

Urban tourism and World Heritage: Relations and effects of the classification

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Abstract: The World Heritage classification emerges as a universal form of validation and dissemination of the heritage value, being a relevant tool for the communication of tourist destinations. The aim of this article is to understand the effects of the World Heritage classification on urban tourist destinations, by confronting the theoretical fundamentals of urban tourism and patrimonialization with case studies that seek to evaluate the objectives and results of the World Heritage classification in these places. The different studies reviewed do not allow for a common generalized conclusion but enable to identify some destinations where the World Heritage seal has become an important factor in increasing the notoriety of the tourist destination, and, also, to recognize cities that have several factors that appeal to the visit, where the classification is not proven to be a determining factor in the attraction process for the destination.

Keywords: Urban tourism; Cultural tourism; World heritage; Historic centres; UNESCO.

Turismo urbano y Patrimonio Mundial: Relaciones y efectos de la clasificación

Resumen: La clasificación del Patrimonio Mundial surge como una forma universal de validación y difusión del valor patrimonial, siendo una herramienta relevante para la comunicación de los destinos turísticos. El objetivo de este artículo es comprender los efectos de la clasificación del Patrimonio Mundial en los destinos turísticos urbanos, confrontando los fundamentos teóricos del turismo urbano y la patrimonialización con estudios de caso que buscan evaluar los objetivos y resultados de la clasificación del Patrimonio Mundial en estos lugares. Los diferentes estudios revisados no permiten una conclusión generalizada común pero permiten identificar algunos destinos donde el sello de Patrimonio Mundial se ha convertido en un factor importante para aumentar la notoriedad del destino turístico, y, también, reconocer ciudades que tienen varios factores que atraen a la visita, donde no se demuestra que la clasificación sea un factor determinante en el proceso de atracción del destino.

Palabras Clave: Turismo urbano; Turismo cultural; Patrimonio mundial; Centros históricos; UNESCO.

1. Introduction

Cities are essential areas for understanding human evolution. It is recognized that they are territories of attraction, development, cultural diffusion and of various interests, where a significant and growing part of the world population is concentrated. For these reasons, it is clear that cities occupy a decisive place in the tourist activity, either because they represent important and notorious tourist destinations, or because they are the cradle of a relevant part of the flows of the issuing markets. Bearing in mind the role of urban tourist destinations, the study of this phenomenon seems complex and justified. The approach taken in this text becomes from the need to understand the fundamentals of tourism in the context of the multifunctional use of cities. Specifically, the historic centres are the parts of the city where the tourist attraction is stronger and, as such, it is important to reflect on the processes of patrimonialization of urban centres. Recognition by tourist markets of the attractiveness of historic centres occurs after the attribution of heritage value to certain streets, buildings and urban artefacts.

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In this way, it is inevitable to approach the concept of patrimonialization, its main historic steps and associated concepts, as a consequence of the previous degradation of historic centres and the realization of the interest of their conservation. Urban tourism emerges as a phenomenon that is interconnected with the culture and heritage of places. One of the most visible facets of these connections can be found in the World Heritage classification, which appears, at the same time, as a factor of institutionalization of the heritage value recognized to cities and as a communication tool perceived by the tourist markets.

1. Cities as tourist destinations

Visits to cities represent high flows of human movement that tend to grow due to different factors, including the progressive conditions of accessibility and transport that make access to urban centres faster, as well as the dominant characteristics of tourist demand find answers in cities (Henriques, 2003). The profusion of urban destinations and source markets makes urban tourism a continuously growing area of research, although it is quite fragmented and complex (Pearce, 2001). In fact, tourism is just one of the economic and social phenomena that occurs in a multifaceted environment such as a city. Tourism is presented in a variety of products and experiences offered to tourists with different motivations, preferences and cultures. Therefore, it is the interaction within a triangle made up of tourists, companies providing tourist services and the local population (G. Ashworth & Page, 2011).

Cities are spaces of intersection of multiple users and functions and, therefore, they are elements with a high impact on the organization of territories and on the flows of people, goods, and capital. In particular, the historic centres soon established themselves as important tourist attractions. Research about tourism history converges to cultural and educational travels that the young people of the European elites carried out, especially in the XVII and XVIII centuries named as *Grand Tour*. Cities of great monumentality, especially French and Italian ones, were mandatory stopping places for the admiration of architecture and other art forms at that time (Davidson, 1998; C. Gunn, 1997).

