

ICOA1698: SUSTAINABLE AND PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE HISTORICAL CENTER OF LEON-NICARAGUA

Subtheme 01: Integrating Heritage and Sustainable Urban Development by engaging diverse Communities for Heritage Management

Session 2: Management, Documentation

Location: Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre

Time: December 13, 2017, 12:00 – 12:15

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Abstract: With the aim of heritage protection, it is necessary to integrate strategies of conservation, management and appreciation of the material and immaterial heritage of historic cities in the local development processes. Conservation policies with the broader scope of sustainable development are promoted; furthermore, active participation strategies of local stakeholders that generate citizenship approval are being implemented. The overall objective of the project implemented in León (Nicaragua) is to improve the local governance by defining an integral and sustainable system of local development policies that facilitate multi-stakeholder cooperation and foster the inclusion of the civil society's interests in the urban management processes and heritage protection. The partnership is including the Italian municipalities of Florence and Pontedera, International NGOs (Medina), Universities (School of Architecture of Firenze and National Autonomous University of Nicaragua), and Government Institutions (Instituto Nacional de Cultura Nicaraguense). The partnership is engaged with the aim of enhancement of the capabilities of the municipality of Leon. The project includes the definition of participatory urban planning and management tools (Local Cultural Heritage Areas Plan and Recovery of Nodal Areas Plan) that allow the physical and functional revitalization of the historic urban centre, and promote greater equity and transparency in the decision-making and the redistribution of public finances. The objective is achieved through technical, scientific and institutional activities and it is implemented by relevant citizen participation. At the current stage of the project, the Plan of Cultural Heritage Area has been produced. The Plan is the result of a participatory diagnostic of the historical city centre that validated the initial proposals. Furthermore, it is completed with technical implementation rules, participatory survey, courses on the contents of the plan proposal, international seminars on others UNESCO heritage sites, training courses for citizens, administrators, technicians, and public employees.

Key words: *community, stakeholder, development, equity, participation*

Context

The city of León is going through a crucial phase of transformation nowadays. The recent inclusion (2011) of the Cathedral in the UNESCO's World Heritage Sites list has strengthened an already existing growth of tourism flow, hence giving rise to a structural change in the socio-economic system of the urban centre. This transformation, along with other economic and cultural factors, is producing social and spatial imbalances that in the near future could cause conflicts within the urban community and between citizens and institutions. This is because it is often difficult to reach the right balance between the economic benefit brought about and the unwanted effects, which entails a sudden change in the socio-economic structure of a city.

The urban planning discipline, when it becomes a government act, i.e. a planning tool, has precise responsibilities when it concerns mitigating social and spatial inequalities and conflicts, and the city 'project' should be one of the starting points of any public policy that seeks to cut them out, or at least to alleviate them. Planning accurately, or not planning at all, has considerable consequences even in inclusion processes or, on the contrary, exclusion of population groups from the urban community. This is particularly true for a city that finds itself in the difficult task of carrying out policies and mechanisms in order to protect and enhance its historical and architectural heritage that adequately respond to UNESCO recommendations and are able to regulate existing tensions between more or less rigid physical structures and mutable socioeconomic and cultural realities. In the technical document that goes with the statement, UNESCO suggests among others, the establishment of a Management Plan of the Cathedral and the 27 blocks that constitute its protection area, involving all interested public and private participants; the implementation of the Local Development Plan; the harmonious management of all the city's historic and architectural sites; the mitigation of social and territorial conflicts between residents and historic centre's beneficiaries. In order to comply with such recommendations, León's city hall approved the 'Municipal Planning and Territorial Development Plan' (PMDT), for the 2013-2023 period. The PMDT, drafted with the technical collaboration of Associazione Medina, assumes, among its priority axes of intervention, the revitalization and safeguard of the historic centre through marking a new perimeter of the heritage district (widening its area compared to the old Plans) and a new regulatory and design structure that tends to rebalance the city and to limit the residential emptying phenomenon of León's centre. PMDT also has provided for the arrangement of specific tools meant for participatory management of different areas, rules on the cadastral income, public-private agreements, and recovery plans.

Objectives

In order to promote heritage protection, it is essential to combine preservation, management and planning strategies of homogeneous historical urban fabrics, and integrate them into local development and urban planning processes, articulating and organizing heritage conservation plans of action to broader goals regarding sustainable development, and generating approval among citizens and other involved participants. The management of a rapidly growing tourism industry requires transparent and long term policies, as well as an enduring dialogue between all stakeholders, and a constant supervision of the changes and transformations that will eventually occur on the territory and its resources. That is why the project's overall objective has been to improve local governance in León, by defining a whole and sustainable system of local development public policies that are able to facilitate and encourage a multi-

party collaboration, and promote the inclusion of civil society interests into the urban management processes.



