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Built Heritage and Sustainable Tourism: Conceptual, Economic and Social Variables

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1. Introduction

The origin of tourism in the modern world is closely linked to recognition and appreciation of cultural heritage. In the eighteenth century, the so-called "Grand Tour", from which the word *tourism* comes, consisted of trips of intellectuals and artists from different countries of Europe to the Italian peninsula, and especially to Rome, to take direct contact with relics of classical antiquity. The ancient world, especially the Roman civilisation, had been "rediscovered" by the culture of the Renaissance and Rome had become a destination for those who wanted to know and appreciate classic art, which was taken as a source of inspiration for artistic production of the time (Choay, 1992). This habit meant the implementation of infrastructure and equipment to meet the needs and requirements of the travellers, including transportation systems and accommodation, all of which constitute a background of modern tourist facilities. This initial form of tourism included some components of its current definition: the idea of "tour" meant that travellers returned to their places of residence once their expectations had been met, they were motivated eminently by cultural purposes and funds invested in the destination came from their home countries. In short, it was, in modern terms, a practice of cultural tourism, reserved for a selected social group in terms of education and economic position.

The major economic, social and cultural changes induced by industrialisation all over the world took to new modalities of tourism; among the rights recognised to workers, free time, vacations and leisure appeared, especially throughout the twentieth century. New social groups were gradually incorporated to the practice of tourism. At the same time, new heritage items expanded the realm of tourist attractions, something that has occurred up to the present time. The interest in nature typical of the scientific field between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was transferred to the realm of art especially by the nineteenth century Romanticism; the natural environment was considered a source of contemplation and relaxation for body and spirit. The translation of this expansion of the heritage concept impacted in the field of tourism, besides sun and beach and cultural tourism. Nowadays, several modalities appeared, among them ecotourism, adventure, health, business, religious, gastronomic tourism, etc. Over the twentieth century, and particularly the period after the World War II, the progress in transportation and general improvements in revenues facilitated the access of new social groups to the possibility of travelling. Social tourism

emerged, which assured the possibility of holidays for workers, and mass tourism, which has continued to expand, making tourism a top economic activity at international level and, for many countries and regions, a source of economic growth and overall development of communities.

These concepts have undergone several changes throughout time. The qualitative and quantitative evolution of tourism as economic and social activity coincides with the development of heritage concept, assessed mainly in the late twentieth century. New categories of goods would be added to the initial idea of “historic monuments”, which according to the Venice Charter (1964), these are testimonies of *“a particular civilisation, a significant development or a historic event”*; the concept of monument does not longer refer only to great creations but also to *“more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time”*. In the late twentieth century, new heritage categories were considered; in 1992, UNESCO introduced the concept of cultural landscape, consisting of the joint work between man and nature. In 2005 the notion of heritage routes was included in the *Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, which implies the consideration of *“tangible elements of which the cultural significance comes from exchanges and a multi-dimensional dialogue across countries or regions, and that illustrate the interaction of movement, along the route, in space and time”*. Intangible heritage, consisting of literary and musical works, traditions, social practices, oral history, gastronomy and traditional knowledge gained significant ground in the theoretical debate and in the field of heritage management, which is manifested in the adoption by UNESCO of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage in 2003. In this framework, historic towns and urban areas became one of the most significant heritage assets, since they express, perhaps better than other heritage categories, all the complexity of human relationship with the environment, merging tangible and intangible heritage components. Nowadays, heritage is recognised as social construction and it is highlighted the active participation of all social actors in its identification and management, when defining heritage, according to Prats (1997), as *“the symbolic referent of the cultural identity of the community.”*

These two concepts in evolution, heritage and tourism, are linked with the formal appearance of the concept of sustainable development in 1987. Its more well-known definition indicates that it deals with a development that has to satisfy the current needs without threatening the ability of future generations to solve their own needs. Though the term “sustainable” may be mainly associated to natural resources, a public policy of sustainability cannot exclude today conservation, management and use of the built heritage.

Tourism has had a global booming growth during the last decades, and the close relationship between heritage and tourism brings about opportunities and threats. Among the advantages we can mention the attainment of economic resources, creation of jobs, provision or improvement of facilities and the urban infrastructure, enhancement of public spaces and building restoration as well as the consolidation of the local identity. However, there are important threats related to sustainability. These not only imply alteration or destruction of material components of buildings and sites but also they may distort their values and meanings.

As regards this issue, key economic factors, which need to be identified and analysed, remain. Tourism has always been studied as an economic activity, measuring its incidence, for instance, in the national gross product. However, when we include heritage, the

economic study is subtler and less spread. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) adopted an International Charter on Cultural Tourism in 1976. The extraordinary growth of tourism over the last decades of the twentieth century led ICOMOS to review the Charter; a new text was adopted in 1999, more suitable to the demands of the moment. This text introduces concepts and recommendations related to the proper interpretation and transmission of heritage values and meanings, with the need to consider the tourism use of heritage as a tool for the integral development of host communities through the idea of participatory planning involving all stakeholders.

In the context above mentioned, the main purpose of this chapter is to study the relationships among three key concepts: built heritage, cultural tourism and sustainability. The conceptual, economic and social variables of this issue are particularly emphasised, making special mention to the case of Latin America countries.

The main problem that will be discussed in this chapter is the degree of conflict among these three concepts, which arise particularly when we pass from theory to practice. We will follow the next steps in order to analyse this problem and to think about the compatibility among sustainability, tourism and heritage. First of all, it is necessary to study the definitions and nuances of the sustainability concept, relating them to the updated conceptions of tourism and built heritage, according to current specialised bibliography and technical documents. Secondly, it is required to link the knowledge cited above to social and economic variables, factors that, according to our hypothesis, can cause the main distortion when we pass from theory to practice. Finally, it is essential to verify these through some case studies. In relation to that, we think that Latin America World Heritage towns are very appropriate examples in order to test the ideas developed before.

The analysis of successful experiences and of problems detected in many cases of historic centre rehabilitation of Latin America included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage – Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) and Colonia del Sacramento (Uruguay), among others – serve as guide for the development of a series of recommendations intended to achieve the tourist sustainable use of the cultural heritage, with social, economic and cultural advantages for the communities involved.

2. Sustainability and built heritage

2.1 About the sustainability concept

“Over the last thirty years, the concept of monument has grown, evolving from the individual building to the historic district of the cultural landscape. Slowly but surely, we will reach the concept of ecosystem, in which it will become obvious that the preservation of a site, even as a historic city, can occur only if it is possible to preserve its environment and all the activities that have traditionally supported the life in the site. Why preserve the fisherman’s town if the river is allowed to go dry or if the industrial plant upstream is allowed to pollute the river and kill the fish?” (Bonnette, 2001).

The previous observation has the advantage of building a bridge between concepts which are very widespread, such as sustainable development and heritage conservation, but they often appear empty of content, or they are interpreted in a different way from the view of other disciplines, or they are not integrated according to a systemic view. Sustainability is a concept

which has been applied, not very accurately, among the people responsible for policies and decision making (Meppem, 1998). There is no coincidence about its meaning, either.

