

# Revitalisation Initiatives: The Enhancement Of Cultural Heritage In Greater Resistencia

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the urban planning initiatives in revitalisation as usefull approach for intervention in derelict areas and buildings who had important role in the past and the government decided to restore for cultural and social purposes. Revitalisation policies tend to address urban growth within built-up cores by enhancing historical areas and derelict areas and neighborhoods. Meanwhile, urban expansion tends to be related to either suburban growth in developed regions or informal settlements in developing countries. Within the last forty years, city councils in all regions have needed to address urban issues with ever tighter budgets and so they do experience similar problems, particularly in relation to planning issues. Greater Resistencia, a city located in one of the poorest region within Argentina, was always been supported by National Government, is not exception to this rule. These initiatives can be seen as starting point to fuelled local economy and reduced dependence from National Government. This paper will explore one of the urban revitalization initiatives currently applying in Greater Resistencia (Argentina) and attempts to analyze the achievement and failures, assessing them, by taking examples in Resistencia and recent experiences in Preston (UK)..

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## 1. Introduction

This paper relates to previous experiences and debate, among researchers as part of the Network Projects: 'Policy Review of Revitalisation metropolitan areas: A comparative view of experiences in countries of this network' and second project named "Políticas de Revitalización y Áreas Metropolitanas: nuevos desafíos en planificación de ciudades de Indonesia y Argentina" approved by the Secretaría de Políticas Universitarias del Ministerio de Educación de la Nación (Argentina). Argentina have long tradition of plans conceived at different scales that have either failed to achieve expected results or not been implemented at all. Meanwhile, programs and projects have been successful, accomplished a great deal using loans from international agencies, such as the World Bank and the IADB.

Programmes supported by the donors have been more successful on the ground, but these projects needs to refer to a general framework, as Strategic Plan [1]. Nowadays, they have been implemented some revitalisation schemes by partnership with different stakeholders from public and private sector in Greater Resistencia (Argentina). In addition, from previous research, contrasting different policies already applied

in developed and developing areas, results have shown that revitalisation initiatives seem to be convenient for both regions, since they fuelled local economies. As widely known, United Kingdom have to deal with urban growth in limited land, affordable to be developed in the island. In other words, there is a limit for urban development, even in other countries without size limits, urban increased has to be controlled. That is why the English Government is trying to encourage to restrain the quantity of development in countryside and encourage regeneration in town; such that figure show us 38% of the land developed for new housing in 1985 was previously developed. By 1993, this proportion had increased to 49% [2]

Then, in order to meet the requirement for new housing and, at the same time maintain conservation policies, it is important that full and effective use is made of land within existing urban areas. Experience has shown that there are many opportunities arising from conversions, improvement and redevelopment, for bringing into use neglected, unused or derelict land, and sites suitable for small scale housing schemes.

On the other hands, developing regions as Greater Resistencia, Argentina, must prepare itself to accommodate growth of 6,799 inhabitants/year according to The National Statistic and Census Institute

(INDEC). This population supposed to be located inside the polder protecting from flooding of Parana River. If the city actually continued to grow at this rate, Resistencia city would need to incorporate 1,180 new dwellings per year and a minimum of 30 net hectares of potential development land. As a result, local government needs to find policies that privilege regeneration of existing areas, safer and with complete infrastructure (PDER, 2006).

Therefore, regeneration schemes seem to be “the key policy” to accommodate growth in sustainable way. Government and Resistencia City Council has no official assessment at the moment and, so we would like to explore some examples in Britain and what have done in Resistencia with the purpose to have an overall knowledge of their performance.

