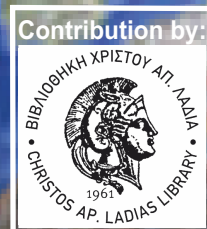


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Editorial Note

Regional Science Inquiry, Vol. IX, (1), 2017

This issue, Journal of No 1 Volume IX, June 2017 provides a range of approaches towards regional macro-economic issues covering a wide area of scientific and research interest, promoting an in depth understanding of these topics, promoting, motivating, and supporting every interested scholar and reader, particularly within the current financial and economic environment, based on selected papers a wide range on modern topics, such as:

- Output, growth, and convergence in a creative region: an analysis of measurement issues of the coefficients of a related cross-region growth regression.
- Moving regional economic policy modernization, providing rationale for the systems basis for organizational and deblocking mechanisms of a discrete regional modernization process.
- Payment technologies and money demand as evidence from dynamic panel on banking system and the total effect of these innovations on money demand and financial innovation.
- Inter-jurisdictional competition for sales tax revenues: a natural experiment of destination retail outlets as an increasingly popular development strategy.
- Cable and pipeline corridors under the legal framework of UNCLOS and the energy treaty. Geopolitical considerations at the eastern Mediterranean sea
- Cities and enhancement of their historic centre and heritage: educational communities' and visitors' perspectives, conceptualising cities' educational, cultural and urban/regional/transnational development aspects.
- Indicators and a mechanism to ensure economic security of the regions as one of the most important components of national security of the state.
- Regional strategies for dealing with structural change, increasingly intended to strengthen the innovative and technology capacity of regions in European periphery.
- Relationship between greenspace agreement, external diseconomy and residents' risk assessment as an effective method to promote the conservation and creation of greenspace.
- Uncovered interest parity puzzle (UIP): evidence from major currencies, highlighting the weak relationship between exchange rates and interest rates.
- Regional inequalities and effects of fiscal consolidation, exploring the impact of fiscal consolidation on regional inequalities on national levels among 13 EU member countries for period 1995-2009.
- Migration and its causes in Monchengladbach – a city for living and working, providing a high quality of life and work for citizens and employees in a specified location.
- Unemployment rate growth model in the euro area
- Methodological aspects of construction of the dynamic model for the development of the institutional environment of the innovative multiclusters, allowing to monitor the effectiveness of the regional cluster policy over the long term.

- Determinants of inclusive growth in Iranian regions (sure approach in panel data) in order to investigate the relationship between income inequality and GDP growth in Iranian provinces over the period of 2000-2014.
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- Economic contagion under uncertainty: CGE with a Monte Carlo experiment, quantitatively investigating how economic shocks of a certain country influence a different country.

The Journal wants to thank each one and all of the contributors and share the belief of this issue being a platform aiming to enable readers to develop an understanding of current best-practice and evidence-based approaches.

On behalf of the Editorial Board



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CITIES AND ENHANCEMENT OF THEIR HISTORIC CENTRE AND HERITAGE: EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITIES' AND VISITORS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Several movements conceptualise cities' educational, cultural and urban/regional/transnational development aspects, such as Educating Cities, Children's City, or URBACT's. Cultural tourism/Edutourism, seen as a non-formal, lifelong education formula led by the individuals, has also played an important role, enhancing the value of cities in the broader sense. Monitoring people's opinion about the city and getting them to actively participate also enlightens those movements. This paper presents a research on the renewal of Chaves's historic centre (HC), whose rationale considered educational communities as partners. Results showed that teachers value urban renewal processes, while being critical, though. They emphasize the need for information and training. The HC should be a space for families to live in and is referred to as a multiple use educational resource.

Keywords: Cities and learning, historic centre renewal, municipalities and development, cultural/heritage tourism, educational communities' participation

JEL classification:

1. Introduction

This article results from a research project designed to understand educational communities' and visitors' perceptions about a town's historic centre renewal and heritage enhancement. In the context of a wider endeavor towards enhancing and promoting cultural values and heritage in town, teachers, students and tourist¹ were selected as partners whose perspectives and demands were considered especially relevant to ensure the historic centre renewal and its role in towns and regional development (Diniz, Costa, Joukes, Morais, and Pereira, 2014).