If the sustainability definitions are considered, it may be concluded that most of them are expressed in normative or positivist terms. According to Keynes, a regulatory science can be defined as a body of systematised knowledge referring to the criteria of what something must be; instead, the positivist science considers what things are (Keynes, 1890, as cited by Meppem, T. & R. Gill, 1998).

The most widespread regulatory definition of sustainable development is that emerging from the so-called Brundtland Commission in 1987, which states that development must answer to the current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The success of this definition is sometimes attributed to its ambiguity.

In general, there is some agreement in the fact that the scientific positivism is incapable of answering by itself the political and cultural variables that lead the action to a sustainable development. The evidence resulting from the science domains, from sociology, philosophy, economy and law suggests that the conventional regulatory-positivist approach is not suitable from the epistemological point of view. The alternative is to develop a process in which it is taken into account the socio-cultural context where the environmental and economic information circulates, considering the development scenarios more completely.

According to Pearce, the capital stock takes different shapes: works and products, human capital (knowledge, abilities), natural, environmental or social capital. The latter involves the group of social relationships that produce welfare directly or indirectly. The built heritage, which is the main subject of our study, can be thought also as a capital, which comprises a stock of physical works along with ideas, beliefs and values that gather communities and link the present with the past (Pearce, 1998).

As a general rule, the sustainable development requires that the capital stock transferred to the next generation is lower than the capital stock in hands of the current generation. From that, two new concepts have arisen:

- Weak sustainability: the stock should grow through time, but its composition is irrelevant. For instance, if the environment is now degraded, this can be justified since the benefits resulting from the proposed activity are higher than the cost of the resulting degradation. Many projects of conventional urban construction and intervention can be included within the weak sustainability concept.
- Strong sustainability: some goods, like those included in the natural or cultural heritage, are so important that it is indispensable its conservation. Some of the reasons for this are the following:
 - a. The environment has intrinsic values and it is not replaceable. There is no possible replacement (irreversibility).
 - b. The value of the environment and its components is uncertain, therefore, it should not be destroyed for caution. This reason may respond to a kind of “non-use values” (for instance, a plant species can be the key in the future healing of a disease, and this would be impossible if this species becomes extinct).

From the social point of view, the strong sustainability is related with the idea of investing in activities which enable social progress, that is to say, improving the public participation,

democracy, the reinforcement of local communities, information flow and the human capital, since the formation of human capital through education enables the development of other social values. Within the strong social sustainability, it is possible to focus on the cultural capital and, specifically, on the built heritage. There is some agreement about the fact that art and architecture have values similar to those “intrinsic values” of the natural environmental ones. In fact, according to Pearce, it is about a modern interpretation of Ruskin’s thought:

“... it is not about convenience or feelings when trying to preserve or not buildings from past times. We do not have rights to touch them. They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them and partly to all mankind generations that will follow us.” (Ruskin, as cited by Pearce, 1998).

From the point of view of weak sustainability, this position can be objected. It is held that conservation at any cost is not practical and even doubtful from the moral point of view since the resources spent on conservation could have been used today with other purposes, maybe with higher benefits. The defenders of sustainability often disregard the basic principle of economy: the opportunity costs. Beyond the moral arguments of conservation, the financial resources spent on conservation, especially in developing countries, can be used to solve present basic needs (food, health, housing), which can also be considered as “rights”.

It is also certain that not all the present goods can be preserved with the expectation that future generations consider them as their “cultural heritage”. Leaving the decision in hands of “specialists” would be in agreement, perhaps, with Ruskin’s thought, but this attitude can be considered inappropriate according to the present concept of heritage as “social construction”.

2.2 Man, nature and culture

Each generation has a capital that mainly includes three kinds of goods: natural, cultural (personal property and real estate) and human resources. There is a share, quantitatively smaller, of natural and cultural goods, considered as having special features, and because of this, they deserve to be protected, so that they can be enjoyed by the present and next generations (Lichfield et al., 1993). This apparently simple issue, in practice, results in countless difficulties of complex order, among which economic aspects play a key role.

In the previous paragraph, it is possible to foresee two topics that deserve consideration: that of the relationships among man, nature and culture; and heritage conservations as a problem that affects or involves different generations (the latter, key point in the classical definition of sustainability).

Regarding the first issue, it can be stated that until mid twentieth century the human myth of the supernatural man prevailed, and the opposition between nature and culture was the basis for the prevailing anthropological model. The world seemed to be built by three overlapped strata, isolated from each other: man-culture, life-nature, and physics-chemistry. This situation began to be modified in the 1950s with the opening of the gaps between these tight paradigms, enabling a new concept in the relationships between the natural and cultural things.

It is owed to Schrödinger, pioneer of the biological revolution, the main idea that: living beings are nourished not only by energy but also by complex organisation and information. Thus, the human society, which can be considered the most emancipated as regards nature,

actually nourishes its independence from multiple relations: the more autonomous the living system, the more dependent on the ecosystem where it is integrated (Morin, 1973).

This complexity sometimes seems not to be taken into account in the conservation environment of the natural and cultural heritage, and this can result in the fact that the implemented measures do not produce the expected results. For instance, many of the national and international efforts have been centred on the creation of national parks and protected areas, aimed at the conservation of pristine and intangible goods. Considering cultural landscapes is relatively recent, understanding as such those where the physical and biological features have been extensively modified by human activity. This means that the decisions and social - economic processes prevail in determining spatial patterns and landscape characteristics. Disregarding this aspect, sometimes the protected areas do not offer an integral solution for the wild life conservation, aim of its creation. Then, it becomes necessary the programs oriented specifically to the needs of rural residents, who live on agriculture and on the exploitation of the wild life in the area. This kind of approaches to the conservation fulfils a double purpose: to protect the wild habitat and to respond to human needs at the same time (Young, 1997:137).

Regarding the problem between generations, it is known that, in the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the sustainable development arose as one of the most urgent and critical topics of international politics. Some specialists consider that this critical issue has been mostly dealt from an “emotional” point of view, but not enough progress has been made in the construction of sustainable patterns for a modern industrial society. A serious position requires the study of the resource assessment, what usually results from its contribution to use or profit. The key factor is how the value is considered so that present and future have an equal treatment. Sensitivity is necessary in relation to both and this implies a symmetrical treatment of the generations, in the sense that neither the present nor the future must profit at the expense of the other. Thus, there is no preference for the romantic vision that privileges the future or for the consumption view that only decides in function of the present (Chichilnisky, 1997).

2.3 Tourism and sustainability

Tourist resorts attract cyclic populations throughout time. The tourist's perception of the social and environmental quality of the site influences the future attraction that such places bring about. If tourists have a positive perception of the site, an increasing number of people will visit the area. As this figure increases, the effects of tourism on social and environmental quality increase. Thus, degradation levels may be reached because of excessive visiting, and these levels can revert the tourism trend in the area (Lawrence, 1994:265-66). This process is known as “tourist cycle”, shown in Figure 1.

