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URBAN PROJECT “CÁCERES 2016: DE INTRAMUROS A EUROPA”

“Cáceres 2016: de Intramuros a Europa”: during the 2000’s, this Spanish city located in Extremadura, in the south-west of the country, launched a major urban project called “an integral action of urbanistic regeneration” of its historic centre. It was strongly linked to culture as the city was nominated for the European Capital of Culture for the year 2016.

Cáceres is far from being the first Spanish city to focus its urban development and regeneration objectives on a major project or cultural event, and followed the famous example of the urban requalification of Bilbao. But in this case, the city proposed a project which seems “softer” in the way it didn’t seem to involve a profound physical restructuring. However this major project, announced as a commitment to the sustainable development of the city around its patrimonial historic centre, still proposed significant changes in order to initiate a new dynamism.

How then did this multi-thematic project combine the constraints of the heritage preservation process and the objective of a sustainable development for the city? Indeed, both of these concepts frequently depend on different disciplinary fields, distinct political strategies and legal frameworks and various skills, and therefore require specific practices. Under these conditions, faced by their own requirements on practical implementation, the question arises: how to combine them within a specific spatial framework and integrate their own practical objectives in the implementation of a project? The heritage preservation dimension is paramount, as the main goal of the framework is the historic centre. But how does sustainable development fit in, faced with patrimonial requirements? How can it be mobilised in an urban project established in this context? This is the general issue that led us to refer to an academic project in 2010 directed by Laura Verdelli, linked to the research project “R+0 ! Développement durable et conception des

espaces publics des centres modernes des villes méditerranéennes / R+0 ! (Sustainable development and public spaces design in modern Mediterranean city centres"} under the coordination of Romeo Carabelli (UMR 6173, CITERES). The goal of this project was to check if the measures linked to public spaces in the framework of an urban regeneration project in a historic centre took care of sustainable development.

Cáceres city gave us an interesting experimental site for such an issue. The various Mediterranean civilisations which settled in this area since the Roman period left to the town a remarkable heritage. Its centre is a rich historic complex, well preserved and easily distinguishable thanks to its structure and architecture. Its patrimonial value is nationally and internationally recognised as an “historic complex” expressing the mix of various cultures. The spatial framework reflects an old-established heritage process, and is therefore subject to conservation and management of heritage constraints.

At the Spanish national level, the Cáceres historic centre was first recognised for its monuments in 1930 (declaration of the walls as “National Monument”), followed by a declaration of various buildings *intramuros* in 1931. Then it received recognition as a “heritage whole” with its declaration in 1949 as “*Conjunto Histórico Artístico*” (“historical site”), including the *intramuros* area (the monumental walled town) and an *extramuros* area². Today Cáceres’ historic centre belongs to the “properties of cultural value” (the highest protection level according to the law of 2/1999 on Historic and Cultural Heritage of Extremadura) in the category “historical site”³.

At the supranational level, Cáceres’ historic centre was declared a “third monumental whole of Europe” by ICOMOS during the 1970s, and then inscribed by UNESCO on the World Heritage List in 1986 according to the criteria (iii) and (iv).

During this period, the city set up a management tool to safeguard its heritage: the “Special Plan of Protection and Revitalisation of the Architectural Heritage of the Municipality of Cáceres” (PEPRPAC), embracing an approximately 70 ha. urban area with about 1800 buildings. The Special Plan, approved in 1990, was still in operation in 2010, and a plan of regeneration of the historic complex was attached to it (the city also had a general town-planning tool: “*Plan General Municipal*”⁴ which was set up in 2010 to substitute the “*Plan General de Ordenación Urbana*”⁵). This Special Plan had completed the process of “patrimonialisation” and reinforced heritage protection. Some patrimonial constraints are very operative in the Special Plan. Any urban project which provides for an intervention in this framework, such as “*Cáceres 2016: de Intramuros a Europa*”, has to fulfil these requirements.

An analysis of this project has been done, specifically focusing on the practical measures relating to the treatment of public spaces and their integration in a territorially broader project. As the implementation of the project was still on-going during our assessment, we focused on the written and spoken word in documents and discussions. We analysed the objectives fixed by the project holders and also the operational measures announced to the public.