The theoretical framework relies on the topics of cities as educational/cultural places, the role of heritage, namely historic centres, cities' sustainable development and the way heritage enhancement in urban spaces puts forward different types of educational stances (formal, informal and lifelong learning). A multi-method design was followed and results showed that the participants were attentive to questions involving heritage, though each group was

¹ ONU Statistics Commission devised, in 1983, a conceptual distinctions among "tourists", "visitors" and "day-visitors". Because it was not within the scope of this paper, we leave out the discussion and use "visitors" and "tourists" as synonymous.

attentive to a different degree; the town and its historic centre were also a *locus* of both individual and collective learning, albeit in different formats.

2. Cities as educational/cultural places

The birth of cities, while closely related to the need for protection and economic development, has ended up in reflecting multiple dimensions which historically has led to their being regarded as crucial places of human development. Cities are also seen as socialization and therefore educational spaces, where learning experiences are likely to occur due to the diversity of actors and contexts offered by the urban environment (despite the violent incidents that have been affecting cities in every continent in recent years and that naturally shape the way people think about them).

It was so in Antiquity, in the Middle Ages, in the Renaissance and it continues to be so across continents today. In reference only to the western world, the notion of place-based learning (in towns, regions or communities) can be followed back to the ancient Greece, although it was not categorised as such (Osborne, Kiernes and Yang, 2013). It was in the late twentieth century that several proposals were made which, in their own different ways, conceptualise, name, test and deepen the cities' social, educational and cultural dimensions. It is the case of the modern concept of a learning city/region, which originated from that of a "learning society" and gave way to the UNESCO supported International Platform of Learning Cities (Osborne Kiernes, and Yang, 2013). Learning cities are meant to represent a new approach to urban development, linking lifelong learning, social inclusion and urban generation.

Still, other proposals conceptualize and try-out the educating capacity of cities, as it is the case of the *Educating Cities Movement* (Villar, 1990; Lucio and Neves, 2010). One of the features of this movement is to gather inputs from the citizens and engage their participation, thus consolidating democracy and citizenship (Messina, 2013).

In order to undertake appropriate action, the persons responsible for municipal policy must obtain accurate information on the situation and needs of the inhabitants. Thus, the city shall undertake studies and surveys, which it shall keep up to date and make available to the public and shall establish channels that are constantly open to individuals and groups that allow the formulation of specific proposals and general policies.

Another example worth mentioning is the *Children's City Movement*, inspired by Tonucci (1996). Tonucci's ideas have been at the basis of several working groups in and outside of Europe which have two common denominators: they reject the idea that cities are built for adults, ignoring children's needs; and they put forward proposals to make cities more children friendly, emphasizing their potential to become regional and national development centres.

Some movements may be also integrated in this dynamics, like the *Eurocities*, a European movement that relies on urban/regional/transnational development, emphasizing education and culture (Joukes and Costa, 2015); URBACT², another European Union collective learning movement, which includes specific programs for historic cities, such as HERO, which develops around the concept of heritage "as an opportunity".

The movements that have been referred to one way or the other conceptualize cities as human development spaces and, among other things, list objectives and strategies that basically pertain to the informal education sphere. When one thinks of Europe, however, one notices that cities have been gaining more protagonism even at the political level in the field of formal education as well. Suffice to look at the decentralisation policies in recent decades that reinforce the role of municipalities in education (Araújo *et al.*, 2013; Costa *et al.*, 2013).

In short, none of these movements designed to think and live in the urban space can be ignored, and cities are now viewed as places of formal as well as informal education and lifelong learning. More than ever, the urban space has an educating identity that can be described through concepts such as *learning in* the city – since it contains plenty of pedagogical facilities, like schools, museums, etc. – and *learning from* the city – referring to the informal learning opportunities offered by the city (De Visscher, 2015). In fact, in

² It is a European Exchange and Learning Program promoting sustainable urban development.

international forums, cities are being more and more the target of multidisciplinary discussions “on what can be learned in and from urban spaces, as well as on how different stakeholders perceive the city as an educational space, taking into account pedagogical theories, existing concepts and intervention programs” (see De Vissher and Lucio, 2015).

