

# THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REVITALIZATION OF REPRESENTATIVE STREETS AND TRAILS

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**Abstract.** Many cities have realized that investment in the revitalization of streets and pedestrian walkways and care for conservation of monuments and historical sites, not only can boost economic profile of the area, but can bring the city in world tourist route. The objective of these trails is to make life of the pedestrians more pleasant, encouraging them to do shopping and so local economy increase.

**Key words:** urban design, responsibility, reconstruction, historical sites, conservation.

### 1. Getting Started

It is becoming easier nowadays to assign streets to the traffic roads , so its public space function began to be overlooked. For many generations, street has given to the communities open public spaces right in front of their house. Jonathon Barnett said: *“a secondary basis element for any public open space is recognizing the importance of the street as a frame of urban public space”* (Barnett, 1982).

#### 1.1. Urban Design

*In the center of urban design study must stand man, its values and aspirations,*

*and the power or ability to attain them; the task of the designer is to understand and express through forms, the needs and aspirations of beneficiaries* (Cliff, 2003).

The city can be an element of culture, both spiritual and physical, while representing the highest cultural expression. *“An important element that contributes greatly to the urban design is the pedestrian routes that can take different forms depending on the way of transport used. In this case, urban design can be seen both in terms of cars, and also through the pedestrians, in each case we speak of amenities with a specific design”* (Lang, 2005).

### 1.2. The Street

“Street can be defined as a closed, three-dimensional space, bounded laterally by the fronts of buildings” (Le Corbusier, 1967). A specific element for the street is heavy traffic, with all the related infrastructure equipment. Perhaps transposition of the functional needs required by road traffic in a dogma, by architects and urban planners of the Modernist Movement, was the one that led to the neglect of the street and its architecture.

### 1.3. The representative path

Representative paths are based more on “emotions sent to the pedestrians and the experiences they live, fact achieved through highlighting different buildings or objects of historical and architectural character, using lights or a series of other activities” (Brambilla and Longo, 1977). The objective of these routes is to change in good the image of a city, for the welfare of people communities, by revealing and showing some historical places that otherwise may not have been recognized.

## 2. Case Studies

### 2.1. Australia, Sydney: George Street (1997-1999)

George Street is a major traffic artery that crosses the center of Sydney. From the Sydney Harbour (Jackson Harbour) in the north to the Central Station in the south, the route considerably changes its character.



Fig. 1. Overview for South

“A Statement of Environmental Effects of the George Street Urban Design and

Transportation Study (1993) noted that the street possessed neither visual unity nor did it afford pedestrian amenity. It had been shaped incrementally over its 200-year history by piecemeal design” (Lang 2005, p. 98) (Fig. 1). “In the mid-1990s a decision was made to upgrade the street from Alfred Street at the harbour end to Central Station, a length of 2.6 kilometres (about 1.8 miles)” (Lang, 2005).

The City Hall was the direct beneficiary but who has taken full responsibility for the project was Design Department of the PWD (Public Works Department), in partnership with the Design Center of the city, and the architect responsible for the project was Petrykowski Margaret. The first drawings were made by the Noel Bell Rildy Smith, Architects company. The initial budget was 75.000.000 Australian dollars (aprox. 50.000.000 US\$) in 2000.

The project was fulfilled in three main phases. The first two have involved a detailed and circumstantial preparation for the reconstruction of the street itself. The third and final phase involved the relocation of existing services, installation of new activities and preparing the area for reconstruction of sidewalks, their repaving with blue stone and granite inserts for the portion related to roadway traffic.

There followed installing a complete set of urban furniture, especially designed for this route. Attention to detail could be seen even in choosing the vegetation line, the option was a species called London Plane trees, resistant to pollution.

“The result of all the work is a tidier street unified by consistent paving materials and street furniture” (Lang, 2005).

Operations as widening the pedestrian streets, opening spaces and choosing a quality street furniture have contributed greatly to improving

urban image of the street. The result was seen in the increasing number of apartments in the area and revitalization of commercial fronts. This example has been applied to other streets in the city. The project itself was designed in order to generate a series of events with a positive effect on the city.

