

# **CULTURAL HERITAGE AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION: MANAGING SPACE AND TOURIST PROJECTION OF ARQUEOPALEONTOLOGICAL SITES OF ATAPUERCA (BURGOS, SPAIN)**

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The broad and extensive experience of tourism strategies developed by the cities has created a solid basis to know, from a comparative study, the factors which support the dimension of the guidelines which direct action programs, the plurality of actors and their impacts socio-economic and spatial. Urban policies focus attention on three interesting aspects: first, in the evolution of the concept of cultural tourism, which are integrated with other traditional elements adapted to the demands of a market flexible and open to new possibilities; second, in the analysis of changes in management procedures, leading to new organization in the healthcare and information services, to provide the user guarantees that improve the quality of the service, and, finally, illustrates about the importance of spatial effects, visible in the range of interventions promoted by the public sector, and also in frequent collaboration with the private sector, make up a new space.

This article focuses on a representative sample of many of the factors and trends that characterize the situation of contemporary tourism in urban areas, depending on the strategies promoted in their essential guidelines for the local power in exercising its responsibilities and as a manifestation political will aimed at developing the city. It analyzes the specific case of the city of Burgos, strategically located in the communications network of northern Spain, and valued for its industrial strength, whose traditional focus personality as a tourist attraction is significantly enhanced by the added value of cultural and territorial him offers its proximity to the prehistoric site of Atapuerca, considered as one of the world's most important references in the field of archeopaleontological human.

The importance of this event is not limited only to testing its scientific relevance. For this reason it has been regarded as a territorial resource of the first order, capable of being projected into the knowledge society and promoting scientific and educational possibilities. The «*System Atapuerca - Culture of Human Evolution*», as has been formally

identified, it becomes a cultural asset of extraordinary value, fully incorporated, and in prime position to offer the city as one of the emblems primary, and in this case unique, cultural attractiveness. And while this is a singled potential, no doubt both its merits and the space in which it is located has enough evidence to consider it a very prominent example of the types of relationships between cultural tourism and space urban. It is the manifestation of a process of «urban patrimonialization», which has a spatial-economic significance when analyzing the relevance of the plans and projects focused on the permanent valorisation of those resources that have a major presence in the design of policies public to shift the political discourse even over other goals in decision making.

The recognition of the city of Burgos as one of the most important Spanish cities by the magnitude, quantitatively and qualitatively, of its cultural heritage has undergone a remarkable revitalization to become associated geographical reference to the scientific dimension of archeo paleontological site located in the Sierra de Atapuerca, about fifteen kilometers from the city. Three reasons justify the exceptional importance of the findings in Atapuerca. It is, first, the site with the largest number of bony elements of the world, which has full demonstrations of the human skeleton, including smaller size; on the other hand, is also unique in that it has found a human group, composed of individuals of both sexes and various age and, finally, is the core paleontological where proven the existence of Europe's oldest hominid, was unearthed in 1997 at the Gran Dolina and identified as *Homo Antecessor*, which is attributed to older than 800,000 years, placing its origin in the lower Pleistocene. Their discovery includes a new element in the evolutionary sequence and preceding *Homo Heidelbergensis* and *Homo Neardentalensis*, representing a contribution of extraordinary importance for the knowledge and interpretation of human evolution, especially when the anthropological remains are accompanied by abundant and valuable material culture.

Thus, both the entity of the findings as the perception that it is a leading cultural resource, explains the attention given as an essential factor in the design of promotional strategies and urban transformation. Hence, out soon assumed the importance of these remains could bring in strengthening the prestige of the city and their own attractiveness. This process highlights the role played by the council, which from the beginning decided to promote all initiatives made possible the use, in favor of the findings. Mr. Angel Olivares, mayor of the city during the 1999-2003 legislature, promoted the construction of a Museum to house the research results and favor its projection in all directions, trying to integrate the findings in the allocation of capital territorial area to make them public in space they come from. Conceived as an decisive element of «cultural competitiveness» and supported by an extraordinary media coverage, this initiative is contained in the objectives of the Strategic Plan, which states the objective of identifying to Burgos as the «world capital of Human Evolution» (*sic*).

Gradually, it has created an infrastructure designed to facilitate the care of potential claims that the deposits, and configured everything around them, they give rise. The result was the formation of a complex consisting of two main elements. On one side, are those in the vicinity of the excavations, particularly in the villages of Ibeas de Juarros and Atapuerca, where many buildings have been equipped for the disclosure of wealth discovered paleontological and one each Visitor Centers, in order to effectively

organize tours in the specific area where the deposits are located. And, secondly, all this appears structured around the essential part of the «System», ie, the Museum of Human Evolution, located in the historic center of the city of Burgos. The initiative to carry out the construction of the museum dates from July 5, 1999, when performing the restricted call for an international consultation of ideas, which is resolved in favor of the project presented by the study of Mr. Juan Navarro Baldeweg. The result is a stunning architectural landmark, consists three buildings, separate but with great aesthetic coherence: the Museum, the National Research Centre on Human Evolution and the Palace of Congresses and Auditorium.

The opening of the Museum of Human Evolution on July 13, 2010 was a major event in the history of demonstrations understood large-scale museum and cultural projection and image of the city of Burgos. Although only a sufficient time horizon may allow a rigorous evaluation of the results and the level of acceptance achieved, it is evident the interest of the data supporting a major response by the demand in its first months of operation (151,523 visitors up to 31 December 2010) and the fact that he has become a factor in attracting visitors from not only of the local and regional environment, but also from Madrid, the Basque Country, Catalonia and foreign. And at the same time, the review process provides a very interesting space, as reflected in the very transformation of small towns related to the infrastructure created in the vicinity of the deposits and, above all, in the historic center of Burgos. Planning reform applied in the space where it has been decided to locate the building complex exceeds the limits of the work to impact on the management of a section of the left side of Arlanzón river, which facilitates the integration of the entire area under relations and use of core areas, reinforcing the effect of crimping along the river as the main axis of the most valued public space of the city both culturally and environmentally.

If this new space represents the promotional image of the city of Burgos in the XXI century, coinciding with the qualification made in the southern sector of the traditional city, it is necessary to consider the appropriate role in the integral redevelopment of the old town, thanks the incorporation of a new element that enriches the patrimonial references and capacity of cultural syncretism. The public space configured by the architectural complex from the «phenomenon of Atapuerca» adds another essential element to the patrimonial heritage of the city, historically symbolized by its Gothic cathedral and the surrounding scenery, or representative of medieval urban planning and nineteenth-century modernist architecture. The route between these two symbols of the history of the city is the most significant link in the historical center. Hence, given the critical situation from the functional point of view, appropriate to reflect on the possibility that the linker and cultural space that may form between the Cathedral and the Museum may be a factor to the future economic and cultural revitalization, recognized as such by the very visitors and local people once assumed how much the city is to work built south of the river Arlanzon. Not surprisingly, the symbolic dimension that both have, and which is inseparable from its importance in the tourist attraction of the city, will justify the simultaneous recognition of the pride felt by the beautiful Gothic Cathedral and providing awareness to dispose of the remains testify the presence of Europe's oldest hominid, called Homo Antecessor, which would also identify as the Man of Atapuerca.

