

# Chapter 18

## The Old Havana: Economic and Social Impact of Tourism Management on the Quality of Life of Residents



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**Abstract** The Old Havana, a World Heritage Site since 1982, is one of the main tourist attractions in Cuba, but it is also a space with a marked residential nature. In recent years, the process of recovering this site and restoring it for tourist use has represented a major challenge, both economically and socially. The current situation in the country, resulting from new Cuban government policies, has led to great interest in developing public and private initiatives that enhance tourism in this area. This chapter presents Old Havana as a case study and addresses the economic and social impact that the tourism management carried out by the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana (OHCH) has had on its residents. The chapter opens by introducing historic centres and impacts of tourism, especially in Latin America. It then goes on to introduce the special features of tourism in Cuba. Next, it addresses the social impact on the Cuban population of the tourism policy implemented in the early 1990s, which focused on promoting international tourism at the expense of domestic tourism. It also describes the scenario that resulted from creating designated tourist areas, isolated from the Cuban population, which prevented visitor exchange with residents and cultural enrichment. Next, it discusses the tourism management model developed by the OHCH, which constitutes an outstanding example of sustainable tourism management practice. The chapter closes by presenting a series of final considerations regarding the future of tourism in Cuba, based on the current context.

**Keywords** Old Havana · Rehabilitation process · Tourist management · Social programme

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## 18.1 Introduction

The historic city centres of Latin America share a common history of neglect, marginalization and vulnerability that has impacted the populations that reside therein. This situation has occurred as a result of the process of decline associated with factors such as the growth of the city, the deterioration of the buildings or natural disasters (Pérez 2014). However, in recent times the situation seems to have become more complex and different types of city centres are appearing: reasonably renovated city centres that suffer from continuous renovation and degradation processes, and a third group that is in a state of extreme deterioration (Vergara 2008).

Tourism is one of the main drivers for the interventions in historic city centres, and one of the main added values in the renewal processes that we have just mentioned. In the majority of cases, its influence is due to the recovery of architectural heritage and public spaces which allows the promotion of metropolitan tourism (Etulain and González 2012). In this regard, the enhancement of historic heritage allows the strengthening of a population's local identity as a whole, although the development of tourism may also cause social problems associated with gentrification processes or the trivialization of spaces, turning them into purely tourist sites and devoid of identity (Santos and Lois 2005).

An example of creating spaces solely for tourist use, was the tourist model developed by the Cuban government in the 1990s. As an alternative to the economic crisis resulting from the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, the development of international tourism was established as a priority. However, this model not only directed the tourist activity towards foreigners but also restricted it for locals, leading to an intense process of marginalisation of the Cuban population. Tourism thereby created an important social problem in the country that lasted for almost 20 years, until 2008 when the Cuban government authorised Cubans to access tourist services. In addition to this social problem, the tourism model did not have an important economic impact on the population. It could therefore be said that the sustainable tourism dimension aimed at improving the receptor community's quality of life, has not been reflected in the model established in Cuba.

Taking into account this problem, we proposed, as research questions, ascertaining whether any subsequent tourist strategy capable of reversing this situation was implemented, and if it had a positive impact on Cuban residents' quality of life. In this regard, we can only point to, at a national level, the exceptional case of the Historic City Centre of Havana. This is the largest and most successful model of local development undertaken in contemporary Cuba (Monreal 2007). Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to study the economic and social impact of tourism management on the quality of life of residents in the Old Havana. The tourist model developed by the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana (OHCH) will be presented as a case study to illustrate the way they deal with the improvement of the community's quality of life.

## 18.2 Theory Note: Historic City Centres and Tourism

The historic centre of a city is its prime symbolic space and is, to a large extent, the collective memory of the society that inhabits it (De la Calle and García 1998; Levy 1987). Santos and Lois (2005) state that historic cities whose emergence took place in the majority of cases in the pre-industrial period, are a unique social product. Their landscape features are the result of the juxtaposition of different building layers corresponding to different historical phases (Lois 2004). Functionally, they were spaces marked by diversity, polyfunctionality and modernity; although at present, social changes are generating a series of conflicts and misadaptations (Lois and Santos 2006). Taking into account the nature of the historic city centres, Troitiño (1992) differentiates between those who retain their functionality and those who do not. Taking this into account, the following functional types are suggested:

- Old towns which are no longer the economic city centre, but retain a symbolic and cultural centrality.
- Old towns that preserve certain heritage and functional centrality.
- Old towns which continue to be the functional centre of the current city.

