

TOURISM REFUNCTIONALIZATION OF THE HISTORICAL CENTER IN OLD HAVANA

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Abstract

This paper deals with tourism refunctionalization in the Old Town in Havana, which was marked by two fundamental events: the City Center (Old Havana) and its Fortification System were declared World Cultural Heritage sites by the UNESCO in 1982, a fact that bestowed international visibility to the architectural ensemble, and the government decision on cultural tourism development in this area from 1993 on, thus, making these historical sites attractive for commercialization and aggravating socio-spatial contradictions. The study, which comprised a literature review, documentary research and an analysis of empirical results, aimed at evaluating the renewal of urban landscape, displacement of a part of the low-income population, arrival of the Cuban middle class and revaluation of housing, albeit informal. These facts highlight that there is a growing gentrification process taking place in the Historical Center of Old Havana.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Tourism Refunctionalization, Historical Center, Old Havana.

Resumo / Resumen

REFUNCIONALIZAÇÃO DO TURISMO DO CENTRO HISTÓRICO DA ANTIGA HAVANA

Este artigo trata da refuncionalização turística do Centro Histórico de Havana Velha, marcada por dois eventos fundamentais: a declaratória do Centro e do sistema defensivo da cidade a Patrimônio Cultural da Humanidade (UNESCO), em 1982, que conferiu visibilidade internacional ao conjunto e, a decisão governamental de desenvolver o turismo cultural nesta área, a partir de 1993, tornando a zona histórica atrativa para a comercialização, agudizando as contradições socioespaciais. Por meio de revisão bibliográfica, de pesquisa documental e de análise de resultados empíricos, avaliamos a renovação da paisagem urbana, os deslocamentos de uma parte da população de baixa renda, a chegada das classes médias cubanas e a revalorização, mesmo que informal, das moradias. Esses fatos apontam a existência de um processo de gentrificação emergente no Centro Histórico de Havana Velha.

Palavras-chave: Patrimônio Cultural; Refuncionalização Turística; Centro Histórico; Havana Velha.

REFUNCIONALIZACIÓN DEL TURISMO EN EL CENTRO HISTÓRICO DE LA VIEJA HABANA

Este artículo aborda la refuncionalización turística del Centro Histórico de la Habana marcada por dos eventos fundamentales: la declaratoria del Centro y del sistema defensivo de la ciudad como Patrimonio Cultural de la Humanidad (UNESCO), en 1982, hecho que le otorgó visibilidad internacional al conjunto y, la decisión gubernamental de desarrollar el turismo cultural en esta área, a partir de 1993, potenciando la atraktividad de la zona histórica para su comercialización, hecho que agudizó las contradicciones socioespaciales. En este artículo, por medio de revisión bibliográfica, de investigación documental y del análisis de resultados empíricos, evaluamos la renovación del paisaje urbano, los desplazamientos de una parte de la población de menores ingresos, la llegada de la clase media cubana y la revalorización, incluso cuando es informal, del precio de las casas. Hechos que señalan la existencia de un proceso de gentrificación emergente en el Centro Histórico de la Habana Vieja.

Palabras-clave: Patrimonio Cultural, Refuncionalización turística, Centro Histórico, Habana Vieja.

INTRODUCCION

Touristification of some historical centers in Latin America has been related to the fact that they were designated World Cultural Heritage sites by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It has highlighted the relation between world heritage and tourism as an integrated logic of visibility and consumption of those places. UNESCO's declaration ensures international notoriety to sites, aggregates economic value to assets and attracts both investments and tourists; it happened to Latin-American cities which have World Cultural Heritage sites (DELGADILLO, 2015).

This paper analyses the Historical Center in Old Havana, an area with several historical buildings, a fortification system from the colonial period and many public spaces which were designated UNESCO World Cultural Heritage sites in 1982.

Cuba, a socialist republic which has been under the USA commercial embargo since 1958, has implemented restructuring processes of urban space to adapt the central area in Havana to international tourism, a contradictory process of appropriation and use of urban space in the Latin-American context.

Results were based on a literature review on tourism, cultural heritage and gentrification mainly produced by Latin-American authors, documentary research on the recovery of the Historical Center in Old Havana and tourism in the area between 1990 and 2018 (maps and photographs provided by Proyectos RESTAURA, 2017), sites available at the Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad - Emisora Habana Radio, Habaguanex S.A, Revista Opus Habana, the Plan Maestro (2004; 2006; 2016), laws on urban regulations of the Historical Center and the Plan Especial de Desarrollo Integral 2030 (2016), Cuban statistical annuals – issued by the Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas (ONE) –, which refer to international tourism in Cuba from 1990 to 2015 and from 2015 to 2018 and digital data and documents issued by the UNESCO – related to the Historical Center in Old Havana – and by the Consejo Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural del Ministerio de Cultura.

