

# Regional Science Inquiry



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## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN URBAN HERITAGE PROMOTION: RESIDENTS', VISITORS', AND STUDENTS' CONTRIBUTIONS

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### **Abstract**

The present study is part of a broader research carried out in Chaves, a medium sized town on the border with Spain, in the interior north of Portugal, and it took place within the Monumental Chaves – Valuing and Promoting Cultural Values and Heritage Strategic Programme. This programme focussed on keeping and promoting the town's monumental heritage (both architectural and archaeological) at the heart of the town's historic centre, and aimed to make a positive difference on the development of the territory in which it is located. It included a set of studies on impact monitoring which ended up attaining goals that had not been foreseen in the initial programme, not only because these were purposely extended, but also because of the methodological approach that was chosen. Thus, this article presents the residents', students', and visitors' perspectives on the subject of monumental heritage protection, conservation and enhancement. Results show that protection, conservation, and enhancement of cultural heritage still matters for the population segments whose opinions were taken into consideration, who acknowledge its value as a solid resource for the town's and the region's development. Cultural tourism as a personal strategy of informal self-learning also plays a specific role. Worth mentioning is the fact that young people have different and broader views on the future of both the heritage and of the town containing it. Results of the studies in question amply justify a promotion and development proposal that goes beyond the limits of the town's historic centre and bestows on it a major role in terms of the town's and the region's development. The conclusions of the study are a contribution to increase public opinion monitoring and public participation in actions designed to enhance cultural heritage, more so in towns which have an historic centre.

**Keywords:** historic centre renewal, public participation, cultural tourism, youth, regional development

**JEL classification:** O18, P25, O21

### **1. Introduction**

The present research is part of an articulate set of strategic programmes developed by Chaves municipality, a medium sized town in the interior north of Portugal, in order to rehabilitate and renew the town's historic centre, enhancing its cultural heritage (both architecturally and archaeologically). The major goals of these strategic programmes are preserving the town's historical identity, improving its urban condition, and promoting the town/region (Chaves) in the network of cultural cities. This research is part of *Monumental Chaves – Valuing and Promoting Cultural Values and Heritage Strategic Programme*, and of the *Urban Network Strategic Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation*, sub-item *Designing Monitoring Studies on the Impacts of Cultural Heritage Enhancement on the Region's Tourism and Educational Communities*.

Some of the *Founding Topics* underlying the candidacy strategy were the fact that the tourism sector is a strong component of Chaves' socio - economic development; its cultural

values and cultural heritage which represent structuring specific resources that sustain many local economic activities; the need to preserve, enhance and promote these values so that they can be passed on to future generations, making sure they remain a competitive, attractive and distinguishing asset; the fact that the strategic programme for enhancing the architectural and archaeological heritage is part of a strategy to support local development (Chaves Municipality, 2008).

These studies were, therefore, part of a series of plans and interventions in Chaves' Historic Centre and were designed to allow an understanding of the impacts of the heritage enhancement process. They also help the various communities involved in the region's development know each other better, due to the programme's original goals having been extended and as a result of the methodology that was chosen, as well as the commitment of those responsible to discuss and disclose conclusions. (Diniz, Costa, Joukes, Morais, & Pereira, 2014). Notably, stakeholders have been heard - visitors, residents, teachers and students - and, each in their own way, have expressed their views on how this habitat has evolved. In view of the input of the public segments that were consulted, these studies may be deemed a public participation tool, in that they are also a contribution to future strategies to promote and develop the town and the region.

## **2. Urban renewal and its audiences**

This section includes a brief presentation of Chaves town and of some concepts which were instrumental to both the candidacy and the studies, namely "the Historic Centre renewal processes", "cultural heritage enhancement", "cultural tourism" and "public participation".