Fig.1- León, Cathedral (<http://www.mattpazar.com/>).

Before getting to the description of the carried out activities and the achieved results, further thought should be given to the more general contribution that planning processes aimed at preservation and enhancement of material and immaterial assets, when they are accomplished through a concretely participatory method which brings the city management- and the goods and assets contained therein- to citizens and their delegations, can give to the real democratization of the territory government and its settled communities. It should be considered, in this regard, that any fixed asset, regardless of its material property (whether public or private), constitutes a “collective good” and, in this sense, the heritage of citizens, of all citizens. Restrictions on the use or transformation of a fixed asset (which are now being enforced by legislation throughout the world, although with alternately effective), are aimed at preserving the very value of such assets, at making it available to the community, at keeping it and handing it down to future generations. To bring therefore the survey processes first, and then the decision ones, closer to citizens, and to lead the very citizens to a higher level of knowledge and awareness on these issues is the purpose of this project and it is, at the same time, a significant step towards democratization of management of the city and its heritage. In the light of what we have so far described, during the project's implementation (from its analysis to the Plan proposal), a constant and tangible involvement of the citizens has been carried out. Together with them, through participatory GIS methodologies, fact-finding investigations were accomplished and strategic approaches regarding the proposal were discussed; and still with them, we validated the Plan before it was approved by the City Council.

Activities and results

The achievement of the *Plan Sectorial de la Zona de Patrimonio Cultural de León* is the outcome of a long process of studying, analyzing and taking a deeper look into both technical and participative topics. The Plan begins with the creation of the technical-participatory Diagnostics, or rather an analytical summary of the collected data, whether updated or made from scratch. In particular, pre-existing sectorial studies, current regulatory instruments, and good practices concerning the management of high patrimonial value historic centres have all been collected and classified in order to provide the basis for the next planning phases. The UNAN-León, a project partner, has carried out a sectorial study on heritage tourism management in the city of León, examining the relationship between tourism flows and citizens' standard of living, the quality of the provided services and, the impact of tourism on heritage safeguard. The team, made up of technicians from León's Municipality, experts provided by



Fig.2– León, Sutiaba Church (authors)

Associazione Medina and the Pontedera Municipality, and international consultants, has conducted the survey of 10,541 lots that make up the *Zona de Patrimonio Cultural* (the historic centre), by analysing data related to land use, the physical state of buildings and the neighbouring areas, public spaces and infrastructural networks. An additional activity was implemented by updating and sorting the information regarding the tangible and intangible assets in previous studies and catalogues, gathering them in records and data repositories approved by the *Instituto Nicaraguense de Cultura* (Nicaraguan Institute of Culture-INC). The high value assets' list consists of 215 sites and 57 intangible assets. Thanks to the collaboration of the Department of Architecture of the University of Florence, furthermore, a thorough analysis was carried out concerning the church of San Juan Bautista of Sutiaba, which is the main monument of the indigenous neighbourhood incorporated into the city. The study was accomplished in several stages, consisting of the complete historical research of interviews with residents, geometric survey of the building, material and degradation survey, structural test conducted by means of a static and dynamic

analysis based on tri dimensional numerical models, in addition to an architectural restoration and consolidation project, created also in order to increase and improve the monument's anti-seismic ability. Even in this case, especially during the first phases of the work, the involvement of institutions and of the district inhabitants was essential.

One of the project's key features, as mentioned above was the multi-level participation on which it was based. There were many institutional and inter-institutional working and exchange stations, as well as involvement workshops attended by a total of 270 people, who were selected – through a previous cooperation with associations, cultural organizations and public offices – according to group of interests and both collective and individual representation abilities. Two rounds of meetings were implemented for each of the four areas in which the historic centre has been divided into, and for a final validation table of the technical-participatory diagnostics. In the planning stage, a round of three plenary planning meetings was set up. The participatory process was of great relevance since it allowed, on the one hand to carry on the awareness raising project on issues such as heritage, relationship with tourism, mobility and habitat and, on the other hand, to bring a great deal of information that only someone who lives in a given area of the city can know.