Tourism is cyclic by nature, so are its social and environmental impacts. In Figure 1 there are two representative bands of the tourist population and of sustainability. The first grows through time up to an MTP (maximum tourist population) point, from which the people flow tends to decrease, as a consequence of excessive visiting, pollution, crimes, etc. On the other hand, the negative impacts that indicate a decline of sustainability take some time to revert, since a period of time is needed for the environmental improvement and socio-cultural changes. If the tourists' arrival continues decreasing, the negative impacts increase

from a CNIT (change of the negative impact trend) point. Like in the supply and demand curves of economic models, the tourist population and sustainability flow around the intersection area of both bands. Such area is the sustainable development zone. If the tourist population and the negative impacts do not exceed the maximum levels that this area determines, a sustainable development can be reached in the long term.

Many tourist projects have ignored these tendencies, encouraging tourism growth beyond the recommended limits. This, in the long term, has resulted in the opposite expected effect: the decrease of the tourist flow together with social and environmental negative impacts in the area, sometimes very difficult to revert.

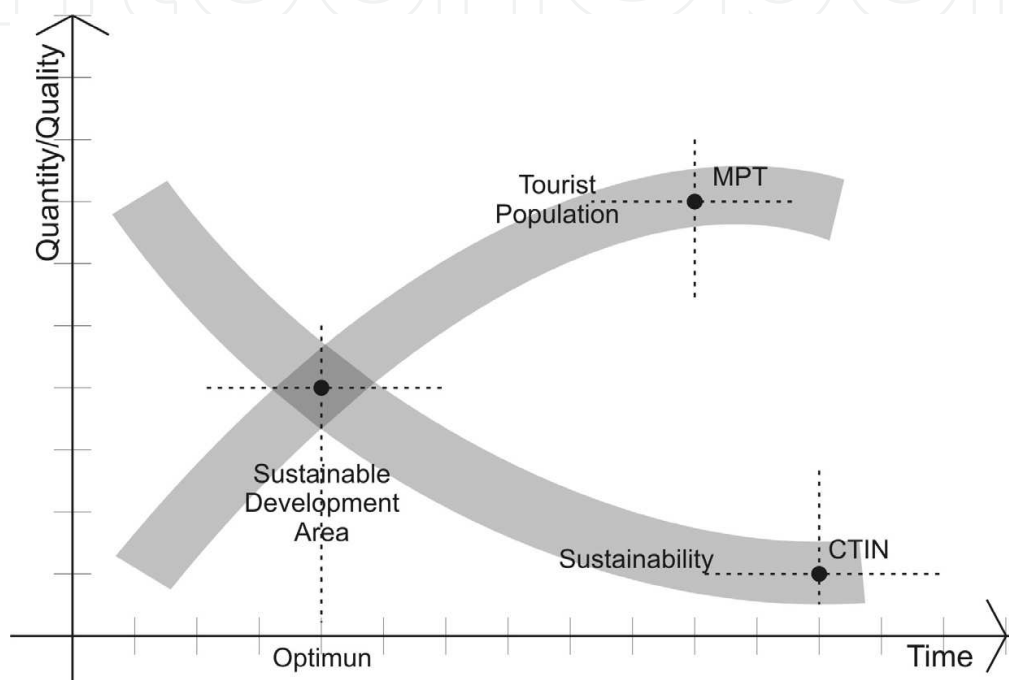


Fig. 1. Sustainable development area. Adapted from Lawrence (1994)

2.3.1 About ecotourism

The interest for the environment, developed in the industrialised countries since the 1980s, has encouraged particular ways of tourism, such as ecotourism. This fact contains potentially excellent opportunities of using tourism as protection tool of natural ecosystems, giving them a socio-economic value in their original estate.

The term “ecotourism” seems to have appeared in Mexico, chosen by Ceballos-Lascurain to define activities related to trips to natural areas in relatively pristine conditions, in order to study, admire and enjoy the flora, fauna and cultural expressions that may have existed (Filion et al., 1994). This concept has been broadened throughout time, including the environmental and socio-cultural consequences resulting from the tourist activity. Thus, nowadays, it is considered that ecotourism is a responsible trip, aimed at preserving the natural environment and at sustaining the local population welfare.

The definition of ecotourism includes a wide range of activities. Some market segments are small and well-defined (ornithologists, observation of rare species), while others are just the opposite (enjoying nature in trips mainly organised with another purpose).

Ecotourism seems especially positive in developing countries, since many of them are characterised by their biodiversity richness, but sometimes they do not have the necessary means for preserving the environment, favouring other forms of unsustainable economic development. In countries with a particular natural and cultural heritage, and with a special sensitivity or tradition in its conservation, these activities may become the main income source of the nation. In Nepal, “*the economic dream of conservationists*” seems to come true (Wells, 1994): a net of well-established protected areas produces, thanks to foreign visitors, an important part of the income of one of the poorest countries in the world.

In some developed countries, ecotourism has a significant importance. For instance, in Canada, millions of inhabitants perform tourist activities related to wild life, such as bird watching. These activities produce a high economic impact on the gross net product, on the income level of the population, on job creation and government income through taxes. In this country, an important part of the income the government receives through taxes from local ecotourism is invested in preserving wild life. Therefore, quantifying the socio-economic importance of ecotourism is a key factor for encouraging governments and companies to increase their efforts in environment conservation.

Though travelling with the purpose of enjoying nature has important benefits, there are also great conflicts. Beyond the well-known negative impacts on society and environment, there are other problems in the developing countries, such as money leakage: international airlines, hotel chains, etc. (Filion, 1994).

2.3.2 Cultural tourism and built heritage

Built heritage must also be studied as the basis for the development of sustainable tourist activities. According to “The Royal Heritage Site Working Group”, tourism and heritage are activities that must find a balance, including understanding the permanent value of the sites with historic and heritage relevance, as well as respecting the original nature and purposes of the site, though its uses have been modified. The full visitor’s enjoyment must be guaranteed, in relation to the site and its social, cultural and aesthetic context, and at the same time its maintenance and conservation in the long term must be also guaranteed so that its integrity is safe through time.

This balance may be altered by some obstacles that hinder a harmonic relationship between heritage and tourist activity, especially in developing countries having population settlements with heritage value (coastal, mountainous zones, fishing villages, etc.). There may appear a great pressure by the tourist use of those settlements; this process coexists, among other phenomena, with the increasing number of new constructions, including holiday houses uninhabited most part of the year and the public inefficiency for providing economic resources for conservation and rehabilitation activities (Öznöğul, 1998). This situation can be observed in many cities in different countries.

The previous paragraph shows the lack of understanding regarding the nature of sites, which are only analysed according to their “picturesque” features or to the way of life characterising them. The massive incorporation of visitors may represent the risk of incorporating foreign patterns which can destroy the cultural heritage to be preserved.

Certain population settlements with heritage value indicate that the building morphology and their characteristic urban fabric respond to complex factors including climate, safety,

economy, politics, socio-cultural and religious factors. That net of interdependent factors creates a strong association between population and the built environment. The open spaces help to place the inhabitants in their social space, influencing the way and intensity of the communication between them. Historically (such as the case of many settlements in Saudi Arabia and nearby zones), the circulation systems were designed for enabling the connection between the residential areas and the agricultural tasks, the cult places and the markets. Many paths were designed as labyrinths for disorienting the rivals in case of attack. More recently, the land subdivision according to a grid, the abandonment of the compact fabric for an extended and disorganised urbanisation, surfacing of passages and open spaces for enabling the vehicle access, as well as the excessive tourist interest have destroyed the original balance (Saleh, 1998).