3. Notes on historic centres’ renewal

What is now known as a city’s historic centre used to be referred to as the “old part of town” until the middle of the twentieth century; besides the concept does already correspond to the enhancement of the places where present cities have actually come into existence (Santos, 2014). It should be noted that by “centre” one does not always mean geometric centre but rather bestows upon it a symbolic meaning by acknowledging its centrality to history and everyday life and its importance as the origin of the city, something that is widely accepted and increases its symbolic role. Although nowadays the intrinsic value of these places has been established, until arriving at the concept of historic centre there has been a whole trajectory that, particularly in Europe, would lead to an awareness of how important these old urban tissues are and has had an impact on other parts of the world as well

So much so that in the beginning of the twentieth century some initiatives took place that together precede and endorse the concept of historic centre as we know it in the twenty first century. A few key moments in this evolutionary process should be singled out. First and foremost, there is the Athens Charter which, in 1921 pointed out necessary criteria for the preservation of old buildings, drawing the attention to the fact that these bear witness to History; in 1964, the Venice Charter extended the concept of heritage to buildings in an urban environment and introduced the idea of “reuse” based on the notion that preserving the traditional town of itself was no guarantee of future. The Tendenza group, responsible for the Bologna’s Historic Centre Regulation Plan that was designed in 1971, used a methodology of analysis and project/proposal that has become a reference in Europe. In 1975, the Amsterdam Charter suggested that preservation/reuse rested on a social spirit, while advocating inhabitants/residents in historic centres remain there once these had been renovated (García Vázquez, 2004).

After the 1960s, the tendency for what one now refers to as historic centres to become an urban concern and the object of a more systematic study and methodology grew stronger (Garcia Lamas, 2000), and turned into a spiral that in the 1980s led to historic centres being recognized as one of cities’ major issues (Salgueiro, 1992). It followed that in 1986, the Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas was drafted under the auspices of ICOMOS, identifying goals for the preservation of historic towns. The views expressed in this Charter apply to “historic urban areas, large and small, including cities, towns and historic centres or quarters, together with their natural and man-made environments. Beyond their role as historical documents, these areas embody the values of traditional urban cultures [...]. The values to be preserved are the historic character of the town together with the set of material and spiritual elements that express its image” (Salgueiro, 1992: 391). Therefore, the essential features of what is now called the historic centre were designed, notwithstanding, as has been pointed out by Fernandes (2010), that the concept of historic centre is constantly undergoing a revision process.

Especially in the last decades of the twentieth century, the state of decay of parts of most historic centres led to the appearance and reinforcement of several movements of urban planners and municipalities set on establishing intervention policies to revitalise historic centres (e.g., WH, 2002). Several European and American towns have developed urban regeneration dynamics³ that are more or less focussed on heritage/historic centres, depending on each town’s specific circumstances.

³ Because it was not within the scope of this paper, the intense theoretical discussion around such concepts as renewal, revitalization, regeneration or requalification has been deliberately left out.

4. Heritage enhancement, educational communities and cultural tourism as mutually reinforcing factors in historic centres

Regarding the concept of heritage, some considerations must be made. Today, heritage means something very different from what it used to in the past, when it had a narrower meaning and was mostly related to built heritage. In fact, this concept was always associated with the idea of “value” and referred to everything that was material, physical and visible. The evolution of the concept of heritage was addressed in detail by Harvey (2010: 327) whom, relying on Tunbridge’s and Ashworth’s definition of heritage as “a contemporary product shaped from history”, underlined that heritage is, above all, a process, or “a value-laden concept, related to processes of commodification, but intrinsically reflective of a relationship with the past, however that ‘past’ is perceived and defined” (Harvey, 2010: 327).

Therefore, communities have a say when defining heritage (Waterton and Smith, 2010); thus, a community’s understanding of heritage must be considered. Regarding the relationship between perspectives on cultural heritage and community, “the local understanding of cultural heritage becomes a social process rather than a physical object to be preserved. In other words, cultural heritage is seen as an instrument for the development of social experiences, relations, exchanges and so forth” (Mydland and Grahn, 2012: 583).