The items introduced here are mainly derived from the analysis of communication materials issued by the project holders, as well as the analysis of related materials, interviews with qualified actors (drafting project team manager, Cáceres 2016 cultural manager) and our own field observations. Furthermore, the analysis was carried out using a “questioning tool” created by the above-mentioned “R+0 ! project” team.

In this paper, the objective is not to present the entire results and an exhaustive analysis. The aim is more to illustrate a general issue

and to show the mechanisms in this project, which had the ambition to combine sustainable development and heritage constraints and consequently somehow change the city's image, without necessarily involving a profound physical restructuring of this heritage urban area.

AN URBAN PROJECT RELATED TO A FLAGSHIP CULTURAL PROJECT

“Cáceres 2016: de Intramuros a Europa” was a major element in the nomination to become European Capital of Culture. This candidacy was led by the *“Concorcio Cáceres 2016”* which was created in 2007, involving a collaboration between the Municipality of Cáceres and the main regional institutions. A broad cultural programme was attached to this nomination, with the organisation and support of events in various fields (artistic events in the urban space, involving citizens, festivals etc...), but not only that. Within this framework, infrastructure, facilities and urban operation projects were also launched, mainly in the historic centre. The project we are dealing with here forms part of it.

This was introduced as approaching some topics around the regeneration of the historic heart of the city. It aimed at the *“physical, social, functional and environmental regeneration of the historic centre of the city”*⁶ introduced as a *“Mediterranean city on a human scale, friendly, habitable and sustainable”*⁷. It was particularly emphasised in the nomination and regarded as one of its major thrusts according to the various communication documents. In this way, Cáceres showed that the approach of the historic centre was going further than only a cultural programme in the area.

The historic complex and its heritage, real assets for this tertiary town, seemed therefore to be set at the heart of this ambition, becoming the support of cultural events and being

concerned by physical operations, especially with this emblematic project. It's in this context that we are reviewing it and that we are going to approach its contents to assess the type of interventions proposed regarding its objectives.

A COMMITMENT TO A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY AROUND ITS HISTORIC CENTRE

The “Intramuros project” sponsored by the foundation *“Cáceres Siglo XXI”* with an interdisciplinary team, mainly from Cáceres and directed by Antonio-José Campesino, had been finalised in 2007. It had been incorporated by the municipality as a “roadmap” for actions, for the purpose of setting a new and modern basis for town-planning, especially in the historic centre, according to its ambition to become European Capital of Culture in 2016.

With the goal of urban regeneration of the historic centre, this project wanted to make Cáceres a *“cultural urban planning city”*⁸, highlighting its history, its identity, its heritage. It also suggested to convert Cáceres into a *“sustainable development friendly city and committed to the balanced society it welcomes”*⁹. It was positioned as a *“socio-economic development driver, with heritage recovery actions, respectful of sustainable development, which will support the regeneration of the companies' fabric, in hotel and commercial sector in the central area, and will improve the quality of life for inhabitants”*¹⁰.

These objectives, stated in the media tools of Cáceres 2016, reflected the desire for general action involving various social, economic and environmental dimensions on the whole of the historic centre. Moreover, through the announcement of its general objectives, the project introduced the intention to be part of a sustainable development approach, based on patrimonial heritage.

FROM A GENERAL INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT TO FIVE MACRO-PROJECTS...

The “Intramuros project” had been influential in a number of policy fields, such as heritage, social, cultural, touristic, functional, environmental, morphological etc.. These referred to the issues identified in the historic centre: insufficient renovation of popular accommodations, numerous unoccupied commercial premises, economic specialisation with tertiary dominance etc...

The “Intramuros project” had been divided into sub-projects integrating their own specific issues, directed at various areas within the historic centre and combining some strategic ambitions.

As introduced in 2007, it was organised into five “strategic macro-projects”¹¹:

- Review of the Special Plan of Protection and Renovation of the Architectural Heritage of the Municipality of Cáceres; the urgency of this review was highlighted by the project considering the plan obsolescent;
- Recovery of the Plaza Mayor and its area of influence; the treatment of this whole area tended both to make it the driver of historic centre renovation and to enhance the value and the function of the public space;
- Bioclimatic planning of the public spaces; the morphological treatment of the public spaces would include pedestrians, materials and the quality of urban property;
- Enhancement of the pedestrian area and creation of “disincentive car parks”;
- Writing of the Special Plan of Protection of the Ribera del Marco area.

