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**DETRADITIONALIZATION AND TOURISM:  
OLD MEMORIES, NEW FUNCTIONS  
AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF CITY IMAGES**

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***Detraditionalization and Tourism:  
Old memories, new functions and the reconstruction  
of city images*** \*

by  
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(ABSTRACT)

The paper opens up with a theoretical interpretation of the process of construction of the identity of cities. It is asserted that globalization entails a growing inter-city competition which, in turn, puts the cities' modernization strategies under pressure. The re-invention of local history and tradition is one of the most valuable competitive resources for city planners, developers and cultural intermediaries to launch modernization. *Inter alia*, tourist resources (primary and secondary) and tourist attraction help cities relocate themselves amongst competitors. The re-invention of local tradition, a process called here *detraditionalization*, implies not only the city's inclusion in international *tourist agendas* — by means of the competitive modernization of local images —, but also the reconstruction of local *heritage* and memories, as well as the architectural *embellishment* and life-animation of the city's historical center. In many historical cities of today, tourism is responsible for significant changes in the local economy

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(investments and job creation), urban preservation and reconstruction, new forms of city networking, revigoration of street life, confrontation of past cultural trajectories with other (future?) possibilities and imageries. Thus, *detraditionalization and tourism* interfere not only with the city's cultural landscape as such, but also with the way it is consumed and lived by both residents and visitors. From the empirical point of view, the case of the Portuguese city of Évora helps substantiate many of the hypotheses put forward.

***Detraditionalization and Tourism:  
Old memories, new functions and the reconstruction of city images***

*"... the civilizations of the past have regarded cities as neither shameful nor inevitable, but as deliberate creations, worth making sacrifices to build, maintain, and embellish."*

(Olsen, 1986)

## **Introduction**

Just as individuals have their own identity, so do cities. Sometimes fleeting, sometimes lasting, these identities are a complex set of attributes which are acquired and transformed or weakened and altered by innumerable circumstances, both internal and external. I will start from this premise in order to analyse some of the relevant aspects of the identity and image of historical cities. In my view, these cities are undergoing a process of redefinition, largely due to the way the heritage landscape is being changed so as to comply with modernization requirements and growing inter-city competition.

The way in which tradition and innovation are being combined in historical cities leads me to characterize the ongoing reconstruction of their identities and images as a process of detraditionalization. I will try therefore to clarify the manner in which I am using this notion and to apply it to the process of image transformation that the Portuguese city of Évora is undergoing.

I would like to point out straight away that this particular notion of detraditionalization stems from the fact that I consider tradition, and likewise innovation, to be first and foremost a cultural narrative or a "point of view". Whereas, in its workings, tradition selects elements of the past, and innovation selects elements of the future, detraditionalization combines and recreates these into a plausible present, neither utopian nor defeatist.

Detraditionalization stems from the recognition that neither tradition nor innovation exist in absolute or pure forms. There are elements of tradition which are potentially anti-traditionalist, just as there are non-modernizing components within innovation. A judicious selection of the former —the non-traditionalist elements of tradition— and the rejection of the latter —the non-innovative elements of innovation— should ideally guarantee the successful detraditionalization of the image of any city. However, the possibilities with which cities are faced are in most cases far more favorable to the rejection of traditional elements of tradition than to the acceptance of the modernizing factors of innovation. Therefore, the realistic meaning which I want to attribute to detraditionalization is that of a balance sheet favorable to the non-traditionalist and innovative sides of tradition which, more often than not, is realized as a paradoxical process of *innovative conservation* of tradition.