### **2.1. A few notes on Chaves town**

Chaves, a border *concelho*<sup>1</sup> in the interior north of Portugal, integrates the CIM-AT - Comunidade Intermunicipal do Alto Tâmega (the Alto Tâmega Intermunicipal Community) and the Eurocidade Chaves-Verín (Chaves-Verin Eurocity) (Ourense, South Galicia, Spain). It has an area of 591.23 km<sup>2</sup> and in 2016 it had 39,682 inhabitants (PORDATA, 2016), of which around 50% lived in the urban centres of Chaves and Vidago (a small spa town worldly renowned for its medicinal waters and the Vidago Palace Hotel complex. Like most *concelhos* in inner Portugal, Chaves demographic evolution has been negative, a tendency that needs to be reversed. With regard to formal education, as head of the *concelho*, Chaves has several pre-primary education schools, primary schools, secondary schools, vocational schools and High schools (currently, there is a Nursing School and until 2014 there was a branch of the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro – UTAD). Besides a group of private schools and associations dedicated to arts and sports (painting, music, dance, sports, among others), the town has an Arts Academy and a Vocational Training Centre. The *concelho*'s economy mainly revolves around the tertiary sector, the commercial sector and tourism and, to a lesser extent, agriculture.

Thanks to its spa and its location on the border (it is one of the partners of Chaves-Verin Eurocity), Chaves has been benefiting from tourism, which is an important development factor especially since the 1950s. In the last decade, there has been a notorious increase of visitors<sup>2</sup> that makes the town the major tourist attraction centre in the interior north of Portugal (PDMC, 2015). Suffice to say that the number of available beds in the *concelho* has been rising from 1,222 in 2009 and 1,333 in 2013 to 1,514 in 2016. In terms of the number of visitors that have been assisted at Chaves Tourist Office, the tendency is also very positive: 6050 visitors were assisted in 2015, and the figure more than doubled in 2017. As to the main reasons for visiting the town, in 2013 visitors specifically mentioned cultural tourism, health and well-being tourism and the food. It should be noted that the number of beds available in Portugal is only higher in larger towns and coastal areas like Porto, Guimarães and Braga (Município de Chaves, 2016; PORDATA, 2016). Besides, the increase of tourism in Chaves

<sup>1</sup> Portuguese territorial unit referring to the municipality.

<sup>2</sup> in this paper, "tourists" and "visitors" are used as synonyms, despite the UN Statistics Commission's distinction from 1983.

is in keeping with the general trend for Portugal; in fact, in recent years the country has been increasingly registering high tourist flows and the thereof ensuing revenues (PORDATA, 2016).

### **3. Urban renewal processes for the Historic Centre**

The candidacy that is being monitored focussed on revitalising the cultural heritage, namely the urban renewal of the Historic Centre. When one mentions the “historic centre”, one does not necessarily mean the geometric centre of the town or city, since they do not grow in a concentric way. The concept of Historic Centre appeared in the 1950s to describe the enhancement of towns’ and cities’ more ancient zones (Santos, 2014) and is permanently being revised (Fernandes, 2010). The Historic Centre is recognised by everybody as the place where the town or city first started, which helps increase its symbolic importance. These spaces are also often called “the ancient part” of town/city, “the medieval quarters” “the old core” or by other similar expressions.

Historic centres take on (or are almost always likely to do so) a major role on how towns/cities work; therefore, they should be attractive to its inhabitants as well as visitors, which fully justifies the need to renew them so that they may enhance the towns/cities they are part of and become a specific resource on which local development depends.

Historically, tourism has played an important role in raising people’s awareness of Historic Centres and consequently in helping enhancing them. New synergies that feed back into each other have been taking place; in other words, local residents are once again interested in the Historic Centres due to the interest shown by visitors in those places, for they gather multiple, attainable as well as unattainable values as a result of their civilisational/historic dimension. This dimension reflects itself in the place, the monuments’ property value, the singular elements of erudite, religious, military architecture, and the value of the whole set of houses and the organics of the urban matrix.