In addition to the work scheduled on these two special plans of protection, operations on the public spaces were programmed in several of these five axes and even seemed to be a major input. In the case of the Plaza Mayor recovery, it seemed to be the favoured approach to boost a new dynamism, wider, deeper and stretching beyond the public space.

However, we must analyse more specifically how the operational implementation of these projects was scheduled in order to understand which solutions were chosen to enhance this solid spatial framework, and to measure the associated intervention level.

THREE INTERVENTION AXES IN THE OPERATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The project was structured around three intervention axes, cross-checking the components scheduled by the strategic aims and by the five macro-projects mentioned above. Each intervention axis was structured in plans, projects or operational implementation guidelines.

It’s mainly through the brochure describing the project, directed by the communication office of Cáceres 2016¹² and published by the Consorcio Cáceres 2016, that we analysed the project’s operational implementation. As mentioned above, our analysis remains within the limits of the written and spoken word (and not through a direct analysis of the project itself).

- **”Historic centre Operational Master Plan”**: this master plan (morphological treatment, accessibility and mobility work,...) was mainly organised around the Plaza Mayor (even though other spaces were considered) as an symbolic and central space, a meeting area for inhabitants (“social forum¹³”), the major interface between intramuros and extramuros areas, a frame for cultural activities, a key area for touristic activities,...;
- **”Functional Revitalisation Project”**: tended to enhance the historic centre’s commercial activity focussing primarily on the Plaza Mayor and its surroundings (shopping and hotel facilities,...);
- **”Social Resettlement Plan”**: it was about “residential reactivation¹⁴” operations in the historic centre (axis scheduled over a decade).

A “**cultural enlivenment**” dimension was added to redefine and reinforce a cultural function in the historic centre and to suggest a “*cultural re-interpretation of the city*”¹⁵. This point was related to a cultural programme (concerts, exhibitions, artistic events) which was already being carried out for several years, linked to “Cáceres 2016” and mainly in the historic centre public spaces considered as an “*open air*” stage¹⁶.

