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Public Heritage, Tourism and National Identities in Brazil

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The institutionalisation of the practices of preservation of the cultural heritage in Brazil is directly linked to the creation and action of the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional – IPHAN [National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute]. Since 1937, this agency has borne prime responsibility for the formulation of public policies that have had, as a more immediate consequence, the selection and protection of properties, urban architectural ensembles and other assets. Indeed, as demonstrated in works (Chuva, 2009), the first three decades of the Institute’s activities, marked by the administration of Rodrigo Mello Franco de Andrade, were fundamental in defining a heritage typology and producing professionals qualified to deal with preservation matters.

That period was also fundamental for the organisation of tourism in Brazil, during which we observed that business associations were formed, aimed at the development of this sector, such as, Sociedade Brasileira de Turismo¹ [the Brazilian Tourism Society], in 1923, which, three years later, became associated to international agencies and renamed Touring Clube do Brasil; Associação Brasileira da Indústria de Hotéis – ABIH [the Brazilian Hotel Industry Association], founded in 1936, and Associação Brasileira de Agentes de Viagens - ABAV [the Brazilian Travel Agents Association], founded in 1953.

Subsequent to Decree No. 23.103, issued on 19th August 1933, which made it viable to grant holidays to urban employees linked to official trade unions, and to introduce measures that would provide travel incentives, such as the opening of low-cost holiday camps, the act of travelling during holidays with the family and being accommodated in inns and hotels gradually became a new habit. Such activity, however, was restricted to a few resorts served by public transport, given that the automobile industry and national highway construction policies did not yet dominate the national scenario. The urban sites listed by IPHAN generally still had precarious access, and, despite already

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enjoying protection by this federal agency, still did not form part of the tourist circuits. In Ouro Preto, a town that would become one of the greatest symbols of preservation activities in Brazil, we identified that, until its listing in 1938, there had been few records of travellers visiting it as a tourist site. There had not been any organised tourism project. An almanac, published in 1890, mentioned only four establishments offering accommodation in the town². All were located near the railway station, given that they were occupied mainly by visiting traders and businessmen. In her book, *Memórias e Casos de Ouro Preto*, Aracy Lessa (1967) provides us with information about the period covered between the change of the Minas Gerais State capital in 1897 and the elevation of status to national monument in 1933. The stories set in the town form a picture of a typical interior town, in which “young women hardly go out of their houses”(Lessa, 1967) and the men gather in the small stores located on the ground floor of old 2-storey colonial houses with yards containing jabuticabeira and other fruit trees. The authoress states that her grandfather's friends used to meet in a small shop near her home, “ (...) commenting on politics and telling anecdotes to the younger men (...), or, who knows, commenting on the lives of others, something that has always thrived in that cold quiet little town, hardly visited by tourists.”(Lessa, 1967)

In tracing the “journeys of discovery in Brazil”, undertaken by the Modernists, heading towards the “dead towns” of Minas Gerais State, we identified important indications about the conditions for tourist development in the town in the first decades of the XX century. On train and car journeys, Mario de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, Tarsila do Amaral and Blaise Cendrars, among other members of the “Paulista caravan”, faced great transport difficulties, as the major part of the itinerary was made, at times, by car on extremely bad roads, and, at others, by train at a snail's pace (Nogueira, 2002). There is also reference to complaints about the difficulties encountered due to the lack of tourism infrastructure in the region, albeit compensated by good local food (Nogueira, 2002).



Figure 01 Ouro Preto View. Source: commons.wikimedia.org

After the creation of IPHAN, in 1938, successive restoration works of properties in the town were executed by this Institute, which, besides conserving – or, in some cases, creating – the colonial stylistic uniformity of its constructions, further sought to project its action nationally. The tourism potential of the old urban architectural suites did not go unnoticed by those who had been engaged in practices to safeguard Brazilian heritage. At this moment, the existence of tourism in old European cities, ruins, museums and other institutions of the genre served as a stimulus for such reflection and practices as the creation of museums in protected urban architectural arrays, as in the cases of the Museu das Missões in Santo Ângelo in 1940, the Museu do Ouro in Sabará in 1945, the Museu do Diamante in Diamantina in 1954, and the Museu da Inconfidência, in 1938 in Ouro Preto.