In order to give voice to local people, fieldwork was carried out in the Historical Center in Old Havana between August and September 2018, i. e., semi-structured interviews were made with some groups that live in the area, such as local residents, civil servants, workers or owners of private businesses and employees or technicians that work in heritage and tourism management centers. Twenty-two people were interviewed about several themes, such as implications of the process of tourism refunctionalization of cultural heritage (AUTHOR 2, 2012); residents' displacement towards areas out of the Center; arrival of the Cuban middle class to the area; and positive and negative aspects of tourism opening (AUTHOR 1, 2019). Interviews were analyzed by the ATLAS.ti software program. Besides, guided observation and a photographic survey aimed at identifying and registering the population's life conditions (housing, services, public equipment), tourism infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, nightclubs) and characteristics of private businesses in the area

THE HISTORICAL CENTER IN OLD HAVANA: FROM RECOVERY TO TOURISM REFUNCTIONALIZATION

Havana was founded in 1519 in the area that has been known as the Historical Center in Old Havana. Its buildings had a ground floor with an internal patio, large gates, ceramic decorations, military fortifications, churches and squares (PLAN MAESTRO, 2004). It became the capital of the island in 1607, due to its location in the bay, a key port for relations between the New and the Old Continent (LEAL, 2004).

The fortification system, which comprised the Castillo de la Real Fuerza, the Castillo de Los Tres Reyes del Morro and the Castillo de San Salvador de la Punta from the 16th century and the Fortaleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña and the Muralla de La Habana, from the 17th century, protected the city against privateers and pirates.

Afterwards, aiming at beautifying the city and creating spaces for Spanish religious orders (PLAN MAESTRO, 2004), the colonizers built some of their marks, such as the Convento de San Agustín, the Ermita del Humilladero, the Iglesia del Santo Ángel Custodio, the Monasterio de Santa Teresa and the Convento de San Felipe Neri (LEAL, 2004). Besides, they created the five fundamental squares, public

spaces of everyday life.

The Villa invested in cultural buildings, in the railway and in elite residential neighborhoods that led to population exodus and enabled the center to take on an industrial function between the 18th and the 19th centuries (PLAN MAESTRO, 2004).

The country was involved in three independentist wars, but its goal was frustrated when the USA entered the war in 1898; Cuba, which was a Spanish colony, became a North-american neocolony, even though it had become a republic in 1902. The country changed owners, as well as interests.

Havana, which is the result of the mixture of Spanish white people, African black people, Cuban aborigines and, later, criollos, has kept its marks in constructions crystallized in space and time, since urban modernization has not got there, unlike other cities in Latin America (CASTILLO, 2001).

The Historical Center stretches over 2.14 km² and occupies about 50% of Old Havana (Figure 1): the old intramural area, the expansion area at the end of the 19th century, the Paseo do Prado and part of the Bairro Jesús María (ALOMÁ, 2001).