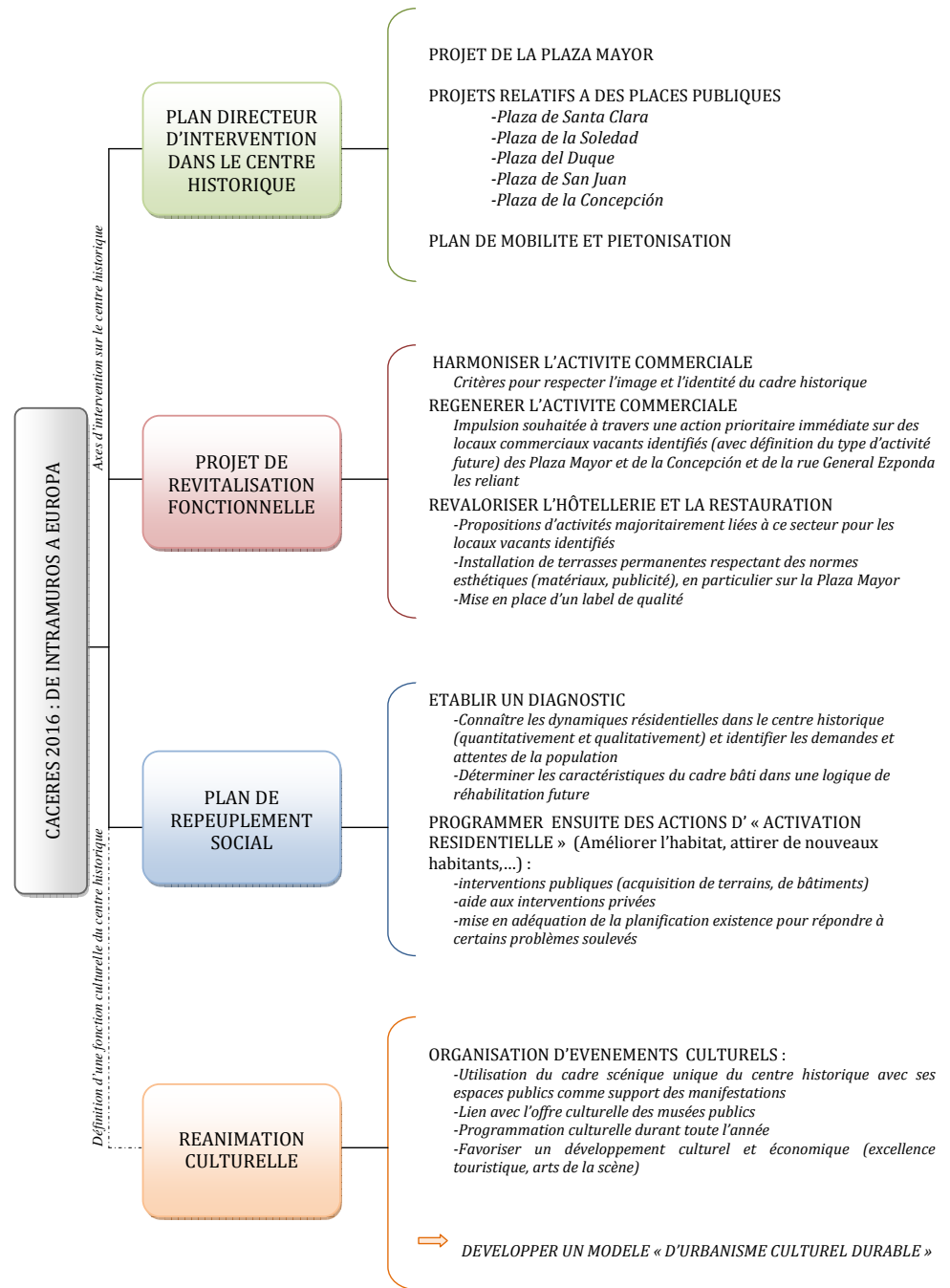
These operational axes were organised in various plans, projects or operational implementation guidelines, as illustrated in the next diagram¹⁷.

These intervention axes and their strategic guidelines deserve some comments.

We notice that a morphological operation was scheduled in several public spaces, with, at the same time, attention for mobility issues and the development of a cultural incentive. Public spaces played a major role in each of these axes. “Physical” interventions in the urban area gave therefore a major role to the interventions in public spaces, with a perceptible will to change the image of the city (treatment of the main squares, enhancement of the pedestrian area, and harmonisation of the aesthetic of the hotel and restaurant terraces). This kind of treatment allowed an implementation in the short-term, with a visible impact, which must influence the perception of the city by inhabitants, visitors or investors.

However the project also targeted interventions in non-public spaces through a will to regenerate commercial activities and to promote a residential dynamism (housing, building renovation, work on vacant commercial premises), with impacts in the longer-term.

A better “brand image” also appears as a major point throughout the cultural programme and the functional regeneration work, involving criteria to respect the historical



1. General.

source: CACERES 2016

framework image and identity in the commercial activities, a quality label etc..

We can also point out the plurality of the topics approached: social, cultural, economic, transportation. The aim was certainly not a mono-functional historic centre, as it seemed to be previously or turning it into a museum, but to appeal to commercial actors, inhabitants, visitors, and to develop various uses in the heritage area. This idea is clearly expressed in the brochure describing the project:

“we may have been so concerned about our architectural heritage preservation that we have forgotten about its use by a part of its citizens. We must find a balance between protection and use, because by reconciling both aspects, we will find an optimal template of heritage sustainability.”¹⁸

This expresses a clear will to associate the heritage dimension with sustainable requirements.

Finally, a comparative vision of the “Intramuros project” and the Special Plan (PEPRPAC) objectives established about twenty years ago, underlines a relative continuity in the historic centre regeneration ambition.