3. Analysis of the main variables

3.1 Built heritage and the economic variable

Including the economic variable into the domain of nature and culture aesthetics has always been suspicious as it seems impossible to value the invaluable. Regarding this, the viewpoints vary with the culture of each people. As Michel Racine says, referring to the “tourism of gardens” in Great Britain and France, “... *garden tourism has become a business, activity considered as the most noble in the mainly protestant countries, when this activity is often suspected in France*” (Racine, 2001).

However, the association between production, commerce and aesthetics has an early background. Significant technological innovations took place not only to improve hunting or recollection efficiency but also to achieve aesthetics goals. In the Aurignacian period (40 thousand to 28 thousand years ago), the Cromagnon man created several techniques for working ivory, including the preparation and use of metallic abrasives for polishing it. They used the ivory for creating beads, earrings and small figures, and seldom for making tools or weapons. Objects made in bones and mammal teeth, fossils, corals, limestone, etc. have been found; the raw material was not chosen at random, and many materials were from geographically far destinations, acquired by means of trade (PNUD, 1998).

Incorporating the economic aspects to this knowledge field has been expanded in the last twenty years, taking into account the following causes, among others:

- Recognising the existence of a “cultural sector” and of “cultural industries”, understanding as such, works and practices related with the intellectual and artistic activity, concept that has been broadened, including recreation, sports and free time (Casey et al., 1996).
- The development of specific methods of economic assessment that, starting from the premise that these goods have special features (association of tangible and non-tangible values), take into account aspects that the market disregard. Thus, the economic assessment of natural and cultural heritage allows the existence of a common measure of comparison with other goods, useful when giving priorities to investments, especially in the public sector.

There are different branches of the economy that are directly or indirectly related to the built heritage. This is considered part of the culture economy; thus, it is linked to the theory of

property rights (public and private sector, or problems related to different generations), the economy of regulatory instruments (incentives and other measures related to heritage conservation policies), cultural tourism, etc.

A feature of heritage is that this has not been produced intentionally as such, as goods or collection of goods, but it is a heterogeneous whole of elements produced for several purposes and that has come down to us with a deeper meaning than the original one. What today is considered heritage is a social and cultural construction, created and controlled by experts. This construction has been changing throughout time and has social perceptions about what is culturally interesting and valuable. According to Pierre Bordieu, it is about the creation of cultural symbols by “consecration”. In the case of heritage, the goals are obtained through standards where, as mentioned before, experts mainly participate (Towse, 2002).

An avoidable consequence is that the heritage stock is always growing, as a result of some mechanisms, such as the designation of goods from certain age or type, the inclusion of new heritage categories, etc. Among other consequences, this situation leads to carry out an economic choice, determining the amount of investments for adding value through conservation or revaluation. As regards its possible tourist or recreational use, either the lack of visitors or the excess of them brings about economic problems to the authorities in charge of heritage.

Once the object and field of study have been defined, it is possible to refer to the different dimensions of the economic research in the domain of culture and heritage (Ost et al., 1998). We are interested especially in two:

- “City or Historic Centre”: this dimension is linked to Urban Economy and, more widely, to the sustainable development issue.
- “Tourist”: heritage is considered as attractive and its impacts are studied in the local economies.

From the economic point of view, the built heritage is subjected to a double approach. It can be considered as goods, as a product (*commodity*) and at the same time, as service support. Heritage as goods is the monument, the site or building with its physical features. From the point of view of services, it is about the concerned built heritage with the use or function to which it is affected or potentially can be.

3.2 Built heritage and tourism: benefits and risks for sustainability

When including the historic environment built by man, the built heritage comprises a great variety of goods: buildings, old monuments and archaeological sites, designed landscapes and gardens, battle fields, industrial buildings and ruins.

Since the 1980s, the interest for the relationships between cultural heritage and tourism has been strengthened and the economic function of heritage has been explicitly recognised by those responsible for decision-making. Performed studies show that each restored and enhanced site gives rise to a certain amount of jobs in the site and in peripheral activities, generating a cost per visitor that can be estimated (Vincent et al., 1993). If taking into account the annual volume of visitors related with certain attractions (for instance, in France about 7 millions annual visitors for the Eiffel Tower and more than 8 millions for the Louvre), it can be observed that these economic effects, direct and multiplicative, are extremely important.

However, this situation, favourable at first, has negative aspects related with well-identified problems: excessive amount of visitors, the lack of content in cultural sites, the risk of developing a pseudo-cultural tourist offer, etc. The excessive visits threaten the existence of buildings and monuments, along with the progressive loss of its cultural identity. The traditional commerce often changes to *souvenirs* shops. The cohabitation becomes difficult; the original inhabitants often emigrate, leaving the historic centres empty in low season, distorting the local urban characteristics.

The badly-administered cultural offer grows and the projects revaluing cultural heritage with tourist purposes are usually faster than the demand. The success of certain cultural sites attracts tourist, hotel and real estate agents. Thus, some behaviour similar to that destroying several sea or mountain sites is developed around the cultural heritage. Tourism, which at first is an important tool for being aware about the heritage value as basis of local cultural identity, becomes finally a way of trivialising urban and rural landscapes.

As regards heritage in hands of private owners, other problems appear. Many of them think that opening their properties to the public is anti-economic and that visits and economic activities organised for making money damage or destroy the heritage to be preserved. In addition, the fact that the building appears in an official list as protected property may influence negatively in its market value, since future modifications are limited. Buildings or areas to be preserved provide a benefit to the society but create a cost for the proprietors (although there are economic incentives for preservation), who are prevented from altering them in order to obtain other economic benefits (Cassey et al, 1996).

4. Case study and discussion

4.1 The sustainable historic city

An interesting example for the study of the interdependence between the economic, cultural, social and environmental variables is the city and, in particular, the historic city in developing countries. The socio-economic causes that lead to the downfall and destruction of that heritage will be analysed, as well as examples of strategies in order to revert the situation, put into practice in some countries with the help of international organisations.

The protective measure of the urban historic heritage should be taken not only to suitably preserve and revitalise buildings and sites with the aim of satisfying the social, cultural and economic requirements. On the contrary, these actions should be tightly linked to a wider objective concerning the urban identity, considered a requirement for increasing environmental and human quality of the settlements, trying to get rid of degenerative forms of the urban fabric such as decline, insecurity and lack of efficiency. This degeneration results in chaotic and unsafe urban environments, with problems of social and environmental decline. In terms of this, Notarangelo mentions Pierluigi Cervellati, who believes that the memory of a historic city should be assimilated with the memory of human beings. When men lose their memory, they become mad, and the same happens with cities (Cervellati, 1991, as cited by Notarangelo, 1998).

A historic city must be preserved in its nature of cultural heritage and economic resource. We will not analyse the first issue, which was considered for the first time, at international level by the Athens Charter referring to artistic and archaeological heritage (1933) “... the

architectonic values must be preserved in all cases, either isolated buildings or complete urban nuclei... must be preserved when they are the expression of a previous culture or reach a general interest..."