Nevertheless, early forms of modern tourism focused primarily on natural resources rather than cities. Thermal baths and beaches became the first tourist destinations of the modern era. In the tourism system, cities were reserved the role of source markets, as the bourgeois elites who constituted the main portion of the bathers who went to the thermal and bathing resorts were residents of urban centres, where they had their industrial and commercial businesses. Industrialization developed in the cities two new social classes: the bourgeois class, owner of the capital, which would be the basis of a latent tourist demand that would develop with the improvements in transportation, and the working class, which would form a relevant tourist demand at the level of excursionism (Burkart & Medlik, 1981).

The development of the transport sector as well as trade and associated services had direct effects on the increase in urbanization by accentuating population flows to cities. In several cities and towns, near the train stations, hotels emerged, the so-called terminal hotels, sprang up as the train saw its demand increase. The need and opportunity of providing accommodation for the travellers made the railway companies owners of this type of lodging, as they obtained a higher economic return than the simple sale of train tickets, in addition to ensuring that traffic would not be affected by possible limitations in the capacity of the accommodation offer (Burkart & Medlik, 1981).

The first forms of urban leisure can also be found in the 19th century, which progressively became widespread. Sport occupies a prominent place. In the case of the United Kingdom, Burkart & Medlik (1981) refer to athletics, horse racing and football matches between clubs. Since then, cities have maintained a strong appeal to tourists, something that intensified in the second half of the 20th century when urban tourism began to be seen as an alternative to mass tourism of sun and sea. At the last decades, tourism is increasingly a central component of the global system of cities, in which urban culture asserts itself as a consumer good (Henriques, 2003).

Apart from the historical aspects, it matters to define the concepts that are articulated with the vision of the city as a tourist destination. The concept of tourist destination, refers, in a simple mode, as a place that attracts visitors on a relevant scale. This geographical unit can take on different scales, depending on the type of tourism in question: from a mere resort to an entire country or even a continent. The importance of a tourist destination depends on four main factors: attractions, whether fixed (climate, landscape, history) or episodic (events); accessibility, comprising the distance to the tourists' places of origin and the available modes of transport; facilities to stay and move within the destination; and tourist organization, this is, the network of entities and actors that allows to operationalize the tourism activity and communicate with potential tourist issuing markets (Burkart & Medlik, 1981; Leiper, 1979).

Currently, cities are the largest tourist destinations in the world because, in general, they combine historical and cultural elements, good communications, accommodation, restaurants, entertainment and commerce (Burkart & Medlik, 1981). They also represent the great cultural tourist places, as Lozato-Giotart (1987) highlights, European capitals (such as London, Paris or Rome) and the cities of the arts (Venice, Florence, Pisa, Granada, Bruges). At the same time, cities are tourist destinations and everyday spaces for the inhabitants and workers of these same cities, which increases the frequency and variety of users. In this way, the tourism role that cities can assume is defined by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) (Organização Mundial do Turismo, 2003), which presents cities as gateways and places of concentration of tourists within a tourist region. In practice they can be a base within a tourist itinerary or be the main attraction that motivates a travel. Ashworth & Tunbridge (2000) elaborate on this concept, defining the three main characteristics of the relationship between tourism and cities. Firstly, tourist activities in urban areas can take place in a regional or even national context. In this case, the city plays a pivotal role in the reception, retention, and maintenance of tourists within a wider network. Secondly, cities can organize themselves in cooperative networks, but also competitive with other cities in the creation of national or international tourist itineraries. Thirdly, urban tourism offers a variety of attractions and infrastructures that provide different leisure experiences to visitors, and these infrastructures are mainly developed for frequent users of cities but are also available for occasional users.

The development of urban tourism is, in the view of WTO (Organização Mundial do Turismo, 2003), the pursuit of economic benefits in terms of job creation and income raising for cities, as well as boosting the physical and social rejuvenation of older cities by defending that tourism creates opportunities and forms publics for the construction of facilities that are also used by inhabitants, such as theatres, museums or restaurants. Without the tourist activity, these facilities wouldn't probably be created.

Another way of looking at the city's resources used by tourism is through the division into primary and secondary attractions. Primary attractions are the main reason for the visit while secondary attractions are features that support visitors during their visit. However, in terms of economic revenue, secondary ones generally reach a higher level (Orbaşlı, 2000). At the same time, its use may be intentional or accidental. For example, a visitor who intends to visit a cultural attraction, such as a museum or a monument, during their stay in the city, can consume in restaurants, shop or stay (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000).