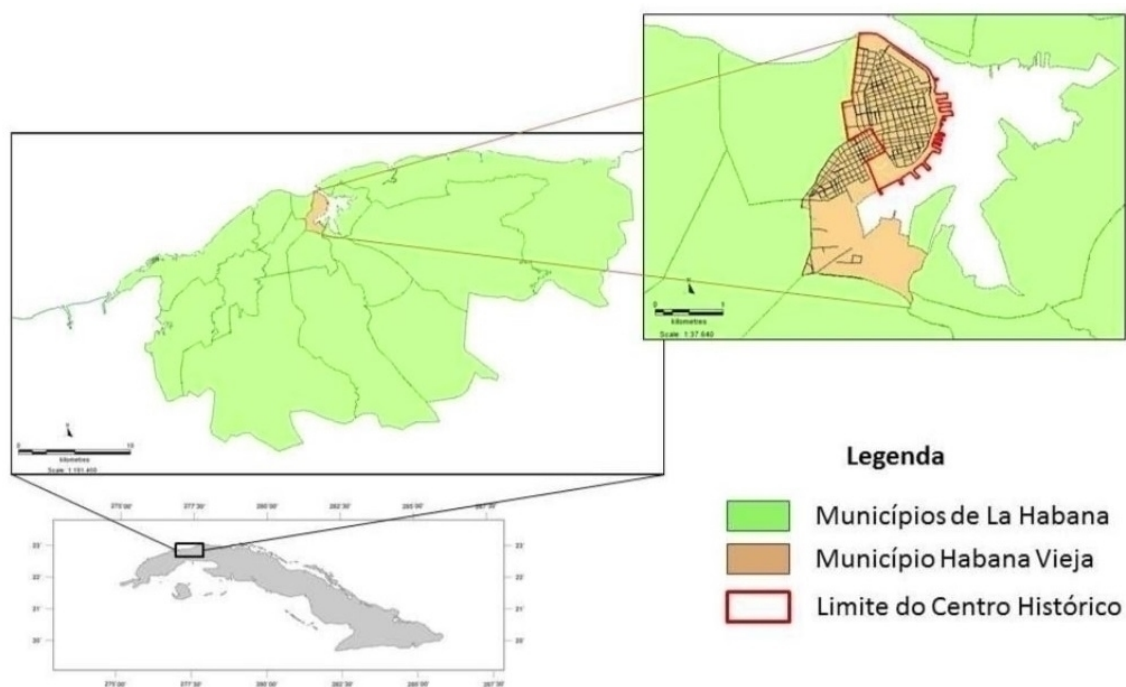


Figure 1 - Havana Province, in green, Old Havana, in pink, and the Historical Center, perimeter in red. Source: the authors, based on information provided by the Empresa de Proyectos RESTAURA (OHCH) (2017)

In the 1930's, a group of nationalist intellectuals who knew the value of historical heritage started several actions to get state support to preserve the city's document heritage and, thus, the architectural heritage of the Old Center. In this context, the position of Historiador de la Ciudad was created in 1935, while the Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana (OHCH) (ALOMÁ, 2015a) was established in 1938 to defend the national culture and protect colonial constructions in the Historical Center in Old Havana.

Between 1940 and 1950, the OHCH aimed at the recovery, conservation and restoration of buildings and architectural ensembles, such as protection of the Castillo de la Fuerza, from the 16th century, and its surroundings, the Plaza de Armas and the houses of notorious residents, restoration of part of the Muralla de la Habana, from the 17th century, restoration of the La Tenaza, one of the doors of the Muralla de la Habana, the Convento e Igreja de San Francisco de Asís, from the 16th century, the Hacienda, the Catedral, from the 18th century and the Palacio Aldama, a Cuban mansion from the 19th century (PLAN MAESTRO, 2006).

The Revolución Cubana, which triumphed on January 1st, 1959, led the country to a period of

deep social, political and economic changes. The new government acknowledged the OHCH and its work; even though it could only carry out few strategic actions to preserve heritage between 1960 and 1970, they were significant: the beginning of a recovery plan in Old Havana, which included interventions in the three main squares – Plaza de Armas, Plaza de San Francisco and Plaza de la Catedral –, and the continuation of restoration and refunctionalization work in castles and palaces for cultural use (ALOMÁ, 2015a).

The Historical Center in Old Havana and its military fortifications were designated Monumento Nacional by the Comisión Nacional de Monumentos (CONSEJO NACIONAL DE PATRIMONIO CULTURAL, 2019) in 1978. Afterwards, the Historical Center and the defensive system of the city, with ten military fortifications outside the Historical Center –which were considered a homogeneous ensemble by the Conselho Internacional dos Monumentos e Sítios (ICOMOS, 1981) – were designated World Cultural Heritage sites in 1982.

In many Latin-American cities with preserved colonial heritage, valuation of assets that represent hegemonic social groups has concealed heritage built by economically disadvantaged classes. In Cuba, as well as in Brazil, immaterial heritage was more inclusive than the stone and lime architecture; some popular traditions, such as the sombrero de guano, a traditional hat worn in the countryside, peasants' folk tales and parrandas, the popular carnival in the central region, were designated Patrimonios Culturales ou Inmateriales de la Nación (CONSEJO NACIONAL DE PATRIMONIO CULTURAL, 2019) in the last years.

The UNESCO declaration made it easier to get technical and economic help for the restoration work carried out in the Historical Center and its defensive system. US\$ 263.777 was approved between 1985 and 2002 to recover the Plaza Vieja and buildings that surround it, to preserve the Parque Histórico Militar Morro Cabaña, which comprises the Castillo de los Tres Reyes del Morro and the Fortaleza de San Carlos de la Cabaña – transformed into museums –, and to restore the Convento de Santa Clara de Asís (UNESCO, 2018).