We will analyse which is the material benefit, beyond the spiritual one, that preservation offers to the process of urban development and management. It is interesting to study which is the economic advantage that the public or private sector can obtain from the conservation of historic centres. In 1977, the Charter of Machu Picchu introduces for the first time the consideration of the material value underlying in the conservation of historic centres, joining the economic value to the cultural one "... the action of preserving, restoring and recycling the historic environments and architectonic monuments must be integrated in the vital process of urban development, also because it is the only way of financing and managing this operation" (Machu Picchu Chart, 1977).

In developing countries, the problems present characteristic features. When the residential and economic activities abandon the historic centres, the benefit resulting from the real estate market declines. As the space demand is reduced, so is cash flow, therefore sales decline and become sporadic. Besides, in many cases, the preservation regulations together with the building deterioration increase construction costs, making the restoration little competitive compared with other areas. These trends prevent the private sector from making new investments in the historic centres: investors look for opportunities outside this area, re-feeding the decline process.

The presence of non-productive urban districts or of those districts that do not meet the idea of an efficient and comfortable city leads to a situation which many historic centres experience. They are aside of the development and transformation processes of the contemporary city, and their inhabitants are excluded and forced to live with the phenomena of social and environmental degradation.

The decline of activities also reduces tax collection. This trend, together with the explosive growth of cities, attracts the public investment towards developing zones, accelerating the decline spiral of the historic centres (Rojas, 1999). Some functions in central areas (government, banks, and commercial areas) often continue. However, the construction of other sites in new administrative, university, commercial centres, and residential neighbourhood areas only emphasises even more the economic exclusion of the historic centres and their physical decline.

The deterioration and loss of cultural resources (monuments, building groups, sites of historic, aesthetic, ethnologic or anthropologic value) is due to a great extent to the urban sprawl; to the unplanned development of the urban infrastructure, the inadequate water provision, sewage and pluvial drainage as well as to the lack of maintenance of both buildings and infrastructure.

In many cities, residential, commercial and industrial buildings from the beginning of the twentieth century, with architectonic and historic values have been destroyed or are in danger because of urban development. Due to the high land value, many houses of interest are demolished to give rise to residential or commercial entrepreneurships. Beyond the cultural damage, these facts negatively affect the tourist activity, with the loss of potential benefits for the local communities.

In this situation, it is habitual for an important part of the low income population to live in old buildings in central historic areas, where relatively high socio-economic classes used to live. With the displacement of these inhabitants towards the suburbs, these huge houses were subdivided in order to be used by several families. However, most of these properties neither are connected to the sanitary infrastructure nor receive an adequate system of rubbish collection, that is why their deterioration and downfall rapidly increase.

In this context, strategic or sector plans for reverting this situation have appeared in many cities in Latin America since the 1990s. Rojas thinks that, in developing countries, the activities destined to preservation may undergo three stages. The first is characterised by the pressure that some cultural minorities exert for establishing some control or legislation on this matter. This brings about isolated interventions in specific monuments, generally financed by private philanthropists. Many of these buildings are destined to public use, what leads to a non-sustainable conservation: investments are made now and then due to the lack of systematic maintenance and inappropriate use.

In Latin America, some countries have reached, at least partially, the second stage, in which governments assume responsibilities in conservation. This participation from the estate, potentially positive, brings about other problems: the lack of continuity in the conservation efforts due to budget restrictions and to the volatility of public resources. The Bank for Inter American Development, which gives credits for conservation, has warned that the conservation process, as currently organised and financed, is not sustainable in the long term and represents a heavy burden in the budgets of the public sector that, also has to prioritise the problems regarding poverty in these countries (Rojas, 2001).

The trend should be progressing to a third stage, in which preservation of historic heritage becomes the responsibility of the community as a whole, including the private sector. Sustainability in the long term can be only achieved when the involved social actors jointly collaborate with this aim.

The action of the public sector allows providing the private sector with favourable conditions for its active participation in the process (Rojas, 2001). Firstly, with the provision of stability in the regulatory frame. Investors are always afraid of risks when acting in an area of unknown future. Secondly, showing the feasibility of investments in non-traditional markets is a possible means of deeply encouraging the private investors.

The strategies for modifying this trend are numerous. Firstly, the traditional way of acting is towards actions aimed at the physical improvement of the area (repairs, maintenance, building enhancement, urban infrastructure and facilities. This attitude is not directly aimed at the economic development of the inhabitants, though it may influence it. On the other hand, a plan of socio-economic action may have value for the population, but it does not act on the functional and spatial structure, on the urban shape and its decline. The best way of sustainable recovery of these areas is based on an integrated strategy of interventions, able to solve the demands of the socio-economic development and the conservation of heritage values, without disregarding the spatial identity of the sites.

Some ideas referred to the effective protection of the cultural resources in developing countries are the following:

- Property ownership: establishing the property ownership and having an updated property registry is a way of promoting the heritage conservation. Legalising land

ownership often enables the owners of properties with historic value to obtain credits for improving buildings and this helps the conservation of this kind of property. These strategies must have the conformity of owners, who sometimes do not want to regularise the register of their properties to avoid paying taxes.

- Establishing flexible controls regarding the alternative uses of these buildings to allow an adaptable use and to ensure the conservation. The local authorities can encourage the conservation and restoration of buildings and historic districts, allowing the private sector to adapt old buildings for new uses. This must go together with policies aiming at expanding the economic basis, attracting investments and creating new jobs.
- Register and protection of priority natural resources: it is necessary to identify and register historic buildings which need special protection and thus, determining how this can be carried out in a context of permanent growth or urban development. Sometimes it is not possible or desirable to preserve all buildings. Many proprietors may resist conservation regulations on a private property, unless they are compensated according to the benefits they would obtain from that land if it was liberated for new uses (apartment tower building, for instance). If the list of buildings to be preserved is excessive, it could be impossible for the Estate to face that burden and in the long term it may lead to a deeper process of deterioration in the area (Berstein, 1994).

4.2 Case study: Latin American World Heritage towns

In the context above mentioned, this chapter will refer specifically to sustainability problems caused by the development of tourist activity in urban centres and historic neighbourhoods, particularly in Latin American countries. It is a kind of heritage highly significant and valued by tourists, since it is in the old city neighbourhoods where the distinctive signs of a particular culture can be seen more clearly: the principal architectonic monuments, the public spaces with higher symbolic value and the most significant components of the immaterial heritage.

The case of historic centres in Latin American cities is apt to set an example of the many problems that are related with the triad heritage – tourism – sustainability, especially in its economic and social aspects. With regard to the origin and evolution of Latin American towns, Hardoy (1971) identifies six stages:

- a. Pre Columbian period, in which 5% of Latin American territory was occupied by urban cultures. Even if the Americas were totally populated before the arrival of the Europeans, original cultures reached different degrees of development; the most advanced cultures were located in Meso-America (a portion of present Mexico and the Central America) and in the Andean region of South America. At the arrival of the Spaniards, some towns like Mexica-Tenochtitlan or Cusco matched or even surpassed in development and architecture many European cities of the time. In some cases, Spanish towns were settled on the remains of pre-Hispanic ones.
- b. Stage of Spanish foundations over the first half of the sixteenth century, based on regional and urban infrastructure of the pre-Columbian cultures.
- c. Establishment, by Spaniards and Portuguese of ports, mining towns, forts and reductions. The territorial structure was based on natural resources and on a communication system and the urban basic schemes were defined around 1580 for both Spanish and Portuguese territories. New towns were especially settled along the roads

systems linking the production or mining areas with the ports and on the seashore. Spanish towns were settled on the basis of strict legal regulation regarding urban and territorial layouts. The common type was based on a regular grid pattern of streets with a central plaza that constituted the civic, religious and commercial core of the town. Portuguese towns, conversely, were constructed according to more organic urban schemes, sometimes taking into account the topographical features of the setting.