In Chaves Historic Centre specifically, there is a built heritage that leads one in a journey through centuries of History, beginning with the Roman Bridge, dating back from 79 B.C., and extends to the medieval streets and houses, the sixteenth century town walls, the hundred year old churches and the recently inaugurated Nadir Afonso Museum of Contemporary Art, designed by Siza Vieira. Some buildings stand out like the well preserved Roman Healing Spa, which was discovered in the present millennium and is presently being converted into a museum, whose importance makes it comparable to other European big spa complexes, such as Bath, Badenweiler or Hammam Salehine (Carneiro, 2013; Vaz, Martín-Seijo, Carneiro and Tereso, 2016). This Roman monument shows the relevance of all the work that has been done in recent years and which has uncovered the urban layout, structures and objects (some quite unique, in fact) of the old *Aquae Flaviae* town (Carneiro, 2018). As we see it, this process of studying the town’s past, including its Roman origin, done by multidisciplinary teams led by the town’s archaeological group, is also part of the town’s rehabilitation process. That is why Chaves has now a modern Thermal Spa and a recently discovered Roman Healing Spa, both located near the river, but in different places: the thousand year old spa is WITHIN the Historic Centre (about 30 metres away from the Roman bridge); the modern spa is OUTSIDE the Historic Centre, a little further away but also by the river, in a green area.

Through the Plano Integrado de Reabilitação e Revitalização do Centro Histórico de Chaves<sup>3</sup> (PIRRCHC, 1988), an area was formally circumscribed - now referred to as Chaves Historic Centre - according to specific urban management rules, and later included in the town’s Masterplan (PDMC, 1995). As such, since the 1980s, Chaves historic centre has been at the heart of a number of plans and interventions; and although a lot has already been done, there is still much to do, according to the towns’ Masterplan (Quaternaire Portugal, 2012). The Masterplan suggests a few strategies to help and retain and attract residents, especially young people and attract and diversify business, while involving the different stakeholders in the process (Quaternaire Portugal, 2012). Getting all segments of the population to be involved and keeping them satisfied seems to be the right way to face the never-ending

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<sup>3</sup> An Integrated Plan for the rehabilitation and Renewal of Chaves Historic Centre

challenge of revitalising any Historic Centre, as we will see further along (Joffe and Smith, 2016; Węziak-Białowolska, 2016)

It should be pointed out that most of the documents about the Municipality of Chaves that have been looked into, although referring to the Historic Centre, mostly focus on life concepts, cultural heritage, history, preservation and interaction, notions that are extremely relevant in terms of interpreting the results of the present studies. Debate on such concepts as urban renewal, rehabilitation and regeneration has been intense. In this case, urban rehabilitation seems to be especially suitable to the actions that have been centred on Chaves Historic Centre since the 1980s, since this concept goes beyond the mere rehabilitation of cultural heritage, despite its common acceptance as an integrated perspective comprising the restoration of urban and built heritage. However, the sought-after renewal results from the rehabilitation, which accounts for the use of both concepts in the present article.

In fact, the number of plans and actions that have been undertaken in the city suggest the existence of specific policies to stimulate the development of the economic fabric, for instance, by granting residents and local commerce tax benefits. The above mentioned plans and actions are also meant to retain and attract population, by creating the conditions for businesses to stay on the area and ensuring jobs linked to culture, heritage and tourism. The idea is clearly to decentralise urban centres and reach territorial cohesion (Leite, 2010). In this context, as regards Chaves Municipality's strategic options over the last two decades (*see* PDMC, 2015), tourism is considered one of the main bases for developing the town and the region, namely as far as spa and wellness tourism, cultural tourism and gastronomic tourism are concerned, since, despite targeting different people, they are inextricably linked. Hence, the importance of studying and enhancing the built heritage, mostly located in the Historic Centre, which is a symbolic place where the town began and from where it spread.

#### **4. Heritage enhancement, cultural tourism and public participation**

The focus on renewing Historic Centres may indicate different dimensions, of which “heritage enhancement”, “cultural development”, “cultural tourism” and “public participation” are the most frequently used as the basis for regeneration strategies in Historic Centres. As far as cultural tourism is concerned, it was considered as “the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs” by the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 1985). Actually, cultural tourism is a form of longlife learning led by the individuals themselves, who decide about their own destiny according to their educational/cultural interests, other than leisure, rest or relaxation.

