



ORGANISATION DES VILLES
DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL

ORGANIZATION OF WORLD
HERITAGE CITIES

ORGANIZACIÓN DE LAS CIUDADES
DEL PATRIMONIO MUNDIAL

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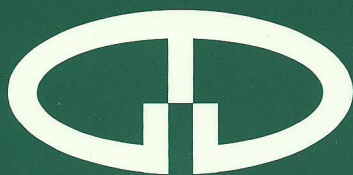
ORGANIZAÇÃO DAS CIDADES
DO PATRIMÓNIO MUNDIAL

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CITY OF MEMORY, CITY OF CULTURE – THE CHALLENGE OF MANAGEMENT

Joaquim António de Moura Flores - URBE

Abstract

Ancient houses are like old TV sets

When I was a child whenever a television or any other device went broke my parents send it to fix. It was the usual procedure. Today, fixing something usually costs around 2/3 of a new one. That is the commercial strategy to oblige us to buy a new device, spending always more money. We are naturally lead to think: «for such a price I would rather buy a new one». By this way a policy of consumption is promoted in detracton of a recycling one.

In the world of building industry and real estate a similar process is implanted. The idea that the rehabilitation of an ancient building is so expensive that the only rational alternative is to buy a new flat in the surroundings of the city is promoted, leading to the decay of the urban centres. Once again we are lead to think: «for such a price I would rather buy a new one».

We are always leaded to consume a new product rather than recycle the old one. That is the truth for TV sets or mobile phones, as it is to ancient houses.

City of memory, city of culture

The culture of conservation that we are progressively loosing is throwing us in a world where references are lost. The sustainable balance, the tradition and the memory that the historic city represents, should be motivations to the city management policies or to the guidelines of urban design.

The traditional building techniques, the organic balance of the urban morphology, the simple but effective traditional urban design and the maintenance of the human scale, are elements that we should incorporate in our contemporary urban culture.

Above all, we should learn the lessons from the past. The culture of conservation represented by the historic city, in detriment of the culture of consumption, should teach us the principles of the urban sustainability and urbanity.

The challenge that today our historic cities are dealing with is the challenge of management. Not the traditional urban management, but one where the culture of sustained partnerships and consensual actions are the base for a strategic and sustainable development. This should be done in balance with the preservation of the authenticity of historic cities, their most added-value in a globalised world, where everything is tending to look alike.

Authenticity

The World Heritage Cities, like any other historical cities, are important for their own irreplaceable characteristics. These are cities of memory, each one with its own ADN printed in their built heritage, creating a distinctive urban image impregnated with local history and sedimented with memories. This image is like an icon that immediately identifies the city. But this image needs to be understood in a larger scale than just iconography. It must be understood in the sense that Kevin Lynch gave to the sentence «image of the city» in the 60's.

Today we live a major paradox: we are in direct contact with all the world through the media, but at the same time we are alone with our mobile phone or in front of a computer monitor, virtually linked to the global village.

Due to globalisation everything and every one looks alike following fashion wave tendencies. The same happens within the cities, where their contemporary expansions are homogenising its image. As a reaction, the image of the built heritage gains another sense – to its intrinsic values of memory, aesthetics, and economy is added a new one - distinctiveness. This new value makes of historic cities distinctive references in this globalised world.

A prove of this situation is the way corporations, public or private, are taking for logo the image of their built heritage icons.



Figure 1 - Porto City Council Logo



Figure 2 – Tower of Clérigos - Porto *ex-libris*

These distinctive images, understood in the broad sense of representation of the stratified memory of the cities, are a major value in the definition of a strategic vision for the urban development in this competitive world. These images are an added-value in the marketing of places, an indispensable tool of today's urban management.

The challenge is to keep the authenticity of these images in a world where nothing is what it looks like. An example are the known brands of clothes that sell the images of the «American dream» or the «French glamour» and are made in China.

The historic cities in general and the World Heritage Cities in particular, must absolutely keep their authenticity or they will lose the great value they possess in a world where everything looks the same. It's a question of survival.

Decline of Urban Centres

In the beginning of the 70's the North American downtown started to show signs of decay. It was the visible signs of a process that spread rapidly to the industrialized world, in a first stage, and globally in a second one.

