Chapter 2

Negligence and Reinvention: Cultural Heritage of the Watering Place of São Vicente (São Paulo/Brazil)

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Abstract This text discusses the appeals and contradictions of the historical heritage of the watering place of São Vicente, a city located on the coast of São Paulo, Brazil, and considered the oldest in the country. Despite the compromised state of its environmental heritage and the lack of respect for the preservation of its material and immaterial cultural assets, public and private management recreate memory pseudospaces as potential tourist attractions for local economic development.

Keywords Vila de São Vicente cultural park \cdot Historical heritage \cdot Cultural heritage \cdot Memory

Several factors make it difficult to perceive the social scope and economic potential of conservation practices in Brazilian ancient cities. With a view to a problematic approach to the distortion of the senses of the protection and conservation of material and immaterial cultural goods, this reflection discusses impasses involving the recognition of the patrimonial assets, knowledge, and practices of the resident population in São Vicente's Watering Place, located on the coast of the State of São Paulo (Brazil).

For this purpose, this analysis is directed toward the appreciation of the strategies of public and private powers to promote an attractiveness of city as a historical nucleus of national relevance: first, dedicating monuments to famous personages of the process of the Portuguese colonization; second, taking as narratives of founding myths and transforming them into identity referents, often relegated to simulacrum.

In the case of São Vicente, there is an aggravating factor: it is a city that did not protect its cultural and natural assets. Although when municipal authorities viewed the possibilities of development and generation of employment and income through the exploration of tourist attractions, they adopted a series of misguided measures to remedy the setbacks with the local patrimony.

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2.1 São Vicente's Watering Place

Recognized as the first Brazilian urban center, São Vicente is located in Santos' microregion (State of São Paulo, Brazil) and completed 484 years in January, 2016. According to data provided by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 2015, the city has approximately 350,000 inhabitants and 147,893 km² of land area; and the total length of the beach area is about 3,400 meters. The best known beaches are Milionários, Itararé (where you can see Porchat and Urubuqueçaba islands) and Gonzaguinha, which has 800 meters of coast and, historically, is recognized as the place where Martim Afonso landed at the time of Portuguese colonization.

Cartography and records of Spanish expeditions' travelers show the presence of Europeans in <u>Santos coast</u> since the early years of the sixteenth century, but the village was officially founded only on January 22, 1532 by Martim Afonso de Sousa, a nobleman named done of two hereditary captaincies by King Dom João III. It is reported that Gaspar Lemos arrived in this place 30 years before (1502) and gave it the name of one of Portugal's patron saints: Vicente de Saragoça (Leme 2003).

On IBGE's map (Fig. 2.1), São Vicente's territorial extension is highlighted in orange:

In the last years of the first three cinquecentist decades, São Vicente was elevated to the condition of a village. Although there is no charter record of this fact, it is assumed that it occurred between 1536 and 1537, as pointed out by Castro (1932), Leme (2003) and Gianesella (2012).

The houses of the village and the mother church—remnant of the temple structure raised by Jesuits—appear in this cartographic representation (Fig. 2.2), designed in order to indicate nautical conditions and accessibility to the port.

This eighteenth-century picture, considered the oldest of São Vicente Village, also suggests some attributes which favored the establishment of the Portuguese, such as rivers that guaranteed access to fresh water and easiness of defending the territory against any investitures of corsairs adventurers, because in this bay the sea was too shallow. In addition, this side of the island guaranteed partial protection from the strong wind from the South and avoided confrontation with Tupinambá indigenous, settled on the eastern side of the island.

One thing we know for sure is Martim Afonso de Souza's squadron anchored on the island of São Vicente and his responsibilities were the following: to establish territorial landmarks of the Portuguese colony in that part of the Brazilian coast; to face continuous confrontations with Carijós, Tamoios and Guaianases indigenous people; to promote exploratory activities on the coast and on Rio da Prata (Silver River); to open representative institutions of Royal power (church, pillory and municipal council); to develop sugar cane culture and, as a consequence,

¹Source: IBGE. Research Board—DPE—Coordination of Population and Social Indicators—COPIS.