The fact that some historic city centres lost their administrative centrality led the public management to focus on the new urban areas (Carrión 2009). Thus, the lack of investment in infrastructure and services and the maintenance of public spaces in the historical centres became evident. Also, the narrow streets and old buildings structures were unable to provide appropriate space for contemporary lifestyle patterns. For these reasons, the inhabitants with greater buying power began to abandon historic city centres as places of residence (Etulain and González 2012). This situation dragged the commercial activity and service companies with it, meaning the loss of historic city centres as points of reference, and resulting in their process of deterioration (Vergara 2008).

The processes of abandonment in which many historic Latin American and European city centres were in after the World Wars, started to reverse at the end of the 70s and the early 80s (Etulain and González 2012). In this period, many interventions took place resulting in renewal processes, usage replacement and the enhancement of central spaces. Its objective was to try to reconstruct both the materiality and the image of these undervalued areas, to become attractive sites for entertainment, visual and aesthetic consumption (Girola et al. 2011). Tourism became the priority sector of a large part of the rehabilitation activities in historic city centres. However, these processes were mainly oriented towards the protection of tangible heritage while abandoning other important functions. As a result, well preserved urban spaces but devoid of life and economic activities as well as tourist activities appeared, leading to a museumisation of historic city centres (Santos and Lois 2005).

With time the museumisation of historic city centres begins to be questioned and they start to be reclaimed as living centres, as a result of the society that inhabits them. The 1977 Charter of Quito, states that the protagonists of the city centres are

their inhabitants and that one of the essential elements of a city centres' rehabilitation and its renewal must be its residential use (ICOMOS 2007). In this regard, it should be mentioned that in some historic city centres there has been a *gentrification* phenomenon. This is the result of the eviction of residents from damaged buildings so they can be remodelled and re-functionalised, to be inhabited by a population of greater buying power at a later date. Therefore, this phenomenon is accompanied by the displacement or eviction of the former residents (Sabatini et al. 2009), altering the richness of the primary housing function of these places.

In Latin America the characteristics of interventions in historic city centres vary according to the place. For example, in the Historic City Centre of Colonia del Sacramento in Uruguay villagers have been handing over their spaces to new inhabitants. At the same time many heritage structures have had their exterior kept and preserved, but emptied of content for refunctionalisation (Etulain and González 2012). In the Historic City Centre of Quito, together with the promotion of tourism in refunctionalised buildings, university buildings have been introduced, providing this space with new purposes and integrating tourism into the local development. Additionally, there are more comprehensive examples such as the recovery of the Historic City Centre of Old Havana. In this case, the actions have been focused on public spaces, buildings of heritage value, and the promotion of uses and activities with the participation of residents. Tourism is the economic pillar of the rehabilitation process of Old Havana (Palet et al. 2006; Monreal 2007).

The management of historic city centres is a complex task taking into account the diversity of actors, situations and realities. For example, a European historic city centre does not possess the same characteristics as a Latin American one. These differences also arise between different countries and even between cities in the same country (Etulain and González 2012). In this context, each territory must regulate the development of the tourist activity according to its own scenario. Tourism planning and management should ensure a satisfactory experience for visitors, but respect the environment of the resident community, according to the principles that govern the development of sustainable tourism (UNWTO 1997, 2004).

### 18.3 The Problem: Particularities of Tourism in Cuba

Tourism has been gradually acquiring a key role in the Cuban economy. In the last 10 years Cuba has received more than 2 million international visitors annually, and in 2014 this figure surpassed for the first time in its history the 3 million visitor mark (ONEI 2015). Ninety-five percent of arrivals have as their main motivation holidays and leisure, Canada being the main market source of tourists. However, with the recent restoration of relations between Cuba and the United States there has been an increase in the number of U.S. visitors, and the forecasts predict continuous growth. The second most important market (14%) is comprised of Cubans residing abroad (Perelló 2013). The European market comprises 30% of tourists, led by the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Spain (ONEI 2015).