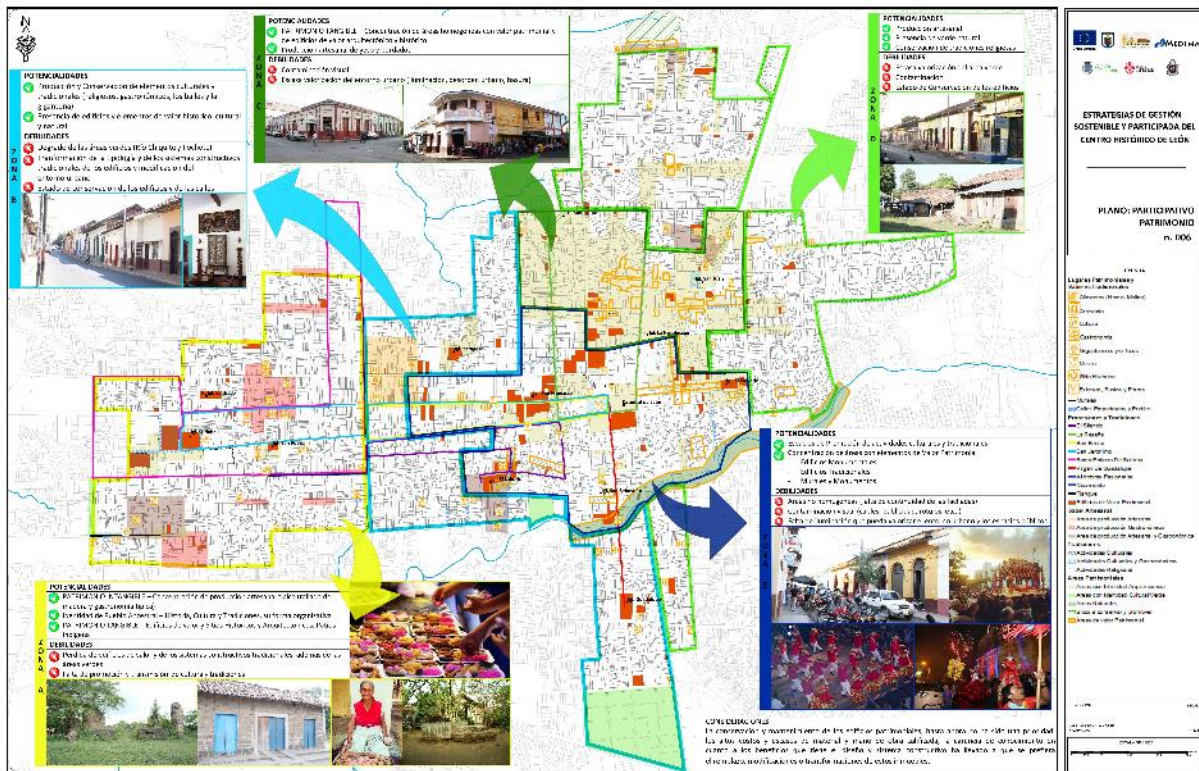


Fig.3– León, map result of the participatory taller (authors)

Another prominent factor was the adoption of a Geographic Information System (GIS) that has made it possible to establish a database where all the information is georeferenced and that, right after the diagnostic was approved by the City Council, has started to be used in the municipality's day-to-day work and it is available to institutions that need it. Based on the diagnostic model, SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) was developed, from which the Plan strategies, programs and

projects have arisen. The regulatory part has been achieved with the INC's close cooperation, an entity that, together with the municipality, has the task of protecting and preserving the cultural heritage. The regulation determines public and private actors' roles and competences, the procedures of intervention in lots and buildings, the types of action allowed depending on the area and on every single classified and listed building, interventions on the urban environment and on the colour, and the standards that regulate advertising or the use of eco sustainable technologies, urban green, public spaces, traffic, wiring and risk management. Moreover, plan implementation tools are established.

The *Plan Sectorial de la Zona de Patrimonio Cultural de León* has been approved by the City Council on July 17th this year, and it will be fully operational by January 2018. The Management Plans of two essential city areas, in the work's final stage, were created: the area including the 27 blocks labelled as the protection zone of León's Cathedral and the Spanish foundation nucleus in the indigenous district of Sutiaba, which has been identified by the Church as the emblem of cultural fusion between native Indigenous people and Spanish colonizers, a process that took place since the seventeen century. The Management Plans, also achieved with the support of interest groups, citizens and organizations, represent new intervention tools for the administration and enhancement of historic, cultural and environmental heritage, hence guiding the implementation of specific projects that let the assets and their urban environment to be protected, given value to and promoted.

The project, during its development, has made use of the good practices presented, on the occasion of the first 'International Conference on world heritage cities', by the delegations of La Habana, Quito, Antigua Guatemala and Florence. In this context it was possible to undertake a stimulating reflection on the possible solutions to be taken in the processes of preservation and enhancement of high artistic and cultural value cities, which are subject to remarkable, and sometimes invasive tourist flows.