The UNESCO searched for, but did not get enough funds to recover the Plaza Vieja. As a result, it was only thoroughly restored at the end of the 1990's (EMISORA HABANA RADIO, 2019). Anyway, it was the institution that started an international campaign to get the funds by using the following call:

(...) a los estados miembros (...), a las organizaciones intergubernamentales y no gubernamentales, a las instituciones públicas y privadas, a las fundaciones, artistas y poetas, historiadores y educadores, a ofrecer con generosidad sus contribuciones en dinero, en materiales o en servicios para la gran tarea que emprende el Gobierno de la República de Cuba para preservar su patrimonio histórico (...) (ALOMÁ, 2015b: 200)

Besides funds that came from international cooperation, the government increased resources so as to recover the Historical Center (PLAN MAESTRO, 2006). Even though the Planes Quinquenales and projects of economic planning in several areas started in 1981, it was the UNESCO declaration that triggered these recover strategies in Old Havana. Public spaces, such as the Plaza de la Catedral and the Plaza de Armas, besides access routes such as Oficinas, Mercaderes, Tacón and part of Obispo (rebuilding is still going on), the Colegio de San Francisco de Sales and domestic architecture buildings that belong to Cuban elites, the Palacios del Marqués de Aguas Claras, Conde de Casa Bayona and Conde de Jaruco, were recovered, mostly for cultural, commercial and residential uses (LEAL, 2004).

Priority was given to restoration of buildings, squares, monuments and streets; it included the status of conservation and their location on main streets and public spaces in the Historical Center (ALOMÁ, 2015a). About 50 buildings were recovered in 1990 (PLAN MAESTRO, 2006); these interventions valued the colonial landscape ensemble in the Center. However, the collapse of the European socialist block and the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) made the country's economic situation change radically.

Cuba came to an economic crisis and the UNESCO again asked for international cooperation to restore Old Havana. Thus, the country got technical and economic assistance –that amounted to US\$ 25.8 million up to 2008 – from several countries, such as Mexico, Spain, Italy and Belgium (ALOMÁ, 2015b). It shows that, even though the country was under an economic sanction, through the cultural heritage and the UNESCO's declaration, funds and international cooperation that aimed at recovering

the architectural heritage of the Historical Center in Old Havana ruptured this sanction.

Even so, the UNESCO's declaration itself did not increase the number of international tourists in Cuba and in the Historical Center in Havana. Increase in the number of tourists from the 1980's, before the declaration, to the 1990's, was associated with sun and beach destinations in the Caribbean region (FERNÁNDEZ, 2008). In this period, the strong economic crisis got worse since support was given neither by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) nor by the government, which had no funds to rebuild the Historical Center, also withheld the amount that had already been approved in 1981. It was the beginning of the so-called Special Period in Cuba. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) dropped from -2.90% in 1990 to -14.9% in 1993, exportation and importation decreased about 50%, petroleum, fertilizers, agricultural inputs, food and basic products became scarce and both electric energy supply and transportation systems got unstable (SANTOS, 2014). Hence, shortage of products and propagation of all types of activities in the informal economy.

Then, the government decided to develop international tourism to mitigate the crisis and strategies were re-oriented to cultural tourism, with new actions in the Historical Center, associated with notoriety given by the UNESCO's declaration and self-financed recovery strategies. The Law-Decree 143, which was signed in 1993, designated the Historical Center as an "high priority conservation area" and again put the responsibility on the Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana, associated with the Habaguanex S&A, a tourism company that enabled economic and legal means to be used. It also took on touristic activities and collected funds that were invested in the conservation of the Historical Center (LEAL, 2004).

After the decree, the Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de La Habana, which aimed at preserving, protecting and restoring the cultural heritage in Old Havana, had to create and manage its own touristic and commercial installations – and later an entrepreneurial system – that provided economic resources for recovery, cultural animation and social investments in the surroundings. The concept of the institution did not change, but new touristic functions – which had not been the original ones – were added.

The process of tourism refunctionalization of architectural heritage in the Historical Center started in 1994. About 25 buildings which had been residences, such as old palaces and colonial houses that belonged to the elite, offices, port warehouses and schools gradually got new touristic uses as restaurants and hotels. Most of the buildings that underwent either restoration or reconstruction date back to the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries (PLAN MAESTRO, 2006). The symbolic intentionality of space appropriation that prioritized material heritage of architecture produced by the elite and from the colonial period reveals ideological strategies related to what should be preserved. Neither vernacular architecture nor popular culture got any visibility, i. e., they constituted space and landscape invisibilization (VESCHAMBRE, 2008). The image communication system (MONNET, 2006) found in this chosen heritage reveals that space appropriation also takes place in the symbolic circle of power of production, appropriation and valuation of landscapes.