Until the end of the 1950s, Cuba was the main tourist destination in the Caribbean. In 1957 the highest number of arrivals was reached with 272,265 visitors, of whom 85% were US citizens, attracted mostly by advertising offering Havana as the gambling and prostitution centre of the Caribbean (Baroni 2009; MINTUR 2015). However, with the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959, major changes took place. Among them are (Soler 2001): promotion of domestic tourism, change of beach ownership to become publicly owned, development of an incipient “Socialist tourism”, emphasis on agricultural industrialisation and mechanisation, and loss of hotel competitiveness.

In the 1960s, the number of foreign tourists continued to trend downwards, due to the breakdown in relations with the United States, as a primary market source. In 1970 small groups from Canada and some countries of Latin America began to arrive, while visitors from Europe increased. In February 1982, the 50 Law Decree on foreign investment which came into force in 1988 was issued (Soler 2001). This law regulated the economic partnership between Cuban and foreign entities and was considered an instrument to expand exports and tourism more dynamically.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 hit the Cuban economy, which lost 80% of its exports and imports, meaning a sharp decline of 35% of GDP (Navarro 2008). From that time onwards, the Cuban Government began to consider tourism as an alternative to the economic recovery and reactivation. However, the development was based on attracting international tourists, to the detriment of domestic tourism that had been promoted since the triumph of the revolution (Pérez 2014). Therefore, the tourism offered was designed taking into account the needs of international tourists, and not only that, but it forbade Cubans access to the main tourist facilities. In this way, tourists were people with certain privileges that residents did not have. This situation had strong social implications, as the fact that Cubans could not enjoy tourism in their own country created a major upset in the Cuban population.

This model promoted the creation of totally tourist areas, basically beach oriented, preventing it from differing itself from other Caribbean destinations which employ this same tourist formula (UNWTO and SEGIB 2010). This was a competitive disadvantage. It is well known that people are increasingly travelling away from crowded places, to find experiences that allow them to enjoy the customs and mix with the population (Pérez 2014). The places where the coexistence of both areas was inevitable were strongly policed to prevent any kind of relationship between visitors and residents. In 2008 this policy changed and Cuban citizens were allowed access to tourist services, although in practice they do not have the financial resources to enjoy them.

In regards to the levels of income, it should be noted that in addition to the aforementioned social problems, this tourism model did not have a relevant economic impact on the population. It is, however, true that the Cubans benefited by being hired in different public tourism or joint venture facilities, but as in other sectors, wages do not match the cost of living. Therefore, workers rely on customer tips, and often turn to fraudulent procedures that can affect the quality of the service. This

wage imbalance has been maintained until today, being one of the most significant problems in Cuban society.

The private tourism sector was promoted by new laws or reforms of existing laws which have been adopted since 1994 (Carranza et al. 1995; Burgos 2011). It encouraged the creation of small private businesses such as restaurants called “paladares” or the rental of private homes to foreigners. However, then came a process of stagnation in the granting of licences for these purposes (MTSS and MFP 1996). This situation lasted for more than 10 years until 2011 when, as part of the new economic and social policy of the Cuban Government, the promotion of private business creation was restarted (PCC 2011). It is then when private business such as: the paladares, private accommodation in homes, shops, transportation services, rides in carriages or vintage cars among others, started to surge.

It could be said that the sustainable tourism dimension that looks for an improvement in the quality of life of the receiving community, has not been reflected in the model established in Cuba. In this regard, it can only be highlighted at a national level the exceptional case of the Historic City Centre of Havana. This is the largest and most successful model of local development undertaken in contemporary Cuba (Monreal 2007). Old Havana is one of the places with the most favourable conditions to territorially strengthen economic support of dynamic, diversified, and mutually reinforced activities, with the intensive use of knowledge (Monreal and Carranza 2003). Tourism is the economic engine driver of this model, but also the respect for the population’s well-being is a fundamental pillar of the rehabilitation policy.

## 18.4 A Solution: The Case of the Old Havana Rehabilitation Process

The historic centre of Havana with an area of 214 ha (2.14 km<sup>2</sup>) is located in Old Havana municipality, occupying 50% of the space. Unlike other historic city centres of Latin America, and in general of the central areas of big cities, it has an intense residential purpose. Its population of 66,742 inhabitants (OHCH 2011a) represents 74% of the municipal population (ONEI 2015). The gross density in the area is 310 inhabitants per ha, with net densities at building block level that vary between 100 and 1000 (OHCH 2011a).