In general, the UNESCO designation of historical cities as World Heritage Cities induces noticeable changes in the local landscapes. Leaving this aside for the moment, I shall however say that the city which has inspired these considerations —Évora, in southern Portugal— being itself a World Heritage City, seems to be a good example from which to argue for the innovation that the conservation of artistic, architectural and monumental patrimony can represent. Under certain conditions, it is clear that the listing of this city by UNESCO (beyond the fact that it has greatly increased the number of tourists attracted to it) shows that its detraditionalization has specific local effects. Besides, UNESCO's designation has simultaneously projected the city beyond its own boundaries. The localized city has thus, one can argue, gained a global dimension. Symbolically, detraditionalization, international tourism and UNESCO's recognition are altogether helping residents find an emancipatory ingredient for their social identity, inasmuch as they see themselves as curators of the heritage of humankind, proud hosts of foreigners and direct participants in a cosmopolitan world<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This involves the interaction of the local and the global realms. Santos (1995: 262-5) argues that the recognition of a common heritage of humankind may induce a sentiment of sociopolitical emancipation as far as the "awareness of the new opportunities for transnational creativity and solidarity" arises therefrom. In this sense, the cosmopolitan spirit that is likely to evolve out of this awareness is radically different from the *aesthetic cosmopolitanism* referred by Lash and Urry (1994: 256) which stresses the individual capacity for making comparative evaluations with the help of cultural and sensory mechanisms.

## Detraditionalization, Heritage and City Tourism

Just as society undergoes transformations of varying nature and intensity, so do cities<sup>2</sup>. Just as the individual's identity is under continuous recomposition, so is that of the city. Whether the analysis made is synchronic and comparative or diachronic and evolutionary, the ambivalence of the identity of the city derives mainly from the fact that, although it is forged locally, it requires outside public recognition. The materiality of a city conceived in terms of *what the city is, what is the area of its influence, and what it does*, is rarely perceived by outside visitors. The material elements, locally defined, of the city's identity then become weaker or distorted as the distance between the observer and the observed increases. This identity forged locally is disembedded from its primacy of place by a variety of symbolical, cultural and representational elements in which the visible expressions of history, memory and the past are included. While not eliminating *in toto* the material attributes of the city, its public image is increasingly a composite image made of abstract qualities and values, aesthetic considerations, and instantaneous appreciations. These are not, however, any less efficient forms of defining a city, since the latter can also be identified according to what it *seems to be*, what it *represents* and what it *has to offer* to our senses and emotions.

This combination of material and immaterial in the configuration of identities, of individuals and cities alike, is part of a *sensuous sociology* which seems to be growing at the present time. From Simmel (1981) to Foucault (1979) or Elias (1994), to name just a few renowned scholars, many have written about the pertinence of qualitative elements (visual, symbolic, aesthetic and sensory) for the definition of societal arrangements.

Tourism is of course a privileged terrain where these material and immaterial elements come together both at the level of the self-evaluation of tourists and their appreciation of the surrounding world. Recent analyses of contemporary travel and tourism have repeatedly called upon the satisfaction gained from moving from one emotional site to another. Moreover, advertisements of

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<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere I raised the possibility of the characterization of this process of recomposition of city images as an act of *creative destruction of identities* to denote the continuous readjustment of criteria for the self-evaluation of the public image, according to the multiplicity of social situations and economic, political and cultural transformations which characterize contemporary societies (Fortuna, 1995a).

holidays typically employ the language of emotion, and holiday destinations are identified with "relaxation", "opportunity to unwind", or else they provide "excitement", and even a sense of danger.

The historical past of cities and other locales is itself codified in emotional and sensorial terms, as implied in various writings on issues such as the *market authenticity* and the *sacralization of place*<sup>3</sup>, the creation of *places-myth*<sup>4</sup>, the role of *ocularcentrism* and the *commodification of the past*<sup>5</sup> in the making of the modern city or cultural tourism. This is to say that not only places, but above all, time —the historical time embedded into historical markers such as archaeological ruins, monuments, and prestigious buildings— is submitted to a process of canonization, endorsing tourist appeal. However this needs clarification. To contextualize such tourist appeal for the past, one could make use of two major contributions: on the one hand, Walter Benjamin's thesis on the "philosophy of history", where this most celebrated thinker of modernity strongly argues that the meanings of our social past and memory can be fully grasped only in the light of our present (Benjamin, 1992a); on the other hand, the argument put forward by John Urry (1995) according to whom, in view of the collective frustration, risk and ambivalence that characterize the times we are living in today, the past may function as either a countervailing "resort" or an open field for the free-floating re-creation of meanings. This is all the more important since the reproduction, both mechanical and social, of the city markers flattens out and destroys the city's uniqueness in space. Under this standardization of landscapes, the city history, seen through its physical markers, is probably what makes it unique.