Fig. 2.1 Map of São Vicente



Fig. 2.2 Floor plan fragment of São Vicente village (1765–1775). Unidentified authorship. Source: "Floor plan of the coast of Santos Village" detail, manuscript safeguarded by the National Library of Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro

subsistence agriculture; and to introduce the needed mechanisms for sugar manufacture, a basic product in the colonial economy.

Souza's expedition, even without officially integrating the Portuguese Crown colonization plan, brought together a contingent of about 150 men for about 16 months and, in those conditions, contributed to fixing them in Brazil, impelled by the dream of finding "Eldorado" and exploration intentions of gold and silver mines, even precious stones. That way, it would have operated indirectly and collaborated in a non-compromised way with the exporter agrarian colonial project implemented by the Portuguese metropolis (Gianesella 2012: 181).

Bad weather and floods altered the landscape features of São Vicente Village (Madre de Deus 1975); misfortunes that resulted from invasions and robberies of English and Dutch corsairs pirates, respectively, in 1591 and 1615 (Luís 1980); deactivation of sugar mills activities, supplanted by development of coffee production in regions of São Paulo upland; expansion of coffee beans trade in the international market; and development of port operations in Santos somehow contributed to the economic stagnation of the city over the centuries (Castro 1932).

In the second quarter of the twentieth century, the city grew moderately around seaside activities which attracted vacationers in the hottest seasons of the year. Social, cultural, environmental, and economic defective policies culminated in frequent attacks to seaside ambience and almost total lack of enterprises in health, education, security, and habitation fields. Therefore, they contributed to the spread of <u>favelas</u> and proliferation of violence, making job generation not viable and corroborating to turn São Vicente into a "dormitory town" of <u>Santos coast</u>. Although São Vicente's sea coast had "natural attractiveness", it failed to assure job opportunities related to tourism and *per capita* income equal or lower than two or three minimum wages (Roque 2005).

From 1997 on, there is a more incisive concern of political authorities with the association of tourism to the city historic "vocation", which explained initiatives to provide entertainment and leisure options for vacationers.

Cultural marketing used slogans such as "The First City of Brazil", "Cradle of Democracy in the Americas", "São Vicente—always the first one", and "The First Municipal Council of the Americas", catchphrases that spread through the local press narratives and have gained considerable prominence in political speeches and tourist companies, which made investments aiming to attract vacationers and stimulate tourism, by alternative entertainment options, such as

nautical-sports fairs and products from other regions; exhibitions (...); photography contests (...); Fish & Pay opening; (...) creation of thematic spaces, such as the "Replica of Brazil's first village"; use of already existent squares and places, such as the Praça 22 de Janeiro (22 de Janeiro Square), where the Hipupiara Park was established; and the Horto Municipal, where there is the Museu dos Escravos (Museum of the Slaves) (Roque 2005).²

²The author highlights that a program was created on cable TV channel titled "TV-Primeira" as well as "electronic tourist information panels", available in squares and avenues.



Fig. 2.3 Houses at the entrance to the Vila de São Vicente Cultural Park. Source: São Vicente City Hall Photo Gallery Archive http://www.saovicente.sp.gov.br/galerias/visualizargaleria.asp? ID=21/ Accessed on March 18, 2014

Despite the intentions of these initiatives, Parque Cultural Vila de São Vicente (Vila de São Vicente Cultural Park) (Fig. 2.3), opened in 2001 next to the Mother Church, is for sure presented as a fantastic "time machine" which, according to São Vicente City Hall reports:

Reproduces the architecture, traditions, and customs of the first Brazilian city, colonized by Portuguese. At the park, visitors can get to know the sixteenth century colonial daily life in many cultural spaces that pay homage to important characters of Brazil and São Vicente histories in the region (PMSV 2014).

