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The challenges of urban planning in the tourist-historic city.

A review of the book

Barrera-Fernández, D. *Attracting visitors to ancient neighbourhoods.*

Creation and management of the tourist historic city of Plymouth, UK. Groningen: InPlanning, 2016.

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The challenges of urban planning in the tourist-historic city. A review of the book Barrera-Fernández, D. *Attracting visitors to ancient neighbourhoods.* Creation and management of the tourist historic city of Plymouth, UK. Groningen: InPlanning, 2016.

Abstract

Plymouth, UK, houses, for its strategic location, an important base of the British Navy. In recent times, the military presence in the city has been reduced, with impacts on the local economy. The book sign by Barrera-Fernández, *Attracting visitors to ancient neighbourhoods - Creation and management of the tourist-historic city of Plymouth, UK* analyses this scenario and the community solutions to the problem. It seems important to invest in regenerating port facilities, encouraging the installation in these spaces of leisure activities, shopping facilities and complementary products such as creative economy districts, and the celebration of big events.

Keywords:

Historic City, Urban Tourism, Urban Planning. Cultural Heritage, tourist-historic city, Barrera-Fernández, D., Plymouth, UK

The transition to the 21st century has consolidated the deep socio-cultural changes that occurred after WW2, as a result of or parallel to the process of marked globalization of the economy. Economic globalization became possible due to technological advances, but also due to the introduction of the container, which facilitated and cheapened the freight costs. In the sociocultural sphere, there is the greater role of women and, consequently, a new family design. In the same sense, gender and ethnic minorities began to demand greater visibility, re-negotiating identities, among others, for the rescue and [re]construction of personal and collective memories. The treatment given to cultural heritage is extended in temporal and typological terms: not only the very ancient, such as Greco-Roman archaeological sites, is treated as Heritage, but also the most contemporary manifestations, as well as non-material heritage, gain recognition, among others, by UNESCO.

It is important to bring to the discussion the profound changes in temporal perceptions. In traditional or agricultural societies, time was demarcated by nature (day and night, phases of the moon, seasons...). Modernity, and its logic from the machine, introduced the time of the clock and the calendar, aiming at a previously subjective temporality. The watch allows time to turn into merchandise, both by the workers selling their workforce, and in the time spent in entertainment while watching movies or in city tours (Gastal, 2010). Dates and facts refer to other temporal landmarks, recorded in documents, but also in materializations in the buildings and monuments of urban space.

If traditional cultures have the past as a reference, Modernity is focused on the future. In contemporaneity, the acceleration of the experiences leads to the emphasis on the present, but also to the nostalgic appreciation of the past and, in this condition, it is commodified. Vintage films, retro fashion, authentic food (those associated with the comfort food of the family tradition) or recovered historic centers, all associated or not with tourism, are significant of the trend.

This preamble, perhaps a little long, seeks to highlight the importance and relevance of the book by Daniel Barrera-Fernández, *Attracting visitors to ancient neighbourhoods - Creation and management of the tourist-historic city of Plymouth, UK*. Plymouth, for its strategic location, houses an important base of the British Navy. In recent times, the military presence in the city has been reduced, with impacts on the local economy, similar to those observed in ports of commercial tradition, where many of their facilities have become redundant by the introduction of the containers.



Barrera-Fernández's research indicates that localities where tourism is not a major activity or where there is not a magnificent heritage to trigger the demand, should be associated in itineraries that diversify the presence of attractions. Another way is to invest in regenerating industrial or port facilities, which became obsolete by the processes of globalization, encouraging the installation in these spaces of leisure activities, shopping facilities and complementary products such as creative economy districts. The association with the celebration of big events, that promote the image of the city, is another way. Nevertheless, if the proposal succeeds in attracting tourists, it is possible that the ecosystems of the historic centers or remaining heritage - where new activities and their visitors will focus - will not support the impacts generated by the increase in demand.

Considering these scenarios, Barrera-Fernández rescues in his book the historical evolution of urban tourism and then consider how different actors and tourist initiatives affect the tourist use of the historic city in terms of heritage, culture, urban planning and economy. The triangulation of the study reaches the concept of tourist-historic city, bringing together City, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, as synthesized in figure 1, having in its interrelations the Historic City, Urban Tourism and Cultural Tourism. The author follows for the concept of tourist-historic city the definition in Brito, 2009.



Figure 1: Creation of the tourist-historic city.

Source: Barrera-Fernández, 2016, p. 15.



Attracting visitors to ancient neighbourhoods structures its content in seven chapters, after an Introduction that describes the methodology that will be applied to the case study.

In the first chapter, the author presents Plymouth's historic and economic links to the sea and the British Navy, and the urban development of the city.

The second chapter tells the civil society movements, the planning and preservation regulations, interventions, damages and regeneration of local heritage.

The next chapter focuses on the historic city, on which to interventions for protecting heritage have been developed.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the historical presence of tourism in Plymouth, and then presents its current initiatives to attract new visitors, developed in depth in the subsequent chapter.

The last chapter presents and discusses how different actors and initiatives, from a focus on heritage and culture, tourism, urban planning and urban development, plan and act in the historic city.

It is therefore a work with an important contribution to the study of tourism in urban centers, especially those that stand out for the presence of a significant cultural heritage. A situation in which tourism can contribute to economic development and quality of life of localities, and to reduce negative impacts on their cultural and heritage ecosystem.

The author's conclusions indicate the importance of the presence and interaction of different local actors, so that the process is successful. Likewise, the methodology adopted by the study will make a relevant contribution to other localities.



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