What is implied hereby is that the fascination of the tourist city derives from its historical manifestations and temporalities which then must be ornamented and aestheticized.<sup>6</sup> This places the onus on the city as a whole to continue to

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<sup>3</sup> MacCannell (1989: 43-45) describes various stages or phases in the process of *sacralization*: (1) naming; (2) framing and elevation; (3) enshrinement; (4) mechanical reproduction; (5) social reproduction.

<sup>4</sup> Shields (1991: 61) pays detailed attention to the different practices and rituals performed by tourists in the process of *mythification* of sites.

<sup>5</sup> Urry (1990) has demonstrated the extent to which consumer culture and visual culture are subsidiary to one another and are both constitutive of the contemporary touristic practice, namely in historical sites.

<sup>6</sup> It not surprising that enshrining places tends to subsume them into the authenticity market, whereby they are promoted as tourist attractions. The spectacularization of city's historical

increase the aesthetic value of its heritage, even though, as happens quite often, its value and historical significance is instrumentalized and subjected to various changes and modulations of meanings and images<sup>7</sup>, which are all part of the above-mentioned process of detraditionalization.

### **City Images and Inter-City Competition**

Generally speaking, we can say that the image of a city fluctuates between two poles: modernist images and heritage images (Mons, 1992). The *modernist images* place the emphasis on competition, technology, business and on the internationalisation of the city. They advocate an "extensive" culture in which the image is projected beyond nearby boundaries (local or regional) to a national or a transnational audience. In turn, the *heritage image* portrays expressions of local and regional life, habits, celebrations, rituals and ceremonies, as well as architecture and the quality of the environment, thus promoting the management of resources and symbols. These images advocate an "intensive" approach where the emphasis is placed on local or regional identities and cultures. Neither type of images are stagnant. On the contrary, they complement and juxtapose each other, thus forming a hybrid image of the city (Sciorra, 1996) which emerges as simultaneously an awareness of the past, an investment in the present and a perspective on the future (Mons, 1992).

The historic patrimony, the past and the memory of the city are ingredients in this interconnection of images which are used strategically to promote the city. An example of this interconnection can be seen in the succession of historical inventories of cities and nations and in the increase in conservation and

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centers is part and parcel of this process. It is not uncommon that archaeological ruins, monuments, museums, prestigious buildings and the like, are increasingly submitted to various forms of embellishment. Artificial light, sound and life-animation are common devices which contribute to their ambiguous status (Shields, 1991). The outcome of this is that, once initiated, this aestheticization of historical city centers cannot be stopped and, as argued elsewhere, "the show must go on" (Fortuna, 1997b).

<sup>7</sup> This issue deserves an in-depth understanding of the key role played by cultural intermediaries who, to my knowledge, have remained relatively marginalized in studies of tourism. By cultural intermediaries, I am referring to a specific group of experts, acting as creators, and translators of cultural goods, images and discourses. They can be travel journalists or travel agents, tourist guides or consultants, museum curators, policy makers, even hotel managers, and specialized *chefs* who contribute to the free circulation of cultural narratives within the global cultural and tourist imagery.



renovation projects. The frenetic proliferation of these projects (Peixoto, 1997) has led to tensions and conflicts about the limits and the management of collective historical legacy (Poulot, 1995). This proliferation, which is intensified by inter-city competition, reveals a universal process of revaluation of heritage as a symbolic resource, used as a strategy for the modernization of the city images. Thus, heritage, local memories and narratives have been the object of a “reinvention” of their social significance and their functions (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), in the sense that their very traditionalism is being converted into innovation capital. It is in this process of reconstruction of meanings and functions that what I call the detraditionalization of heritage occurs, and, by implication, the detraditionalization of the image of the city itself. This implies the active forgetting or the *symbolic divestment* (McCracken, 1990: 87) of some of the attributes and traditional uses of local patrimony, and, simultaneously, the addition of new ones, or *sacralization* (MacCannell, 1989: 43-45). Only in this way can the detraditionalization of heritage work as the guarantee of cities' modernization.

