



THE RECOVERY OF HISTORICAL CENTRES  
AND THEIR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

IDEASS<sup>CUBA</sup>

Innovation for Development and South-South Cooperation

## Introduction

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Photos of the Image fund of the Master Plan and of Miguel Bàez



**The City** of Havana, founded at the beginning of the 16th century, is graced with a remarkable heritage of urban and architectural monuments in its historical centre. Due to the natural evolution of the city over the last century and a half the area became a marginal zone, and for several decades it was characterized by a marked deterioration of its buildings, the supplanting of appropriate uses by harmful ones, and poor habitat conditions in general.

**The rehabilitation** of the historical centre of Havana has been given an extraordinary boost with the implementation of a new management model established in 1993 – paradoxically, in the context of the worst economic crisis the country has ever suffered – which does not abandon public responsibility for the protection of national heritage. It takes culture as its guiding principle and places the human being at the centre of the

whole process – as creator, conveyor and transmitter of cultural models and thus as the protagonist of development. To this socio-cultural vision of recovery an economic perspective using criteria of profitability was added, which sought to make the process sustainable.

**The model** is implemented by a sui generis entity, the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana, in recognition of its long history and experience in areas related to cultural heritage. The institution was founded in 1938, a pioneer in the transformation of heritage preservation and defence of national identity. It has always been closely tied to every tangible and intangible heritage preservation process and has lived through various political and socio-economic scenarios, in which it has always asserted its role as intellectual vanguard. The Office has maintained a permanent commitment with the Nation and has achieved important results through its work.

**The Office's** long experience was guided first by Dr. Emilio Roig de Leuschenring, who was Historian of the City of Havana from the founding of the Office until 1964, and later by Dr. Eusebio Leal Spengler, who was creator and promoter of a humanist and revolutionary vision for the recovery of Cuba's cultural heritage. For the last ten years the Office, with a team of collaborators, has developed and applied very novel management criteria. Dr. Eusebio Leal Spengler was honoured with the title "United Nations Goodwill Ambassador".





**Economic and** social rehabilitation, closely linked to heritage preservation, has strategic importance in terms of human development. Understanding the three dimensions as integrated guarantees citizen involvement in the process. As the local economy gets reactivated using this perspective, it creates new jobs, improves living conditions and ameliorates the situation of marginality, replacing it with a dynamic of recovery that has a synergetic and multiplying effect on investments, expanding the recovered areas and increasing the resources available for development.



**Beginning from** when the new management mechanisms were first put in place, to date the Office has produced over 160 million USD which have been reinvested directly into the rehabilitation process. That activation of the local economy has furthermore mobilized numerous resources in funds from the National Bank, International Cooperation and the government budget, in national currency.

**The work** has been recognized first of all by the citizens and nation of Cuba, as shown by research and public opinion itself, which judges the results positively.

**The main** benefit obtained is the recovery of 33 percent of the Historical Centre area from support to the local economy, mainly from State, with the resulting creation of jobs on a grand scale. The integrating framework adopted allows for reinvestment of the resources obtained from the tourism industry and other sectors of the economy, with direct benefits to citizens. Old Havana may be seen as a laboratory experimenting with a new vision of how to manage historic areas.

**The project** has also received a high level of international recognition, in particular from the United Nations System, especially UNDP and UNESCO. Specialists have been convoked to more than 300 international forums in order to make better known how the process in the Historical Centre of Havana has developed.

**Between 2000** and 2004, the experience of the Office of the Historian was awarded ten prizes and honours from prestigious international institutions.

# What problem does it solve?

**The Office** of the Historian has made it possible to face and find positive solutions to the problem of the recovery of the Historical Centre of Havana.

**The Conservation** Priority Zone has an area of 214 hectares, with 3 344 buildings, most of which are invaluable representatives of the 18th, 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Of the 514 buildings with protection levels I and II, 32 percent are in poor technical/construction condition.



**There is** a population of 66 745 inhabitants and a total of 22 623 housing units, of which 50 percent are in poor condition and 47 percent are overcrowded and in slum conditions. Most of the infrastructure networks are deteriorated or overburdened due to age or because they are terminals.