- d. Once consolidated institutions and norms of colonial life, there was a period of about two centuries with no significant changes, with an urban scheme that would remain until the arrival of the railroad. During this stage major administrative and trading centres were consolidated.
- e. The independent period, which started on different dates depending on the specific countries but was consolidated by the late nineteenth century with the inclusion of countries in the region to the global economic framework, including the massive influx of immigrants in some countries. During this period the railway was incorporated and ports were modernised, the first urban industries and new institutions were settled. Some cities, particularly political capitals and ports initiated a sharp expansion. The establishment of new towns responded to a variety of requirements, among them the consolidation of the boundaries of the new countries, the incorporation of new territories to the productive system, the construction of new ports or the establishment of administrative state or regional capitals. Urban patterns were generally based on the heritage of the previous period.
- f. Over the twentieth century, the most significant process was the incorporation of former rural population to urban centres; there was an explosive growth of industrial cities and, to a lesser extent, of provincial capitals, and a decrease of population of rural areas or villages.

Latin American historic centres correspond generally to colonial towns, in a few cases constructed upon the remains of Pre-Columbian cities, which conserved their main urban and architectural features with no major changes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In these cases, new developments occurred out of the boundaries of the colonial cities; in other cases instead, extensive renovation over the last two centuries prevented the historic cores from preserving their original features. In the cases where the historic centres preserved their traditional features, these areas generally presented diverse degrees of functional and physical degradation whereas those evolving cities (Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires or Santiago) changed drastically the original appearance. The “discovery” of the historic centres started in the 1960s and restoration and conservation works have been developed since then. The most prominent Latin American historic centres are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In 2007, 38 out of 84 Latin American World Heritage properties were historic towns or centres, a figure that represented 45.23% of the cultural properties and 31.40 % of the total of World Heritage sites in the region.

Latin American historic towns and centres bear some common features if compared with those belonging to other geo-cultural regions; at the same time there are specificities given by their history, urban and architectural features and symbolic content. At the same time, there are particular pressures and constraints. For example, the construction of major development projects, common today in many historic cities around the world, seems not to appear as a real threat, although some examples can be found in the region. However, the strong impact of tourism, social changes, inadequate maintenance of public spaces,

buildings and sanitation problems, which are not serious problems elsewhere, tend to appear frequently as specific threats to the integrity, authenticity and sustainability of these towns. A characteristic cycle may be described, as follows:

- The active population abandons the historic centres, with obsolete buildings and infrastructure, moving their economic activities to peripheral areas. The area is then populated by the lowest strata of the real estate market, by unemployed or low-income people.
- Decades later, the public sector, sometimes together with the private sector, decides the rehabilitation of these areas, making them a tourist attraction. If the activity is not properly regulated and the carrying capacity is excessive, there is always the risk of beginning again the decay cycle with new damages to the material and immaterial heritage.
- It may take place an expulsion of local inhabitants due to the high cost that now the land and properties have due to the effect of the new commercial value, giving rise to the social phenomenon known as “gentrification” .

Regarding the impact of tourism on historic towns and centres, it is possible to identify some indicators of what could be considered positive impact on the heritage sites and on the local community. The general idea is that tourism constitutes an opportunity for development; particular indicators are economic benefits produced by tourism, creation of jobs related to tourism, improvement of infrastructure and public spaces and opportunities for education and training. With regard to public spaces and infrastructure, World Heritage towns and urban areas are usually a target for improvement and enhancement. Usually, public spaces are well preserved and maintained; adequate urban furniture and infrastructure are provided or improved. This is an action that contributes to a general amelioration of quality of life of local population and enhances the experience of visitors. The inscription on the World Heritage List and the increase in the number of visitors constitute also an opportunity to restore historic buildings. New uses are often related to tourism. It is quite usual in Latin American towns that old one-family houses, quite difficult to continue with its original use, are dedicated to accommodation for visitors. This can be considered an opportunity in two senses; on the one hand historic buildings are restored and given a new use, generally by private investors, and, on the other, visitors may live the experience of lodging in typical historic houses, which is a means for a deeper contact with the local culture.

With regard to threats caused by unplanned or inadequately managed tourism, it is possible to summarise the situation on the basis of the following scheme (Conti, 2011):

- Replacement of traditional population, gentrification.

A frequent aspect related to management of historic urban areas and its tourist use is the displacing of traditional population or depopulation of historic neighbourhoods. This situation is strongly linked to a process that can be noted equally in developed and developing countries. The inscription of an urban area on the World Heritage List implies generally improvement of public spaces, of services and infrastructure. This takes to a rise in the market values of urban land and buildings and takes almost inevitably to the replacement of population. Traditional inhabitants of many historic areas are sometimes displaced by self decision since they prefer to sell their houses and buy new ones out from

heritage areas, something that produces financial benefit. In other cases, they are “pushed” by the pressure of investors or by groups having major revenues who want to buy properties in the prestigious historic areas.

The phenomenon of gentrification means the replacement of typical population of a given urban neighbourhood for another of greater financial resources or more exalted social position. The truth is that this process takes place equally in urban centres around the world, though with higher recurrence in economically disadvantaged countries. The reason that causes this process lies primarily in the fact that the buildings are purchased by individuals or entities, usually affecting them to different uses of the original. Thus, it is common to find old homes converted into hotels, restaurants or shops or even maintaining the residential uses but occupied as secondary homes for short periods throughout the year. This implies that the neighbourhoods gradually lose their population, which means at the same time a crisis regarding some aspects of authenticity. In this case, although the tangible components of buildings may be in good condition, even improved with respect to their previous state, a loss of authenticity of functions appear.

- Threats against authenticity

With respect to the alteration or distortion of heritage values and message, it is necessary to consider heritage as a set of tangible assets to which values related to history, art or science are assigned. In this sense, heritage is a carrier of meanings that we try to transmit, through the conservation of the material substance, from one generation to another. A proper understanding and interpretation of such values is therefore essential to understand the true meaning of heritage, to ensure proper use and to preserve its authenticity, understood not only as the preservation of the tangible components but also the intangible ones as functions, vocations, associated traditions, etc. In this sense, a conflict often observed with the spread of mass tourism is that heritage becomes a sort of spectacle and object of consumption, without reaching the adequate transmission and understanding of its values.

It may happen that while a heritage site is well preserved and its carrying capacity or limits of change are maintained at appropriate degrees, its dedication to tourism involves risks to its authenticity. This is a situation frequently observed in some heritage categories such as historic centres or urban areas. According to the current theory, authenticity is verified in several ways, taking into account tangible and intangible components; thus authenticity includes the consideration of materials, shape and design, setting, functions and vocations, meanings and traditions associated with specific sites (ICOMOS, 1994).