Since the end of the eighteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century, the area of the old city maintained population stability of between 40,000 and 50,000 inhabitants. However, from 1920 until 1943 a growth in population took place, reaching the figure of 72,000 inhabitants. This increase was a result of the construction boom, the process of property speculation and the conversion of former palaces into citadels and other housing solutions. Since the 1950s there has been a slight reduction in the number of inhabitants, as a result of the expansion of the city to the suburbs and a steady number of about 60,000 inhabitants in the area (OHCH 2015). However, in qualitative terms, it must be mentioned that the historic





**Fig. 18.1** Delimitation of the historic city centre of Havana. (Source: Own work as per University of Texas (2014) and OHCH (2011a))

city centre shows similar indicators to those in other central urban areas, as for example, the aging of the population. Similarly, there has been a reduction in family size, which is evidenced by the fact that 16% of families are single households (OHCH 2015).

The historic city centre has 3370 buildings, of which 551 have a high heritage value. It consists of two areas clearly differentiated from the urban point of view: the old city within the walls, and the surrounding strip that was urbanised after the demolition of the city walls and built between mid-nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century (OHCH 2011a). The area of Havana within the wall extends from the western edge of the bay, including the current maritime border, up to the axis through which the old wall ran (Fig. 18.1). The other area encompasses the Las Murallas neighbourhood (in Spanish, *barrio Las Murallas*) ranging from the San Salvador de la Punta Castle to the courtyard of the Central Train Station. The Bay of Havana Fortification System is also part of the historic city centre.

The decline of the historic city centre as the main residential area began in the mid nineteenth century with the growth of the city to the West and the emergence of

exclusive neighbourhoods. Many of the single-family palaces were sold and became tenancy houses or citadels. The lower floors domestic use began to suffer transformations, being converted into warehouses and workshops depending on the port activity. New buildings for these purposes were also built, and the industrial function acquired greater relevance. With the arrival of the twentieth century, it became an area characterised by a high density of low income population (Rojas and Rodríguez 2004).

More critical issues included poor housing conditions, the deterioration of existing accessibility, and the health and educational facilities in the community. Similarly, there were flaws in the infrastructure needed for the elderly, the disabled and other vulnerable groups. Nor were there sufficient sports facilities, and resources for environmental care were scarce. In addition, there was an overload in damaged technological networks and infrastructure, which were insufficient to even provide an acceptable local performance. Another serious problem was the lack of supply of potable water, mitigated in part by the use of water tank trucks (OHCH 2006a).

In this context, Cuban avant-garde intellectuals in the 1930s started to raise awareness of the urgency of protecting buildings and historical monuments and deepening and disseminating Cuban culture and nationality. One of the biggest victories of that movement, led by Doctor Emilio Roig de Leuschenring (1889–1964), would be the foundation of the Havana Historian Office (OHCH) in 1938. After the disappearance of the historian Roig, the work of the institution continued with the appointment in 1967 of Dr. Eusebio Leal Spengler as the historian of the City of Havana (Rojas and Rodríguez 2004). Leal continues in this role and he is the highest authority in the comprehensive restoration of the historic city centre.

From then onwards, the restoration works of the General Captains old Palace in Armas Square began. This work continued with other later works, carried out jointly with institutions and agencies of the Cuban State and society. At this time, the proposal to award the Historic City Centre of Havana the National Monument distinction was submitted and was granted in 1978. In 1981, with the decision to allocate a significant budget to the restoration of the historic city centre, the Office was appointed to lead the rehabilitation from an urban perspective. The implementation of scientifically well-founded concepts was endorsed by UNESCO in 1982, listing the Historic City Centre of Havana and its Fortifications System as a World Heritage Site (Leal 2007).

