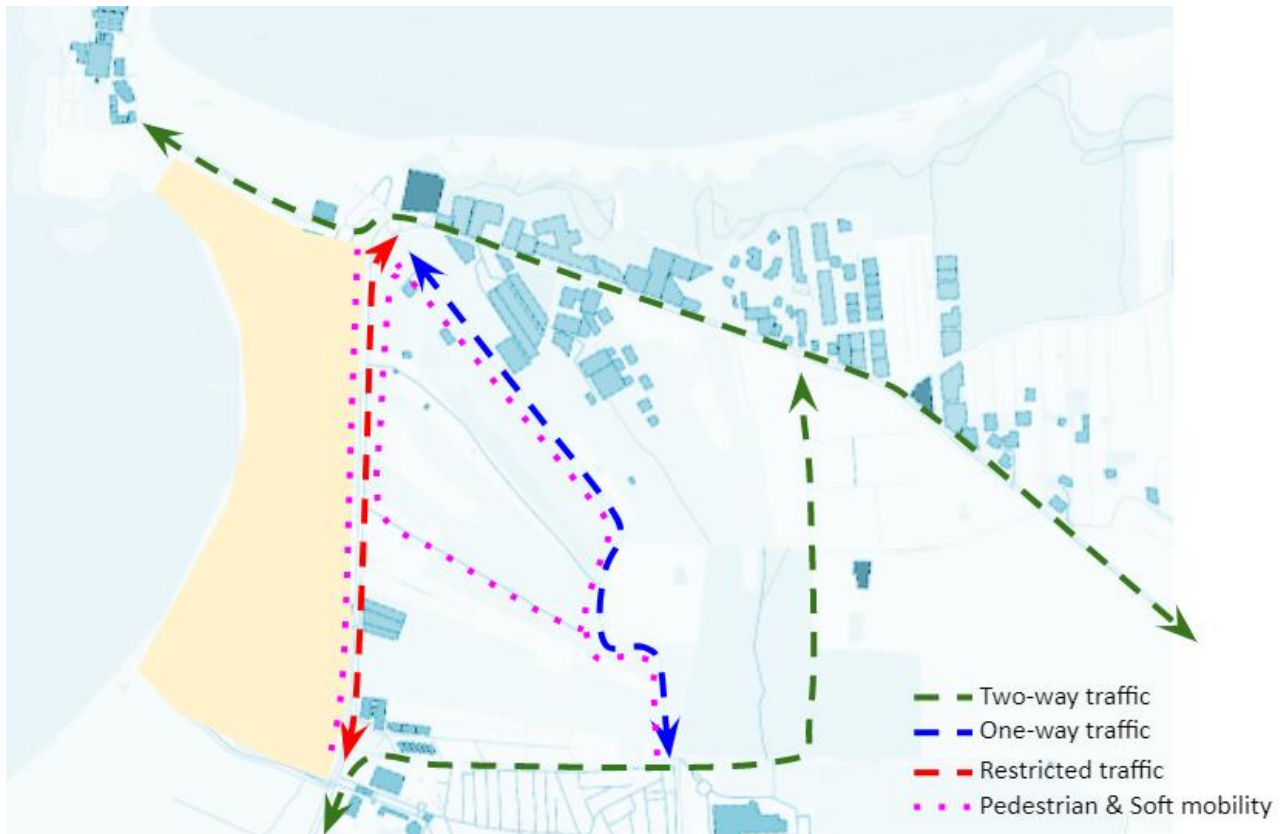


Figure 3: Innovative traffic flow management policy in Baleal Beach.

Source: own elaboration.

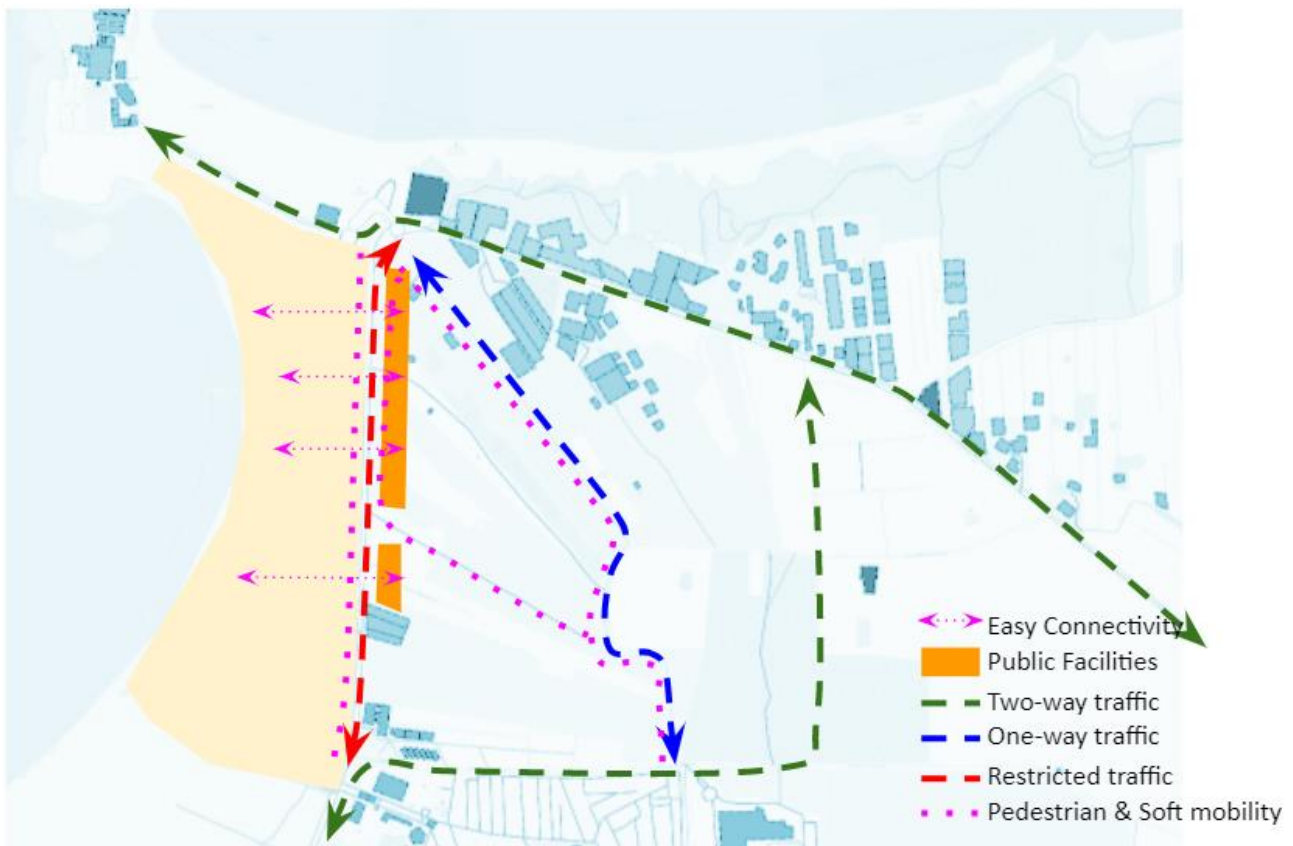


Figure 4: Establishment, improvement and maintenance of public facilities in Baleal Beach.

Source: own elaboration.

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