It is worth pointing out that, in this same year, there was involvement of “intellectuals from the Institute” in the construction of a hotel in Ouro Preto, with the aim of encouraging tourism in the region. The viewpoint of the tourist was already a growing concern among the administrators of the heritage. According to what we could detect in IPHAN correspondence, the involvement of this Institute with the hotel was not restricted to its construction. A decade after its construction, the hotel manager asked Sylvio de Vasconcellos (then head of the 3rd district of IPHAN) for the “customary interference with the competent authorities for us to obtain a water supply, without which we would be forced to close the hotel due to not having any other means of attending the main Institutes”³.

We have also observed the participation of IPHAN in the divulgation of the tourism potential of the city through finance of the publication of a tourist guide written by

Manuel Bandeira. Published for the first time in 1938, the Guia de Ouro Preto [Ouro Preto Guide], became a guide of reference about the town, sold until today at some of its main tourist sights (Bandeira, 1967). It resembles a set of guides written by important Brazilian personalities, such as, the Sentimental Guide of Recife and the Sentimental Guide of Olinda, both written by Gilberto Freyre, and the Sentimental Guide of Bahia written by Jorge Amado. As the Guia de Ouro Preto author himself describes, most of the information for the work was obtained through Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade and other employees of the Institute.

The development of the preservation activities in Ouro Preto was closely linked to its projection as a tourist attraction. The conservation measures reinforced its image as a national reliquary that all Brazilians should get to know⁴. We identified this aspect, for example, in the correspondence from Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade to the Minas Gerais State governor, Magalhães Pinto, in March 1965⁵. Concerned with the conditions of the most important hotel in Ouro Preto, the Grande Hotel, then owned by Hidrominas, the director of IPHAN asked the governor to take measures to revitalize it once again, "to the level expected of an establishment of such a nature, owned by Minas Gerais State, in the most important centre of tourist attraction in Brazil"⁶.

As of the 1960s, the world expansion of tourism generated great reflections on the field of preservation. At this moment, many of the intellectuals in the agencies, responsible for safeguarding cultural heritage in the recently created agencies for the promotion of tourism, began to systematically defend tourism development in the urban architectural ensembles as the main alternative capable of generating the resources necessary for maintenance and conservation of the assets included in the national cultural heritage. Such an argument was strengthened, mainly in countries like Brazil, in which the state finance proved to be insufficient to maintain the integrity of the national cultural heritage.

The alternative of "cultural tourism" emerged as a solution for the problems regarding the preservation of the Brazilian cultural heritage, as may be verified in one of the main documents analysed in this work: a UNESCO report, issued in 1968⁷. The conservation of Brazilian cultural assets, hitherto subsidised by the government, should, according to this influential international agency, integrate the national development projects⁸, and, among them, tourism, with its high annual growth rates, stood out as a highly promising sector. Even with a brief warning that mass tourism could contribute to degradation of these assets⁹, the seductive argument that this activity could finance the urgent works of restoration, raising funds from private enterprise and not only from the State, was broadly used throughout the 128 pages of the 1968 UNESCO report, according to which this had become a trend in the most developed European countries. In this new context, the assets would be preserved because of being tourist attractions, and, as a consequence, new social agents were qualified to define and manage them, and develop new forms of safeguard.

According to this document, the exceptional condition of Brazil in terms of "cultural tourism" arose from its cultural diversity, the existence of preserved urban sites and also its inclination towards modernity", proven by its modern architecture, widely used in the construction of the capital Brasilia, which would facilitate the construction of

tourism infrastructure¹⁰. After enumerating the benefits of Brazilian tourism development, a report by Michel Parent analysed the potential of some Brazilian regions for the development of this activity, and listed some of the necessary measures for its successful exploitation. Among them, one may highlight the stimulus for commercial aviation, sea and river transport, and the construction of new highways and railways.¹¹ According to Parent, the Brazilian tourist industry, until this moment, had lacked organisation, and "Brazil was not truly conscious of this sector of activity, which is what has been developed more rapidly on the international plane, constituting, therefore, a source of income for these countries"¹². Following the UNESCO recommendations, in Salvador, in 1967, the Fundação do Patrimônio Cultural da Bahia [Bahia State Cultural Heritage Foundation] was created¹³, responsible for devising projects to designate new functions to the preserved area.

UNESCO's advocacy of tourism expansion for the preserved Brazilian urban sites as a solution for their conservation, coincided with the worldwide development of this activity and a consequent demand to create further tourist destinations. During the Brazilian "economic miracle" of the 1970s, investment and finance were boosted in this sector, along with major national highways that would ease access to cities and towns, until then, practically isolated, such as, Porto Seguro in Bahia State and Parati in Rio de Janeiro State.