My reading of Walter Benjamin, according to whom the meaning of the past is prone to adaptation by the human spirit (Benjamin, 1992a), allows us to think of the loss of any perennial quality of history as a guarantee of the link between past and present. The fact that the active forgetting to which the past is submitted is always selective, however, brings with it a complex process of individual and collective self-reflection. The latter encompasses not only the evaluation of our social *hic et nunc* but also the definition of what can be changed, regardless of its being more or less deeply rooted in tradition.

By thinking along these lines we can understand the growing attention that cities have been giving to their historical patrimony and their monuments as a resource for their image (Ashworth and Turnbridge, 1990). From what I said earlier, however, it is obvious that neither the recognition of the existence of a monumental patrimony, nor the care which is taken to conserve it, suffice on their own to give patrimony a role in the process of detraditionalization<sup>8</sup>. It

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<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, we can say that many of today's monuments have as their principal objective the reinforcement of tradition. They are “etymological” or “intentional” monuments in the terminology of Alois Riegl “built with the specific objective of keeping the memory of a determined act present and alive in the consciousness of future generations” (Riegl, 1984: 35). Also according to the Austrian thinker, there are other monuments -the “artistic and historical monuments” (*ibidem*)- whose value and public recognition stem not from the intentional act of its creators, but from the enlargement of the concepts of history, art history and memory, as these

needs to be “put into practice”, made accessible, visited and consumed in a creative fashion<sup>9</sup>.

Transforming patrimony and memory into objects is part of the time warp that cities offer as a way to become competitive. We are dealing with the random conjugation of the past (heritage) with the present and future (modernist), contained in the free construction of a hybrid image of the urban environment. The time warp is transformed into the very annihilation of time, which as Sansot argues, is equal to a decharacterized re-reading of the real history of the town itself (Sansot, 1988). Both these social constructions – patrimony as an “object” and the annihilation of time – highlight the need to place the issue of a city’s identity in the context of a symbolic economy which takes into account the resources, agents and processes which govern the current conversion of the urban environment. This is particularly true of those which have placed a permanent mark on history and civilisation, in terms of the décor and the aestheticization of the daily life of the city (Featherstone, 1991).

Although tourists are responsible in their own way for the banalisation of time and the historical and monumental patrimony, they are obviously not the only ones involved. In fact, they find themselves among the potential viewers of the detraditionalized image which the historical city uses to promote itself. This does not mean that tourists cannot be seen as promoters and passers-on of this image. But it is first and foremost the tourist agencies, the artists and designers, the media, the technical advisers and the politicians, as well as institutions and entities (local or otherwise), who are in charge of constructing new images of historical cities. This is especially true in terms of media icons. As with any other act of communication, the image of the city which these cultural intermediaries transmit does not permit global and uniform interpretations, because they are subject to the interpretation of autonomous receptors (Pellegrino, 1994). These receptors can interpret freely everything which is done or said in the city or about it as a message and an image of the

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developed from the XVIII century onwards and whose legitimation are the result of a specialized and erudite knowledge.

<sup>9</sup> Heritage and memory thus evolve into a kind of “historical” object. They are “special” objects because their usefulness has no measure, which makes them similar to luxury items, whose value, ownership and viewing are subjective, symbolical and situational. They generate an affective and emotional effect on people. The different ways in which they are reproduced tend to project them onto an increasingly large market and as they increase in extent they lose the intensity of their “real” value (Benjamin, 1992b).

city's identity. Thus, one-off events (for example fairs, exhibitions, conferences or sports meetings), or longer-lasting initiatives (such as nominations for Cultural Capital of Europe), or more permanent nominations (such as for example the listing of Heritage Cities), can be used and converted into a promotional tool for cities. Even when this is not the initial intention, the promoters of these initiatives are unable to prevent these images being used, inside and outside the city.