## 2. Material and Methods

This research has been developed through literature review and general overview of approaches to revitalisation, with particular reference on analysis of chosen examples. The research has also used information gathered from a number of sources, such as:

- Information produced by researchers at the Institute of Urban Planning and Regional- FAU–UNNE (Argentina), from Jurusan Arsitektur Fakultas Teknik-Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta (Indonesia) and from University of Liverpool (United Kingdom) and from urban managers of Resistencia City Council.
- Data collection and revision of bibliography.
- Selection and analysis of reference cases, regulations and processes developed to address similar problems, contrast it them with chosen examples.
- Analytical stage, i.e. the processing, systematization and analysis of relevant information.
- Conclusions and final recommendations

### 2.1 Revitalization Approaches

From previous research, Purwantiasning (2014) [3] noted, revitalisation has been regarded as activities or efforts to revitalise an area within a city, or part of a city, and return it back to its previous vitality. An area needs to be revitalized when it has suffered both socially and economically, as well as it having encountered degradation to the local infrastructure and utilities. The process of revitalization, then, includes improvement to physical, economic and social aspects, and sound approaches must be able to recognise, exploit and support the potential of the environment of an area or region, including its unique location, history, meaning, identity and image and local wisdom. The activity of building or revitalisation of an area can be implemented, then, through various aspects, either

physical or non-physical. Physical aspects can include the form of a building itself and the infrastructure within it, and non-physical aspects can related to social, economic and cultural aspects of the communities that live in areas in and around the historical sites in question. Some of the important aspects to revitalization related with social and physical intervention are expanded upon briefly below.

Furthermore, from United Kingdom experience these initiatives are known as Regeneration. Government and other agencies can introduce "urban regeneration initiatives"; some policy and strategy referred to regeneration of those areas, for instance, areas with poor environmental quality, derelict building and vacant land or declining local shopping areas, unemployed areas, etc. The aims of the plan could be, for instance, to improve the environment and encourage the development of derelict and disused land.

In addition, The United Kingdom experience stressed that every regeneration policy has to include the assessment, monitoring and evaluation of urban regeneration initiatives requires qualitative as well, as quantitative performance indicators. The current emphasis by the central government on monitoring specific and quantifiable objectives encourages a narrow view of regeneration and one that underplays the possibilities for increased involvement by the community in its governance.

### 2.2 United Kingdom Regeneration experience

The Government estimates that up to 800,000 properties in England are currently standing empty; 700,000 are in private sector. Many of these properties are empty because their owners are finding it difficult to sell them, perhaps because of location, physical state, or market conditions.

Likewise, the Government is spending £1.4 bn this financial year on regeneration initiatives. In addition, substantial European Union Funds are made available for the same purpose. Local authorities are also spending substantial sums. These represent considerable investment, with potential for significant impact on the distribution of household growth.

In order to encourage the reuse of previously used land in the urban areas, the Government has concerted programme of measures to regenerate towns and cities.

Most of the Regeneration initiatives are implementing in Private and Public Partnerships, whose remit to promote the regeneration and re-use of derelict, vacant and under-used land and buildings throughout England. It does this by enabling the public, private and voluntary sectors to work together to promote and achieve economic development, job creation, and environmental improvement [2].

### 2.3 Recent experience in Preston, Lancashire, UK Winckley Square Enhancement Framework

A proactive approach to regeneration of historic areas, such as the Flag Market and Winckley Square, has been taken by Preston City Council by simultaneously acknowledging their historic value and the contribution that they make to the city centre economy. Any further locally developed plans, such as neighbourhood plans and special design guides, have to be in conformity with both The National Planning Policy Framework and Local Strategic Plans and it is expected that they are developed through engagement with local communities to elicit a collective vision. One such example of a recently developed local plan for the city is the Winckley Square Enhancement Framework. Winckley Square is considered the finest example of planned development from the Georgian area within the north west of England and has many of the seven hundred listed buildings that are located within Preston.

In addition, the area forms part of one of the thirteen conservation areas incorporated within the strategic city development plan. Although the Winckley Square area has been somewhat disused and relatively forgotten, its commercial streets dating from the eighteenth century and its neo-classical townhouses have considerable potential for regeneration. As conservation is, nowadays, considered to involve effective management of change, the Winckley Square Enhancement Framework is a plan that has, in compliance with national planning guidelines, been developed with a vision of the revitalisation of this valued heritage setting to enable a mix of workspace, residential dwellings and leisure opportunities befitting the twenty-first century. The aim is to enable Winckley Square to be a thriving quarter for retail, business, culture and leisure, recognised throughout the north of England, with an enlivened atmosphere both day and night.

