Abstract:

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

*Marisa EGREJAS – Federal University of Rio de Janeiro*

*Ado Francisco Eduardo Sesti de**AZEVEDO – Federal University of Rio de Janeiro*

*Roberto BARTHOLO – Federal University of Rio de Janeiro*

*Marta de Azevedo IRVING – Federal University of Rio de Janeiro*

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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**Authors’ CVs**

**EGREJAS, Marisa** [marisaegrejas@gmail.com](mailto:marisaegrejas@gmail.com)

Marisa Egrejas holds a Ph.D. in Production Engineering from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (COPPE/UFRJ), where she is currently a researcher at the Technology and Social Development Laboratory (LTDS). She also holds a Master degree in Education from Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ) and a BA in Art Education from the same institution, and teaches at the Professional School of Tourism at Antonio Prado School. Her main fields of interest are tourism, post-high-school professional training, art education, curriculum and public education.

**AZEVEDO, Ado Francisco Eduardo Sesti de** [design@adoazevedo.com.br](mailto:design@adoazevedo.com.br)

Ado Azevedo is an architect and urbanist with a Master degree in industrial design, and is currently a Ph.D. student at the Production Engineering program at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (COPPE/UFRJ). He was a teacher and director at the Research Center of the Istituto Europeo di Design, in Milan, working in a partnership with Fiat’s Research Center in Torino. Ado was a member at the design firm Indio da Costa Conception and a teacher of product design at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) and at the Estácio de Sá University, both in Rio de Janeiro. He is the author of the conceptual project for the revitalization of the Urca Casino in Rio de Janeiro, and of urban projects for the implementation of light rail transit systems in the cities of Nova Iguaçu and Porto Alegre, developed by his design and consultancy firm AdoAzevedoArquiteturaDesign. [*www.adoazevedo.com.br*](http://www.adoazevedo.com.br)

**BARTHOLO, Roberto** [bartholo.roberto@gmail.com](mailto:bartholo.roberto@gmail.com)

Roberto Bartholo is a full professor at the Production Engineering program of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (COPPE/UFRJ). Prof. Bartholo holds a BA in Economics from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), a BA in Theology from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), a Master degree in Production Engineering from UFRJ, a doctoral degree in Production Engineering from Universitat Erlangen-Nurnberg (Friedrich-Alexander) and a Ph.D. in Human Sciences from the same institution. He is the director of the Technology and Social Development Laboratory (LTDS) at COPPE/UFRJ, and his main fields of research are knowledge, power and ethics, philosophical anthropology, social development, sustainable development and tourism.

**IRVING, Marta de Azevedo** [mirving@mandic.com.br](mailto:mirving@mandic.com.br)

Full Professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Bachelor’s degree in Biology/Ecology from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and in Psychology from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ); Master of Sciences in Water Resources Management from the University of Southampton (U.K.); Doctor in Sciences from the University of São Paulo (USP). She is currently a full professor at the Post Graduation Eicos Program and at the Program of Public Policies, Strategies and Development of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Senior researcher at the National Institute of Science and Technology (INST) in Public Policies, Strategies and Development of CNPq/Ministry of Science and Technology. Main research issues in Applied Social Sciences, on the following subjects: protected areas social management, tourism and sustainable development, governance, biodiversity and local development in connection with public policies.