### **The City of Évora: A case of detraditionalization**

It is with these points in mind that I would like to concentrate now on the alteration of the image of the city of Évora which, as I understand it, has been taking place most noticeably since the mid-70's. I will start by saying that the most widely spread image of Évora throughout this century has been that of a small inland town, insular and traditional, politically conservative, dominated by a group of families and small groups of socially influential people. The town was seen to depend mostly on economic sectors linked to agriculture. Its central position in the region and its role as administrative capital had little influence on the local urban space. Having peaked during the Portuguese Renaissance period, the image of the city retained from this period only a few examples of monuments and architecture of religious inspiration. These illustrated the long-lasting dominant presence of the Church and they were symbols that the city had kept of an inert past. Finally, the stereotype of the good-natured local from the Alentejo region was another ingredient in a picture of a stagnant city, living in a present with no perspectives on the future, controlled by external circumstances, without the dynamics or the capacity to invert the course of its marginality.

Évora is a small-size city<sup>10</sup>, situated in a region which is predominantly agricultural. At the beginning of the 80's agriculture was the largest sector in terms of the number of people employed (38.4% of the working population). The local economy until recently was very dependent on the agribusiness

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<sup>10</sup> In 1991, in the city of Évora there were 53.754 inhabitants. The city "inside the walls", made up of the quarters of Saint Antão, Saint Mamede, Saint Peter and part of the Cathedral quarter, had 7.842 inhabitants. The remaining 30.252 lived "outside the walls" (part of the Cathedral quarter and Canaviais parish).

sector, and there was a very fragile technological and organizational structure. Traditionally, the city has exercised a considerable influence on the surrounding region (Gaspar, 1972), as it is the main urban and administrative center in the Alentejo.

It was at the end of the 70's and at the beginning of the 80's that Évora's role as the regional capital gained in importance, as the expectations raised by the development of Agrarian Reform began to fail. The deruralization of the Alentejo, understood as the result of the crisis in employment and the decreasing number of jobs in agriculture, imposed new challenges on the local agribusiness sector and, by the same token, on the political and administrative management of its social consequences over the city as a whole. Thus, one can say that the detraditionalization of the city is linked to the effects of the deruralization of the region which has left permanent marks on the local employment structure<sup>11</sup>.

In 1991, the city of Évora had a slightly higher percentage of the working population in employment than the national average (47% versus 44.6%)<sup>12</sup>. At this time, the division of the working population resident in the city reveals that the tertiary sector employed most people (74%), followed by the secondary sector (23%) and the primary sector (3%) (INE,1991). The city has, as one would expect, a strong tertiary profile and there is a noticeable business dynamics, to be seen in the 406 enterprises which have started up since 1990. However, 179 of these do not have any employees working for them (Geoideia/CME, 1995)<sup>13</sup>.

As the information about permits granted by the City Council between 1982 and 1995 shows, the growth in the tertiary sector is predominantly the result of *changes from other uses to a tertiary use*. These represent 56.4% (260 cases) of the 523 permits granted. Permits for the *improvement or renovation* of

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<sup>11</sup> At the level of the district, the percentage of the working population employed in the primary sector was 43.3% in 1960, having decreased to 16.4% in 1981, and 9.3% in 1991.

<sup>12</sup> The same was true of the percentage in employment when analyzed by gender, that is to say 40% for women and 58.3% for men whereas the national figures were 35.5% and 54.3% respectively (Geoideia/CME, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> The analysis of the situation in the old part of the city is made more difficult by certain social factors, such as the high number of elderly residents. They are highly vulnerable to the rapid changes which may take place in the center. In 1978, 17.6% of the population were above the age of 65, and in 1991 this number had increased to 26.2%.

existing units numbered 169, with most of these (71.2%) having been granted in the five-year period between 1991-95 (idem; idem). Administrative and financial services and, especially restaurants, bars, discos, hotels, terraces and craft outlets are responsible for the huge increase in the number of permits to continue or begin to run a commercial establishment in the city, responding to the local tourist demand<sup>14</sup>. Taken as a whole, the installation of these services illustrates a functional reconversion based on new social dynamics, in the areas of tourism, leisure and the commercialization of local and regional artefacts. As for the terraces, whose number has increased sixfold between 1984 and 1996, their proliferation is particularly meaningful from a sociological point of view because they represent the reconfiguration of the old part of Évora as an area open to the public, be they residents or visitors. Hand-in-hand with this is the invitation to stroll around the old city center, to consume and to socialize in the open air, and thus, in a nutshell, the recreation of the street's cultural value<sup>15</sup>.

