

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE 2
Degree in Architecture
Honors theses

Title of the thesis: Upgrading an urban space: case study on La Habana old town. Cuba

di Elena Castaldi

Tutor: Roberto Mattone

Co-tutor: Manuela Mattone

The work I carried out stems from a joint effort with La Habana Historic Bureau, which assigned me to the rehabilitation project of a building located in the San Isidro district.

The area is part of a thorough restoration plan of the old town, which has been declared a universal heritage by UNESCO, and is one of the major urban blights.



The quarter placement; TALLER DE SAN ISIDRO, *Programa de Revitalización Integral del Barrio San Isidro*, La Habana 2001

A gradual analysis has been carried through, starting from an appropriate overview of the country's evolution, to an in-depth study of the city, his development and his current situation.

The town has been looked into through an analysis of its district, the main road, the site and the building.



The building, (picture: E. Castaldi)

The activity has highlighted not only the architectural aspect of the district, but also its environmental value, its role in the geography of the whole city and its social and cultural value.

An accurate study of the building has also pinpointed its evolution and history, its architectural and environmental value, its functions, its plight, its degradation and the state of its equipment; last but not least, its social functions and a portrait of its dwellers.



The building, (picture: E. Castaldi)

This is thoroughly documented by means of pictures, written documents, official papers and on-site surveys with the help of the locals.

The results of the analysis and the contribution of the multidisciplinary team of the district workshop have allowed to forge a plan of action, bearing in mind the whole planning and the consequences of country's peculiar conditions.

The project is structured through the following stages:

- consolidation works of the site where necessary,
- rehabilitation of the building with a more fitting redistribution of space,
- adjustment and upgrading of the facilities,
- standardization and creation of new sanitations,
- resetting of light and air sources,
- redistribution of the family units,
- planning of a new superelevation of the building according to current regulations and laws.

Dealing with the less technical though considerable aspects has implied an extensive collaboration with the dwellers who have contributed expressing their criticism and tabling new proposals.

The emphasis has been put on a flexible evaluation and planning method in order to face unexpected contingencies rising through the project.

The outcome is an ideal planning and rehabilitation project of the building, but also a specific analysis to cover all variables, thus leading to new approaches to suit each contingency.

Given the variety and the unpredictability of the issues, a tailor-made strategy was devised.

Less advanced tools and economic dire straits narrow any action plan, which entails a constant research that has to be carried out in hand with creative and inventive solutions, paying special attention to the uniqueness of the building, the compliance to the current regulations and, last but not least, common sense.

The experimental method of the study is not a guarantee of their effectiveness, though it outlines a virgin soil, by emphasizing a number of issues that, if ever solved, would be a great contribution to improve the population's plight.

For further information, e- mail: ele2001it@yahoo.it