

SOME DEFINITIONS

(drafted by S. Mutal over the years
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1. Historic City:

"as those active human settlements strongly conditioned by a physical structure originating in the past and recognizable as representing the evolution of its people"

It is fundamental that a historic center be inhabited and form a live cultural nucleus.

Abandoned areas and monumental or archaeological complexes are excluded because they lack a continuous organized social life.

*For purposes of the Built Heritage Management Courses reference could also be made to archaeological sites and generally to Built Heritage.
When it comes to **Management** and **Financing** and **Sustainable Human Development**, the criteria are similar.*

This definition recognizes that a historical center is not constituted only by a material and physical heritage.

It comprises **not only**

- Buildings,
- Streets,
- Squares,
- Fountains,
- Arches,
- Sculptures,
- Lamp posts,

but includes the **natural landscape**, and of course:

- Its residents,
- Customs,

- Jobs,
- Economic and social relations,
- Beliefs and urban rituals.

This definition also includes the important presence of the past and understands by “historical” all those cultural, architectural, and urban expressions which are recognized as relevant and which express the social and cultural life of a community.

It eliminates any selection based on restricted interpretation of the term historical and an outlook which places more value on **past** periods of history.

We can affirm that it is also the recognition of a society or a social group which qualifies a sector of the city as a historical area and interrelates with the totality of the Urban Compound, and in a way is **intimately** related to the Metropolis in various forms. It need not be a “ghetto” or a “gentrified” segment of the urban landscape. **Today** in 2008, more than ever an interaction is in place to avoid a new phenomenon of gentrification “banlieus”, “favelas”, and “shanty towns”. A negative social-economic segregation; leading at times to social exclusion.

2. For easy reference, a list of terms used in historic City/ Center interventions and monuments restoration is hereby given:

Protection:

The act of ensuring (usually by way of legislation) that a specific property is *safeguarded* from destruction, change in use and appearance, etc., laws, by-laws and regulations. Listing and designations are the most common instruments used for protection. Legislation to this effect is at times obsolete and not in conformity with present-day local urban legislations and urban dynamics of balanced **sustainable development**.

Preservation: (Is a regressive term.)

Keeping safe from injury, decay, destruction and change, allowing no alteration of original situation. Although there is no significant semantic difference between the concepts of preservation and conservation, the latter allows for more changes - as by definition new elements may have to be put in place.

Conservation:

Action taken to prevent decay, embracing all acts that prolong the life of a given property, assuming that a considerable amount of existing material and style would have to, and should be, retained.

In built heritage, it should be dynamic.

In movable objects, it may well have a “static” connotation, museum objects, “reserves”. (See conservation centers for movable property.)

Restoration:

Returning something as nearly as possible to its **original form or condition**; reviving its original character. An extreme interpretation of this concept supports the re-establishment of a completed “ideal” state that **may have never existed**. This is at times being practiced, negatively so in most cases.

Renovation:

Improvement of existing (usually physical) conditions of a building, not necessarily concerned with the replication of its original state.

Urban Renewal:

Broad, encompassing concept associated with a wide range of interventions in the urban fabric.

It is used interchangeably with development and rehabilitation.

It refers to decisions made and actions taken in order to bring existing built up areas - which have become physically, functionally and/or socio-economically obsolete - **back into a worthwhile state**, taking into account “economic returns” for the local government and population and incorporating elements of local identities, where possible, and in fact needed to be comprehensive.

Adaptive Reuse:

A restored, renovated or recuperated building or set of buildings can be made to have new functions, while keeping to the basic standards of restoration or other past bona-fide interventions, while addressing the needs of the new use which needs to be clarified and defined at the outset.

An ethics in Adaptive Reuse of Historic Sites could also be in place in the future.

Redevelopment:

New plan for a specific area of the city, entailing the clearance of the existing built up area before the construction of new structures with a new layout. It may include insertion of new buildings of quality

architecture blending with the past. New architecture in old settings is an excellent means of conservation.

Reconstruction:

Rebuilding of something no longer in existence, with particular care (or not) of producing an exact replica of the original condition and situation (archeological and others).

Rehabilitation:

Bringing back a certain level of efficiency and/or returning to a state of functionality; put back in function, make the **fabric** or **ensemble** to perform its functions (usually associated with current standards) and not necessarily with traditional building techniques/materials. This when deemed necessary for sustainability and for mitigation against natural disasters.

It is to be noted that rehabilitation includes a set of correlated areas of intervention in all aspects of the urban setup, urban design and urban services in context of urban management.

Revitalization:

Bringing back new vitality; bringing (a building, a community, a neighborhood, activities, business, etc.) back to life; regenerating. It may involve allocation of new uses. The term is the opposite for a “museum city” and does not include revitalization of an existing social/economic dynamism, but its proper order and dimension, including the informal sector.

Recuperation:

Taking into possession; recovering a condition previously lost and assigning to it the same or new functions.

Improvement:

Any action aimed at making the value rise, or the level of comfort, utility and efficiency (physical, socio-economic, cultural) or for a better appearance; it may be considered a **synonym** for **upgrading** although this concept seems more appropriate to use when referring to shelter or infrastructure components, in a rather restricted manner.

Enhancement:

Increasing, “making greater” (value, desirability, attractiveness); it allows for a fair degree of change and at times, additional elements, not necessarily corresponding to the original state of the site. New public spaces, new architecture, upgrading street furniture. In common parlance “puesta en valor” in Latin America referred and still refers to

tourism attraction, visitation and revenues (mise en valeur - old concept for tourism etc. of archaeological sites).

Maintenance:

The upkeep of property and equipment allowing the total infrastructure to perform its specific functions adequately. This issue is one of the **bottlenecks** of **continuity/sustainability and adequate conservation**.