The Old Havana Comprehensive Revitalisation program continued with the Five-year Restoration Plans (1981–1986 and 1986–1991) based on a strategy of recovery of public spaces, that would change the image of the main squares and establish the lines of what would become the old town heritage rehabilitation (OHCH 2015). In 1993 the Council of State approved the number 143 Law Decree, declaring the historic city centre A Conservation Prioritised Area (Leal 2007). From this moment, the Historian Office was awarded powers of attorney to develop self-funded comprehensive rehabilitation plans, a unique management formula which was introduced for the first time in Cuba. Also in November 1995 through the 2951 Agreement, the Council of Ministers proclaimed the historic city centre Area of High Significance for Tourism.



In the Historian's Office, the Master Plan is the entity that controls the uses of the land and is responsible for maintaining the management's integrity. In 1998 it developed the Special Development Plan (PED), a practical guide to govern actions in the territory, ensuring the coherence of interventions and physical recovery. The rehabilitation was structured by linking comprehensive development criteria, self-financing recovery mechanisms and cultural development, from five key policies (OHCH 2006b):

- Safeguard the national identity drawn from the research, promotion and development of culture.
- Protect the inherited heritage, rehabilitating the land through a legally binding continuing Special Plan of Comprehensive Development.
- Avoid the displacement of the local population, protecting it from the impact of outsourcing and establishing appropriate density and quality of life.
- Provide the territory with technical infrastructure and basic services that ensure its operation responding to contemporary needs.
- Achieve a self-funded comprehensive development making heritage investment recoverable and productive.

The continuity of this planning was followed by the 2001 Strategic Plan, where policies and actions in each of the main lines of action were laid out. However, a decade later the new Special Plan of Comprehensive Development (PEDI) was developed. This tool organises and directs the revitalisation process through the identification of a series of actions to develop from the physical point of view, in particular those planned in the short term (2011–2015) (OHCH 2011a). Its adoption was the result of a public consultation process, which has involved entities from the Historian Office, the Physical Planning and Cultural Heritage System, and the local government and its sectoral directorates. In addition, people residing or employed in entities in the historic centre participated by expressing their opinion through a questionnaire (OHCH 2011b).

With the increase of powers of the Historian Office regarding tourism, real estate and tertiary sector administration, the company Habaguanex was created in 1994 to find the financial resources that would make possible the self-financing of the work. Also, exclusive powers were granted to create the necessary companies to raise funds. In this way, a structure of hotels, restaurants, markets and other services was created; and also former hotels and small hostels located in mansions and palaces were repossessed (Rojas and Rodríguez 2004).

With revenue from tourism operations, from taxes on productive companies in the territory to the self-employed, investment increased significantly in the area. Figure 18.2 shows the case of the renovation of the Old Square (*in Spanish, Plaza Vieja*) and the Old Warehouses of San José (*in Spanish, Antiguos Almacenes de San José*). As originally planned, the Old Square has become a space with a traditional image, a strong cultural, service and housing purpose; becoming one of the main attractions of the old part of the city. Furthermore, the restoration of the Old Warehouses of San José, an example of the industrial architecture of the late nineteenth century, gave rise to the process of restructuring the old port structures into



**Fig. 18.2** Restoration works in Old Havana. Note: Old Square (left) and Old Warehouses of San José (right). (Source: Havana Historian Office. Master Plan (OHCH 2015))

cultural and leisure facilities. The former warehouse became the new headquarters of the Artisans Market, thus marking the first step in the recovery of the waterfront of the historic city (OHCH 2015).

In regards to the waterfront of the historic city centre, it is interesting to note the project of the OHCH for the redevelopment of the port of Havana, from a commercial to a tourist purpose. The recent opening of the Mariel Port, located 46 km from Havana, will allow the movement of all commercial activity from the port of Havana to Mariel. In this way, the Havana coast and its surroundings will have a tourist-recreational function. This is a typical urban renewal action as those undertaken in Europe, in cities such as A Coruña, Hamburg or Rotterdam, with the aim of freeing port space for citizens (Pérez 2014).

The waterfront of the historic city centre will feature a series of structures that will enable the diversification of touristic space, making use of architectural and industrial heritage located in this area and incorporating new products/services. The main functions defined for the waterfront are (Oliva 2013): Promenade, cruise liner terminal, poly-functional areas (recreational, commercial-gastronomic and cultural), tourist accommodation, markets, real estate offices, parking lots, a wharf for transfers between the two sides of the bay, and sporting and recreational yacht harbours (Fig. 18.3). However, work is being undertaken in sections, so the transformation will take place gradually.