The downtown was the centre of city life, where everybody met and where the main shopping was done. Shops were mainly rented and the same happened with the majority of the flats above. Being the most wanted place for trade and living the price of property raised, leading to a process of urban sprawl of the peripheries, in conjunction with an increasing motorization tax of the population and new highways developments.

The new suburban development led to the raise of the first mass shopping places, known as Malls in the 50's. The first acclimatized Mall, Southdale Shopping Center (Minneapolis) designed by the architect Victor Gruen, opened its doors in 1954, beginning a process that speeded the commercial decline of urban centres. The indoor commercial space copies the image of the urban centre and its public space, giving ideal conditions to the commercial activities.

As a consequence of this overall situation, the delicate balance encountered in the Downtown was broke. The decline of the urban core was inevitable, visible in the progressive desertion of stores and flats. The image of the city centre reflected this situation, visible in the deterioration of buildings and public spaces. A vicious circle began: the level of attraction diminished, the human desertification progressed, the property income lowed, the level of insecurity raised as the economic degradation and physical decay.

Town Centre Management

As a reaction and a response to such situation it is developed in the North American Downtown the first experiences of its management, fighting back the malls concurrence by increasing the level of attraction of the urban centre and, consequently, raising the value of the property. In such way, the reaction was primarily economic, leaded by the property owners. However, to promote the revitalization of the urban centre a global management activity has to be established, leading in such way to the appearance of the Town Centre Management discipline.

Business Improvement District - BID

From this community informal movements of the late 70's it was born a formal management scheme, in the middle of the 80's, known first as «Special Assessment Districts», and spread today all over the United States of America as «Business Improvement Districts» (BID) - there are currently over 1,200 BIDs in the US, which together generate more than \$1billion per annum on the provision of capital projects and services.

Mainly a BID its a partnership between a local authority and the local business community that develops and takes forward a project which will benefit the trading environment and the public realm, in a bottom-up approach to the problem (private sector leadership).

A non-profit private organization is created to develop various services of common interest to the owners and shoppers of a delimited zone. Their funding is provided by a tax that the property owners of such zones are obliged to pay. Those owners benefit on the valorisation of their properties in a long term.

The services provided by the BID organization are commonly the following: maintenance; security; marketing and promotion; capital improvements; business and fund raising.

Maintenance Various services are provided as a complement to city hall obligations. These services are vital to obtain a quality image of the urban centre. The cleaning of the streets and sidewalks, graffiti's removal and green elements maintenance (grass and trees).

Security In addition to police work a service of private security is provided, as well as CCTV in the streets for surveillance.

Marketing and Promotion A Vision of the urban centre is created and developed in a strategic plan, where the strengths of the district become opportunities. The promotion of all the necessary actions to accomplish this vision are also attribution of the BID management. Those activities can be translated into all kind of merchandising products that promote the image of the urban centre, publicity campaigns and festivals and several public events.

Capital improvements Although the main initiative on the creation of the BID's is from the private sector, the partnership with the public sector (city hall) is unavoidable. Only the city administration can make the necessary investments in the public space requalification needed to obtain a viable and attractive district.

Business and fund raising The execution of a business plan is also an attribution of the BID management team. In such plan, supported by market research, the economical promotion of the District is the main objective, balancing between the offer of financial benefits and raising of new investments and funds.

Town Centre Management Schemes

Suffering from the same problems of city centre decadence, a similar reaction was produced in the United Kingdom in the 80's, leading to the creation of the «Town Centre Management Schemes». The first manager was nominated in 1987 for the Centre of Ilford. In 1991 it was created the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM), with the purpose of promoting the exchange of management experiences and training of managers. By the end of the 90's, 240 management schemes were already implemented in Great Britain.

“The primary aim of town centre management is to create active partnerships and broad networks to develop a healthy and sustainable environment that involves and benefits all its stakeholders. It works for all levels of society, valuing and encouraging contributions from those who are normally least able to influence events, from the bottom up as well as from the top down, so to speak.” (ATCM ¹)

On these experiences the partnership between the private and public sectors is more balanced than in the North American experiences. The contribution of the local authority is almost equal to the retail sector, usually the leading partner of those management schemes.