This valorization of the public space has faced both restrictive and pro-active policies on the part of local authorities. The former included, for example, measures to restrict traffic in the city "inside the walls", and the provision of alternative methods of transport, namely minibuses and car parks (Park and Ride Schemes). Amongst the more supportive cultural policies is the one called "Long Live the Street!", which is designed to promote the "participation of users" and to encourage the "break with the formalism of the dominant aesthetic and the recuperation of different forms of expression" (Câmara Municipal de Évora, 1996)<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> According to the estimates of the city council itself, the number of visitors probably reached 280,000 by 1990 (Fortuna and Peixoto, 1997). It is likely that this number has continued to increase, but the temporary reduction in the number of visitors registered between 1991 and 1993 means that the estimates made by Farinha (1995) of 500,000 is far too high. Even so, it is worth noting that in a study on the socio-environmental impact of tourism on 25 European and North-American cities, sponsored by UNESCO, Évora appears in a still sustainable position as regards overcrowding.

<sup>15</sup> Often, the recreation of a cultural street value is associated with an increased commercial activity, as has happened with the alteration, stimulated by tourism, in the physical aspect of the street known as "*5 de Outubro*" (formerly "Selaria"). This street is the main axis between two symbolic and touristic points in the city, the Giraldo Square and the historical zone around the Roman Temple (Ladeira *et al.*, 1992).

<sup>16</sup> In the presentation of the latest edition of this event, it is sustained that it "constitutes a cultural and tourist attraction which will contribute to an increase in the economic dynamic of the historical part of the city, by encouraging more visitors to spend more time there. They will stay longer not only because of the city and its monuments, but also because of the artistic events which will reanimate the multicultural aspect of Évora which has always been present. This

In small-size places, tourism is potentially the cause of inflation in the cost of living, and Évora has not escaped from this negative effect. On the other hand, tourism is equally an agent which can help economies of scale in a positive sense in small cities. I am not only thinking of the renovation and growth in primary tourist resources (museums, galleries, shows, patrimony in general) or secondary resources (equipment, accommodation, infrastructures, transport networks, environment) which Évora has benefited from in the last few decades, when it became the main medium-sized tourist town in Portugal. I am also thinking of symbolic economies of scale. In reality, much of the local commerce, especially in terms of crafts and restaurants, has increased as a direct influence of the desire to benefit from the “hordes” of tourists who regularly visit the city<sup>17</sup>. Curiously, however, these are good examples of the detraditionalization of the image and the identity of the city, following on from my arguments in the initial part of this paper. They link and juxtapose a heritage-based dimension (the promotional reinforcement of local and regional culture) with the modernist dimension (the optimization of potential tourist demand).

It is obvious that under the effect of the tourist market, the typical crafts and local or regional gastronomy in Évora, as in any other place, runs the risk of losing precisely the characteristics which make it culturally significant at a local or a regional level. However, particularly in the field of regional gastronomy, the City Council has tried to accompany the influence of the tourist industry by running “Alentejan Cookery Competitions”<sup>18</sup>. I believe that these are admirable and successful attempts at archaeological gastronomy, because they have brought about the revival of innumerable traditional cookery recipes, including various sweets. This is a demonstration of the dynamic effect of the symbolic economy I referred to earlier. If it were not for the impact of these initiatives this culinary tradition from the Alentejo, a cultural patrimony which originated among the locals and in the convents, would have remained inaccessible and lost in the mists of time. The “search” in the regional gastronomical memory

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dynamic will be of added value to the hotel industry and to local commerce and will reinforce the cultural life of the residents” (Câmara Municipal de Évora, 1997).

<sup>17</sup> As we are dealing with a small city, it is worth noting that there were 31 craft outlets and 89 restaurants in 1997.

<sup>18</sup> These competitions are organized annually and are now in their 16th edition. Equally regular are the well known “Pork week” and “Mutton Week”, each of which in 1997 had 48 local restaurants participating.

bank that these initiatives have caused, is today, without doubt, defined by the rules of the market, and is marginalized from domestic cooking. There are various reasons (the preparation time, the costs involved and the skill necessary) as to why most of this “typical” food was set aside from normal local eating habits, and why today these dishes are only available in restaurants and bakeries. That does not mean that they are no longer authentic, but they are subject to reinvention. Being reintroduced to the market, they gain their own meaning, as significant elements in a local culture which undergoes detraditionalization as part of its own promotion.