**Fig. 18.3** New purposes of Old Havana waterfront

Note: Floating promenade (top) and wharf (below)

Source: Oliva (2013)

## 18.5 Implications of the Rehabilitation Process on the Residents' Quality of Life

In order to ascertain the impact of tourist policies on the History City Centre of Havana's residents, we used the results of a survey of the local population carried out by the Office of the Historian's Master Plan. The objective was to ascertain the resident population's opinion of the tourist activity. The survey was carried out

**Table 18.1** Reasons expressed by interviewees for working in tourism

Reasons	%
Greater economic benefits	70.8
Good working conditions	35.2
Cultural exchange	30.0
Meeting people from other countries	23.6

Source: Echarri (2006)

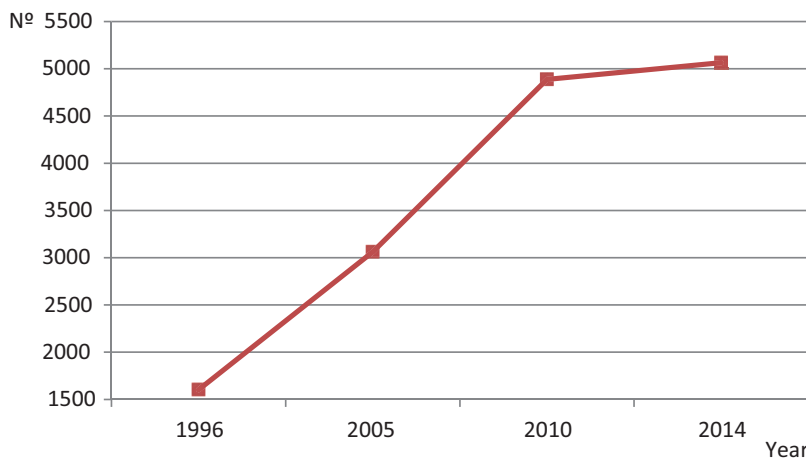
among 378 residents of the Historic City Centre in 2003, by means of simple random sampling with a significance level of 95% (Echarri 2006).

In the case of 88.8% of respondents, they would like to have activities related to tourism in their neighbourhood. In relation to tourism's benefits for the Historic City Centre, 85.7% replied that it is a source of economic income for the community, 33.7% believed that it favoured the preservation of heritage and 32.6% that it helped to promote Cuban culture abroad. Despite this, 9.9% of the interviewed residents expressed their discontent, claiming that it led to greater segregation and increased deterioration in the Historic City Centre.

Resident support for tourism is shown by their interest in working in this sector. In the case of 71.4% of interviewees, they expressed this intention, especially in relation to gastronomy and commerce. Table 18.1 shows the main reasons why residents work in tourism. Economic reasons are important, being mentioned by 70.8% of those interviewed. They also associated tourism with other reasons, such as: good working conditions, cultural exchange and the possibility of meeting people from other countries.

Another important study used in this chapter, to illustrate the comprehensive rehabilitation process' effect on residents, is the project "The capacity and number of visitors in Havana's Historic City Centre." The proposal was developed at the University of Havana's Tourism Faculty, based on the analysis of sustainability indicators using the methodology of Echarri (2006). Therefore, analysing as indicators the number of workers employed by Habaguanex and the number of tourism-related licenses granted to the self-employed, reflects the improvements experienced by residents in terms of employment and the possibilities of setting up private businesses.

Figure 18.4 shows the evolution of the number of workers employed by the Habaguanex tourist company (Delis 2015; Echarri 2006). As we can see, the number of workers grew by a factor of 3.7 from 1996 to 2014, as a result of an increase in tourist services. In relation to these workers, the Office of the Historian's Master Plan indicates that 50% are residents of the Historic City Centre (Delis 2015). In general, more than 13,000 direct jobs and another 2000 indirect ones have been created in the construction, tourism, and culture sectors thanks to the rehabilitation process (Leal 2007). In any case, these workers employed by OHCH are not exempt from the aforementioned wage problems. This is therefore an issue that still has to be solved, if this comprehensive rehabilitation process is to have a greater impact on the residents' quality of life.