Indeed, the Special Plan, which, in addition to urban protection regulations, also had regeneration objectives for the ‘heritage whole’, did have to endure some notable troubles. These objectives were introduced in the document through two kinds of policies¹⁹:

1. **a general policy of historic centre development**, with three axes of protection and historical image improvement, urban space recuperation and regeneration. In this way, we can notice the will to avoid a specialisation of the historic centre, to resolve congestion troubles, to limit incompatible

uses, to promote the conservation of buildings, to solve urban framework problems...

2. **sector policies involving:**

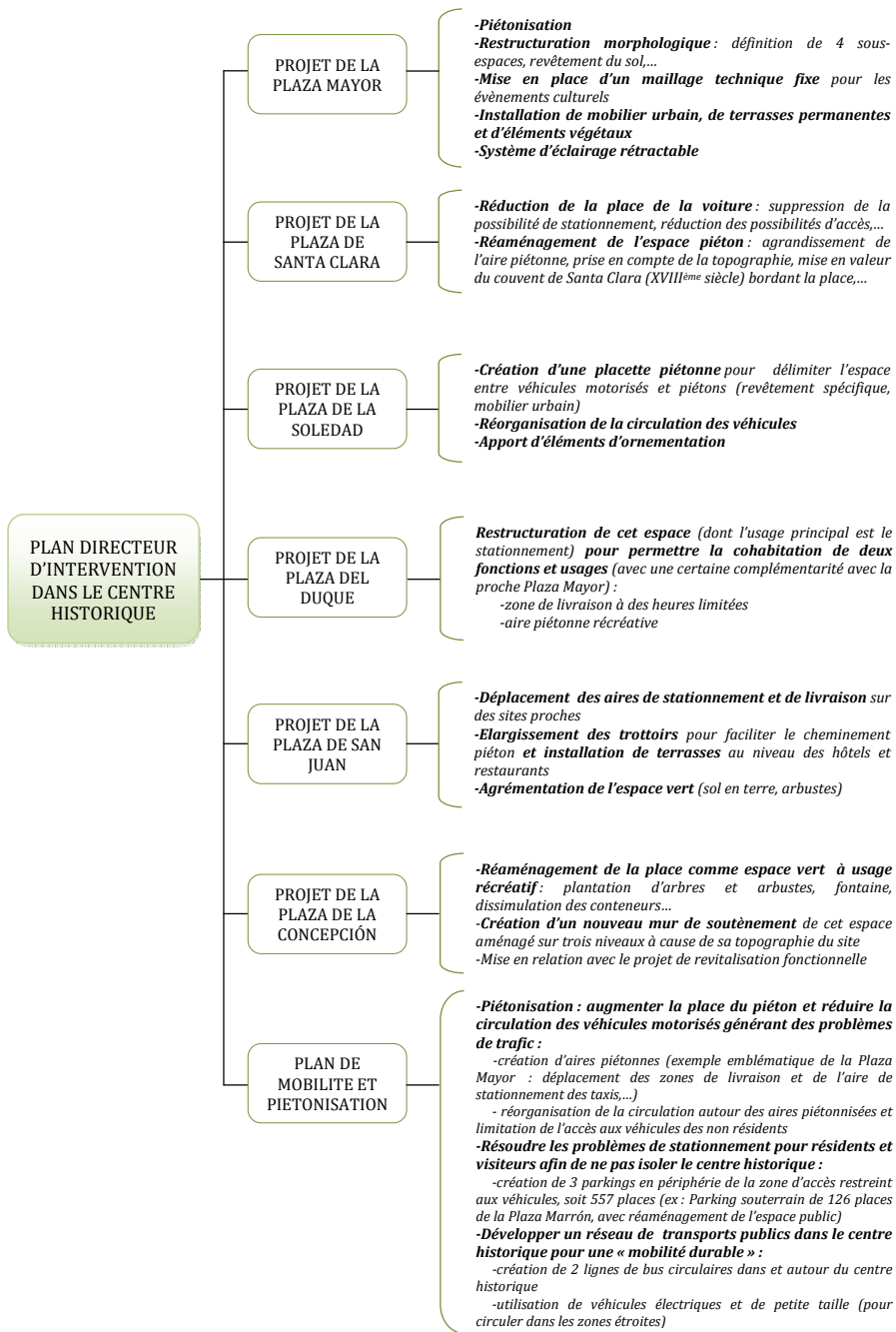
- housing (rehabilitation and reduction of empty housing stock),
 - facilities (planning of public spaces, urban furniture...),
 - transportation (development of public transportation, reduction of traffic in some areas, solutions for parking problems),
 - shopping facilities, services, economic activities (to boost commercial activities and services, to promote cultural tourism,...),
 - cultural heritage (monuments and urban space promotion, development of the historic centre function as support of cultural activities);
- with the general intention to associate both public and private initiatives.