The achievement of the results has been accomplished thanks to the constant technical support given to the team by international experts in urban and GIS-participative planning, and because of a series of trainings and awareness raising meetings carried out by international experts qualified in restoration and



Fig.4– León city oldest houses (authors)

conservation of the heritage, land register, urban and GIS-participative planning for municipal technicians, institutions, university and political representatives.

The tangible results, in short, have come to fruition in the definition of the *Plan Sectorial de la Zona de Patrimonio Cultural de León*, obtained from the dialogue between institutions and civil society, in order to ensure a balanced development of the city's physical, functional and socioeconomic components, and the strengthening of technical and administrative capabilities of León's municipality. Likewise, the implementation of two Management Plans containing the guidelines and specific intervention projects that are essential for the improvement of two areas of interest, which constitute two different and specific poles within the very urban reality (“Cathedral Area” and “Sutiaba Indigenous Area”); and lastly, the transfer and exchange of North-South expertise between the partners network and associates both at local and international level.

However, the best achievement that could contribute to a sustainable city's development has been the process of consultation and involvement between local and national organizations and civil society that has led to a widespread awareness over the importance of preserving the historical, artistic and traditional background for the social and cultural cohesion concerning León's community.



Fig.5– León, the traditional gigantona carnival (INTUR)

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List of Figures

- León, Cathedral (http://www.mattpazar.com/).	3
- León, Sutiaba Church (authors)	4
- León, map result of the participatory taller (authors)	5
- León, city oldest houses (authors)	6
- León, the traditional gigantona carnival (INTUR)	7

ICOA1698: STRATÉGIES DE GESTION DURABLE ET PARTICIPATIVE POUR LE CENTRE HISTORIQUE DE LEÓN-NICARAGUA

Sous-thème 01: Intégrer le patrimoine et le développement urbain durable en engageant Diverses communautés pour la gestion du patrimoine

Session 2: Le management, documentation

Lieu: Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre

Date et heure: 13 Décembre, 2017, 12:00 – 12:15

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Michele Paradiso est architecte, professeur associé enseignant la résistance des matériaux à l'Université degli Studi de Florence. Depuis plus de 40 ans, il étudie les structures historiques, leur comportement et la réhabilitation structurelle non-invasive du patrimoine bâti. Ses domaines de recherche spécifiques sont l'analyse des principes de stabilité des arcs de maçonnerie, voûtes et dômes, des édifices en terre crue et des structures en bambou. Le Professeur Paradiso est consultant dans des programmes de coopération de développement humanitaire tels que UNDP/UN et diverses ONG, œuvrant en coopération en Amérique latine. En outre, il est membre d'ICOMOS-Cuba et des Comités scientifiques de l'ICOMOS IcoFort et Iscarsah (expert).

Résumé: En vue de la protection du patrimoine, il est nécessaire d'intégrer les stratégies de conservation, de gestion et d'évaluation du patrimoine matériel et immatériel des villes historiques dans le processus de développement local. Les politiques de conservation dans une perspective de développement durable la plus large sont promues; en outre, les stratégies de participation active des intervenants locaux qui suscitent l'approbation des citoyens sont mises en œuvre.

Le principal objectif du projet mis en place à León (Nicaragua) vise à l'amélioration de la gestion locale en définissant un système intégral et durable de politiques de développement local, facilitant ainsi la coopération d'intervenants multiples et favorisant l'intégration des intérêts de la société civile dans les processus de gestion urbaine et de protection du patrimoine. Un partenariat inclut les municipalités italiennes de Florence et Pontedera, des ONG internationales (Médine), des Universités (Ecole d'Architecture de Florence et Université nationale autonome du Nicaragua) et des institutions gouvernementales (Institut national de culture nicaraguayenne). Son but est l'amélioration des capacités de la municipalité de León. Le projet inclut la définition d'un plan d'urbanisme participatif et d'outils de gestion (plan des zones de patrimoine culturel local et plan de valorisation des zones sensibles) qui permettent la revitalisation physique et fonctionnelle du centre urbain historique et favorisent une équité et une transparence plus grande dans la prise de décision et la répartition des finances publiques. Cet objectif est atteint grâce à des activités techniques, scientifiques et institutionnelles, et mis en œuvre avec une participation citoyenne concernée.

Au stade actuel du projet, le Plan de la zone de patrimoine culturel a été réalisé. C'est le résultat d'un diagnostic participatif du centre urbain historique, qui a validé les propositions initiales. En outre, il est complété par des règles techniques de mise en œuvre, l'enquête participative, des cours sur le contenu du plan proposé, des séminaires sur d'autres sites figurant sur la Liste UNESCO du patrimoine mondial, des stages de formation pour les citoyens, les administrateurs, les techniciens et les fonctionnaires.

Mots-clés: communauté, intervenant, équité, participation