It is up to the entities responsible for the management of tourist flows to make synergies between primary and secondary attractions, in order to monetize and optimize resources. One way is to distinguish tourist resources as a category within the city, resources that clearly assume a recreational function. In this way, an intra-urban regionalization is achieved, delimiting specific areas, which are identified as RBD – *Recreational Business District*. Another way is the existence of areas in the city where there are leisure, entertainment, restaurants and shops infrastructures. These types of measures are useful for creating maps and managing tourist flows. (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000). Various methods are used to proceed with the regionalization of tourist spaces in the city, being characteristic the restriction of space and the creation of clusters. The regionalization of the tourist city depends on three factors: the relationship between infrastructures, the tourist's spatial behaviour and the tourist's images in relation to the city. The location of leisure infrastructures depends not only on tourist demand, but also on the inhabitants and other users of the city. It is also influenced by the organization of the economic sectors responsible for infrastructure, the city's economy and land use policies. Regarding the tourist's spatial behaviour, it results from the information obtained about the city and his own personal experience as a traveller. However, this is conditioned by accessibility and available modes of transport (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000). Finally, the image that tourists create of the city is largely due to actions to promote the city, but also to other indirect aspects such as visibility from the media, cinema or television programs (Hall, 2001).

Many cities focus their tourist development on the historic centre, but in the opinion of authors like Ashworth & Tunbridge (2000), strategies must be built to expand the tourist city, which may involve driving flows to unknown parts of the city, encouraging the creation of new areas or setting up commercial activities in other locations. In this way, the expansion of the tourist city, better distribution of economic revenues and conflict mitigation are achieved. At this level, the WTO points out that the main problems of urban tourism are the excess of demand visible in the physical pressure on attractions, traffic congestion and the need for space for activities that welcome tourists, specifically the accommodation sector (Organização Mundial do Turismo, 2003). In a more detailed way, the main conflicts of the coexistence of tourism in cities can be considered. In the case of monuments, the conflict

can be evident, as the excess of visitors causes physical damage, intentional or not. Another conflict is the need to provide tourist accommodation. Historic centres have buildings that do not have the conditions for this type of service, so there will be pressure to adapt the buildings to accommodate the function of tourist accommodation, due to the preference of many tourists to be close to attractions (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000). Also, the access to historical attractions can be conflicting, as many monuments and spaces can be visited for free or at a relatively low price. Consequently, the financial revenues generated directly by historic resources are minor and eventually insufficient to ensure their operating and maintenance costs (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000; Orbaşlı, 2000).

Another aspect that stands out concerns the selective characteristic of the tourist. In this way, tourism only offers a part of the historic city, that is, the managing entities select the heritage elements that they consider most relevant to the tourist. This situation results in an unbalanced valuation of the city and, eventually, the creation of an image that is too reductive (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000).

Characterizing the tourist demand of cities is a complex task, as cities have users with different reasons. Inhabitants, visitors from the suburbs and international tourists are audiences that intersect in the urban space, some for leisure purposes, others for work or other types of aspects that appear in a diffuse panoply. A possible approach can be taken dependently the type of user. Henriques (2003) interpreted the typological definition created by Ashworth, which indicates four types of users. It should be noted that in order to understand this interpretation, it is important to establish the concept of city-region. This is the territory that is confined to the residential areas around the city and may incorporate dependent towns. Then, the users are: i) intentional users from outside the city-region with the specific purpose of visiting it, ii) intentional users from inside the city-region, generally those looking for recreational facilities, iii) accidental users from outside the city-region as this is the case of business tourists or those visiting family members and iv) accidental users of the interior of the city-region, being, above all, residents who are working. For this reason, it is clear that for the first two types of users, infrastructure and cultural activities are preponderant aspects for the decision to visit the city.

Inserted in the urban tourism segment, it is important to explore the concept of city break, which, in a simple way, refers to short stays in cities. It is, fundamentally, a European phenomenon, which is understandable given the existence of a large number of European cities with strong tourist attractions, the relative proximity between them, and the development of low-cost flights that connect cities that are often senders and receivers of tourists. According to the synthesis made by Brito (2017), the duration of a city break trip oscillates between one and eight nights, but most are between two and three nights. The reasons for traveling are quite diverse, but the cultural and recreational aspects stand out. These are trips that are not very dependent on the existence of certain climatic conditions. Another relevant aspect is that part of these trips have an impulsive component in the decision to travel, and are not subject to intense planning processes.

A study made for the Turismo de Portugal, i.p. (THR - Asesores en Turismo Hotelaría y Recreación, 2006) features tourists of city breaks in three groups: i) Standard: that look for services at a reasonable price, ii) Upscale: who seek more personalized, expensive experiences and who shop at the destination, iii) Thematic: with a specific reason for visiting a theme or event. This study shows, as well, that the organization of the trip is autonomous and uses online channels. In the destination they visit few attractions, due to lack of time or limited budget, and therefore they are more receptive to a return to the city to visit the attractions that they did not have the opportunity to see. The main motivation for travel is to escape, in the sense of changing the physical and social environment, in addition to socializing with travel companions. As it turns out, tourism is one of the numerous activities that take place in cities, being practiced by individuals with different motivations and profiles. This phenomenon is especially felt in the historic centres of cities, where the various heritage elements – material and immaterial – form the basis of tourist attractions.