### 2.2. USA, Massachusetts, Boston: The Freedom Trail (1951-8+)

Freedom Trail is a pedestrian trail crossing downtown Boston. The importance of this route is given by the 16 historical sites of great interest within the city. *“They are primarily places of importance in the United State’s independence movement”* (Lang, 2005). The trail begins with a series of *“important buildings (e.g. the Old State House; the home of the British colonial government prior to independence), the location of important events (e.g. the Boston Massacre site), a site of literary importance (Old Corner Bookstore), burial grounds (e.g. Granary Burial Ground), the Quincy Market/Faneuil Hall area (an eighteenth century public meeting hall revitalized as part of a shopping district in mid-twentieth century) to an ending at the Bunker Hill Monument across the Charles River”* (Lang, 2005).

After the political pressure from the journalist William Schofield, in 1951 the project is started. The one who can get funds is the city council itself, but those responsible for the long existence of this route are ordinary people, volunteers who have made the entire program to work over time. *“The development of the trail illustrates the power of simple, workable ideas in fostering a variety of public realm designs”* (Lang, 2005).

From 1976 to today it has been invested large sums in renovating historical sites. Although this route has been steadily upgrading, however we can highlight two main phases in its development. The first phase began with drawing a red line painted on the ground, linking sites together. The second phase focused more on the overall image quality of this route,

so that the red line was replaced with paved stones painted red, there were built ramps for pedestrians and bronze medallions as indicators for specific locations (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Freedom Trail, Boston

The success of this route can be expressed by a large number of tourists who pass through it every year, more than 4,000,000 visitors. Of catalytic effect this project has had on the economic profile of the city, we can only conclude that when there are several parties with common interests, the results can be spectacular.

### 2.3. India, Gujarat, Ahmedabad: The Heritage Walk

Heritage Walk of Ahmedabad is a guided trail which takes about 2 hours, starts at Swaminarayan Temple and ends at Jumma Masjid. It takes the pedestrian through most poles and urban facilities in Ahmedabad. It can be described as a complete contrast to the tranquility of the Gandhi Ashram. Heritage Walk was initiated by the Foundation for Conservation and Research of Urban Traditional Architecture (CRUTA). The main aim of the CRUTA foundation was conservation of Ahmedabad, a large industrial city in Gujarat, founded by Ahmed Shah in 1411, which still retains buildings and places full of historical significance for India. Before this program to be started, either because of lack of budget or interest, local authorities weren't very much involved in the

conservation and protection of these sites. "Pols are tightly knit, self-contained, cul-de-saced, gated neighbourhoods of caste (and occupation) groups" (Lang, 2005) (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Pole - Place for bird feeding

Under this program there were cataloged more than 30,000 buildings proposed for conservation. In this case we can not talk too much about urban planning, because it was present only in some places, but what was thought at first it was psychological connection of the route. Heritage Walk, route organized by the Government is the best thing that can inspire and initiate tourist interest in the old part of Ahmedabad. Tourist route includes all religious, social and architectural models of the city. Tourists can know how the city merges with occupations and religion, still connected by secret passages.

### 3. Conclusions

The case studies above presented are atypical examples for the current context of our country, but typical for other countries who fully understand the importance of quality urban design. Perhaps they are not the most successful projects or not well known, but they were chosen to highlight certain points of view and to understand

how important it is to revitalize streets or representative trails. It should be noted that a common concern in two of the examples was the preservation of heritage objects as a testimony to a long history in the context of a fairly rapid city development, specific to the 20 century. An amazing thing is that, very often, projects were initiated by various community people or by foundations that have realised a very important thing and that is that a preserved history actually means preserving the essence and identity of a place. Time evolution of these routes depended only by the direct involvement of the people in the process. Thus, the continuous modernization, their upgrading lead also to their transformation into catalyst elements that contributed to the local economy and beyond, without taking into account and subsequently gained worldwide renown.

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