Abstract:

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN TOURISM AND ARCHITECTURE: SOLUTIONS TO ENHANCE THE MEMORY AND BELONGING OF LOCAL POPULATIONS

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This paper present a research project - developed at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (UFRJ) - in which the dialogue with the local population formed the basis for the development of tourist routes and for the conception of an architectural intervention at a historic house museum that is under the protection of local heritage authorities. Traditionally, both activities – tourism routing and architectural design – are planned and executed without the knowledge, participation or acquiescence of local dwellers. The innovative character of the project’s methodology consists of this change in perspective.

The “Janelas Abertas para a República” project was developed in dowtown Rio de Janeiro, with its focus on the “Historic House of Deodoro” (Casa Histórica de Deodoro) - which once belonged to the first president of Brazil – and its surroundings, especially the Campo de Santana park. Currently, the house is managed and preserved by the Brazilian Army.

The initial challenge was to turn the existing house - a modest building with an undifferentiated collection, located in a heavy traffic region that acts as a vital transport hub – into a tourist attraction. In order to achieve that goal, we have proposed guided interpretive tours aimed at allowing visitors to develop an understanding of the intricate relationships between the house and the park.

These tours were conceived according to a method that focuses on sites whose main appeal lies in them being “symbolic sites of belonging”. This method, called “Dialogical Routing”, allows local communities to reveal and to assign its own symbolic values to the sites, buildings, objects and cultural events that will be presented in by the guides during the interpretive tours. Face-to-face dialogues between the technicians and the local residents, workers and visitors stimulates the “ethical pact” between all of those involved in the process, avoiding the input of exogenous crystalized meanings, the adoption of meanings that are disconnected from local values and the access to places that local dwellers would not like to expose to visitation.

This dialogue with the local population and with those responsible for the management and conservation of the house allowed us to identify a need for interventions on two scales: an architectural intervention to enhance the relevance of the house as a site of belonging; and an urban intervention aimed at reconfiguring the whole area in which the house is located. The theoretical background for these interventions relied on the works of Yi-Fu Tuan (2012) and Hassan Zaoual (2006), whose theories propose a distinction between the notions of space and place – which represents a pause in the flow of time and movement (TUAN, 2012) – and the importance of adopting an ethical stance when working on places that are symbolic sites for local populations (ZAOUAL, 2006).

The architectural project proposes to transform the house into a place for encounters, convergence and belonging, and was materialized in the form of models – both digital and physical – currently being exhibited at the Historic House of Deodoro.

The tourist routes, which were designed with the participation of local institutions, were offered during the celebrations of the proclamation of the Brazilian republic – a historic event in which Marshal Deodoro was a key figure -, in November 2015 and again in 2016.

The project was concluded in early 2017, and its results are currently being collected and analyzed. The most promising outcome for the near future is the intention to create a Center for Heritage Studies inside the house, in a partnership with the Brazilian Army.

Works Cited:

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