This directs us to the educational dimension of heritage. This dimension, as part of the concept of heritage, has been regarded as one of the richest and most likely to bring people together (González, 2012), around the idea that material and immaterial heritage are worth being past into future generations and as such be considered as an educational goal within both formal and informal education. In fact, cultural heritage can be “an effective educational tool for formal, non-formal and informal education, life-long learning and training” (CEU, 2014: 2).

Historic centres and heritage play an inescapable role in how cities work and therefore should be attractive to both residents and visitors. New synergies that feed each other have been taking place, that is, local residents’ interest for the historic centres attracts visitors who, in turn, encourage locals to preserve and renew these centres, promoting cities and becoming yet another resource as far as local development is concerned. Tourism has also played an important role in that awakening of interest, and cultural tourism in particular. We should bear in mind that, when speaking about cultural tourism, we often talk about heritage tourism. According to Timothy and Boyd (2006: 1), “heritage tourism, which typically falls under the purview of cultural tourism (and vice versa), is one of the most notable and widespread types of tourism and is among the very oldest forms of travel”. Especially since the 17th and 18th centuries’ *grand tour*, in Europe, the notion of *travelling as a learning experience* has become increasingly prominent (Martínez, 2015).

According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO, 1985), cultural tourism corresponds to all movements of persons that “satisfy the human need for diversity, tending to raise the cultural level of the individual and giving rise to new knowledge, experience and encounters”. Richards (2003) points out that the WTO’s wide spread definition enhances the learning aspect of cultural tourism, which is supposed to contribute to personal development. In other words, the learning component of cultural tourism is widely recognized (Pitman *et al.* 2010), it is closely linked to educational tourism or edutourism and it is not always easy to tell them apart. In fact, cultural tourism can be considered a form of non-formal, lifelong learning, a process controlled by the individuals themselves, who choose their destinations according to their educational/cultural interests. Anyway, as it is noticed by Falk *et al.* (2012), the relationship between travel and learning is not yet sufficiently studied.

It should also be pointed out that the movements which deal with public spaces, mainly urban spaces, whether targeting historic centres or not, depart from the principle that “any recommendation based on research about urban public space cannot replace the direct participation of the public, the unparalleled possibility of those who will actually use the space” (Alves, 2003: 298). Changes in the urban space, which are often not understood by the populations, directly affect people’s everyday life and so must be fully disclosed and duly explained. As Guerra, Jaume and Castells (2011) put it, the interpretation of heritage is an effective strategy to preserve it but it will only work as an educational activity if local communities are involved. Still according to these authors, the best way to bring territory,

heritage and community together is within a municipal context, listening to the population living in the areas that are being rehabilitated. Educational communities, teachers and students, as leading actors in formal education processes and the cultural tourists, as actors of self-directed lifelong learning processes, should naturally be heard in the course of any urban regeneration and heritage enhancement process.

This work is part of a research⁴ that has been developed in Chaves (a middle-sized border town in northern Portugal, integrating Chaves-Verín Eurocity) and looked into educational communities as partners responsible for their own development which, to a large extent, is based on valuing the heritage (in this paper, we refer historic centres and heritage as almost overlapping concepts) and tourism thereof ensuing. The research is part of the “*Chaves Monumental – Valorização e Promoção dos Valores Culturais e Patrimoniais*”⁵ candidacy within the Strategic Program of the Urban Network for Competitiveness and Innovation. This candidacy is focused in the historic centre renewal⁶ and is based on the assumption that the way a town/region is able to make itself attractive results from several factors that have to do with culture and heritage upon which local economies depend. In fact, these resources must be preserved and valued so that they can be passed on to future generations if they are to remain competitive, attractive and distinctive.

The main goals of the research were to identify how valuing the heritage is perceived by the region’s educational communities and tourists and to help the various communities committed to develop both the program and the region know more about each other.