**Fig. 18.4** Number of workers in Habaguanex tourist company. (Source: Echarri (2006) and Delis (2015))

**Table 18.2** Licenses most frequently requested by the self-employed

Type of activity	%
Hiring employees	21
Gastronomic activities	11
Transport activities	9
Renting homes, rooms or spaces	9

Source: Delis (2015)

In relation to the number of tourism-related licenses granted to the self-employed, 954 had been approved by the end of October 2010, according to Old Havana's Municipal Tax Administration Office. This figure rose to 85% at the end of 2012, when, after being opened up to the private sector, 6157 licenses were registered. 4535 of them belonged to residents of the historic centre, 74% of the total (Marrero 2014). As Table 18.2 shows, the licenses most frequently requested by the self-employed were those required to hire employees (21%), those linked to gastronomic activities (11%), transport (9%) and for renting homes, rooms or spaces (9%). In 2014, there were 564 private management rooms, only being surpassed by the State-managed rooms by 3.9% (Delis 2015). This behaviour is a result of government regulations that have allowed rapid growth within the non-State sector. Some experts interviewed believe that private management will experience notable increases in the coming years and may even exceed the State supply.

In addition, the rehabilitation process of the historic city centre included a social program in which social centres for the most vulnerable population sectors have been built. In this way, institutions such as the following were founded: health centres for pregnant women at risk, for children with special needs, and retirement homes and day care centres for the elderly. Public libraries, playgrounds and



gardens, concert venues, museums and other cultural institutions have also been created for both tourist and resident use. It should be noted that the museums as well as their cultural activity also welcome primary school students in a teaching program called “Classroom in the Museum” (OHCH 2011a).

Also, the homes of people who live in renewal areas have been rehabilitated, improving their living conditions. According to Delis (2015), 115 buildings were reconverted for residential purposes during 2008. In this sense, there is still much to be done to meet the demands of the population in terms of housing rehabilitation, and in general in buildings located within the historic city centre. Similarly, models of citizen participation need to be introduced, in the context of a decision-making process which is still very centralised and designed according to major general objectives only.

## 18.6 Final Considerations and Lessons Learned

As has been analysed in this chapter, the conception of tourism as a promoter of the rehabilitation project of Old Havana has resulted in economic development, while maintaining its functions as a residential area and ensuring the quality of life of its inhabitants. The model of tourism marketing and management implemented by the Office of the Historian of Havana strongly involved the local community. Firstly, inhabitants of the Old Havana were prioritized as employees to work in the tourist businesses. Secondly, facilities such as concert venues, museums, playgrounds, gardens among others were created for both tourist and resident use. Finally, the homes of people who lived in renewal areas have been rehabilitated, improving their living conditions.

Currently, the economic impact is even greater, since the promotion of the private sector by the Cuban Government has facilitated the proliferation of restaurants, shops, rooms for rent and other tourist activities in Old Havana. However, the relationships between the public and private sector is an emerging issue in a society in which for many years policies have been handed down unilaterally by government institutions. In this sense, the union of these new entrepreneurs and business associations, for example, could be an initiative to promote their participation in the decision-making process with regards to tourism planning and management in the future.

The Havana Historian Office model has achieved the integration of the resident population with the rehabilitation project, which means that its inhabitants are welcoming of tourism. This fact could be exploited further to the benefit of the receiving communities and visitors. In addition to the creation of common spaces for visitors and residents where they can interact, activities designed around the knowledge of Cuban culture at the hands of local residents could be created. In this way, cultural activities should be more flexible to allow promoting initiatives such as visits to artists’ workshops and gastronomic tours among other activities. When people travel they increasingly demand this type of experience which allows them



to experience the traditions and lifestyle of a destination in conjunction with the locals.

Old Havana has all the ingredients to develop traditional cultural tourism based on its rich material heritage, but at the same time it has the potential to differentiate itself from other destinations in the region if they know how to leverage their intangible heritage. The work done by the OHCH to develop tourism, while maintaining a “living” historic city centre so far has been commendable, although with some outstanding issues. However, it is faced with an imminent challenge. The number of visitors to the city is growing and it is expected that with the opening of the United States market this trend will continue. Therefore, taking into account these forecasts, the necessary measures should be anticipated and taken so this World Heritage Site can offer visitors a quality experience, and at the same time preserve its vitality and uniqueness.

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