2. The patrimonialization of historic centres

The patrimonialization of buildings, artifacts, and activities is a central concern of societies. In fact, “societies and the people, have a collective memory that is an essential part of their identity as a group and whose loss could cause serious disruption” (Salgueiro, 1999, p. 388, own translation). Already at the time of classic civilizations memory was materialized in the form of monuments. Choay (2001) clarifies the concept of monument by defining the existence of two types: the inadvertent ones that subsist without formalization, and commemorative or large buildings, whose creation and preservation

is intentional to mark events or people. However, it is only by the 19th century that the interest in the traces of the past expanded. This period includes scientific expeditions, archaeological excavations, gatherings and collections of documents and objects. Such recognition of the value attributed to ruins and monuments gave rise to conservation and preservation concerns that resulted in the first heritage laws (Choay, 2001). It was also at the time of Romanticism that conservation movements were born with some capacity to pressure and influence political powers. Those movements are groups of people with social notoriety who associated themselves with scientific, artistic, and literary societies. Initially, they were movements of reaction to the processes of industrialization and urbanization, as they considered them harmful to the natural environment. Thus, they exalted rural life as opposed to city life (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000).

By the second half of the 19th century, Europe increases its populational growth and consequently urban expansion. The enlargement of ancient medieval towns led to the demolition of obsolete walls and other buildings of historic interest. These episodes led to increased pressure from conservation movements, which translated into practical results, namely, the beginning of inventorying processes of historical and cultural resources, by several European governments, through the establishment of arts and monuments commissions that made inventories with a classification based on the aesthetics and historical character of each building or vestige (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000).

As the value assigned to monuments became more widespread, the question arose as to how to preserve them. Choay (2001) presents two opposing currents: architects such as Viollet le Duc who defend the restoration of monuments and others, such as Ruskin, who favour only conservation. The way to act and the determination of the degree of restoration were, and still are, controversial issues and in permanent discussion. At this level, there are four main concepts: conservation, restoration, renovation, and rehabilitation, which are clearly and concisely explained by Salgueiro (1999). Conservation is a concept that conceives of intervention in a building through works aimed at its maintenance, with only the works essential for its preservation being carried out. In more deteriorated buildings, the concept of restoration is applied, which consists of the replacement of elements considered original. The concept of renovation, on the other hand, implies the demolition of buildings or larger areas of the city and their subsequent replacement by new buildings and infrastructures. Finally, the concept currently most accepted and practiced is that of rehabilitation. It is a practice directed to an area, and not only located in a building, and has a double purpose: the physical rehabilitation, through the conservation or restoration of buildings and functional revitalization that translates into the dynamism of the economic and social fabric, to increase the attraction capacity of inhabitants and economic and social activities (Hall, 2001).

The first laws of monument protection arise in the first half of the 20th century, but its appliance was almost inexistent, due to the lack of sensibilization of the populations that did not share the vision of the conservationists movements (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000). An essential milestone in the protection processes can be found in 1931, with the realization of the first International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, which resulted in the creation of the first international charter on heritage conservation, the Athens Charter (ICOMOS, 2004). From its reading, the most significant conclusions stand out: i) The monuments conservation must occur through regular maintenance as they have an effective occupation, ii) integral restoration and the use of dissonant materials are condemned, iii) care is recommended with the construction of new buildings in the areas surrounding the monuments, especially when carrying elements of modernity, iv) countries are encouraged to develop heritage inventories and v) young generations must be more conscious of respecting and safeguarding their heritage.

Despite the impact of the Athens Charter, the awareness of the importance of safeguarding heritage only became more generalized in the 60s of the 20th century. It is largely due to the action of the conservation movement that acted as a lobby both on society and on governments, pressured the latter to take measures for the conservation and preservation of urban areas. These measures include the improvement of inventory systems, an increase in government budgets for heritage, classification and conservation of isolated buildings and complexes, and also the consideration of conservation as a measure of urban planning and not only of reaction (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000; Orba li, 2000). The legislation produced in this period is quite similar in the different European countries, although two aspects can be distinguished: i) centralised policies, where the entire conservation process gravitates around a central organism and ii) decentralised policies, with regional and local organizations directing the conservation processes, as occurs in Germany, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, United States of America or Canada (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000).