Figure02 Parati view. Source: Google.com

So-called "cultural tourism", a product already widely commercialised in old European cities, should gain a new impetus in Brazil in the heritage cities, a position vehemently defended by EMBRATUR [Brazilian Tourism Company]. During the Reunião Oficial de Turismo [Official Tourism Meeting]¹⁴, held in 1972, with the participation of business associations in the sectors of transport, hotellery and travel agencies, it was stated that there was a need "to enable exploitation of the as yet untouched tourist sites " and "to use practical methods to exploit and divulgate the natural, cultural and historic wonders."¹⁵ (a document produced by the meeting). From the document, we present the following exemplary passage in this respect:

Furthermore, there is an intention to arouse in people a certain feeling of guilt, or even shame, due to the fact they don't know certain places and things that, from time to time, are cited in conversations, including sophisticated ones. It is thus a dig at human vanity¹⁶.

The first joint action between EMBRATUR and IPHAN occurred in 1975, when the Programa Integrado de Reconstrução das Cidades Históricas do Nordeste [Integrated Programme for the Reconstruction of Historic Cities in the Northeast] was created. Its prime aim was "conservation and restoration of cultural assets for economically viable use"¹⁷. For this purpose, it prioritised incorporation of existing monuments into nuclei possessing tourism infrastructure or in their areas of influence, and, within these spaces, the monuments suffering deterioration¹⁸. The restoration of cultural assets in areas with potential for tourism is a way of attracting investment and valorising towns and cities, or even districts hitherto marginal in the Brazilian capital accumulation process, then enjoying high growth rates at the same time as following to the letter the recommendations of the Quito conference.

Created by the Secretaria de Planejamento da Presidência da República – SEPLAN [Planning Secretariat of the Presidential Office], the main goal of the programme was the preservation and economic development of some urban architectural suites, which, according to the assessments conducted by organs like EMBRATUR, SUDENE and IPHAN, could offer financial returns on investments, as we may verify in the documents referring to the valorisation of the urban nuclei of Icó and Aracati in Ceará State¹⁹.

Such a premise guided the programme action that would assess the viability of developing tourism in the preserved urban architectural ensembles, mainly with regard to road access and distance from the large cities, prior to releasing funds to revitalise cultural heritage assets. Thus, "economic viability", sometimes presented as "a function useful to society" or "of interest to the community"²⁰ became a priority criterion to receive preservation resources.

The recuperation of the architectural array in the Pelourinho area of Salvador, and the consequent increase in tourism, based on a project involving IPHAN, Instituto Estadual de Preservação Cultural da Bahia – INEPAC [Bahia State Cultural Preservation Institute] and EMBRATUR, became the programmes greatest showroom. The stimulation of tourism development in this area as a means of preserving the old buildings had been systematically defended for a little over 10 years, since the issue of a UNESCO report²¹ about the city, and this became possible through the release of funds raised by this program for the provision of incentives to valorise preserved urban architectural suites in cities with "tourist potential". With the extension of the PCH to cities in the states of Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo and Minas Gerais in 1977, each state involved would be required to present a restoration and preservation project, indicating monuments to be preserved and the tourist itineraries to be divulged²².

When Aloísio Magalhães took office as the President of IPHAN on 23rd March 1979, the historic cities programme was transferred to this institution with the aim of strengthening it and decentralising the federal administration. The broadening of the

concept of heritage was amply defended by this institution's main administrators, mainly Aloísio Magalhães, since the early 1970s, when cultural preservation organs were created at municipal and state level after the Encontro de Governadores [Governors Meeting] and the PCH, then within SEPLAN.

The growth of tourism at Brazilian preserved urban sites was so significant that, in 1977, in accordance with Law no. 6513, issued on 20th December, the preserved properties, urban architectural arrays and natural assets were also classified as "areas of special tourist interest". Due to this definition, the preserved urban sites, as well as ecological reserves and stations, spas, places with exceptional climatic conditions and other areas of special tourist interest were "earmarked to develop tourist activities and devise specific projects"²³ through EMBRATUR, IPHAN and agencies, such as the Instituto Brasileiro de Desenvolvimento Florestal – IBDF [Brazilian Forest Development Institute] and the Secretaria Especial de Meio-Ambiente – SEMA [Special Secretariat of the Environment].