The Winckley Square area was recognised for its regeneration potential, with its distinctive relationship between its gardens and buildings, and a focus was made on the area as it already had an established commercial and business base. In addition, given its location, Winckley Square is an integral part of the city centre with strong links between the public and private sectors. Initially, a number of issues were identified related to the vitality and viability of the area for investment. The lack of investment in the gardens and in the public realm in general was seen as detrimental to environmental quality of the area. There was perceived to be a need for more investment for better traffic management and lighting. It was considered a challenge to adapt the historical buildings to enable them to meet modern needs for leisure and offices by, for example, facilitating disabled access and the establishment of

more modern systems of information technology. Parking was considered an issue, especially the lack of opportunity for parking directly in front of the business premises. Also, the 'to let' and 'for sale' boards placed upon properties were seen as having a negative visual impact upon the amenity value of the conservation area.

A partnership approach was taken to help respond to these issues and help create a revitalised Winckley Square. As such, the Winckley Square Enhancement Framework was developed through a partnership approach between Preston City Council, Lancashire County Council, Winckley Square Community Interest Company and engagement with local owners and occupiers. Building upon the previous success within the area, it was decided to have further traffic management measures, targeted improvements to a number of the buildings, improvements to the gardens and the public realm, and activities related to promotion and marketing of the area. So far, through the development of a strong partnership with private sector, and by using a set timetable for the implementation of key actions, the approach taken for the Winckley Square conservation area has been successful in securing funding to support delivery. For example, funds from the National Lottery have been granted to help with the ongoing works, and a number of shopfronts within the Cannon Street part of the conservation area have been identified for a scheme to enhance their heritage value, whilst enhancing their appeal for shoppers and visitors. Furthermore, to improve the access, legibility and landscape in the gardens, further funding has been received from the 'Parks for People' restoration fund, with a further partnership having been developed between the Winckley Square Community Interest Company, the Historic Garden Society, and the Civic Trust.



(Source: Promotional material courtesy of Preston City Council)  
Figure 1: The Winckley Square Conservation Area

(N.B: The Winckley Square Conservation Area above has been identified by Preston City Council as having significant potential for regeneration. Through a partnership approach with the community and the private sector, the Council has adopted a planning enhancement framework with a vision of coordinated effort to encourage investment and growth to the area for both business and leisure. Actions for meeting the vision include improvements to the public realm, traffic management measures, targeting improvements to shopfronts, and promotional activities.)

Overall, the development planning for Winckley Square is proving to be a successful approach; projects are not only fitting successfully with the Winckley Square Enhancement Framework and the strategic local plans, they are working well alongside other regeneration projects for the city centre. In terms of landscape design, the Moor Park conservation area has also received two million pounds as part of the 'Parks for People' project to provide, for example, a new events arena, a refurbished observatory, landscaping and the development of a regional skate park. Preston City Council is also investing heavily in the regeneration and relocation of the central market area and enhancing its listed market canopy in order to strengthen the city centre appeal and enliven the area into the evening. As a growth centre for the north of England, that has allocated lots of land for new housing, these revitalization approaches are both well informed, well-coordinated and well timed [4] (For more information check: [www.preston.gov.uk/winckleysquare](http://www.preston.gov.uk/winckleysquare)).