**Every three** days there are two collapses of one kind or another in the area, and the situation gets worse during the cyclone season (five months of the year). Given these statistics the area may be considered subject to continual low-intensity catastrophe, or practically an emergency zone.



# The office of the historian in practice

**The Historical** Centre was declared a National Historic Monument in 1978, and since 1981 the State has provided centralized financial resources to the zone, within the five-year budget of the national economy. This situation led to its being recognized in 1982 as a World Cultural Heritage site, together with the system of fortifications that defended the city.

**With the** economic crisis caused by the fall of the socialist bloc, the State made a decision of utmost importance for the continuity of the rehabilitation work: rather than continuing to transfer financial resources, it provided the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana with judicial and financial tools that would guarantee sustainable social and economic development. Rehabilitation was transformed from an activity subsidized by the central government into a profitable process that even contributes to the Nation.

**Six premises** were identified for guaranteeing an integrated, sustainable and self-financing rehabilitation: political will and decision-making at the highest level accompanied the process; recognition of the authority of a single “leader entity” for coordinating the management of the rehabilitation (Office of the Historian of the City); and establishment of a special legal code that helps the entity to make integrated plans for the area, transfers to it real estate heritage in use and allows for the development of a series of mechanisms for applying a decentralized economy.



## The proclamation of Legal Decree Number 143 (October 1993) establishes the following prerogatives for the Office of the Historian:

- direct subordination to the Central government;
- legal status;
- the ability to apply special tax policies for contributions and rehabilitation;
- creation of its own management system for tourism and the tertiary sector in general;
- creation of the Master Plan Office, an interdisciplinary team responsible for the integrated planning and management of the development of the Historic Centre;
- expansion of its structure in order to follow the entire sequence.

**In order** to develop the model, the Office has specialized human resources, creating and consolidating an organizational structure with specific directors and departments and a managerial system. This structure is capable of conducting the process from strategic integrated planning – environmental in the broadest sense (economy-society-territory-habitat) – through to the physical recovery of buildings and urban spaces, including the organization and running of the investment process that guarantees it, and the possibility of managing international cooperation.