The elaboration of the Venice Charter is an essential event of this period. Produced in 1964, as part of the 2nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments (ICOMOS, 2004). The main conclusion of the document is the broadening of the notion of monument. Each building is no longer seen as an isolated element, but as an element with its own setting. The notions of field of visibility and protection zones are created, as areas around the monuments, whose morphological characteristics should also be preserved. Another notion adopted is that of the historical and cultural environment. Each monument is embedded in a cultural context to be respected. This concept concerns houses, streets, environmental contact, and even the populations.

The following years witnessed important official initiatives recognising heritage and recommendations for its conservation, such as: Recommendation concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property Endangered by Public or Private Works, issued by UNESCO, in 1968; Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, issued by UNESCO, in 1972; European Charter of Architectural Heritage, in 1975; Nairobi Recommendation, issued by UNESCO, in 1976; Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, in 1985; and the International Cultural Tourism Charter, in 1999. These documents delimit concepts, progressively extend the notion of heritage to architectural sets and specify the various components and facets of heritage, from the tangible to the intangible.

Of the concepts set out in these charters and documents, the basic ones should be highlighted, specifically: antiquity, aesthetics, authenticity, inheritance and identity. The reading of these concepts must be made with margins of adaptation to each cultural reality and to the time of its application. Starting with the concept of antiquity, it is clear that a historic centre is valued for being a testimony of time. However, this is a difficult concept to clarify, since the assessment of antiquity depends on personal judgements and those of the society itself (Orbaşlı, 2000). For example, Europeans do not consider 100-year-old buildings to be significantly old, because most European cities were built centuries ago. On the other hand, American visitors to Europe, due to the more recent age of their cities, attribute to a centenary building a relevant antique label. Aesthetics is another concept of relative subjectivity. The notion of beauty is mostly dictated by the taste of elites who subsequently form a generalized opinion (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000).

Considering the concepts of antiquity and aesthetics, a denser concept emerges: authenticity. Perceiving an object as authentic comes from its aesthetic and historical qualities. So, it is a concept always in equation during a conservation process, because if the process affects the structure or components of a building or urban set, it can affect its authenticity (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000). This concept was the subject of the Nara Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS, 2004). Point 9 of this document states that in order to understand the value of the heritage, it is necessary to consider the credibility and veracity of sources of information about its value. The understanding of these sources and their relationship with the characteristics of cultural heritage is what makes it possible to establish aspects of authenticity. The following points in the document establish that the responsibility for the analysis of authenticity lies with each local culture. Therefore, the recognition of authenticity depends on the cultural context, so what may be seen as authentic for one culture may not be authentic for another.

Another concept under consideration is that of inheritance. This makes the connection between a heritage of the past, with intrinsic values, which must be preserved to constitute a resource usable by present generations, who will have the responsibility of leaving it intact for future generations (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000).

Finally, is considered the concept of identity. The recognition by a community that a certain heritage is the result of an evolutionary process that is composed of specificities that are related only to that community, leads to the concept of identity. In other words, identity is defined by the attributes chosen and recognized by a community to represent and enhance it. The assumption of the identity trait, in the understanding of Pereira, Martins, & Baptista (2017), emerges as a fundamental factor of differentiation and can also mark the processes of reconversion of cities.

These five concepts are of particular importance for the process of conservation of historic centres, especially from the point of view of the local populations who live their daily lives and, also, for the entities responsible for their management. However, the appreciation of heritage and its inherent need for conservation cannot be dissociated from the existence of a market that values the existence of certain objects, buildings and cities. Therefore, public entities and economic agents seek to emphasize some intrinsic qualities of urban heritage, in the sense of transforming the historic centre, or just some of its components, into tourist attractions. This process, now widespread in cities with historical layers, is a common form of commodification of heritage.. Fortuna (2012, p. 24) understands current

patrimonialization as the “detraditionalization of tradition”, that is, the act of patrimonializing means consecrating objects, places and practices invested with historical significance, even if this makes them dissonant elements and disconnected from the current reality of the community. This means that, from the perspective of local populations, the processes of commodification of heritage can jeopardize the authenticity of the place.

3. The classification of World Heritage in cities

International organisations such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), the Council of Europe and others of national nature classify and list cities or historic areas. The classifications are intended to achieve certain objectives, specifically protection from physical aggression in cities, but also serve to allow better access to funding and technical assistance aimed at their restoration and maintenance (G. J. Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000).

The UNESCO classification as World Heritage is the one with the greatest planetary notoriety. The Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, of November 16, 1972 (UNESCO, 1972) marked the beginning of this procedure. The classification process is responsibility of an intergovernmental committee by the UNESCO, that considers the advisory votes of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It is regulated under the 1972 Convention and by a document called Operational Guidelines.