### 3. Results and Discussions

#### 3.1 The refurbishment of Chalet Perrando:

The house is located at the intersection of Avenida Sarmiento and Ayacucho, a high quality area within urban city core. It was built in 1928, designed by the architect Bruno del Mónico and built by Ubaldo Zutiani. It is a symbol of Resistencia's buildings heritage, with compact design from beginning of XX century, with a central core, rounded it by the rooms. The curvature of its walls gives it a pleasing particularity, to which must be added the excellent exterior and interior decoration that complement the whole. It is considered as an urban landmark of the city of Resistencia, but its importance lies mainly in the figure that inhabited it during his life in Resistencia: one of the first doctors of the city: Julio Cecilio Perrando. He came from Buenos Aires, son of immigrants from Genova (Italy) and Spain, he settled down in Resistencia and founded, the first Hospital, it was named after he. When he and his brother passed away in late seventies, the family of his younger brother's personal nurse, kept with the house, because both brothers didn't have descendants. During years, the chalet became rundown. Government was

tried to recover the property but, the process end in legal battle with nurse's family.

Meanwhile, the house was declared Cultural Heritage of the Chaco through Decree No. 2036 of November 28th, 1996. Finally, after 50 years of neglect and when legal battle ended, the chalet have been refurbished by decision of Provincial Government, using The Lottery funds. With investment of 12 million pesos about u\$s 750.000, the sum allowed to rescue the building heritage, gardens and furniture from beginning of XX century, enhancing the value of the house and at the same time, the surroundings areas located in the city centre core. Meantime, the NGO "Asociacion Italiana" claimed, to be their headquarters and to turned the house into Museum of Italian Immigrants and, for different cultural activities. Finally, following the decision of the Provincial Government to recover the property, in October 2013 the restoration works were executed of this cultural heritage of the Chaco and, in 2015 were inaugurated. This initiative must be highlighted as one of the few in history of Resistencia that end successful. The city has several others chalets in different styles located in the city core but, Resistencia City Council has no protection regulation of their buildings heritage.



(Source: <http://www.datachaco.com/noticias/view/24835>,  
<https://www.facebook.com/chaletperrando/photos>,  
<http://www.diarionorte.com/article/123094/la-construccion-del-chalet-un-sueno-acariciado>,  
[http://www.eschaco.com/vernota.asp?id\\_noticia=13051](http://www.eschaco.com/vernota.asp?id_noticia=13051))

Figure 2: Chalet Perrando Before Intervention and After Including Opening Day

### 3.2 The Greater Resistencia experience

An assessment of revitalization strategies, applied through regulations of the Local Government of Resistencia, can be summarized as follows:

1. Intensification of land use within the built-up core through implementation of Resolution 5403/01, where infrastructure and services have been completed, through promotion of a partnership between public and private developers to fuel the economy [5].
2. Pedestrianization of Main Street, Resistencia. Implementation of an urban renewal concept in key areas of the city core, that has enhanced the environment and improved social and tourism activities. Thus, the City Council has developed a pedestrian promenade of 400 metres in length characterized by its amplitude (width) of open views, facilitated by the removal of 'visual contamination' from excessive advertising canopies and bus shelters and the renewal of infrastructure and installation of underground wiring. The established design solutions include, for example, improved pavement circulation, better drainage, the creation of leisure spaces with street furniture ideal for social meetings, the redesign of shops to improve access for ambulances and fire engines, and the provision of traffic lights to cater for blind people. As noted in the *Datachaco Newspaper* in March of 2014, the centre has become "a nice place for meeting, walking, shopping, cultural, social and political events" [4].

In addition Provincial Government have carried out other initiatives in response, mainly to different stakeholders such as:

1. Refurbishment of Chalet Perrando
2. Built of Cultural House located in front of Main Square
3. Refurbishment of Domo del Centenario, huge promenade located in the north of the city, were intervened to be a headquarter of NGO Fundación Urunday and to carry out every 2 years "The Sculptors International Contest" known "Bielal de las Esculturas"
4. Tourist Sightseeing: bus and boat. The 1st one is connecting all those places already mentioned before and others like Government building and Boglietti's House (sculptor) name "Fogon de los Arrieros". There begins the vision to turn Resistencia into a city of Sculpturers. The 2nd one, by boat, gives the

foreigners the opportunity to see the rainforest coast, waterfront of Domo and part of Black river's wetlands.