This situation illustrates the way in which the city seems to have found in the valorization of its own local and regional culture, including its historic patrimony and its monuments, a privileged mediating instrument of its own image. In fact, in its mediatic icons which are an image and a *modernist* resource, the city of Évora presents itself through a markedly creative incorporation of heritage, historical monuments and local cultural references, which together produce a *hybrid* and detraditionalized image of the city, showing a futurist perspective to the outside world, modulated by the awareness of a local and regional past.

### **Évora: A symbolically global city?**

Something similar has been happening since 1986 with the historical, monumental, architectural, and archeological patrimony in Évora. It has also been used for the renovation of the city's identity in various forms: through the detailed study made thereof and the subsequent publication of these studies — one such work among others worthy of note was written by Túlio Espanca (1913-1993) (Espanca, 1993); through its conservation and its positioning in the urban environment by the local council; and through its international recognition, which culminated in 1986, in the certification of the city “inside the walls” as World Heritage by UNESCO. The city of Évora, having become a World Heritage Center, is a place which has overflowed its boundaries and which is now part of the global picture. In a cultural sense, only that which is unique and locally valuable can become global. The recognition of Évora as a heritage city is evidence of the singular nature of this Alentejan city's cultural, historical and artistic qualities. It has thus been projected onto an imaginary universal plane.

In the incorporation of the city in the universal there is a victory of the global over the local. Because it is not a question of power, but a question of symbolic conversion of the meaning of the city, neither the local nor the transnational authorities that promote and certify the patrimony can prevent it from being used as the "object" of a symbolic economy. This economy has very precise practical effects, and the influx of tourists which Évora has witnessed since the end of the 80's is an unavoidable example.

Even if from a global point of view the recognition of local patrimony is a victory, inversely, from a local point of view, it represents a challenge. The idea of historical patrimony is an idea of a legacy necessary to maintain and to conserve in order for it to be transmitted. The status of universal and priceless assets of Human Heritage obliges the city to become ultimately responsible, to become its faithful holder and zealous guardian.

This can have practical effects on the city, and tourist demand is one of its main expressions. Without stopping to make a detailed analysis of the impact of tourism on the local economy in Évora, I will limit myself to pointing out the contribution it has made to the increase in the tertiary sector and in employment locally. To conclude, I will refer briefly to some of the main facets of the detraditionalization of the imaginary and of social life in the city. I will refer firstly to some aspects of the endogenous socio-cultural impact, which directly or indirectly stem from tourism in the city, and then I will refer to external aspects, more appropriate to assess the responses of tourists themselves as "consumers" of the city.

As for the former, as I mentioned earlier, it is the conversion of patrimony into a cultural and tourist resource which stands out. Tourism itself is included in the discursive strategy and in the production of promotional images of the city, and at the same time, in its urban management, most visibly "inside" the city walls. This urban planning has halted the degradation which the conditions and the buildings in this area had been subject to in the last decades.

Patrimony and urban planning are closely inter-related and it's worth highlighting two of the more unusual effects on the recuperation of public spaces. The first refers to the controls on traffic and the increasing number of pedestrian areas and the revalorization of the street. The second has to do with the attention given to the risk of desertification in the old part of the city with the



ensuing marginalization of the more vulnerable social groups. Setting aside other considerations, such as, for example, benefits of an environmental nature, I will only say that as a result of these guidelines, the public space in Évora has been revitalised both in terms of social and cultural aspects.

The pronounced presence of tourists and visitors in this space provides an opportunity for multicultural interaction which, despite the lack of a detailed analysis of this feature, can be seen to have increased the sense of civic pride and identity of local residents. Simultaneously, it tears through their reference points and, indirectly, it reinforces the cosmopolitan sense of their citizenship. As regards the way that tourists behave in Évora, which in itself is also an element of the detraditionalization of the city, we can start by saying that the dominant sociological profile of the tourist in Évora is that of a young adult, of either sex, of middle-class European origin, with relatively high educational and cultural capital. Among the reasons given for visits to the city are the whole architectural and monumental ensemble, primarily the historical monuments (72.9%), and the other local architecture (67.8%)(Fortuna, 1995c).