Also, natural or cultural heritage is a development factor in terms of tourism and of the regions themselves; in fact, the development of a region must ensure a balance between economic dynamics, preservation of the heritage and respect for the environment, while involving the communities in these processes, giving them an intrinsic responsibility, a feeling of “ownership” over the local heritage. Local heritage does not belong to a single entity but to all and, according to Sureda, Guerra and Castells (2008), it is up to all to look after it. For these authors, interpreting the heritage is an effective way of preserving it that can only work if local communities are involved and if it serves an educational purpose. The municipality is, still according to Sureda, Guerra and Castells (2008), the context where territory, heritage and community can merge.

Urban centres that wish to enhance themselves through investing on cultural tourism know how important it is to listen to public opinion. Cultural heritage should be looked into not only for its historic and cultural value, but also for its economic one, understood herein not as how much an asset is worth, but what it represents both in terms of tourism and the populations' intellectual/cultural knowledge and development. Ever since the beginning of urban reconstruction in post-war Europe, public participation has played a major role and can be seen in the rehabilitation of certain urban centres and historic places in particular (ICOMOS, 1987; Dargan, 2009; Koorosh, Sza and Ahad (2015). This is an important field of research but more studies are necessary, especially on the impacts of enhancing cultural heritage and in several dimensions (*e.g.* environmentally, economically, culturally) as posited by Mäntysalo and Schmidt-Thomé (2008) or Della Torre (2010). As a matter-of-fact, studies on this subject are few and far between, compared to studies on cultural industries and

services and the research that is done does not fully grasp the impacts of enhancing cultural heritage on regional development. Results of some studies, however, have shown that an urban regeneration process is more likely to be consistent if it takes into account the different stakeholders' views on cultural heritage (Bakri, Ibrahim, Ahmad, and Zaman, 2015). And others point out that cultural tourism, which often focuses on built heritage, must be developed according to stakeholders' perspectives. (Jung, Lee, Yap and Ineson, 2015).

In this respect, one can say that the research underlying this paper, due to the goals it had and the methodological approach it followed, took on a public consultation feature, albeit of a low-spectrum (corresponding to level 4 of the Arstein scale, 1969; Gershman, 2013). As a matter-of-fact different segments of the population were heard on the subject of cultural heritage enhancement, which resulted in contrasting views: the ones from "inside" and the ones from "outside". Of the multiple stakeholders active in town, residents, visitors and young students were considered the most likely segments to be heard in these circumstances, as belonging to sub-sets of agents responsible for developing and transmitting cultures. In other words, the balanced enhancement of Historic Centres cannot ignore those who use it or may do it in the near future, because they are the ones who have the best insights on the potential of the place. Therefore, in any urban rehabilitation context, public consultation processes, inescapable as they are (Wood, 2002), will only gain if specific segments of the population are included, such as tourists and younger people; tourists for their almost direct influence on heritage enhancement options; the youths, because the future will be built with and for them, whether they are part of the processes in which formal and non-formal education is definitely instrumental or not. Besides, the young people's views have been the object of many a theoretical perspectives, influencing several studies which seek to understand the dynamics of youth socio-educational processes in boarder areas of Portugal (Silva and Silva, 2015). In some studies, listening to students (who are mostly young) is particularly valuable in the context of historic sites conservation (Halu and Küçükaya, 2016). A study on young visitors' perceptions regarding heritage buildings has shown that the majority of youths valued events taking place in historic sites (the presence of shopping centres, for instance) more than the heritage, suggesting that these results might be used to help and develop those areas (Ismail and Nadarajah, 2016). The more actively one tries to commit young people to change the places they attend the easier it will be to reach a wider topophilia which, in turn, will motivate them to get involved in preserving their quality of life, their heritage and ways. That is, the argument here is that the acceptance and success of a sustainable Historic Centre depends on how social expectancies are understood and on the correct application of governance principles, listening to all parts involved, especially young and not so young residents (Scheffler and Calvanus, 2010).