All these measures began as desire of group of visioners who wanted to follow the 1st vision of brothers Boglietti to transform Resistencia in a "city of Sculptures". Nowadays, the city has more than 500 sculptures located in different parts of the city and the tourist bus has the purpose to show them, or the visitors can discover by walk, connecting Cultural House, Main Square and Chalet Perrando and they can see sculptures along the walk.

Nevertheless, all these initiatives are not included in any Urban Plan just like English study case. They are related with Resistencia citizens' common vision. The Government just follows different demands and help to make them real but they are not organized in a planning framework. In addition, some positive achievements must be highlighted:

Greater Resistencia is a city quite young: with 139 years old, has few buildings which remain from XIX Century, that is in comparison with the city in front, Corrientes, which has more than 400 years and wider architecture heritage. Corrientes City Council has Regulations to protect the architecture heritage in their city core. On the contrary, Resistencia City Council has few townhouses under protection Law. Every owner has to carry out their own proceeding to do so. As a result, when Regulation of densification was approved, the owners preferred to sell their properties and have important revenue from development of the plot, by knocking down their houses and building a tower. The Chalet Perrando is one of few that have been protected. Meantime, the house was renovated, other chalets were knocked down though were in different styles but certainly important heritage, part of the image of the city.

In addition, the densification regulations name 5403 of 2001, was important to regenerate city core by intensifying land use where infrastructure is complete and the area is safer from flooding. This policy was good to fuel local economy since it was the engine of building constructions but, promoted other issues such as traffic congestion in the city core and transformation of houses part of architecture heritage into towers. So the city is changing its image from a pedestrian "friendly city" to a "cold image" of high buildings with similar design.

Unfortunately, the Government has no official assessment regarding any impact of their initiatives already implemented, not even from any probable revenue arising from their investments.

For instance, the office located in Domo, headquarter of Fundación Urunday, is aware that every Bielal can gather about 10,000 visitors per day increasing up to 50,000 visitors during the closing ceremony but they have not assessment regarding

turism and how this event can benefit to city's economy. This is an important gap for politician in decision making.

As mentioned before, in British regeneration initiatives, assessment is key measure, important to improved them and to invest wisely. In regeneration of Liverpool waterfront, the partnership incharge to developed the initiatives wasn't successful at the beginning but after assessment, planners and government had a vision to improved tourism through a flagship "Liverpool city of the Beatles", that was key-measure to improved the city's incomes by revitalising local economy which was one of their key-objetive because Liverpool was one of the poorest city within Britain.



(Sources: 1.<https://www.diariotag.com>, 2.photos by author)

Figure 3: One example of emblematic house that have been demolished. House of Julio Garcia before demolished and after.

#### 4. Conclusions

In summary, regeneration strategies such as Britain experience has shown positive impact. Policies have to be incorporated in a planning framework, at different levels with common objectives. Community engagement and partnership has key role within regeneration schemes. Assessment and monitoring is also another key component of this initiatives.

The Resistencia experience has shown the revitalisation approaches implemented by the local government seem to have been positive impact since the pedestrianisation of main street became a chosen place for social and cultural meeting. The other initiatives such as the refurbishment of Chalet Perrando, the opening a House of Culturas, sculptures path are key initiatives supporting the pedestrian area, since all the area can be enjoy by walk. In this point, the lack of proper traffic management is interfering with the a full accomplishment of the already mentioned revitalisation schemes.

It is also important to have a good evaluation of any initiative, regarding traffic jam and how this could affect the city and the tourism. Economic assessment regarding investment and revenue will also, help to invest wisely in further initiatives. Local and Provincial Government have to be coordinated and also,

be able analysed this shortcoming and put in planning framework.

Regarding the recent refurbishment of Chalet Perrando, remains as a good example of partnership between government and private stakeholders who had worked together to turn the derelict house, part of Resistencia history, to bring into a cultural and social use, contributing to enhance important piece of architecture heritage. The legacy could be a good example to protect important buildings which still remains, waiting for proper policy: preservation law just like the example of Wrickly Square in Britain.

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