5. Methodology

In the course of this research, several studies were conducted, following a multi-method approach with recourse to complementing quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Methodological options resulted from the authors’ understanding that it will not be easy to know much about social phenomena, if only a quantitative perspective is taken into account or if it becomes pivotal. As a matter of fact, one’s knowledge about the complexity of social phenomena will be far more extensive and heuristically productive if it rests on different techniques and methodological frameworks (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995; Guba and Lincoln, 1996). Methodological diversity becomes particularly relevant when one wishes to know how events impact educational communities and visitors and the latter’s perceptions, bearing in mind that both populations have clearly distinctive characteristics. Besides, the mixed approach has been favoured by most research studies on these segments and populations, whenever the intention is to go beyond mere market studies.

Particularly, it has been assumed that culture must be looked at through the eyes of those who live it and not only through the scientist’s observations, as argued by Velasco and Díaz (2006), as regards education, and by Denker (2010) regarding tourism.

Selection of samples and participants and the orientation of data gathering tools took into account the results of exploratory studies carried out over different periods (different years) and contexts (although they had not been conducted for the express purpose of this study). They were small studies (ethnographic methodology, in loco observation and informal interviews around archeological heritage, Costa, 2009) undertaken by different members of the team (who have been long expressing an interest regarding this subject), which ended up being very useful for the present study. Exploratory studies made it possible to justify methodological options related to sample selection (educational communities and visitors; residents were also inquired but they are not considered in this paper), places of access, questions to ask and ways of recording information, for instance.

In methodological terms, two pathways were followed: questionnaires applied to visitors (209) and students (58) and semi-structured interviews with students (41) and teachers (12);

⁴ Diniz, Costa, Joukes, Morais and Pereira, 2014.

⁵ Monumental Chaves – Valuing and Promoting Cultural Values and Heritage

⁶ Chaves’ historic centre limits were established in 1995 and for this official area a set of plans and interventions was elaborated, some of which were executed (Diniz, Costa, Joukes, Duarte, and Pereira, 2014).

in the case of the teachers, the interviews were also in-depth. The participating students were 15–22 years old. Although questionnaires were mostly quantitative and subject to statistical analysis, they also included open questions with content analysis. The interviews were analysed through content analysis techniques (Bardin, 1977; Esteves, 2006). After interviews with students had been analyzed, focus group discussions followed in order to provide a better understanding of some aspects.⁷

5.1. Data analysis and discussion: Enhancing and promoting cultural values and heritage in Chaves (Portugal).

Regarding this paper, we were particularly interested in finding out what these groups think about the potential of the historic centre as a learning platform, how the historic centre “educates” them and whether they actively or passively benefit from all that potential represents.

5.2. About the impacts on educational communities

5.2.1. Teachers on the historic centre:

As regards teachers, it was possible to notice that in their statements, when questioned about the historic centre, they do not refered only to it, but rather included the town and its rural environment, which they saw as a whole territory that makes the town a good place to live in. Almost all of them refered the beauty of the town, namely the riverside that has been intervened by the Polis Program⁸.

Not surprisingly, teachers were very much aware of all that has to do with heritage. In fact, they were willing to participate in all kinds of actions related to valuing heritage and promoting urban revitalization, which they thought had been positive so far but still needed to be improved in some areas that they identify. In their opinion, the community should be able to decide the role of the historic centre in the town’s/region’s development and elaborate clear strategies resulting from those decisions. They were critical of specific aspects like the decline of some areas of the historic centre, the difficulties of everyday life in that particular part of town, the need to go back to urban planning concepts and practices from past decades or the deficit in private investment compared to public one. Nevertheless, they know this is no simple matter, and that is why they value every initiative however small.

The teachers’ statements emphasised that information, training and dissemination were extremely relevant and clearly showed how much they valued information and training for they are essential in involving everybody in decision-making, strategic urban and development planning and carrying out those plans. In other words, it was the teachers’ strong belief that nothing can be achieved without the articulate participation of all the population, decision makers and participants. Besides, they did not focus on individual or institutional responsibilities; on the contrary, they highlighted the importance of the community as a whole.

Regardless of the choices that eventually will be made, these should take into account the key importance of the Roman Thermal Spa (see Carneiro 2013). In this regard, they clearly advocated the need to unravel study and divulge the heritage, suggesting a number of initiatives to develop both the historic centre and the town.