The defence of tourism as a beneficial activity for preserved urban sites, generating income and employment, is part of a bigger picture producing a consensus about the importance of boosting this activity, involving various agents and institutions, both national and international. Present in political discourses and proposals, tourism will be presented as an activity capable of expanding the Brazilian economy and eradicating the backwardness and stagnation found in many municipalities, the "Midas touch" that could bring prosperity to the places wherever it is installed, offering the possibility of mercantilisation of preserved spaces.

The argument for touristification of these spaces surpasses the agencies and agents traditionally involved with the promotion of tourism, turning it into a hegemonic discourse, including within the culture preservation and organisation agencies. As one of the most significant marks of the appropriation of urban architectural suites listed as tourism products, we observe that, in the 1988 Federal Constitution, the assets of historic and natural value, notable monuments and landscapes were identified as components of the "national tourism heritage"²⁴. In the case of Brazil, some of the urban sites have become great tourism products, and, for many scholars of the theme, this is the only way of guaranteeing their preservation.

¹ Founded in commemoration of the Centenary of Brazilian Independence with the aim of divulging the tourism resources of the country and stimulating road travel with the publication of appropriate maps.

Almanack administrativo, mercantil, Industrial, Científico e Litterário do Município de Ouro Preto. Anno 1, Ouro Preto: Typographia d'Ordem, 1890.

³ TELEGRAM from Manuel Rias (Grande Hotel manager) to Sylvio de Vasconcelos. Nov.1948. Arquivo da 13a. Subregional do IPHAN.

⁴ Among these we found the chronicle by Rachel de Queiroz in *Jornal do Brasil* on 01/05/1946 and that of Vinícius de Moraes in the *Última Hora* newspaper on 28/04/1952.

⁵ Rodrigo Mello Franco de Andrade. Letter dated 04/03/1965, addressed to Magalhães Pinto (governor of Minas Gerais State). Arquivo Noronha Santos. Inventário Grande Hotel (Ouro Preto) Caixa 248 Pasta 696.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ UNESCO. *Protection et mise en valeur du patrimoine culturel brésilien dans le cadre du développement par M. Parent*. Paris: mars, 1968. Mimeo.

⁸ Ibidem. p. 1.

⁹ UNESCO. Op.cit.

¹⁰ Ibidem. p. 11.

¹¹ UNESCO. *Protection et mise en valeur du patrimoine culturel brésilien dans le cadre du développement par M. Parent.* Op.cit. p.24/25.

¹² UNESCO. *Conservation de quartiers anciens et développement touristique à Salvador.* Paris: janvier, 1969, p.35.

¹³ At present, the Instituto do Patrimônio Artístico e Cultural da Bahia (IPAC).

¹⁴ *Reunião Oficial de Turismo, 1972.* Mimeo.

¹⁵ Ibidem. p.3

¹⁶ Ibidem. p.3

¹⁷ TELLES, Augusto Carlos da Silva. *Planos Regionais e definição de prioridades para o programa integrado de reconstrução das cidades históricas do Nordeste.* Mimeo. in Arquivo Noronha Santos Caixa 79M69P1Pasta 31.08

¹⁸ *Exposição de motivos 076-B de 31 de maio de 1973 dos ministros do planejamento e da Educação e Cultura apud.* TELLES, Augusto Carlos da Silva. Op. cit.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ *Exposição de motivos 076-B de 31 de maio de 1973 dos ministros do planejamento e da Educação e Cultura apud.* TELLES, Augusto Carlos da Silva. Op.cit.p.2.

²¹ Besides pointing out the stimulus for tourism activity as the main solution for preservation of the Bahian State historic and artistic heritage, the UNESCO missions to Salvador led to the creation of the Fundação do Patrimônio Cultural da Bahia, which would have a central role in the development of preservation activities and valorisation of the old Bahian urban architectural suites for tourism. *Conservation de quartiers anciens et développement touristique a Salvador.* Op.cit.

²² IPHAN/Pró-Memória. *Proteção e Revitalização do patrimônio cultural no Brasil: uma trajetória.* Rio de Janeiro: IPHAN/Pró-Memória, 1980.

²³ BRASIL. Law no. 6513, 20th December 1977, p.167.

²⁴ BRASIL. Constituição da República, Art. 24, 1988.