The process of recovery, refunctionalization and reopening of the real estate was gradual, from 1994 to these days, as shown by opening dates of the Habaguanex hotels, the company that has the largest number of hotels in historical buildings.

Some of the buildings transformed into luxury hotels were tenements that housed several low-income families, such as Beltrán de Santa Cruz, El Comendador, Los Frailes, Santa Isabel, Saratoga and Iberostar Grand Packard hotels. Many families were displaced and taken to different areas in the city, mainly to faraway Alamar (SCARPACCI, 2000).

Landscapes of squares and streets in Old Havana, as well as terrazas in Barcelona, Spain, have been invaded by tables and chairs of state touristic restaurants, which become public spaces that are exclusive for tourists. For instance, the mural of the old Liceo Artístico y Literario de La Habana which shows important Cuban intellectuals (opened in 2000) was surrounded by protection walls for tourists' enjoyment (Figure 2).



Figure 2 - Mural of the old Liceo Artístico y Leterario de La Habana. Source: fieldwork (2018)

The Puerto de la Habana was also renovated to house tourism businesses. Traditional loading and unloading activities have been transferred to other areas in the bay that are not so visible to tourists. Now, the Terminal Internacional de Cruceros occupies that space. Refunctionalization of the Almacenes de Depósito San José, between 2005 and 2009 (PARRA, 2015), transformed them into the Centro Cultural Antiguos Almacenes de Depósito San José, where handicraft and standardized souvenirs from most colonial destinations is exposed and sold to tourists. The recovery program of the old port zone finished in 2015.



Figure 3 - Catedral de la Virgen María de la Concepción Inmaculada de La Habana in the Tourism Campaign entitled Auténtica Cuba. Source: <https://thecrazycircus.com/cuba/>

Regarding the five squares in the Historical Center – Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza del Cristo, Plaza de San Francisco, Plaza de Armas and Plaza Vieja (CASTILLO, 2001) –, the three first ones house

catholic churches or religious spaces built by Spaniards. Even though they keep their original uses, they have become icons in touristic campaigns about Havana (Figure 3).

Tourism refunctionalization accentuated socio-spatial contradictions. On one hand, there was investment in the recovery of the Center but, on the other hand, some old residents, mainly the poorest ones who lived in tenements, were displaced and had to move to peripheral areas with fewer services and less equipment and transportation. Even indirectly, increase in cost of living resulting from the establishment of restaurants, bars and night clubs expelled residents who did not have financial conditions to consume them¹. Therefore, the city is found to fragmentize as the result of social classes and income, just like capitalist cities

HAVANAN GENTRIFICATION

According to Morales (2016), some authors who studied gentrification² such as Betancur (2014) and Ghertner (2015), stated that the concept does not describe the phenomenon on a planetary scale, since it refers to the post-industrial moment in the global north. However, Morales (2016, p.221) explains that this concept cannot be rejected just because some current expressions, in the south, are not replicas of the model described in the first cases in England. According to him: “La gentrificación asume también diversas manifestaciones sociales y físicas dependiendo del contexto, pero siempre con el efecto de producir desplazamiento o exclusión desde el centro urbano de los segmentos sociales más bajos (...)”. This study of the Historical Center in Old Havana agrees with Morales (2016), Delgadillo (2016), Janoschka (2016) and AUTHOR 2 (2017) and assumes that there are different socio-spatial manifestations of the most global process of gentrification, since it can be found in many cases of urban re-structuring that take place in Latin America. It should be mentioned that the early concern for housing recovery in central degraded areas gave rise to a new way of thinking about urban landscape, urbanism, jobs, consumption and leisure.

In Latin America, such urban interventions in old centers became more common in the 1990's. They aimed at recovering them for cultural consumption, leisure and tourism, rather than providing housing for the middle class and the elite, a fact that took place in central countries (AUTOR 2, 2017). Even in Latin America, there are several versions of this process, such as the one of the Historical Center in Old Havana, Cuba.