Through theater groups and script previously defined by São Vicente City Hall, actors and actresses take turns telling the history of the city foundation, by reciting poetry, commenting daily life facts of old colonial villages, and recreating conversations between female colleagues and occasional encounters with indigenous catechized by Jesuits and priests (Fig. 2.4).

Administered by the Association for Economic and Social Development for Families (ADESAF), the park received numerous critical assessments of heritage scholars, since in a tendentious way, their managers linked an authenticity idea to the reproduction of aesthetic and historical peculiarities of architecture and design of the old village, with no reference to fishermen and with an artificial lake, beach umbrellas, and other anachronisms.

Furthermore, the assumed concept of the park as a place capable of reviving memories of residents and visitors is doubly dissimulative: first, because it is a simulacrum of the official histories; and second, because it is based on a





Fig. 2.4 Vila de São Vicente Cultural Park. Source: São Vicente City Hall Photo Gallery Archive http://www.saovicente.sp.gov.br/galerias/visualizargaleria.asp?ID=21/ Accessed on March 18, 2014

hierarchizing project of access to the city, guided by a veiled proposal of distinction and social exclusion aggravated in 2010, through the adoption of the "Tourist Passport", created by the city Department of Tourism.

Between the gateway and the walls that surround the village, the scenario is full of distorted explanations about dichotomous and Manichean representations of human relationships, about notions of progress and civilization (cities and European colonizers) versus delay and barbarism (colonies and indigenous/Mamelukes), and also judgments that induce suppression of perceptions regarding indigenous population annihilation and a wrong sense of culture and power.

In addition, the works have not gone through technical assessment of the National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN) or the Council for the Defense of the Historical, Archaeological, Artistic and Touristic Heritage—of the State of São Paulo (CONDEPHAAT). The park was completed under warnings of embargoes and interdiction ultimatums for disobeying the resolutions of the Preservation Federal Law (25/1937) and also for transgressing the norms of protection of the surroundings of goods under tutelage and safeguard of the State (Motta and Thompson 2010).

Scocuglia, when commenting on nowadays scenic architecture, draws attention to two main dangers of this type of revitalization: transformation of "individuals" into "mere contemplators" and "artificial appreciation of urban land, associated with an increase in flow of people in areas created within proposals of generation of partial public spaces" (2006: 1–2).

In spite of all that, the expression "Brazil was born here" was certainly high-lighted by the media at the time of April 22, 2000 celebrations and, following the civic festivities of 500 years of Brazil's discovery, it stimulated the production of pamphlets, billboards, t-shirts, and all kinds of souvenirs that could link São Vicente's natural heritage and landscapes to its historical past. This is the case of a caravel's logotype, used in picture representations formatted in golden metal that dot the edges of traffic and identification signs of places of interest, beaches, civic

center, and local shops, arranged at circulation spaces of the city and surrounding areas, outside the urban perimeter, and on access roads to the city.

In addition to the ship visual symbol created, the "S V" letters have been inserted on the stylized drawing of waves, in order to promote a dialectic and identity intervention of the printed set through "stickers glued on official vehicles, garbage collectors' t-shirts, panels displayed in spaces intended for events and waste baskets distributed along the beaches" (Roque 2002: 4). The ostensive display of these symbols and topics had an impact in interviews of mayors and municipal secretaries, in printed materials in newspapers and magazines, in programs broadcast by radio and television, and in digital texts and images provided by the Internet.

In periods close to preparations for celebration of the city's anniversary, a clear dissemination of such slogans catches the eyes of observers. Phrases such as "Always the First", among other similar ones, were and continue to be used as a cultural and business marketing, printed even on paintings of vehicles responsible for the transport of tourists and for driving passengers in vans that move around the city.

In this line of thought, is it possible to infer that lack of urban planning and non-accomplishment of legal regulations that rule Brazilian legislation with respect to heritage has accompanied São Vicente's trajectory? To understand the merit of this hypothesis, it is necessary to approach the disturbing experiences of São Vicente's population and scholars' views of this subject.