Earlier, the authors presented the results of studies which departed from the articulation of both visitors' and educational communities' viewpoints, contributing with some suggestions (Costa, Joukes, Diniz, Cantante, 2016). The present article focuses on some of the results of monitoring studies that were conducted about the impacts of heritage enhancement, highlighting residents', visitors' and students' perspectives on how to enhance one's cultural heritage. It also tries to gather suggestions for the future and different views on the limits and value of the heritage – as well as of the spaces – that are being enhanced. Finally, it was the authors' goal to understand and be able to make some conclusions of what role investments on heritage enhancement play on local development and their relevance, according to these stakeholders

## **5. Methodological approach**

The research favoured a multi-method approach, resorting to techniques that complement each other, based on the assumption that there cannot be only a quantitative perspective, neither can it be the most relevant one, if one is to understand social phenomena (Velasco and Rada, 1997; Costa, 2006; Dencker, 2007). The present research was divided into sub-studies, targeting residents, visitors and the educational community (students and teachers, although the present article does not refer to the teachers study).

Questionnaires were applied to 114 residents, 209 visitors and 58 students – totaling 381 questionnaires. Close-questions were subject to statistical analysis (SPSS). Since

questionnaires included some open-questions, these underwent a content analysis. Initially, analysis of the questionnaires applied to each group was treated as an independent study. The study targeting the students was extended, by applying semi-structured interviews to 41 students; these interviews were later subject to content analysis (Bardin, 2009; Esteves, 2006), using NVIVO software. As regards methodology, it is important to note that the initial research project did not contemplate building focal groups. Yet, when questionnaires and interviews to students were being analysed, this data gathering technique proved very useful and so focus groups with students were created. This reinforces the role of data triangulation in result discussion; when one is doing research within human and social sciences, complementarity and the comparing and contrasting of data are more important than generalisation, that can be so questionable. In these studies, researchers were not held hostage of the initial research plan, and so they resorted to another technique that was not originally planned (focus group) when it proved to be helpful. This description about the methodological procedures would not be complete if no mention were made of the contribution of exploratory studies, observations and informal talks inspired by ethnographic methodology and previously carried out by members of the research group (Costa, 2009). Besides adding other components like field work, consultation and direct observation to the research *continuum*, these exploratory studies subsequently helped researchers make decisions as regards methodology, including drawing up the interview scripts.

This article does not focus on details pertaining to results obtained from residents', visitors' and students' analysis but rather does a comparative and integrating overview of these three groups' answers, by triangulating data in an attempt to get an overall view of similar aspects, while highlighting meaningful differences. Finally, some suggestions are made as a contribution to promotional and developmental strategies for both the town and the region, taking into consideration cultural heritage enhancement and making the Historic Centre become a leading space within Chaves global strategy.

## **6. Some findings and comparisons: similarities and differences**

The conclusion of this article highlights some of the most striking similarities and differences found among the perceptions of the three segments of the population that were interviewed; it also looks into those more likely to help establish the basis for specific policies leading to the enhancement of Chaves Historic Centre.

The most obvious similarity is that, not unlike residents and students, visitors tend to have the same feeling about the Historic Centre and almost always in a positive direction. The main aspects these three groups agree on are: the most emblematic sites of the Historic Centre; the fact that the Historic Centre is a good place to go for a walk; their favouring of the historical and architectural heritage; the fact that they are not aware (or do not give much importance to) of some of the rehabilitation interventions that have been made, which are not so much under the spotlight (the deployment of optical fibre, urban furniture); the importance of safety; the opinion that the Historic Centre is a tourist site that has the enormous potential of attracting visitors and develop the town.

The similarities that have just been listed are not absolute, but rather have some nuances worth highlighting. It is clear that although all the groups that have been looked into have a positive image of Chaves Historic Centre and clearly think of it as a good place "to go for a walk", full of "tourist interest", the reasons why they choose to visit it differ: residents go there for multiple reasons (shopping, taking care of administrative businesses, going for a walk, having a meal,...); students see it as a place to hang out with friends and go out at night (they walk through it to get to their favourite pub)); as for visitors, they enjoy looking at built heritage and the food. And here is the first indicator that the centre must remain multifunctional.