In the 1970's and the 1980's, the Historical Center in Old Havana was “un hábitat precario” (SEGRE, 1997, p.817) in terms of life and housing conditions. As a palliative measure to provide housing conditions, the government handed in empty houses and spaces in shops located in the Historical Center to families, so that they could transform them into their homes:

Sin controles ni reglamentaciones, cada usuario adaptó a sus necesidades y posibilidades el tratamiento de las fachadas, convirtiéndose ligeros paños de grandes cristales en ciegos muros de bloques o ladrillos (...) la altura de los locales (...) generó la proliferación de barbacoas (entrepisos) realizadas con improvisadas estructuras de madera. Su peso y diseño afectó la estabilidad de los antiguos edificios y el tratamiento exterior, al dividirse los altos paños verticales de rejas y ventanas, típicos del diecinueve habanero, en toscas aberturas con persianas (...) (SEGRE, 1997, p.815)

Before the 1980's, this area had a high vacancy rate, delinquency and residents with low educational level; people of African descent prevailed (SEGRE, 1997). In the 1980's, 131 palaces and mansions became careless ciudadelas and quarterías, which were densely populated and had precarious hygiene conditions, similar to the case found in Brazilian tenements (SEGRE, 1997). Even though adaptations made by residents transformed them into functional houses, they deteriorated the city's image and caused collapse of buildings (SCARPACCI, 2000).

According to Castillo (2001, s.p.), before 1990, many buildings were “(...) ruinas parciales que sufrieron un grave deterioro por sobreutilización, maltrato, desidia y falta de mantenimiento adecuado (...)”. In the 1990's, when the Historical Center had been touristically valued, investments returned and old mansions and palaces were recovered to become luxurious real estate. Figure 4 shows the transformation of the old building called Manzana de Gómez, which used to house schools, pharmacies

and popular stores, into the Manzana Kempinski, the first luxury hotel in Havana, in 2017.



Figure 4 - Manzana de Gómez (2003) and the Hotel Manzana Kempinski (2018). Source: <https://archpaper.com/2017/04/cuba-tourism-modernist-buildings/> and fieldwork (2018).

Morales (2016) stated that, in order to occur gentrification, the poor population must be removed or expelled; thus, based on the analysis of change in population density, it may be concluded that there were cases of people displacement in the Historical Center in Old Havana. Populational density, which ranged from 500 to 1000 inhabitants per built hectare before 1990, has decreased and, nowadays, there are 433 inhabitants (SEGRE, 1997; HERNÁNDEZ, 2018).

According to Delgadillo (2015), there is displacement as the result of pressure caused by increase in the cost of living. Even though the recovery process in Old Havana was marked by recovery of some building for social housing, projects of state interest (school programs, hogares maternos, asilos de ancianos), improvement in infrastructure (road system, water supply) (ALOMÁ, 2001; LEAL, 2004) and by governmental speeches about residents' permanence (LEAL, 2004), some displacement was negotiated, as pointed out by some authors and interviewees. Despite the lack of official data, Scarpacci (2000, p. 295) estimated that the Habaguanex has displaced at least 200 residents.

Twelve people were interviewed about residents' displacement in the Historical Center: 77%

denied that these cases had happened; 15% stated that they took place; and 8% did not know anything about this issue. However, 54% acknowledged that displacement happened as the result of negotiation between residents and state institutions. Interviews enabled to identify three types of residents who were displaced from the Historical Center 1) the ones who had no financial conditions to carry out the restoration agreed to replace their poorly maintained houses with others in better shape, far from Old Havana. The State restored them and used them for other purposes; 2) some were displaced because of the risk of collapse; and 3) some were displaced so that restoration could take place and residents could move back in again.

Even though displacement is associated with recovery, some interviewees stated that some buildings have not been restored yet because residents do not want to leave them. When they were questioned about forced displacement in the area, they stated:

(...) conozco muchas personas que vivían en La Habana Vieja, los sacaron de los edificios, los mandaron para Alamar, en el mejor de los casos, porque hubo mucha gente que los mandaron hasta para albergues y después nunca los devolvieron a sus edificios (...) (verbal communication)³

Regarding the legal situation of houses, around 75% is private and about 12% can be used without any payment, mainly in the tenements. The latter has decreased since 2001, when they represented 40%. Increase in the number of private homes (around 50% in 2001) is associated with restoration of tenements in apartment buildings. These actions were carried out by the State so that certain criteria, such as age (to favor older adults), physical or mental impairment and legal situation of the property, were respected when new apartments were handed to residents that stayed in the area. It aimed at decreasing density in buildings, but not all families stayed there (PLAN MAESTRO, 2016).