When we refer to threats to authenticity, we refer not only to damage caused on the material components of heritage but also to the risk on the intangible aspects that influence their authenticity. A typical case consists of many very well preserved historic towns or centres, both buildings and public spaces have good and proper maintenance. But excessive devotion to tourism means that the entire neighbourhood is devoted to visitors; all businesses are dedicated to the tourist, the old residences are now hotels or are destined to gastronomic uses, etc. The problem then is that while the material substance may be well preserved, this area has lost or drastically changed its meaning and its original functions, so there are aspects of authenticity that are really at risk. This aspect tends to be one of the most complicated issues in the management structures of heritage sites.

- Impact on traditional ways of life

Another type of impact is related to social aspects and, especially, to the relationship between the local community and visitors. Particularly when there is an economic asymmetry between them (more specifically tourism in economically disadvantaged regions), it is common that residents consider visitors as an "opportunity" to secure or increase their income. This can include the selling of typical products or the adoption of behaviours that are expected to cause impact on the visitor. It is common to find people who dress or act in a way that is not part of their daily lives; they become a part of the stereotypical image of the site and, therefore, something that the tourist expects to see. The problem is that in this way the resident community, or some of its members, are at the service of visitors' expectations; this implies another manifestation of a threat against the authenticity, in this case referred to lifestyles, habits, behaviours, etc.

Intangible heritage is fundamental not only to determine the outstanding universal value but also the authenticity of World Heritage properties. In spite of problems of depopulation and gentrification, most Latin American World Heritage towns retain a very rich intangible heritage made up by, among other components, music, gastronomy and traditions. This intangible heritage becomes also a tourism attraction and could be jeopardised if adequate safeguarding measures are not defined and implemented. It is worth asking what the limit is to safeguard traditional ways of life or social practices so that they could be preserved as authentic cultural manifestations and not as performances for visitors. What usually happens is that members of local population act in the way visitors expect them to. There is a sort of alienation of the local population in the visitor's expectations; this is one of the most important threats against authenticity.

Within the social aspects some "contradictions" appear between what could be called a positive effect on tourism and reality. When talking about tourism opportunities we have referred to the economic benefit, to the possibility of improving urban spaces and the provision of infrastructure and equipment. Often, the economic benefit is not evenly distributed among the resident community; although there is a general improvement of urban space and infrastructure, some sites are inaccessible to the residents. Many times the cost of access to cultural facilities and entertainment are fixed in terms of tourism, making them inaccessible to local people.

In order to illustrate these aspects, we will introduce two specific cases, the World Heritage properties of Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, and Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay.

a. Cartagena de Indias

The historic centre of Cartagena de Indias and its fortresses were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1984. The property includes the walled city and a set of fortresses located along Cartagena bay. Cartagena was one the most important South-American ports over the Spanish period; the richness of the city and the importance of its port are evident in the architectural monuments (churches, convents and private residences) and in the defence system, since the town was several times attacked by pirates. Not only was the town surrounded by a massive wall but several fortresses were erected along the bay, protecting the entrance to the port. Cartagena is considered the most impressive ensemble of military architecture constructed by the Spaniards in the Americas and, at the same time, one of the

most beautiful and well preserved historic centres in Latin America, since much of the traditional urban fabric has been preserved.

It is not strange that the historic centre became a main tourism destination in the region. A joint UNESCO-ICOMOS report of 2006 recognised that *“the historic centre has not undergone substantial physical alterations ... while the use of the urban soil has deeply changed”*. The impact of tourism was the main cause of these changes. Until the 1980s, there were not luxurious hotels in the historic centre; the accommodation offering was limited to hostels of lower-middle level hotels. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, five-star hotels and conferences centres have been installed in former convents, skilfully renovated; palaces and historic houses have been restructured to house charming hotels and hostels and some residences were transformed into second houses for national and foreign tourists. The intense demand has increased the market prices, something that made convenient for residents to sell their properties and to leave the walled city.

Tourism has impacted differently on diverse areas of the historic centre. In the Centro district, the core area of the historic centre where the main institutional buildings are located, some of the positive effects already mentioned above can be noticed, such as the improvement of public spaces, the provision of urban facilities and furniture or new uses for historic buildings (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Cartagena, the Centro district. Good state of conservation of buildings and public spaces and high impact of tourism. (Photo A. Conti)

This is the area which exhibits the best state of conservation of the tangible components whereas the intangible ones have changed. The process of gentrification is evident; commercial facilities are related to satisfy the demands from visitors: luxury handicraft, restaurants, bars, night clubs and travel agencies are predominant in this area. San Diego district has traditionally been a more disadvantaged neighbourhood next to the Centro area. The invasive tendency of tourism is more contained, but not less important; it is concentrated around the large hotels and some public squares, and still cohabits, with certain equilibrium, with the traditions of the residual residents. However, this equilibrium is unstable and the increment of the tourist activities could compromise it definitively (Fig. 3).

On the other hand, there are areas where the pressures of tourism are not so evident so far, where traditional local population still lives. The neighbourhood of Getsemaní is the place of residence of low income traditional population. Although the state of conservation of buildings is not as good as in the Centro district and there are some problems with infrastructure, we can still notice the traditional ways of life and uses of the public space. Authenticity is noticeable not only with regard to tangible heritage components but to intangible components as well (Fig. 4).



Fig. 3. Cartagena, San Diego district: balance between traditional life and tourism. (Photo A. Conti)



Fig. 4. Cartagena, Getsemaní district: preservation of traditional population and social life. (Photo A. Conti)

Summarising, Cartagena could be taken as an example of different situations within the boundaries of the historic centre. Economic and environmental sustainability is evident in the districts where the impact of tourism is stronger, while social sustainability is at stake. Conversely, the areas preserving traditional population present deficiencies regarding their state of conservation and quality of life.

b. Colonia del Sacramento

The historic quarter of Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1995. The origin of the town was a village settled by Portuguese in 1680 on a peninsula by the east embankment of the Plata River, opposite of the then Spanish town of Buenos Aires. The village passed from Portugal to Spain and vice versa several times up to 1778, when it came definitively to Spanish rule. Colonia is an interesting example of merging of different urban and architectural features; although there are not impressive architectural monuments, the historic centre retains much of the typical atmosphere of a colonial town, increased by its setting. ICOMOS recognised that *“the main feature of Sacramento is however, its overall townscape, with its mix of wide main thoroughfares and large squares with smaller cobbled streets and intimate squares. The vertical scale is perfectly preserved, only the church tower and lighthouse rising above the mainly single or two-storeyed buildings”* (ICOMOS, 1994).