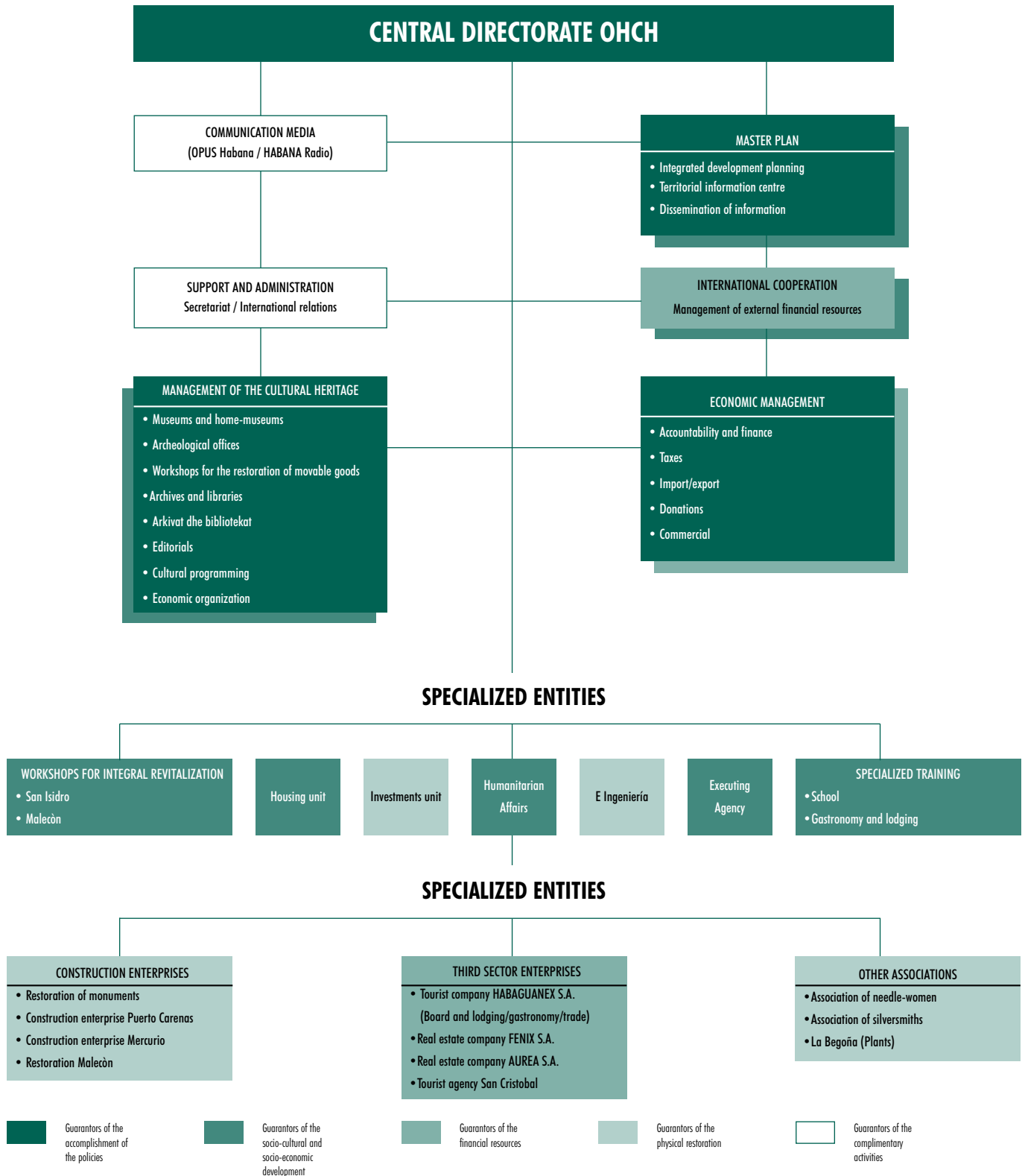
**The rehabilitation process is structured by linking integrated development policy concepts with mechanisms of self-financed recovery and cultural development, as set out in the Integrated Development Plan. The Plan established five main policies:**



- Protect national identity through research, promotion and development of culture.
- Protect heritage, rehabilitating the area through an ongoing Integrated Development Plan and with legal tools. This Plan is conceived as a “navigation map”, and as an aggregate of participatory management and planning instruments that make directing the process efficient overall.
- Avoid displacing the local population, protecting it from the impact of the transformation and establishing adequate levels of habitation density and quality of life.
- Provide the area with technical and basic service infrastructure that guarantee its functioning in line with contemporary demands.
- Achieve self-financed integrated development that makes investment in the heritage recoverable and productive.

**Simultaneously**, the Office is in a position to develop a strong socio-cultural and economic programme as a way to promote human development in the widest sense. Finally, the current structure also guarantees the administration of the tourist, real estate and tertiary sectors to obtain financial resources. These institutions are organized in four groups that assure: compliance with and application of the policies established in the Special Integrated Development Plan; socio-cultural outreach; acquisition and administration of financial resources; and physical rehabilitation.

# Organizational chart





**The Integrated** Development Plan also defined ten strategies essential for working in the zone, which are in line with the policies mentioned above. These policies and strategies were put into practice through implementation of the Investment Plan and the socio-cultural programmes, run by the Office of the Historian.

- **RECOVER THE URBAN STRUCTURAL HERITAGE**, whose main guidelines are to concentrate most of the rehabilitation in areas with great potential, extending the range of activity according to the availability of resources; recover those tertiary axes and urban border areas that have highest priority; develop separate focal points as energizers of the process within the urban area while assigning resources to specific cases that are special because of their social importance or urgency.
- **STRENGTHEN CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT** on the basis of the study and preservation of cultural, archaeological and artistic heritage and its development and dissemination; contribute to the awareness and appreciation of that heritage on the part of the Historical Centre community and the population in general, through cultural programming; disseminate the work of the Office of the Historian in recovering and preserving heritage; continue to market the most authentic cultural products, contributing at the same time to the sustainability of the task of restoration and conservation of museum objects.



