

Copacabana: A City Branding Made of Longevity and Landscape

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Abstract

The issue of longevity becomes more significant every year as there is an exponential growth of the population over 60 years old worldwide, which is accompanied by a change in the demographic profile, as the fertility and mortality rates have decreased. The context of this study is the neighborhood of Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro, the second largest concentration of elderly people in urban areas in Brazil. This neighborhood has been, the past five years, through an intensive city branding, based on the aspects of its landscape, considered a Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and on the longevity of its inhabitants. This territory is the target of intense intersectoral governance that made it the main tourist destination for senior citizens. The article is developed through an analysis of 'friendly urban contexts' for seniors, referenced by the Global Age Friendly Cities Guide by the WHO and complemented by narratives of residents, whose ages range from 61-100 years and living in this place for 12-67 years.

Keywords: Longevity, Copacabana, Landscape, City Branding

Introduction

The possibility of transforming nature into commodity has been a frequent practice in contemporary times, often exaggeratedly, expropriating natural resources, until their depletion. In regards to the landscape, if these practices are not limited by preservation principles, they can lead to degradation, pollution and extinction. In this context, the city branding strategies can act like a double-edged sword, since by emphasizing a region and its landscape as a brand by its qualities, on one hand, it may generate more visibility, more businesses and commercial agreements, as well as a greater flow of visitors, but, on the other hand, it may increase the number of residents and regular visitors, which is often incompatible with the region's infrastructure. In the case of Copacabana, there are major events that attract up to two million people each time, with a disastrous consequence to the environment.

Urban Longevity

The intense global increase of population longevity has been encouraging researches that aims at providing seniors with a better possibility of enjoying more quality in life and an active aging. The WHO published in 2007 the result of a study carried out during 13 years, that is called Global Age Friendly Cities Guide. This research was coordinated by Brazilian doctor Alexandre Kalache and indicated urban factors that favor life quality in 35 cities: Amman (Jordan); Cancun and Mexico City (Mexico); Dundalk (Ireland); Geneva (Switzerland); Halifax, Saanich, Portege La Pairie and Sherbrooke (Canada); Himeji (Japan) Islamabad (Paquistan); Istanbul (Turkey); Kingston e Montego Bay (Jamaica); La Plata (Argentina); London (United Kingdom); Mayaguez and Ponce (Puerto Rico); Melbourne and Melville (Australia); Nairobi (Kenia); Moscow and Turmazy (Russia); New Delhi and Uidapur (India); Portland and Oregon (United States); Rio de Janeiro (Brazil); Ruthr (Germany); San Jose (Costa Rica); Shanghai (China); Tokyo (Japan); Tripoli (Lebanon); Udine (Italy).

This network has expanded with the creation of ICA (Ibero-American Network of Senior Friendly Cities).

These sites showed satisfactory conditions regarding eight factors, which must be considered when analyzing if an urban environment is “senior friendly”, they are:

1	Housing
2	Transportation
3	Civic participation
4	Access to information
5	Access to health services
6	Access to social services
7	Engagement on public life
8	Communication and communication adaptation for the senior

City Branding and Longevity: An Alliance for the Positive Recognition of Aging

Despite the significant increase in senior population worldwide, a positive acceptance does not seem to follow this growth proportionately. Stereotypes still affect senior individuals relating aging to physical and cognitive deterioration, assuming an inevitable loss of lucidity and autonomy. The permanent need to implement public policies that will create appealing situations for the construction and maintenance of active aging is a direct consequence of an offering of a favorable urban area and positive acceptance. In this context, the neighborhood of Copacabana is exemplary, since in its city branding process directed to the inclusion of senior citizens, produced by effective intersectoral governance, transformed the neighborhood in the “main tourist destination for seniors”. Here follows a brief description of the main aspects of the region:

Copacabana is a neighborhood in the State of Rio de Janeiro that is considered to be a “post card of Brazil”. It receives in events such as the Carnival or the New Year’s Eve over a million tourists

It is a neighborhood with an image that works as a very attractive “brand”, and Copacabana, in this favorable context, has the image of its own landscape, which is widely used as a “brand”, configuring its strategy of local branding . In developing a city branding according to Urani (2011), a brand is parts of the maturing of a place, and it is directly linked to the identity of the region. For this author, a city’s “brand” corresponds to an intangible image that we have of something. It’s an unconscious value. And for this branding action to succeed, it is necessary to search for better living conditions for people, involving every sector of society. With this intention, Copacabana’s city branding has prioritizes its elderly residents, involving them on the joint task of divulging the idea of a good neighborhood for seniors to live in. A “senior friendly” place, according to the criteria disclosed by the WHO. Concluding that, if a place is friendly for its seniors, it will be friendly to residents of all ages. This focus ensures an intense social mobility, as, it is interesting and benefic to the senior citizens that the neighborhood is effectively the main destiny for other seniors, because this way the resident’s quality of life will also be good, with services specific for their age and a varied and interesting commerce.