In the Historical Center, there are 55,484 inhabitants (HERNÁNDEZ, 2018), i. e., 25,927 inhabitants per square kilometer; 60.2% is economically active, mainly working for the State and earning 553 CUP (22.12 CUC) per month, on average. The high density in this area results from the existence of about 850 tenements, where about 50% of 21,241 homes is located (PLAN MAESTRO, 2016).

Close to the Plaza Vieja, there is also a Comunidad Provisoria, which is, in the words of a civil servant:

(...) es una residencia protegida donde personas que han perdido su casa, otros ancianos que están solos y ya no quieren estar solos, bueno, pues vienen para acá, tienen un límite, tienes que ser mayor de 60 años, entiendes? Y ellos, bueno, mientras se valgan por ellos solos, ellos se cocinan, se hacen todas las cosas, cuando no puedan está la residencia de Paulo, que allí sí tienen las enfermeras, los médicos, todo, que los cuidan. (informação verbal)

Thus, in this case, there was neither a thorough change nor poverty signs were totally eliminated from the area. According to Segre (1997, p. 818), there are “(...) fronteras muy bien definidas, entre los espacios cualificados por los que deambulan los turistas y las zonas interiores totalmente abandonadas a su propio destino (...)”, as shown in Figure 5. Differences between Mercaderes street, which was recover for tourism activities and to move among hotels, and Muralla street, which houses several residents but has not been recovered yet.



Figure 5 - Mercaderes and Muralla Streets (from left to right). Source: fieldwork (2018)

Some popular practices in the Historical Center, such as street vendors, were not excluded from the urban scene, since they are a well-known touristic attraction and sell several products, such as onions, spices, coconut water, churros, artisanal dolls, hats and empanadas (Figure 6). However, valuation of popular cultural assets and broadening of the cultural schedule aim at tourism. Increase in soil valuation, along with reinvestment and revitalization of the area, leads to replacement of traditional low-income residents with middle- and high-class ones (SMITH, 2012).



Figure 6 - Street vendors in the Historical Center in Old Havana. Source: fieldwork (2018)

In the case of Cuba, after the Revolution of 1959, real estate speculation was eradicated while the State nationalized most land and determined a standard price to urban soil; neither location nor characteristics of the surroundings would affect this value (FERNÁNDEZ e PLEYÁN, 2000).

However, after the restoration of the Historical Center, even though the official value of the soil kept the same, there was informal monetary valuation of real estate, a fact that enabled local residents to rent their houses to make some extra money, a process that was acknowledged by the population and confirmed in interviews. In this case, the fact that the soil got more expensive was connected to the interest in either living or running a business in a renewed central area, which was easily accessed and had plenty of services associated with international tourism.

Besides, according to Nuñez, Brown and Smolka (2007, p. 286), soil revaluation was supported by the State:

(...) la Oficina del Historiador (...) comenzó a recaudar impuestos directos e indirectos que suman el 35 por ciento de los ingresos de empresas privadas no relacionadas con la Oficina, tales como hoteles, establecimientos comerciales y restaurantes que se han beneficiado de las labores de rehabilitación del distrito histórico (...)

High values of the informal real estate market and high taxes charged by the State in the Historical Center have confirmed increase in soil prices. Cuba defended the inexistence of social classes for many years, but the emergence of new economic groups changed this structure. According to Noguera (2004), four social groups can be identified in Cuba from 1969 on: workers, peasants, intellectuals and a small private sector. He states that there were not large economic differences among these groups up to 1989. At the beginning of the Special Period, there were many changes in the economy, such as dollar legalization and consolidation of an economy that operates with two currencies (CUP and CUC), broadening of private work, transformation in the agricultural sector with increase in the private peasant sector. The author also points out that the emergence of these new subjects with different socio-economic profiles led to rearrangement in the social structure, a new class stratification.

According to the interviewees, the Cuban acknowledge the existence of social classes in their society. Belonging to the highest classes is related to better life conditions, such as having their own house and car, earning in CUC (depending on the job), getting dollars sent by relatives from other countries, having a private business, having a savings account, being capable of having a vacation and taking trips abroad or informal commercial trips that enable some extra income.

This process is “(...) desigualdad caracterizada por producirse en un modelo de pirámide social invertida, donde un taxista, un camarero o un participante de la economía sumergida se coloca por encima de un investigador doctor en ciencias o que un cirujano (...)” (NOGUERA, 2004, p. 53). Emerging middle and high classes in Cuba are linked to the service sector and many qualified professionals change areas and focus on services related to tourism and informal practices.