Teachers on students and the historic centre:

According to the teachers, when stimulated, students end up being actively and permanently interested in the heritage. As they see it, depending on the use of adequate educational practices, students will surely have an important and active role in preserving the municipality’s heritage.

⁷ We are very thankful to all the participants. Special thanks to the schools’ principals who supported the research; the students, especially those who participated in the interviews and focus groups, and the teachers, who offered their time to in-depth interviews.

⁸ The Polis Program aimed at promoting interventions of an urban and environmental nature in order to improve quality of life in towns, increasing urban centres’ attractiveness and competitiveness. It was implemented in many towns in Portugal (in Chaves, from 2002 to 2008).

The historic centre is deemed a unique educational space and it and the town, in general, have much to gain from students participating actively in global strategies. For their part, teachers were more than willing to give their contribution, educating and encouraging students. To this end, they have presented a number of suggestions in terms of teaching strategies to get students to commit themselves to revitalizing the historic centre, always following a clearly educational purpose.

In their long and enthusiastic statements – even when one or another are disappointed or skeptical about the future of middle sized towns like Chaves vis-à-vis the country's new tendencies – teachers provided an interesting set of suggestions and reflections, at the heart of which lies the notion of a participating community. It is up to the community to assess and clearly decide what they want for Chaves historic centre, showing they were really committed to give it the central place and function it deserves.

5.2.2. Students - the “enlarged” historic centre as an ideal place for socialization:

Still regarding educational communities, the overall assessment of the inquiries applied to the students (interviews and questionnaires) is jointly interpreted in this paper. The students' analysis was initially structured along two categories: the great majority who were interviewed shared a positive perspective regarding revitalizing the historic centre, whereas only a few were profoundly skeptical. Both groups have made criticism and plenty of suggestions, though.

The students' view of the historic centre was much based on their daily life, marked by their experiences as youths: night visits to pubs – highly appreciated – strolls along the town's main shopping streets (old streets integrating the historic centre) and walks along the Tâmega riverside. When referring to the historic centre they did not focus solely on the castle, the medieval streets, or those dating back from the 19th century (Santo António Street) or even the old houses that are part of what is officially described as the historic centre. In fact, content analysis of the interviews clearly shows the greens areas surrounding the Tâmega riverside, near the modern Thermal Spa⁹⁹ and the river (out of the historic centre borders) as being particularly liked by students. In their responses, especially during interviews, students' perception of the historic centre was then broader than the official one, since it includes the riverbank, which is not included in the official historic centre. Students always found a way to mention the green areas surrounding the riverbank which underwent a process of phased urban regeneration in recent years (Polis Program), thus, somehow ‘redefining’ the historic centre limits.

Students knew and appreciated, although to varying degrees, the Roman Thermal Spa, whose only future, according to them, is to become a Museum. They placed great faith in the Roman Thermal Spa's being able to develop the town's economy, namely by attracting more tourists. They were aware of the state of decay of some historic centre buildings and the general poor environment it causes. They consistently regreted the lack of a shopping mall, because they would like more shops and brands to be available to their budgets. But what really came as a surprise was their extensive list of suggestions to revitalize the historic centre, of which stand out the thematic Roman Fairs, the development of culture and arts, especially music, providing information and knowledge about the historic centre and initiatives to make it known. In other words, they advocated that culture and learning be integrated in entertaining, leisure and teaching contexts, without ignoring the wish to be able to do shopping. Those of them who were more critical wanted the historic centre to be safer and more easily accessed (namely by disabled people), and have more information and better road signs.

5.3. Visitors and the historic centre

As regards visitors, cultural tourism, health and wellness tourism and culinary or food tourism were pointed out by visitors looking for information in Chaves tourist office as the

⁹⁹ Presently, Chaves has a modern Thermal Spa and a recently discovered millennial Roman Thermal Spa, both located near the river, but in different places.

main reasons for visiting the town (TPNP, 2013). As for the respondents in this study, most of them were frequent visitors, often coming to Chaves, not only for a day, but usually staying overnight (on average up to 3 nights). What causes them to visit Chaves again is the wish to visit friends and family, spend holidays or weekends, see the cultural heritage and taste local cuisine.