For Bloom Consulting¹ there are six essential dimensions to work the brand of a country, region or city, such as assets with tangible and intangible values, with management and strategy. These dimensions attract investments, tourists, talent, pride, improvement of the public diplomacy, export increase.

Copacabana contemplates the dimension of pride for the landscape and the presence of an elderly population, which makes the neighborhood a spatial place due to their aging. Therefore, this neighborhood’s brand is made gathering creative design, integrating market needs, political and personal interests to the desire of inclusion. Its logotype is natural, it was born from its landscape, reinforcing the affective and pleasurable memory, the waves of the sea.

¹www.bloom-consulting.com/sites/default/files/files/bloom_consulting_city_brend_ranking_2014_Portugal.pdf



Copacabana Sidewalk

Copacabana: Geographical and Symbolic Cultural Context

Copacabana is the neighborhood with the highest population density of the State of Rio de Janeiro, also of Brazil, with 146.392 inhabitants, distributed along a territory covering 7,840 Km², being 43.431 of them senior citizens.

This region has privileged landscape aspects that are protected on a local as well as global level, with two aspects of the landscape that integrate the group of protected sites considered as Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



Copacabana Fort
Cultural Heritage of Humanity



Copacabana Beach Waterfront
Cultural Heritage of Humanity

It is the neighborhood of the City of Rio de Janeiro that has more protected properties, nineteen in total, with a broad range and diversity, including from centenary trees to the whole group of buildings that correspond to the Copacabana Palace Hotel.



Copacabana Palace (Protected Group of Buildings)

Besides, since the fifties it has an intense and diversified symbolic and cultural capital that has been multiplied with films, theater plays and music, souvenir and fashion images like t-shirts, sarongs and beach towels, as well as decorative objects. This symbolic capital since then has been object of campaigns of city branding and, during the sixties, these initiatives generated a real estate boom, translated on the construction of small habitation units, called 'conjugados' (small apartment), gathered in big buildings with up to 500 inhabitants. A significant part of these residents remain living in the neighborhood, in other words, aging in this very place. This permanence increases their roots on the neighborhood, marked by cultural and affective experiences on the interaction with the region's development. Besides, the great number of senior residents works as an attractive factor for the moving of other seniors to the region, for they feel more comfortable with their peers. And, this way, the population over 60 years old gradually increases and the community benefits and service providing directed to this public will increasingly converge to this neighborhood, attracting more visitors and more residents.

The residents' perceptions about Copacabana is largely positive, with a satisfactory quality on the assessment of the items recommended by the WHO, taken from an interview made with seniors aged 61 to 100 years old, living on the region from 12 to 67 years. The interviewees were unanimous in positively valuing also the fact that they live on a place with a beautiful landscape with many cultural activities. And all of them elected a fishing community that exists on the neighborhood as one of the few that can still survive on an urban environment in Brazil, as their favorite place. There are visual references of this community since 1895, on a photograph by Marc Ferrez.



1895 – Photograph by Marc Ferrez

Despite the urban transformations that occurred on the neighborhood, it survives on the same spot, allowing the population the daily possibility to buy fresh fish and to watch the fishing activities. It is also a meeting point for seniors, sports enthusiasts, and tourists from all over the country and abroad, it is a place to admire the landscape and talk about the weather, politics and life in general.



Fishing Community Z13 Posto 6

In addition, the neighborhood offers several possibilities of leisure, outdoors or in specific places like theaters, gallerias and town squares, and arts and crafts fairs.

Considering that there is a significant number of senior residents in Copacabana that live alone, the possibility to live in a place that offers cultural activities and services certainly is a factor that collaborates in encouraging them to interact, get out of the house and enjoy these opportunities. The fact that this neighborhood has so many heritage sites is also comforting for preserving past times for our daily contemplation in present times.

Discussion

Copacabana offers a wide range of leisure possibilities compatible with the physical limitation of this significant portion of the population. Its beautiful waterfront can be contemplated daily, its parks and town squares, the fishing community, a big cinema theater with access to people with different kinds of physical disabilities, cultural activities such as theater, music and great outdoors shows, and a great number of these events are free or offer discounts for seniors. There, the senescence process, deriving from the aging process, when the elderly has to gradually adapt to the limits of his/her body, will be eased by the possibility to participate naturally, enjoying an intergenerational conviviality, on the leisure opportunities that their community offers them the natural difficulties of aging will increase.

For the senior citizen, who is not always positively acknowledged by the community for aging, to become the 'star' of a region's advertising campaign is certainly very rewarding. The diffusion of the information that the region is a 'senior friendly place' strengthens their feeling of belonging and eases the solitude of those who have already lost their families, because they are living in a place that somehow belongs to them. Their presence strengthens the possibility of a region's economic growth and feeds itself continuously, on a virtuous circle, from which everybody wins.

The brand of a city is not exclusively dependent of political interactions and market management, once it is effective, organic and fully productive, it must be built from what constitutes its natural essence. In the case of Copacabana, of its landscape and its resident's longevity.

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