Figure 3 - Town Centre Management benefits (ATCM)



Figure 4 - Town Centre Management basic scheme (ATCM)

Without a sustained funding, as in the American experience, the British schemes revealed themselves with some fragilities. Their support was, in the beginning, made by some of the major retailing companies that normally can be found in the majority of the English town centres, like Marks & Spencer or Boots the Chemist. With the progressive economic recession those partners reduced their contribution. That fact, in

conjunction with the voluntary scheme of contributions, reduced the vitality of the management structures in progress.

Based on the success of the American model and taking into account the fragilities of the British one, the authorities of this country approved in 2002 a pilot project to introduce the BID model in 22 British cities. In case of success it can be generalized to all the town centres of the country.

Several other countries have town centre management experiences, however those mentioned above are the most developed. The Austrian scheme deserves to be mentioned because it confirms the viability of the BID model in Europe. In several cities of Austria a regional tax for tourism is now being used by some entrepreneurial cities, with the agreement of regional and local authorities, to support some management experiences.

Urban management versus Town centre management

The type of management that we have been speaking about differs from the usual urban management made by the city authorities. The main difference results from the necessity of Town centre management schemes to develop partnerships that are their base of sustained work. The advantage of this kind of management is that the actions taken and developed in the city centre are the result of a previous agreement between all the urban actors. That way of action contributes to successful management.

Town Centre Management in Historic Towns

The management experiences previously mentioned can and should be applied in historic towns. The decadence of the city centre results, among other factors, from the concurrence of the shopping centres. Those shopping structures apply the model of current commercial street, with ideal climate conditions and a rigorous management. As an example we can mention the «Via Catarina Shopping», which is located in the major commercial street of the World Heritage City of Porto. Inside this shopping a copy of several facades of traditional architecture gives form to the «food square».

The struggle that town centres are dealing with the peripheral shopping centres is not a lost one. There are still several advantages that our city centres can reclaim. They are **multifunctional** - residential, administrative, commercial and cultural are some of the usual functions that can be found there. That's also the reason why we can say that those centres are places of **convenience**.

The specificity of the historic towns reaffirms its advantages over the shopping centres and also over other city centres. Such affirmation is sustained by the importance of their built heritage, understood in its 3 values as defined by Françoise Choay – economic, aesthetic and memorial – that combine to produce the most relevant advantage of all: **identity**, that specifically characterizes and individualizes one place from another. This factor increases the power of **attraction** of the city centre over any other territory in the regional context.



Figure 5 and 6 – Via Catarina Shopping – interior

In such way, the preservation of the built heritage is not only a question of culture, fashion, balance, authenticity, sustainability, etc., but also an essential aspect on the power of attraction of the city, working as a vital element in its competitiveness in the territorial context. In that sense, it's also a fundamental issue to be included in the strategic planning and management of the city.

Conclusion

The culture of conservation that we are progressively losing is throwing us in a world where references are lost. The sustainable balance, the tradition and the memory that the historic city represents, should be motivations to the city management policies or to the guidelines of urban design.

The traditional building techniques, the organic balance of the urban morphology, the simple but effective traditional urban design and the maintenance of the human scale, are elements that we should incorporate in our contemporary urban culture.

The management of historic cities must have in its strategic objectives the preservation of the city's authenticity. Above all, we should learn the lessons from the past. The culture of conservation represented by the historic city, in detriment of the culture of consumption, should teach us the principles of the urban sustainability and urbanity.

The challenge that today our historic cities are dealing with, is the challenge of management. Not the traditional urban management, but one closest to the Town centre management above-mentioned, where the culture of sustained partnerships and consensual actions are the base for a strategic and sustainable development.

References

1 - ATCM, *What is Town Centre Management*, London, ATCM, 2000, p. 3

2 - *Ibidem*, p. 4

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Figure 1 – <http://www.cm-porto.pt>

Figure 2 – <http://www.cm-porto.pt>

Figure 3 - ATCM, *What is Town Centre Management*, London, ATCM, 2000, p. 3

Figure 4 - ATCM, *What is Town Centre Management*, London, ATCM, 2000, p. 4

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