The classification process is an initiative of each State, which submits an inventory of cultural and natural heritage assets located in its territory. It is based on these inventories that the Committee defines the World Heritage List, which includes properties considered to be of outstanding universal value. Every two years the list is updated. There is also the List of World Heritage in Danger, that can be updated at any time, which includes properties in risk of destruction. In establishing the risks to heritage, there is a special emphasis on aspects of urban heritage. In the text of the Convention, paragraph 4 of article 11 warns of “rapid urban or tourist development projects” (UNESCO, 1972) as one of the factors that can put a property on the list of World Heritage in Danger. Regarding the criteria for the distinction of Outstanding Universal Value, ten are established. However, for the reality of historic centres, six of them apply, namely:

(i) to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; (ii) to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design; (iii) to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared; (iv) to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; (v) to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; (vi) to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria) (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2019, p. 25).

Another required aspect concerns the characteristics of authenticity and integrity that the sites must possess. Establish the Guidelines, in paragraph 79, that, “properties nominated under criteria (i) to (vi) must meet the conditions of authenticity. Annex 4, which includes the Nara Document on Authenticity, provides a practical basis for examining the authenticity of such properties” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2019, p. 30). Therefore, authenticity is expressed in the following attributes, conveyed in paragraph 82 of the Guidelines (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2019, p. 26): “form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language, and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling; and other internal and external factors”.

Concerning the characteristic of integrity, reading paragraph 89 from the Guidelines, the physical fabric (material) of the property and/or its significant features should be in good condition and the impact of deterioration processes controlled. It should include a significant proportion of the elements necessary to convey the full range of values that the property represents. The relationships and dynamic

functions present in cultural landscapes, historic towns or other inhabited properties, essential to their distinctive character, should also be maintained.

For the specific cases of cities, the Guidelines provide particular conditions. The inscription of historic towns and centres on the World Heritage List can be carried out in one of three categories of urban sets: no longer inhabited, historic towns which are still inhabited and new towns of the twentieth century. Considering the specificity of historic towns, paragraph 14 of Annex 3 of the Guidelines acknowledges a special complexity of the classification of historic centres, as “historic towns which are still inhabited and which, by their very nature, have developed and will continue to develop under the influence of socio-economic and cultural change, a situation that renders the assessment of their authenticity more difficult and any conservation policy more problematic” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2019, p. 84).

The list of classified sites includes 1154 sites, of which 897 are cultural, 218 natural and 39 are a culture and nature mix. It is noted that 334 are located in cities or are urban areas (data as of 31 July 2022).

4. Tourism as an element of refunctionalization of historic centres

Whole cities or parts of cities with exclusively historical and tourist functions are rare. Indeed, cities are multifunctional with a multivariate demand. However, in many cities there is a growth in leisure and tourism functions, aimed at both tourists and inhabitants, which is the predominant feature in several historic centres. These functional changes of cities are, therefore, responses to the challenges of globalization and reaction to the need for economic restructuring, which results in the use of cultural resources for urban regeneration (Richards & Palmer, 2010). In this context, it is understood that tourism is functionally encouraged by local government entities. This is due to the need to replace local industries, but also in view of national needs for economic development. There are countless cases of European and North American cities that repurpose urban areas, especially seafronts and riverfronts, converting industrial and port facilities into leisure areas, such as Boston, Baltimore, San Francisco, London, Glasgow, Rotterdam, Genoa, Berlin, Hamburg, Barcelona, Bilbao or Lisbon (Henriques, 2003).

These aspects of touristification point to dimensions of positivity. However, some authors warn about the risks of this process. Romão (2013, p. 45, own translation) presents the issue in a clear way, pointing out that “the commodification of cultural elements in a tourist destination can transform these values or change their meaning, in a process of adaptation to visitors’ preferences or through the elimination of cultural activities that are not wanted by tourists” and that the lack of involvement of local communities in tourism development “constitutes a serious risk to their social cohesion and to the preservation of their natural and cultural heritage”.

The concept of authenticity gains renewed interest considering the commodification of culture that urban tourism entails. Romão (2013) synthesizes the ideas of some authors on the ambivalence of the effects of tourism on the authenticity of destinations. On the one hand, tourism contributes with resources and awareness to the preservation of traditional activities. But on the other hand, the historical heritage, as a collectively constructed representation, can, through commercial, political or ideological objectives, be oriented in a direction that does not respect the sense of authenticity.