Tourists find Chaves and its historic centre unique. They knew and appreciated how rich its culture and heritage are and clearly acknowledged its touristic potential. Based on their experiences as tourists or one-day visitors, which they consider positive, they recommend other visitors to come and visit the town and suggested public and private authorities to make a continuous effort to endow the city with infrastructures and facilities capable of making the city more attractive to both residents and tourists. Therefore, it is imperative that Chaves' cultural material and non-material heritage be preserved through investing in preserving and revitalizing its centre. As they see it, it is necessary to keep making Chaves attractive to tourists, in a clever and sustainable way, improving infrastructures, renovating more monuments and renewing spaces, while respecting the deadlines for these conservation works as much as possible.

Visitors expressed the opinion there is still much to be done and that it should be complemented with several types of touristic related activities, with guided tours receiving the highest demand. It is not enough to have impressive infrastructures, buildings, spaces and monuments; new life and regeneration must be brought to them.

6. Conclusions: City/historic centres as places for learning: different perceptions and usages.

The main goal of this article was to reflect about the potential of cities/historic centres as places for learning, using the case study of Chaves, a middle-sized town in the North of Portugal focussing on the education community and the visitors.

In short, cities, and especially historic centres are spaces where different types of learning are acquired by different audiences in different ways. However, different types of learning with different meanings can be identified, that is, learning goals and processes vary depending on whether one is considering teachers, students or visitors.

6.1. The historic centre as a formal learning space mediated by teachers and by the school

For teachers, more than a tourist attraction, the historic centre should be a space where families have their everyday life improved. In addition, the town, and especially its historic centre/heritage, is an educational resource of multiple usages in the context of formal education. They are seen as resources, places and objects that facilitate learning, sometimes even creative learning. As regards to their educational purposes, their choice is mostly and plainly within the socio constructivist paradigm of development (Rocha, 1988). In that perspective, teachers assumed a mediating role in their students' learning processes. Teachers repeatedly and spontaneously recognized the historic centre as a suitable place where their students can learn. They had no doubt that, when properly guided, students were aware of the historic centre's value and training capacity. That is why they included references and visits to see the town's heritage both in their lesson plans and in the school's educational projects. The historic centre was seen by teachers, then, as a clear space for students' to learn in the city.

6.2. An "enlarged" historic centre and a socializing space for students

Students took over the historic centre as a locus for self and/or collective, autonomous and informal practices. In an almost hegemonic way and broad perspective, students had this perception of the historic centre as a place of rich and intense life experiences, rather than a locus for formal learning.

In fact, there is a contrast between teachers' statements, who look at the historic centre as a possibility for formal learning to occur, and the students', who never mention that aspect. As a matter of fact, students identified the historic centre with life experiences, that is, with a

socialization locus. For students, the historic centre that extends to the green areas on either side of the riverbank was a spatial set of unmediated learning and self-regulated socialization. Thus, the historic centre was appropriated by the students as a space for learning in and from urban spaces.

6.3. Tourists - built heritage and nature as locus of lifelong non formal learning

As for visitors, they enjoyed heritage, nature and history, and guided tours are especially sought-after, which underlines the dimension of lifelong informal learning. Both students and visitors “extended” the historic centre to the river, combining nature with built heritage.

In sum, these findings showed that teachers demonstrated a deep understanding of the historic centre limits and problematics; in addition, for teachers, the historic centre was seen as a formal learning space mediated by teachers and by the school. As for students and visitors, unaware of the officially defined limits of the historic centre, they easily extended it to specific green areas of the town. In addition, they were open to learning in and from the city/historic centre – its heritage and nature together, and whatever opportunities it offered. However, at the same time, they wanted to enjoy and, especially the students, to socialize in the “extended” historic centre. This led to new reflections on territorial and conceptual boundaries in urban environments, namely when what was being considered were spaces with immense symbolic value, such as the historic centres, as suggested by Fernandes (2010). These findings also showed the importance of citizen audition in the process of change in the cities, which focused on the educational community and cultural tourism, according to the concept of actual participation and involving the community in preserving and divulging local heritage.

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