- **DEVELOP THE LOCAL ECONOMY** based on the efficient promotion of heritage resources; gradually modify the economic structure; strengthen the economic activities that contribute to development of the territory; develop new activities and sectors; make it possible for the local economy to be heterogeneous and diversify funding sources.
- **STRENGTHEN THE TERTIARY FUNCTION** that includes the areas of tourism, real estate and metropolitan

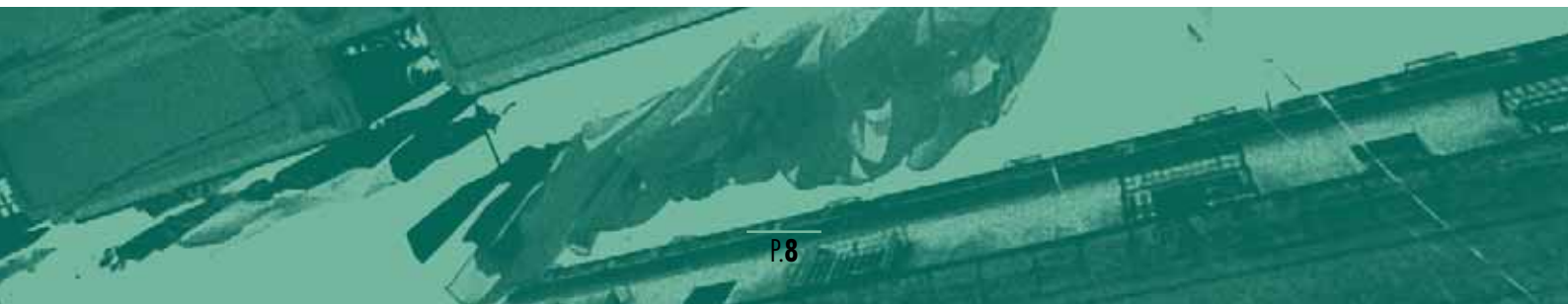
services, to guarantee a tourism industry with rigorous criteria of selection and sustainability; evaluate at the opportune time the practical, physical and economic implications of the assimilation and expansion of cruise ship tourism; prioritize develop plans in the real estate sector and stimulate the recovery of different services that distinguished the Historical Centre and which gave it its character of polyfunctional, hierarchical and highly qualified.



- RESOLVE HOUSING PROBLEMS by running programmes to improve residential areas using a manageable plan; define an intervention model for the habitat; design habitat programmes with social and participatory outreach; establish a separate decentralized productive organization which responds in an integrated fashion to the habitat programmes in the territory. Diversify sources of financing for undertaking the programmes, establish maximum rationalization and control of the technical material resources and perfect the legal mechanisms that regulate the housing rehabilitation processes.
- PROMOTE PARTICIPATORY REHABILITATION that encourages the resident population to take an active part in its planning; introduce the participation of informal community representatives; favour co-management of the processes and start an ideas bank that includes possible projects.
- DEVELOP SERVICES FOR THE HABITAT (community tools) that achieve excellent conditions and adequate distribution of learning centres; perform actions that allow for improvements in health services, assuring adequate distribution in the territory, and promote a culture of health through alternative means. At the same time, the plan is to revive the commercial network and general services of the territory, both in number of locales and in the services they offer; consolidate the organizational structure dedicated to hygiene in the Historical Centre and provide the equipment necessary to carry out this task; stimulate the population to participate in cultural activities and equip available sports grounds, all in close coordination with the Municipal Government.



- IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORKS as analyzed from different perspectives: infrastructure related to the main roads will respond to the needs of vehicle traffic, in line with the functional categories of the city's transit system, establishing additional measures and restrictions in feeder and collector roads to promote pedestrian walkways; secondary streets will continue to be perfected with special attention paid to improving the technical conditions of pavements and to means for regulating and controlling transit; parking is to be increased in various ways in order to satisfy the demand; the city's mass transit system is to be complemented; how cargo transport operates is to be organized in order to minimize the negative effects that it generates. In the hydric systems, the main plans are to eventually supply all consumers with drinking water via the network, eliminating service via the cistern trucks currently in use; improve the quality of existing sewer and rainwater drainage systems; for manufactured gas, complete the gas plan within the territory; in the electric system, make the electricity network more efficient and develop the lighting plan. For the weak current systems, it is important to perfect telephone service and to develop cable television.



- DEVELOP INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION in order to guarantee a more efficient use of cooperation resources; stimulate multilateral cooperation; stimulate decentralized cooperation through the Local Human Development Programme, sponsored by UNDP/UNOPS – all of the above in close connection with the Ministry for Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration (MINVEC).
- PROMOTE A CULTURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION that proposes developing a metropolitan integration strategy; protect the urban environment, natural resources and biological diversity as part of the policy drawn up by the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment; promote management of a more efficient and welcoming transport and transit system; facilitate efficient and effective management for collecting solid wastes and for sanitation; encourage the efficient use of energy and comply with the guidelines drawn up by the Ministry of Basic Industry and the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment; improve existing open spaces and create new ones in the zone and improve environmental health and attention to vulnerable groups.



### MASTER PLAN

Inter-disciplinary entity; participation area.  
It dictates the policies and the strategies of development.  
“Navigation chart”

### SPECIAL PLAN FOR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT.

(Document plan)

- Strategic plan
- Plan of territorial and urban ordering
- Socio-economic plan

### MANAGEMENT OF THE PLAN.

(Process of the plan)

- Agreement of the plans
- Control of the territory
- Spreading of the work
- Coordination and cooperation



**RESTORATION PROGRAM SOCIO-CULTURAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROGRAMS**





# Results

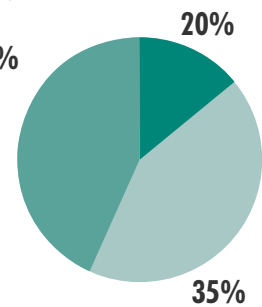
**The tapping** of cultural, tourism and tertiary resources in the territory has produced 160 million USD in earnings in eleven years. 16,2 million USD have been collected through application of the Restoration Tax (ICR). Economic decentralization has allowed for the immediate reinvestment of these resources in a cash flow concept. This has meant obtaining very visible results in the short term, demonstrated by urban and social renewal and a consequent generation of positive outcomes that attract more investment and interest, increasing considerably the number of visitors and people requiring services. The trustworthiness of the process itself led the National Bank to provide almost 65 millions USD in credits aimed at the high-cost works, and the State to provide about 465 million pesos in local currency from the central budget.

**The application** of socially beneficial policies, with 35 percent of resources budgeted for social works such as housing, health and education, has mobilized over 16 million USD in international cooperation since 1994.

**During the** process 10 250 direct jobs have been created, 60 percent of which have been filled by residents of Old Havana or nearby municipalities and 34 percent by women, who hold 59 percent of the technical positions. It is estimated that about 2 000 indirect jobs have

## DISTRIBUTION OF THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES:

- 45% Projects which generate financial resources
- 35% Social programs and projects
- 20% Others (contribution to the reserve, emergencies, contributions to other areas of the city, etc.)



been created, associated mainly with restoration of the buildings, providing services and reviving handcraft activities and production.

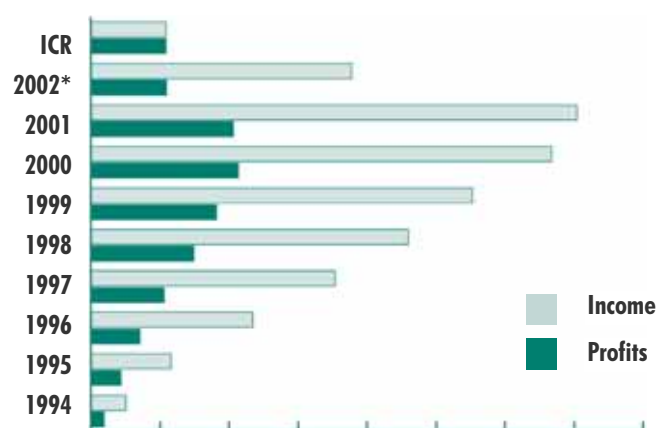
**Many buildings** with social uses have been rehabilitated, mainly for strengthening the Municipal Administration's education and health sectors.