From the perspective of operators and managing entities of tourist destinations, the concept of tourist authenticity emerges as an alternative response to mass tourism, as mentioned by Pereira, Martins, & Baptista (2017). These authors add that due to the proliferation of tourist destinations, as a result of improvements in terms of accessibility and also because there are segments of demand for less frequented places that have not yet been framed in mass systems, promoting the authenticity of places is seen as essential. In practice, it is the development of new tourist products that result from identity reinterpretations, that is, it is the reinvention of the past with the best images to appeal to tourists.

Gunn & Var (2002) emphasize that the current tourist has a lot of information and is attentive to perceive what is authentic or what is a false reproduction. Therefore, they suggest that ethical aspects should intersect with communication. It is about not promising something in its original state but explaining to the tourist that the artefacts can be replicas or reproductions.

From the populations’ point of view, tourist authenticity may not correspond to their notion of authenticity, as they consider it to be out of step with their culture and they tend to be critical of tourist gentrification processes promoted by local authorities (Pereira et al., 2017). However, Boavida-Portugal & Kastenzholz (2017) refute fears regarding gentrification. From the perspective that this concept consists in the rapid transformation of the social structure of a place, which becomes occupied by higher social strata, these authors argue that tourism does not expel other activities from historic

centres, but rather occupies a housing void and also an administrative abandonment to which these areas have been condemned.

It becomes perceptible that urban tourism has advantages and risks, so it is not possible to develop tourism in cities foreseeing and neutralizing all its negative effects. It is up to the various players of urban tourism to participate in the processes of planning and continuous monitoring of tourism activity. The WTO has defined the bases for tourism planning in cities considering the following stages, in a consecutive way: pre-feasibility study, terms of reference, setting of objectives, inventory and analysis of the situation, formulation of alternative plans and selection of the most favourable one, recommendations to the entities involved, implementation and monitoring (Organização Mundial do Turismo, 2003).

Regarding the specific aspects of the historic centres, the international recommendations transmitted by the WTO consider two fundamental aspects: to take special care regarding access, as these are generally areas of the city with narrow street patterns, suggesting the control of vehicles, forcing visitors to park outside the historic centres; and to carry out the historic preservation of the whole area and not only of isolated buildings, maintaining the context and the historic character and promoting rehabilitation for the installation of tourist infrastructures in a well-adjusted way with the encouragement of residential use (Organização Mundial do Turismo, 2003).

5. Effects of the World Heritage classification

World Heritage status represents a recognition of heritage value and an increased responsibility for local authorities to preserve it. This is the basic reading that can be made of the purposes of the World Heritage Convention. However, from the perspective of tourism, the effects of classification are more diverse and possibly conflicting.

As Boavida-Portugal & Kastenholtz (2017, p. 401, own translation) argue, “the UNESCO ‘brand’ is one of the strongest and most unmistakable symbols of recognition of the value of heritage, attracting tourists around the world and promoting value creation based on these assets”. In fact, there are advantages that countries consider important and that pass through international recognition and civic and identity pride. It can be considered that the initial objectives of the World Heritage classification, which served as a wake-up call and a way of mobilising resources for the conservation of the classified assets, have been surpassed by the value that the classification has as a globally recognised brand which can be used in a differentiation strategy for a tourist destination. The sharp growth in the number of applications can be seen as evidence of this greater purpose (Jones, Yang, & Yamamoto, 2017).

However, the original purpose of the Convention remains valid today. The attribution of classification to some tourist destinations, in addition to increasing the visual appeal, also refocuses social attention and the priorities of public actions (Boavida-Portugal & Kastenholtz, 2017), a situation that occurs especially in historic centres.

It is natural that the cities with historical centres classified as World Heritage have a tourist dynamism, where the offer of accommodation and other support services to tourists gradually grows. In this way, the historic centres develop and improve attractions and create activities and events of animation that allow capturing visitors and prolong their stay (Puertas, 2004). Therefore, it can be said that the classification of a historic centre as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO is like a distinctive and differentiating stamp that can allow a city to stand out from others, enhancing its visibility in the tourist markets.

Pendlebury, Short & While (2009) studied the fact that World Heritage classifications have increased significantly in recent years and that, in the case of historic centres, they represent major challenges in terms of defining, accessing and managing preserved assets, given the multiple users and interests, where tourism is assumed to be one of the preponderant ones. In the discussion about the effects of classification, it is also considered a dimension that states that classification can have an effect contrary to its purposes of encouraging conservation. Jones, Yang, & Yamamoto (2017) consider that besides the physical effects caused by the frequency of too many tourists, it is also possible to witness the deterioration of local customs and experiences, that is, the intangible part of a property, which is what guarantees its authenticity. Interesting, also, a sociological approach, provided by Elliott e Schmutz (2012), who consider World Heritage as a unique aspect of contemporary globalization. UNESCO's classification is thus a way of homogenising global heritage rhetoric that is composed of heritage characteristics rather than local history attributes (Fortuna & Gomes, 2013).