As regards built heritage, as expected, quantitative data leave no doubt: some historic buildings are better known and more visited than others. In Chaves, the *Torre de Menagem* (the Tower House or the castle, as it is usually called) was by far the most referred to. Therefore, it can be included in various thematic itineraries, and used as a symbol of the town. Based on this indicator, it is possible to look for ways of making the symbolic power of Chaves "Castle" profitable. Since built heritage in general is appreciated by residents, visitors

and students, the effort to preserve and rehabilitate it must be continuous and any initiative related to it, like cultural tourism, must be prioritised

The Roman Healing Spa is known by almost all the residents and students and by some of the visitors; among those who knew of the existence of this important archaeological complex, everyone without exception say it is extremely valuable in many respects. In fact, opinions are unanimous when it comes to the importance of turning the Roman Healing Spa into a museum (that is currently under way), ascribing it an important, even transforming role within the town's developmental strategy. However, they criticize the little information available on this project and the fact that archaeological studies and the construction work (still going on) to house the Roman Healing Spa is taking too long.

Less visible interventions (optic fibre deployment, historic balconies requalification, urban furniture ...), with the purpose of improving people's quality of life and visual impact go almost unnoticed. Hence, the suggestion that these improvements be signaled by means of information signs, accompanied by photos of what it was "before" and it has become "after".

Next, some of the discrepancies between students', residents' and visitors' perceptions will be presented.

Most residents and students are familiar with more impacting interventions – like rebuilding part of the sixteenth century Wall, pedestrianisation of the Roman Bridge, and modernisation of the main shopping streets – unlike most of the visitors who are not aware of them.

Another of the few topics which significantly differed from group to group was the concern over safety: while visitors stated they feel safe in the Historic Centre, residents expressed somewhat different opinions, although it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what their concerns are about; surprisingly, most students confessed that they do not feel very safe in the Historic Centre, especially at night, because of what they call "night excesses". These results indicate there is more to the safety issue than meets the eye, which calls for more studies about the subject.

However, it is about the limits of the Historic Centre that opinions differ the most, which implies some deeper thought about what places are identified as fitting the description of Historic Centre. The official limits are indicated in Figure 1, marked in red (Quatenaire, 2012), whereas Figure 2 represents students' visitors' and the population's views on how far the Historic Centre goes, according to what they expressed in the questionnaires, and also to the analysis of the interviews and the focus-group with students.

The three groups agree that the Historic Centre is composed of the old streets that converge in the Northeast with the area of the most monumental built heritage (including the main churches and the Tower House), and in the Southwest with a square (where the Roman Healing Spa is located) that leads to the Roman Bridge. More "peripheral", less ancient zones of the officially established Historic Centre are not considered by any of the groups as being part of it. Nevertheless, residents seem to be nearer the official notion of Historic Centre, since they include in the central nucleus described above a sixteenth century fort (São Francisco Fort).

As regards visitors and students, some "deviations" were observed that are worth reflecting on. By looking at Figure 2, it is possible to conclude that students and visitors include the green areas on both banks of River Tâmega (where the present spa is located) in Chaves Historic/symbolic Centre. These green areas have just been regenerated through the POLIS Programme European funds (a programme that was designed to increase urban centres' attractiveness and competitiveness by promoting interventions of an urban and environmental nature in order to improve quality of life in towns; it was implemented in Chaves from 2002 to 2008). The above mentioned "deviations" allow one to assume that what visitors and students perceive as the town's Historic Centre does not coincide with the official definition. That is, for both students and visitors, the Historic Centre is wider and consists of heritage of another nature, because, besides the older parts of town, it includes the river, whose banks that are appreciated and have been reconfigured, invite one to enjoy green spaces in a sequential and integrated way along with the traditional spaces in the Historic Centre. It should be noted that as regards students, the interviews and the focus group reinforced the notion of continuity (both discursive and conceptual) between the ancient houses and the renewed nature, connecting this (widened and transformed) Historic Centre






with its life experiences and its perception as a socialization locus (Costa, Joukes, Dinis and Cantante, 2016).