According to the interviewees, Cuban middle and high classes still live out of the Historical Center, but run their businesses in the area, a fact that shows gentrification in old centers in Latin American cities. They are not necessarily renewed for residents, but for tourism. Old residents also opened their own non-state businesses, but most come from other areas and, in some cases, manage foreign money that is invested in businesses in Old Havana.

Even though investments in tourism arrived in Cuba about 30 years after the UNESCO's declaration, due to characteristics of the Cuban legislative mark which did not favor the emergence of private businesses up to 2010 and prohibited real estate businesses up to 2011, association among world heritage, tourism and urban renovation was very clear in the area to attract a population with purchasing power. There is still a large difference in quality and prices of services that aim at every group, i. e., the local population gets badly maintained businesses who charge in CUP, while tourism services are available in well-conserved buildings, which are well-equipped and expensive. There is also a strong contrast between the state of houses that belong to the local population and both state and private touristic facilities (Figures 7 and 8).



Figure 7 - Hotel Iberostar Parque Central. Source: fieldwork (2018)



Figure 8 - Group of houses close to the Hotel Parque Central. Source: fieldwork (2018)

According to Scarpacci (2000), Delgadillo (2015) and Prudente (2009), a process of gentrification associated with the recovery of the historical city for touristic uses took place in the Historical Center in Old Havana. According to an interviewee that works in heritage management:

(...) no hay un caso de gentrificación agudo como en otros Centros Históricos en el mundo, pero sí ya hay uno emergente, como un caso primitivo de la gentrificación. Personas que se han tenido que desplazar porque su vivienda estaba en mal estado, no han podido repararla, no han tenido el dinero para repararla y han tenido que vender, y han llegado las clases que sí lo han podido hacer (...) (verbal communication)

On one hand, there was tourism refunctionalization, displacement of the poorest residents and real estate speculation, albeit informal. On the other hand, there are still popular practices, precarious houses, low-income residents and social projects for people that lost their houses as the result of collapse. Making a parody of Castillo (2015), who states that in Lima, Peru, there is a process of gentrificación a la limeña, due to specific characteristics that follow the process but that are not fully described by the literature about the topic, in the case of Havana, it could be considered Havanan gentrification.

CONCLUSION

The issue in the Historical Center is not only related to recovery of its built heritage. Gradual displacement of residents, who were replaced with tourists, and the conversion of culture into a bargaining chip to legitimate socio-spatial segregation show a process of gentrification in Old Havana, but it has a trend that may even take place in a socialist country and in a government that is still worried about its population. Tourism is one of the main drives of the Cuban economy in local and national levels, besides people who are involved in this activity. The challenge is to keep it an important basis of economy, while the Old Center belongs to traditional residents, subjects of the culture that should represent a touristic attraction.

In opposition to the socialist system, reinvestment in this urban area by the government, private sources and small and large real estate capital – all with interests in the tourism sector – brings the inevitable conflict of social reproduction of space in a process of unequal appropriation of soil and capital accumulation.

Processes of replacement of traditional residents with investors and consumers, direct or indirect displacement of the vulnerable and low-income population, the use of cultural heritage as territorial resource and ongoing aesthetic and cultural changes resulting from the introduction of tourism show a type of gentrification that may be going on even where the political system thought it was protected from capitalism.

NOTE

1- In Cuba, there are two currencies: the Cuban Peso (CUP) and the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC). State workers earn the largest part of their salaries in CUP, considering that 24 CUP is equivalent to 1 CUC. Monthly minimum salary in Cuba is 400 CUP (16 CUC). The CUC emerged in the Special Period, in the 1990's crisis, when 1 CUC was worth 1 USD, to eliminate excess liquidity in CUP, stabilize the exchange rate and be an alternative to the dollar, so that economy could be undollarized later (FERNANDES E MARTINS, 2015). A 10% fee is charged when USD is exchanged into CUC. Nowadays, most stores accept CUC and CUP but touristic services have high prices in CUC, a fact that favors international tourism to the detriment of the local population.

2- The concept of gentrification was coined by the sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964 to analyse real estate transformation that took place in the elitization of working class suburbs in London, England, expanded to the recovery of central areas abandoned as the result of decline in industrialization and reached European and North-American cities in the 1970's to become, in Smith's words (2012), generalized gentrification.

3- Reports were collected by interviews made during fieldwork carried out in Havana in

September 2018.

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