Several studies seek to demonstrate the effects that the classification can have in terms of increased visibility and visitation of sites (Huang, Tsaur, & Yang, 2012; Moy & Phongpanichanan, 2014; Su & Lin, 2014), as well as on visitors' perceptions (Poria, Reichel, & Biran, 2006; Poria, Reichel, & Cohen, 2013).

However, it is extremely complicated to perceive whether a particular tourist destination would have developed similarly if it had not received the distinction of World Heritage. The reading of several studies, carried out by Jones, Yang, & Yamamoto (2017), leads these authors to conclude that attempts to correlate the attribution of the classification by UNESCO and the increase in the volume of tourists are controversial. On the one hand, there are studies that show increases in the number of visitors to places in China after classification. But, on the other hand, other studies are pointed out, such as the case of the United Kingdom, where there are only small percentages of increase in the number of tourists and others, such as Barcelona, where it is proved that it was not possible to establish a positive correlation between the attribution of the classification and the increase in the number of tourists.

A case study on the city of Porto intended to assess tourist motivations according to destination attributes (Ramires, Brandão, & Sousa, 2018). The role of the World Heritage classification was assessed in a questionnaire, where 59.21% of respondents answered that the city's World Heritage classification was something important or very important. This study also pointed out that the main reason for visiting was leisure, at a significant distance from the second reason which is culture and heritage. Another study, carried out with visitors to the city of Évora (Marujo, Serra, & Do Rosário Borges, 2012) stated that the World Heritage classification influenced the decision to visit the city. This statement was demonstrated in two clusters of tourists identified: one for which cultural motivations were paramount and another where the reasons for visiting were leisure. However, a study conducted on an individual basis for the cities of Coimbra, Évora and Porto (Pinheiro, 2018) concluded a lesser importance of the World Heritage classification. In terms of awareness, this is real, as the majority of tourists in the three cities were already aware of the classification before visiting the cities (69.7% in Coimbra, 64.1% in Évora and 54.9% in Porto). However, from the perspective of the influence that the classification exerted on the decision to visit the cities, it is noted that there are a minority of surveyed tourists who claim that the classification exerted a significant influence on the decision to visit the cities of Porto (22.2%), Coimbra (30.1%) and Évora (32.8%).

In search of some conclusions on the value and effects of UNESCO classification in a tourist destination, du Cros & McKercher (2015) summarise the most important aspects of this analysis. Indeed, there are cases in which tourist destinations registered more visitors after classification, but in others the same effect was not observed. These authors consider that the location close to the main tourist markets and the image and notoriety existing before the classification play a more important role in the development of the tourist destination than the classification itself. Therefore, they are convinced that places that were already tourist destinations end up benefiting more from the classification, as it will amplify a reality that was already positive. The more remote or unknown places do not seem to benefit from this effect in a significant way. As such, they say that the benefit of the UNESCO label will depend mainly on the ability of the destination managers and their players to use the classification in a way that is consistent with the image of the tourist destination.

6. Conclusion

The prospects point to two growing trends that remain connected: by the year 2030, 60% of the world's population will live in urban areas, while the popularity of cities as tourist destinations will continue to grow (Organização Mundial do Turismo, 2019). These two phenomena make urban tourism one of the main subjects of study and analysis, both for its size and complexity. In the panorama of cities, historic centres appear as clear tourist attractions capable of generating high-intensity demand flows. Tourism appears here as one of the most evident components of heritage enhancement of buildings and urban centres, in a context of affirmation of international demand for cultural tourism.

Alongside this path, the institutionalization of cultural heritage advocated by UNESCO assumes one of its exponents with the creation and progressive affirmation of the classification of World Heritage. It appears that around 37% of cultural sites classified by UNESCO are located in urban areas. In this way, the classification of World Heritage ensures a global validation of the heritage of a city and guarantees the attribution of a notorious distinction that will have consequences on the tourist image of the awarded city. These benefits become evident, but they should not be considered as a single formula of immediate results in the conquest of tourist flows. In the current reality of intense competition between

tourist destinations, obtaining a World Heritage classification for a city is a valuable contribution to assisting the process of forming an urban and heritage brand, but the aforementioned studies do not demonstrate the classification as a determinant factor in the decision of tourists to visit these cities. In fact, World Heritage is seen as a tool that helps to differentiate, but that must be evaluated in a global framework of the various image creation and communication tools that cities, as tourist destinations, have at their disposal.

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