**Figure 1 – Orthophoto representing the official delimitation of Chaves Historic Centre (marked in red)**



Source: PIRRCHC, 1988.

**Figure 2 – Perceptions on the Historic Centre (according to residents, visitors and students).**

		
Residents' perceptions on the Historic Centre	Visitors' perceptions on the Historic Centre	Students' perceptions on the Historic Centre

This also confirms what was discussed in the theoretical section of this article, namely that a town's "centre of gravity" may continue to change, after having been assigned new functions as a result of revitalisation projects, for instance.

This evolution in how Chaves significant areas are perceived means that promoting the town is much more than promoting only its Historic Centre; people want to roam the old streets, but they also want to enjoy the green, airy spaces along the river. Apparently, in this town, History easily mingles with the built heritage and nature. This combination may be seen as an enough differentiating factor to be held into account in future initiatives that wish to think and promote the town and the region. Indirectly, it shows that some of the regeneration projects that have been carried out have succeeded (in this particular case, the POLIS Programme), since they are spontaneously appreciated by visitors and students. Future strategic plans to promote tourism activities cannot ignore these new realities and must include itineraries that contemplate places other than the traditional Historic Centre.

Another aspect worthy of further reflection is the fact that the groups that were consulted seem to believe in the potential of increasing tourist activity in Chaves Historic Centre. According to them, The Historic Centre has a significant built heritage and a "lot of life" in it (residents, business, firms, public/administrative services, schools), therefore, increasing tourism should be done in much the same way as referred to in other studies all over the world, because turning the Historic Centre into a tourist attraction may prove itself to be a good idea. The challenge consists of finding sustainable, responsible and little invasive ways to do it, in order to avoid negative impacts on the residing population. (Gilbert and Clark, 1997).

If these criteria are met with, there is social support for a candidacy of the whole of Chaves Historic Centre to World Heritage, focusing on the Roman Spa (networking with other European Roman Spas as it has also been suggested).

All the results that have been mentioned and commented on may be looked at as a strong argument for investing in the town's heritage enhancement, combining the historic built heritage with natural heritage. In other words, these results prove that Chaves Historic Centre and the whole process of heritage enhancement that has been planned (and somewhat put into practice, depending on certain specific circumstances) through diversified resources (human, financial, public, private, plans, initiatives) meets with the approval of important segments of the population and visitors.

## **7. Suggestions: six guidelines to revitalise the Historic Centre**

As a contribution to outline strategies to revitalise the Historic Centre, we would like to suggest six guidelines on which to work. Options must second and reinforce the proposals contained in other strategic documents like the recently adopted Masterplan for Chaves Historic Centre. Besides, the definition of Historic Centre as appears in that document is supported by the findings of these studies, insofar as all the participants seem to favour “an Historic Centre whose heritage is duly valued, rehabilitated and renewed, based on economic and socially and culturally innovative dynamics that are capable of assuming an urban, tertiary, and cultural centrality in the context of “Chaves-Verín Eurocity” (Quatenaire Portugal, 2012).

Guideline 1 – Multifunctionality of the Historic Centre – So far the Historic Centre has been offering a set of services and functions (which are very appreciated, shown by the reasons why people choose to go there); therefore, it makes all the sense to keep this mixed use of the place. Furthermore, other study-cases involving other towns with a Historic Centre show that multifunctional Historic Centers attract a large diversity of residents, visitors, business people, etc. In this case, we would like to stress the notion that the Historic Centre must be promoted along with recreational areas on the banks of River Tâmega, since it all points to their being considered by many of the users as loci of life experience, whose perception and enjoyment represent a geographical, symbolic, and urban and historical continuum, with all the symbolism that it entails.