**Novel experiences** in the education sector have also emerged, including “the classroom in the museum”, providing children with space inside the institutions where they can have their classes and other cultural alternatives while their school is being repaired. A mother-infant home was created, along with a rehabilitation centre for children and a geriatric centre, while general practitioner’s offices were equipped and more than a dozen scholastic centres were rehabilitated. Cultural activity has been intensified with service in more than thirty installations including museums, museum houses, galleries, concert halls, fourteen specialized libraries and centres for children and young people, playground, aquarium

and game centres, among others. Work is also being done on restoring housing of social importance, with a total of six programmes that have provided benefits of various kinds to a large number of residents.

**The average** number of specialized cultural activities during a year is 800 concerts with 70.000 attendees, 296 conferences, 45 courses aimed at young people and children, 50 films screened, 2.000 exhibitions enjoyed by 170.000 visitors, 6.000 hours of radio transmission, a weekly half-hour television programme and four issues of the Opus Habana periodical, among other initiatives.

### INCOME AND PROFITS 1994 - 2004



\*Primer semestre  
ICR: Ingreso por Contribución a la Restauración

	Profits	Income
1994	1813,0	4960,0
1995	4231,6	11558,0
1996	6971,8	23358,8
1997	10565,9	35309,5
1998	14832,1	45868,1
1999	18106,4	55208,5
2000	21272,9	66607,9
2001	20450,3	70299,0
2002*	21276,1	72632,1
2003	21730,5	78508,4
2004	23456,7	86222,4
ICR	16214,6	16214,6
TOTAL	119976,1	361701,5

**TOTAL AMOUNT OF INVESTMENTS:** 154580.6 MUSD, of which: 64568.4 from the Cuban Credit Bank and the remaining amount from own resources.

**CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESERVE:** 25012.4 MUSD

**This policy** of creating jobs, supporting parts of the municipal administration, joined to a programme providing specialized attention to vulnerable groups and a quality cultural and recreational programme, testify to the project’s social vocation. They constitute an example of how business criteria applied to the tourism industry and the tertiary sector are not at odds with sustainable human development, given that when the starting point is the application of public policies of social justice, very encouraging results can be achieved.



# International Interest

**An analysis** of the revival of historical centres in the region shows that beginning in the 1990s, several projects began to apply management models that include the economic perspective and that of the profitability of the rehabilitation of these urban spaces. While in some cases the experience has developed successfully, none of them have shown greater comparative advantages in terms of the integrated nature of the process, nor in the quantitative and qualitative advances, that may be seen today in the experience of Old Havana.

**There has** also been important recognition from the international community, demonstrated by a substantial increase in international cooperation and in the granting of a large number of prizes and awards by prestigious international institutions, including:

- Andrés Bello Conference (Prize 2000 y Recognition 2001);
- Dubai International Prize 2000 (Honourable Mention);
- UNESCO Peace Prize (Honourable Mention 2000–2001);
- Philippe Rotthier European Architecture Prize (Prize 2001);
- Metropolis 2001 Prize (Second Prize);
- Stockholm Partnerships Sustainable Cities 2001 Prize (Experience Finalist);
- Association for the Management of Urban Centres Prize, Valencia (Prize 2002);
- National Prize for Restoration and Conservation (Prize 2002 in Conservation);
- Royal Foundation of Toledo Prize (April 2003).

**In view** of the results obtained in the Historic Centre, the area considered “Priority for Conservation” has been extended to the Malecón Habanero, while expansion to additional zones of the city is expected.