Fig. 5. Colonia: good state of public spaces and historic buildings. (Photo A. Conti)

Even before the inscription on the World Heritage List, the historic centre of Colonia had become an important tourist destination, the second one in importance in the country (Assunção, 2002). It is worth noting that the town is located some two hours by car from Montevideo, the country's capital city, and fifty minutes by ship from Buenos Aires, which comprises some ten million inhabitants within its metropolitan area. The process of gentrification started much before the inscription of the property on the World Heritage List and has continued ever since. The charming atmosphere of the historic centre made that people from Montevideo or Buenos Aires used to buy residences as secondary houses, a process that took to the progressive depopulation of the historic centre and to the rise of prices of land and buildings within the area. In 2002, Uruguayan authorities reported that the price per square metre was more expensive in Colonia than in Punta del Este, the well-known international Uruguayan beach resort. According to Venturini (2008: 11) the population of the historic quarter was some 300 inhabitants in 2008. Public spaces and architectural heritage are very well preserved in Colonia. Over the last forty years, the Honorary Council, the body in charge of the management, and the local government has made significant investment in restoration, conservation and maintenance (Fig. 5).

The impact of tourism on the public space is easily noticeable; some streets have been closed to motor traffic and have become outdoors cafés or restaurants. Historic houses have

generally been bought by people who use them as second residences and many buildings have been given new uses such as shops, accommodation facilities, restaurants or cafés (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Colonia, the impact of tourism on public space. (Photo A. Conti)

As in other historic centres, whilst the tangible components exhibit a good state of conservation, the authenticity of intangible components is especially at risk because of the impact of tourism. In this case, moreover, the proximity with Buenos Aires results in a one-day excursion is the most typical way of visiting the town, with an average of 3000 visitors per day along the whole year (Assunção, 2008); most visitors do not use the accommodation facilities and often spend only a few hours in the site.

5. Conclusion

As stated in the Brundtland report, sustainability includes three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. These three aspects were considered by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) to review the definition of sustainable tourism in 2005, stating that an adequate equilibrium should be established among the three. Although indicators to measure sustainable development have been used over the last twenty years and that WTO has been promoting the use of sustainable tourism indicators since the early 1990s, the

application of systems of indicators to tourism is more recent and still in a tentative face (Rivas García and Magadán Díaz, 2007). There is no a unique methodological approach for the definition of indicators of sustainable tourism (Blancs Peral et al, 2010); the definition and selection of indicators will depend on specific situations. The WTO has developed a system of core and supplementary indicators; among the former, there are several related to physical and social aspects: social impact (ratio of tourists to locals), developing control (existence of environmental review procedure of formal controls over development of site and use densities), planning process (existence of organized regional plan for tourist destination region), consumer satisfaction (level of satisfaction by visitors), local satisfaction (level of satisfaction by locals) and tourism contribution to local economy (proportion of total economic activity generated by tourism only). Among the supplementary indicators to be used for urban environments it is worth mentioning site degradation, restoration costs, levels of pollutants affecting site and measures of behavior disruptive to site (OMT, 1995).

A sustainable city is that which has the capacity of surviving and adapting to processes of changes, and at the same time, providing an environment quality related to settlement patterns and contexts throughout different times. The urban development needs to pay more attention to issues such as durability, the rational use of energy, pollution, natural and cultural heritage, resource conservation and biodiversity (Marat Mendes, 1998).

Two of the most important aspects for an adequate approach to urban conservation are the commitment and participation by local inhabitants in the process. Heritage conservation must be dealt not only by governments but also by all the population. It is no longer a public initiative but a community project (Bonnette, 2001).

As regards the cities in the developing world, and as consequence of the serious social and environmental problems, conservation of cultural heritage is not often seen as a priority. However, it must be taken into account that the destruction is generally irreversible. Therefore, their value and the information they contain is lost forever (Berstein, 1994).

Finally, it is observed that in both developed and developing countries, the tourist activity is growing, that is why it is urgently needed to implement practical measures destined to achieve the “sustainable area” which was previously mentioned, in order to balance the increase of visitors with their negative impacts on the natural and cultural heritage. If these limits are crossed, the opposite expected effects may be reached: deterioration and destruction of the involved heritage, by non-controlled visits that that *fragile matter*, as Torsello says, is not in conditions to bear (Torsello, 1998).

With regard to the items discussed in this paper, it is clear that built heritage has become a main tourist attraction. It is perceived by visitors as a testimony of the identity and attractiveness of the place and by stakeholders and residents as a source for revenue and for developing the tourism system. The presented study cases allow defining some conclusions regarding the relationships between built heritage and sustainable tourism:

- a. In both cases, it is evident that tourism has become a source of revenues and an opportunity for local economy. Nevertheless, it is not evident how these revenues are distributed among local population. Improvement and enhancement of public spaces

- are enjoyed by both locals and visitors but some commercial, cultural or entertainment facilities are practically inaccessible for local population.
- b. Public investment is mainly oriented to areas or sectors especially destined for visitors rather than for locals, while private investment is focused on projects that ensure revenues.
 - c. There is not a necessary relationship between interventions of restoration or enhancement of built heritage, especially historic buildings, and preservation of the authenticity of the sites. The process of gentrification is a sign of loss of authenticity regarding intangible attributes such as traditional functions or social practices. Nevertheless, this situation does not seem to be a problem for visitors, because they feel attracted mainly by the tangible attributes of historic centres rather than for the real life of local populations.
 - d. Sustainability based on economic aspects seems to be evident in both cases, since they can be considered successful from a point of view of generating revenues. The good state of conservation of public spaces and historic buildings allows referring to environmental sustainability as well. What seems to be at stake is social sustainability, on account of the situations explained below, i.e. gentrification, difficulties for local population to access to the facilities especially thought for visitors or acceptance by residents of the changes of use of urban land in favour of tourism uses.

These situations take to rethink how the tourism use of built heritage should be planned and implemented in order to ensure sustainability based on the three above mentioned aspects. Llorenç Prats (2003) challenges the idea that heritage plus tourism necessarily implies development; he proposes that the answer to the question should be “it depends”. Prats proposes three alternatives: a strict preservation and a non-expensive presentation of heritage; considering human resources as a significant heritage component (good technicians and low budget) and, finally, considering heritage as an integral instrument for local planning, not a simple instrument but the axis for local planning. This integration among heritage goods, human resources and proper planning could be the clue for a successful relationship between built heritage and sustainable tourism.

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**Sustainable Development - Policy and Urban Development -
Tourism, Life Science, Management and Environment**

Edited by Prof. Chaouki Ghenai

ISBN 978-953-51-0100-0

Hard cover, 478 pages

Publisher InTech

Published online 24, February, 2012

Published in print edition February, 2012

The technological advancement of our civilization has created a consumer society expanding faster than the planet's resources allow, with our resource and energy needs rising exponentially in the past century. Securing the future of the human race will require an improved understanding of the environment as well as of technological solutions, mindsets and behaviors in line with modes of development that the ecosphere of our planet can support. Sustainable development offers an approach that would be practical to fuse with the managerial strategies and assessment tools for policy and decision makers at the regional planning level.

How to reference

In order to correctly reference this scholarly work, feel free to copy and paste the following:

Beatriz Amarilla and Alfredo Conti (2012). Built Heritage and Sustainable Tourism: Conceptual, Economic and Social Variables, Sustainable Development - Policy and Urban Development - Tourism, Life Science, Management and Environment, Prof. Chaouki Ghenai (Ed.), ISBN: 978-953-51-0100-0, InTech, Available from: <http://www.intechopen.com/books/sustainable-development-policy-and-urban-development-tourism-life-science-management-and-environment/built-heritage-and-sustainable-tourism-conceptual-economic-and-social-variables>

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