These thematic objectives were applied in eight areas (the action schedules in the “Intramuros project” are linked to squares from three of these areas).

We can therefore note that some objectives of the “Intramuros project” reflected the ones of the Special Plan established in 1990. Are the operational measures and means (financial, human) used to achieve these objectives of the same significance in both cases? A comparative analysis of intended and implemented measures in both cases would be interesting but is not our current focus.

FOCUS ON THE HISTORIC CENTRE OPERATIONAL MASTER PLAN

The plan scheduled physical operations in the urban areas by a territorial approach proposing projects in six public squares, with a major intervention around the Plaza Mayor. A pedestrian and mobility plan was also programmed. The operational measures (cf. “Intramuros project” brochure) are introduced in the next diagram²⁰.



Generally, we can observe that the public spaces operations involved two kind of measures :

- a physical intervention mainly through the Operational Master Plan, with a morphological treatment of spaces in accordance with aesthetic, technical, mobility aspects...;
- in parallel, a (re)definition of functions and an orientation of uses with the enhancement of a cultural function (cultural enlivenment with temporary events), the intention to develop a social role for the squares, a touristic interest,...

The operations directed towards these spaces had a major role in the “Intramuros project”. These interventions were directly linked to public spaces but had links with other spaces (for example, the mobility plan measures will have a strong influence on the means of transportation) and in relation to the topics from other operational axes (for example, the functional regeneration project was scheduled in priority around the Plaza Mayor and the Plaza de la Concepción).

Generally, from reading all the documentation, it seems that the project has identified measures being implemented in public spaces which are indeed perceptible and visible but also symbolic, encouraging good practices and appeal for inhabitants, businessmen and investors, visitors, local, national or international. This tended to boost a change in city's perception to generate new dynamism and to support development. The cultural ‘trigger’ widely used in this project also enhanced this positive dynamism. Moreover, emphasising its multi-cultural heritage and its special link with America, the city expressed a wider message, understandable beyond its immediate geographic environment. However, beyond this first approach, more far-reaching interventions were included for the necessarily longer term, sometimes less perceptible, but absolutely more than “window-dressing” to give form to the wish of the city to implement a qualitative sustainable development on a heritage base. Because the risks threatening

2. Operational Master Plan.

source: CACERES 2016

historic heritage city and town centres, without right management, are numerous, it would have been interesting to study its implementation in the longer term and to measure its benefits.

Despite its commitment, Cáceres wasn't successful in getting the 2016 European Capital of Culture title, which went to San Sebastian. But we haven't heard the last from this city. Already through the "Intramuros project", Cáceres has clearly set out its intention within the framework of its functional regeneration project, to create a quality label in the hotel and restaurant sector (quality of products, service excellence,...) and aimed "*touristic excellence*"²¹.

The documentation expressed the necessity to find a balance between heritage protection and use, and to conciliate it to find an "*optimal heritage sustainability*"²² template. With the will to develop its touristic appeal at an international scale, the city seems to be developing in the right direction, as Cáceres has been currently elected 2015 Spanish capital of gastronomy. It is another way to make its assets, its identity more visible at a national and international level. Because, if the city possesses heritage treasures, architectural, historical or gastronomical, all inherited from various cultural influences which the city absorbed through the centuries, needs to improve its visibility to develop its touristic activities. Will it be able to stand out from its competitors amongst Spanish cities which appeal to tourists in the heart of the country, far from mass tourism? At least, in a first step, through its culture and its history with the "Cáceres 2016" project, and now through the gastronomy, the city has chosen to point out its own assets and some values that characterise it, to improve its recognition and to bring appeal. In both cases, Cáceres has invested in quality, and on highlighting its historical heritage, and proposes approaches which seem firmly committed to sustainable development, facing the future but anchored in its history.