**The experience** has been adapted to other Cuban situations in the cities of Santiago de Cuba, Trinidad and Camagüey.

**Many cities** have asked for advising and consultancies from the Office and assistance from its specialists in Cuba. Together with Mexico, the Office has had an ongoing relationship with the seven cities designated as World Cultural Heritage sites, and has participated in two consultancies by special request of the Mexico City Government. Recently a mission organized by UNESCO Brazil in which all Brazilian cities on the World Heritage list were represented visited the Office to begin to outline spheres of work in common. Panama City (Panama), Tegucigalpa (Honduras), Ciudad Bolívar (Venezuela), Cuenca (Ecuador), Valparaíso (Chile) and other cities have contacted the Office to express their interest in learning more about the work methodology and in some cases have applied parts of the experience. The management model used for the rehabilitation of the historical centre of Havana is truly recognized at the regional level and has created great expectations.



# Adopting the office's methodology in other countries

**Replicating the** experience of the Office of the Historian will always imply, naturally, adapting it to different contexts. But there are certain core focus points and strategies that are basic and completely transferable.

**It should** be made clear that use of the methodology itself costs very little, as it requires only trained human resources and political will. With those factors as a base, the rest is a question of creating synergetic processes and facilitating the confluence of interests that create the positive outcomes that attract and stimulate investments.

**On the other hand, applying the Office's methodology strengthens the governability of historic centres – fragile segments of the city – given that the results acquired help assure five strategic aspects of good governance:**

- local autonomy
- assurance of the continuity of the process
- fine tuning, updating and clarification of the legal corpus
- regulation of public space
- capacity to plan territorial development in an integrated fashion

**In analysing different regional dynamics for reviving historic centres, we have seen that the process can run into difficulties due to various problems:**

- Large number and diversity of players with local or national responsibilities in relation to the heritage
- Complex Land tenure structure
- Sparse and out-of-date legislation
- Lack of political will at the highest level and contradiction among national and local levels affiliated with opposing political parties
- Processes that depend on electoral politics
- Plans related to relatively short political periods
- Marginality and acute social conflicts
- Economic precariousness or underground economy of inhabitants
- National economic crisis

**The Office** has tried to confront some of these obstacles in the Historical Centre of Havana by applying the management model described above.

**To adopt** similar models in other contexts, one condition is indispensable: political will and decision-making at the highest level. There are reasons of both weight and convenience for the State – with highest responsibility for protecting heritage – to be concerned with and support the special management of historical centres. In the case of an historical centre which has been declared a World Cultural Heritage site, the State must assure its preservation.





- 3 Colegio de Infantes alias niños
- 4 Colegio de Niñas
- 5 Casas de la esquina
- 6 Casas del Encarnador

**In addition**, protecting historical centres is a complex job that demands a great deal of resources because of the serious problems concentrated in those areas, conditions which generally delimit what may be done in them.

**There is** also a solid argument for classifying historical centres as special zones to be taken on: they are continually subject to the conditions of low-intensity disaster areas and are generally socially conflictive areas.

**These observations** imply that it would interest public administrations to support a process of sustainable rehabilitation that, through self-financing and self-management mechanisms, could even turn a situation of subsidized work into one that instead contributes through the development of a city or a nation.

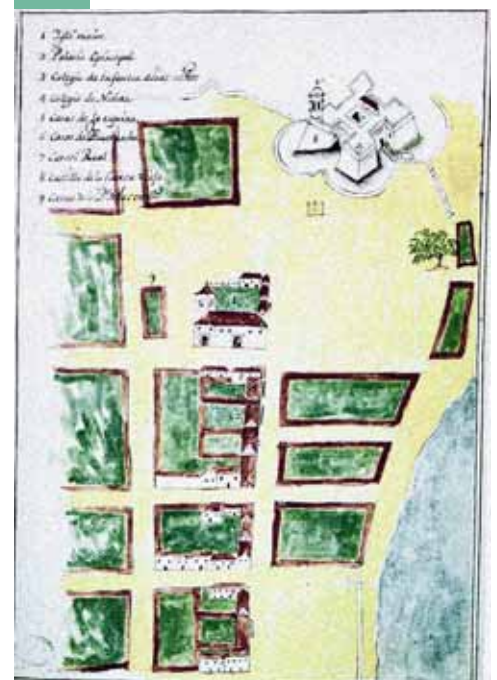
**Restoration work** under the guidance of a leading authority in the public sector has been successful in Old Havana and is another possible formula to apply in other countries. The institution would have to be autonomous and recognized at the highest level, to which it would also be expected to report periodically on its work. In acting locally, agreements must be reached at the local level with major local players on policies, strategies and plans, who must be kept informed about the project management's progress. This guarantees transparent and stable work in the historical centre, distanced from specific interests and the lack of awareness that exists under some circumstances.