Guideline 2 – Defining target audiences in tourism – Identifying target audiences of the tourism market one wishes to attract. A set of more traditional options was formulated, based on the results of the questionnaires: cultural tourism, food tourism. To these we add some less obvious types of tourism, such as educational tourism *latu sensu*, archaeotourism, sustainable tourism, senior tourism and nature tourism regarding which it is easy to create joint packages because they explore complementary markets. Actually, archaeotourism is amply justified by ongoing archaeological studies around the Roman Healing Spa, especially if done in a networking perspective with all Roman Spas in Europe or around the Mediterranean Basin.

Guideline 3 – Innovation – The possibility to adopt a differentiating strategy based on innovative perspectives, establishing itself as a “pioneer” town in a given domain (not necessarily in a typically tourist area like lean urbanism, fabrication laboratories, innovation hubs). It entails clarifying the target audience as well as political options.

Guideline 4 – Heritage Enhancement – The heritage as a whole was much appreciated by the people who were interviewed and, as such, it is a catalyst in the Historic Centre, deserving special attention. The study, preservation and enhancement of the heritage are instrumental to achieve the hitherto proposed goals.

Guideline 5 – Training and Dissemination of Information– There is not much one can do in Historic Centers without citizen participation. That involves training and dissemination of knowledge/information, establishing the basis for good, effective communication. All parties must be constantly heard, according to current governance principles.

Guideline 6 – Transversal, structuring principles – Decision-making on subjects that are directly linked with the Historic Centre and how its heritage must be used for tourist purposes must obey transversal, broad spectrum, and structuring principles. Any intervention to increase the quality of services, the general outlook of the town and quality of life, *tout court*, within the Historic Centre will simultaneously serve both the local population and the visitors. Anticipating that the number of visitors will considerably increase after the opening of the Roman Spa Museum, it is important to start thinking ahead on terms of long-term urban planning in tourism destinations (García-Ayllón, 2015), for instance, how to manage and monitor tourist flows, to allow likely adjustments to the goals that have been defined, thus avoiding eventual difficulties. It is also relevant to value partnerships in an effort to make the Historic Centre more resilient. Working on all these subjects is consistent with the concepts of sustainability and social accountability.

## **Final remarks: generalising from this particular case study**

The main purpose of this article was sharing the results of some monitoring studies on the impacts of cultural heritage enhancement on specific segments of the population which, due

to their goals and methodological approach, may be deemed public participation tools. A thorough consultation of several stakeholders provided reliable basis for drawing up future strategies to revive and promote the historic centre, the town and the region in ways that explicitly respect the inputs of the consulted groups.

Some of the decisions that were taken in Chaves might serve as an inspiration to other medium sized towns all over the world, with a rich architectural heritage in their Historic Centre and a history of rehabilitation projects. Their city councils might understand that it is worthwhile considering elements of public participation processes in their monitoring and planning procedures. Through this research, we consider that it is a valid option to consult a rather original composition of the stakeholders – namely residents, students and visitors – about the future of the local heritage and its presence in revitalization projects which not only pretend to charm endogenous local residents but also exogenous visitors. That is, the research methodology used for this case study can be repeated elsewhere in similar cases, with the necessary adjustments.

Somehow surprising outcomes of this research were the similarity in responses by the three segments of the population, on one hand, and the diversity of suggestions offered by the students on the other. All the quantitative and qualitative data that were obtained, then, led to the development of six guidelines for the revitalization process of the Historic Centre which will also characterize future promotion and development strategies for the town. In other words, the opinions of actors crowding the Historic Town Centre were the starting point of this exercise. Of course, these guidelines will be unique for each destination. The multi-products to be formulated for other contexts will certainly not copy the multiproduct Chaves is perfecting: a mix of cultural tourism, thermal tourism, nature tourism and, even, archaeotourism and edu-tourism.

Future studies might also want to focus on a combined quantitative and qualitative methodology, since, in the course of this research, interviews with smaller groups provided details and even concrete suggestions which might be easily and efficiently integrated in future strategic plans.

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