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1. CÁCERES 2016, in Cáceres 2016 website, <<http://www.cc2016.com/>>,2009
 2. ACEDO (Francisco).- Cáceres La tierra de los diez mil siglos.- TDL, 2006.-159 p.
 3. cf. GONZÁLEZ-VARAS (Ignacio). – Conservación de bienes culturales : Teoría, historia, principios y normas.- Madrid : Ediciones Cátedra, 1999, 2008.- 628 p.- (Manuales Arte Cátedra); p. 510-535 (Law 2/1999 on Historic and Cultural Heritage of Extremadura 1999)
 4. General Municipal Plan
 5. General Urban Development Plan
 6. CÁCERES 2016.- Dossier informativo, Cáceres, aspirante a capital europea de la cultura 2016.- 15 p.- Information dossier on the Cáceres 2016 nomination, p.9
 7. CÁCERES 2016.- Dossier informativo, Cáceres, aspirante a capital europea de la cultura 2016.- 15 p.- Information dossier on the Cáceres 2016 nomination, p.9
 8. CÁCERES 2016.- Cáceres 2016 De Intramuros a Europa.- 26 f.- translation of an extract of the brochure describing the project
 9. CÁCERES 2016.- Cáceres 2016 De Intramuros a Europa.- 26 f.- translation of an extract of the brochure describing the project
 10. CÁCERES 2016.- Cáceres 2016 De Intramuros a Europa.- 26 f.- translation of an extract of the brochure describing the project
 11. Interview of M. Campesino; CALVO (Pablo).- « La modernización urbanística de la ciudad necesita la inversión de 113 millones ».-Diario HOY,31/08/2007.- <http://www.hoy.es/prensa/20070831/caceres/modernizacion-urbanistica-ciudad-necesita_20070831.html>, 2009.
 12. CÁCERES 2016.- Cáceres 2016 De Intramuros a Europa.- 26 f.- Brochure describing the project, directed by the communication office of Cáceres 2016 and published by the Consorcio Cáceres 2016. It holds the discourse stated by an organisation directly linked to the project, which express communication choices and reflects the project image pointed out. The discourses stated on press reports, on others communication mediums and items brought by the interviews of actors had been considered as supports to our analysis.
 13. CÁCERES 2016.- Cáceres 2016 De Intramuros a Europa.- 26 f.- translation of an extract of the brochure describing the project
 14. CÁCERES 2016.- Cáceres 2016 De Intramuros a Europa.- 26 f.- translation of an extract of the brochure describing the project
 15. CÁCERES 2016.- Cáceres 2016 De Intramuros a Europa.- 26 f.- translation of an extract of the brochure describing the project
 16. CÁCERES 2016.- Cáceres 2016 De Intramuros a Europa.- 26 f.- translation of an extract of the brochure describing the project
 17. Warning: the words used come from the project brochure or are directly linked to it, with translation; as the whole brochure had been studied, quotations won't be outlined step-by-step.
 18. CÁCERES 2016.- Cáceres 2016 De Intramuros a Europa.- 26 f.- translation of an extract of the brochure describing the project
 19. Items extracted from EXCMO. AYUNTAMIENTO DE CÁCERES 1990, Memoir of the PEPRPAC ; EXCMO. AYUNTAMIENTO DE CÁCERES (Sistemas urbanos y regionales DELTA SUR S.A, Santiago Rodríguez –Gimeno Arquitecto).- Plan especial de protección y revitalización del patrimonio arquitectónico de la ciudad de Cáceres.- 1990.
 20. Warning: the words used come from the project brochure or are directly linked to it, with translation; as the whole brochure had been studied, quotations won't be outlined step-by-step.
 21. CÁCERES 2016.- Cáceres 2016 De Intramuros a Europa.- 26 f.- translation of an extract of the brochure describing the project
 22. CÁCERES 2016.- Cáceres 2016 De Intramuros a Europa.- 26 f.- translation of an extract of the brochure describing the project