**It is** absolutely necessary to have special legal status, another point to be considered. Specific judicial norms are required particularly for facilitating everything relating to land use, to legislate the possibility of expropriation or preferential purchasing, low-interest long-term credit terms, etc., in favour of the institution responsible for restoration. This guarantees it funding of its own as seed capital that can be increased through efficient use. A public entity would be owner and would administer, or subcontract administration, or rent out its assets, in order to guarantee the sustainability of the rehabilitation process, applying fiscal and land use policies specially designed for each case.

**Special finance** mechanisms can also be incorporated which would, in addition to the land use mechanisms mentioned above, add the possibilities offered by urban surplus values, the transfer of development resources or the establishment of a special tax system, among other procedures.

**Another point** to consider is the formation of an interdisciplinary team responsible for drafting an Integrated Development Plan to be drawn up together with the various players with stakes in the historic centre, that is, the various public administration offices, public/private and private

institutions or companies and the resident population. The Plan, accepted by those same stakeholders, becomes the "road map" for the administrators. The planning office should serve as a space for ongoing discussion and the use of strategies that make the Plan viable. The importance of including territorial planning within the system of this "autonomous authority" is essential, as it is obviously strategic to be able to interact with the urban land and land uses: building conditions, creation of clusters, raising of urban rent, generation of positive outcomes.



## TECHNICAL CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

**In order** to apply the Office's management model, the set of players involved in saving the historic center must be identified in order to find the most appropriate spokesperson.

**The next** step is to choose a "lead agency" with sufficient legal authority to run the process, in charge of conciliating and reaching agreements with the heritage players responsible for the territory, and with the authority to make decisions in cases when agreements cannot be reached through the established mechanisms.



**This agency should comprise four specialized elements, basically:**

- Master Plan. Sets out the main guidelines of integrated development, reconciles the plans and programmes, coordinates and negotiates with the different players, conducts feasibility studies and seeks possible joint funders.
- Central Office. Acts as a bank that administers the financial, real estate, etc. resources of the lead agency.
- Cultural Heritage Office. Coordinates and carries out research and cultural programmes and publicizes through the mass media and specialized press what is happening in the historical centre.
- Managerial system. Alone or in partnerships, draws on certain productive sectors in related cultural and tourism industries, the tertiary sector, the "knowledge and information economy" and other productive activities compatible with the historic centre's character.





## To learn more

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## Contacts

The technical team in charge of managing the Office's activities is available to offer technical assistance in other countries interested in adapting the experience.

For more information and to establish ongoing collaboration, contact:

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**The aim** of IDEASS is to strengthen the effectiveness of local development processes through the increased use of innovations for human development. By means of south-south cooperation projects, it acts as a catalyst for the spread of social, economic and technological innovations that favour economic and social development at the local level. The innovations promoted may be products, technologies, or social, economic or cultural practices. For more information about the IDEASS Programme, please consult the website: [www.ideassonline.org](http://www.ideassonline.org).

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## Innovation for Development and South-South Cooperation



ART - Support for territorial and thematic networks of co-operation for human development - is an international co-operation initiative that brings together programmes and activities of several United Nations Agencies. ART promotes a new type of multilateralism in which the United Nations system works with governments to promote the active participation of local communities and social actors from the South and the North. ART shares the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.

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