What makes the monuments particularly significant in the urban scene, besides their physical and architectural dimension, is their function not only as part of the memory of the past, but as social narratives constructed from this past. This is especially true as most of Évora's monumental ensemble corresponds to what Alois Riegl termed an "artistic and historic monument", whose value derives from its previous social use and not from the political celebration of events or people (Riegl, 1984). Deprived of their "structural materiality" the monuments do not, however, lose any of their symbolic drama. They are elements of the metaphorisation of the city which invite us to imagine the collective and individual past (Fortuna, 1995b). In a culture which, as I have affirmed, is based on living for the moment and immediate gratification, the re-invention of the collective and individual past is an act of search for the roots of identity and the consolidation of the place of individuals in the world. Herein lies the reason why tourists and visitors are seduced by monuments. In cities which are especially dense historically and in the number of monuments, as is the case in Évora, tourists and visitors, as a result of their distance from local history and culture, allow themselves to exaggerate the symbolic value of the places which they visit, and thus they make conjectures which would never occur to the residents (Olsen, 1986), in an act of pure reverberation, i.e.,

through the activation of mnemonic processes able to generate creative ideas and fantasies (Bachelard, 1969).

The many stimuli which the tourists receive and the digressions in which they indulge in the historical centers of World Heritage Cities can be compared to the liberating effect which the lifestyle in a metropolis exerts on the mind of an individual. In effect, in a very similar way to the qualities that Simmel attributed to the city of Rome, in these historical and monumental cities "l'individu, qui prend conscience de lui-même à l'intérieur de cette image d'ensemble, perd la position que son milieu socio-historique, clos et étroit, lui avait octroyé. Il se voit soudain inséré et engagé dans un système de valeurs prodigieusement variées..." (Simmel, 1989: 52). Thus, the tourist amplifies to the maximum his/her psycho-emotional freedom and reduces to the minimum his/her moral constraints and other forms of social control. It is certainly for this reason that 69.6% of tourists believe that Évora allows them to attain a very high level of pleasure and personal harmony (Fortuna, 1995c). No doubt, these are transitory and imaginary states of mind. Still, we ought to recognize that the city is not read in a uniform manner and that the manipulation of its meanings and images varies according to the mindset and the position from which the visitors evaluate themselves.

Imagine for just a moment the experience of a tourist at the Roman Temple in Évora. It is a semiotic operation *in vivo* which annuls the technical or discursive effects of guides, pamphlets and other historical or tourist texts. All these might have been a determining factor in the *ex ante* choice of place to visit, but in the immediate relationship which is established in the place itself, the physical presence of the tourist is made up of his very absence and digressions (Landowski, 1996). Spatially, the monument becomes deterritorialized, and thus the different timespans involved cancel each other out. These are replaced by self-contemplation, and the way in which the archeological relics and the city are seen, as a whole, becomes dependent on the inward reflection of the individual and the intuition of the moment.

If Évora provides a sense of pleasure and freedom to those who visit, it is because the city is itself a special place. If it allows people to digress, even if what is produced are contentious ideas about the city's aesthetic, architectural and political order, made by individuals who imagine themselves to be in a

state of individual sovereignty, it is because the city represents, in their eyes, temporarily and symbolically, *the center of the world*.

Évora —World Heritage City— is, thus, a global city. Perhaps, only symbolically global. Yet, symbols have their own effects on social life. Évora represents a culture which universalises itself from specific fragments of heritage. The efficacy of this patrimonialization is linked not only to the exterior and visitors, but also to the lifestyles, the local cultural expressions and identities and their respective forms of representation. The recognition of Évora as World Heritage, is a symbol, as well as a resource and a challenge. If, as I said before, what I discussed here were only partial views of an urban identity undergoing a process of detraditionalization, there are indications that if Évora is able to *preserve in an innovative fashion its tradition*, the history of this city is about to be told in the following way: Once upon a time, when Évora was a traditional, self-contemplating and culturally stagnant city, ...

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