In the middle of the twentieth century, more precisely in 1953, Claude Levi-Strauss (1985) pointed out the disordered growth problem of countryside cities of São Paulo. He warned that municipal authorities of São Paulo, as well as the City Hall of the State capital, were not preserving urban monuments, understood by him as important identity references. In other words, we can deduce that his reflections had already detected a reckless matter: historical marks, traditional practices, and customs of these populations were at the mercy of oblivion and extinction.

In this line of thought and based on the propositions of the referred anthropologist, Cecília Rodrigues dos Santos, coordinator of the Architecture Department of the São Paulo Cultural Center, on this position in the first year of the twenty-first century, admitted the existence of "administrative discontinuity in municipalities, (...) susceptibility to pressure from community groups, a powerful real estate game of interests" informed by "a sense of progress" linked to "continuous renovation processes of cities" (2001: 45).

Such findings suggest that the deal with natural and historical heritage of São Vicente is on the list of problems mentioned above by Santos, particularly the Brazilian State protectionist dispositions, expressed in 1937 and 1988 *Magni Cartas*, on federal and state legislation. To mention an example, it should be noted that only on October 21, 2005, the São Vicente Council for Defense of Historic, Artistic, Architectural, Cultural and Touristic Heritage (CONDEPHASV) was created. In accordance with the City Organic Law (art. 341), the City Council approved the law 1634/05 that established it as "deliberative and autonomous

institution on issues related to preservation of cultural and natural goods, linked to the Department of Tourism and Culture" (Art. 1—Law 1634/05-PMSV).

However, after several months, the article entitled "The city only has two heritages", published by the newspaper *A Tribuna*, on May 20, 2007, expressed indignation in the face of ineffectiveness of the CONDEPHASV, regarding abandonment and destruction of São Vicente heritage. Such situation was analyzed, to say the least, as paradoxical and inconsistent with the acclaimed distinction of Brazil's oldest city. Furthermore, there is no effective records of protection of natural goods and landscape, nor material or immaterial cultural goods in the municipal sphere either.

Since the middle of 2006, the council formed by twenty-two members promised the forwarding of a list of goods to be assessed. However, due to interest shocks and dissatisfaction of those who had benefited from the real state vacationer boom that has occurred in the municipality, from the 1960s on, there was resistance against municipal processes of preservation performed after 2008.

This is how it happens only in 2008, the announcement of preservation of historical and traditional and touristic city monuments, such as "Biquinha de Anchieta"; "Marco Padrão", from Gonzaguinha Beach; "22 de Janeiro Square"; the "São Vicente Mother Church" and "Pênsil Bridge"; the frontispiece and/or structures of some buildings and the statutory across from the City Hall; "Casa" (House) and "Martim Afonso School"; "Grupão" (nineteenth-century school); "Gáudio building"; the volumetry of "Mirante" and "Anchieta" buildings, located in the central area; and also, "Jardim da Casa do Barão" (Garden of the Baron's House), "Acastelado do Jardim Aralinda" Palace; "Porto das Naus" (Port of Ships), "Ruinas do Acaraú (Ruins of the Acaraú)" and "Curtume" (A Tribuna 2008).

In the IPHAN listing there is the recognition of the heritage value, in 1982, of the "São Vicente Pênsil Bridge" and "remnants of the Vila Colonial e Port of Naus. Among the CONDEPHAAT records the following were listed: in 1986, the "Serra do Mar and Paranapiacaba"; in 1988, the "Casa do Barão e Cobertura Vegetal". Unfortunately, the archaeological heritage of the colonial city, submerged in 1542, still has not received due attention. Under the sea are the remains of the first church of the village and remnants of material culture of the population that inhabited the place.

So, we can check that in the mid-twentieth century, strategies to retake economic growth, driven by the Government in partnership with private investors, have adopted measures aimed at improving quality of life of residents in order to

³Livro do Tombo Histórico (Historic Heritage Registry): Registration number 175, p. 41, 5/26/1982.

⁴Livro do Tombo Histórico (Historic Heritage Registry): Registration number.

⁵Livro do Tombo Arqueológico, Etnográfico e Paisagístico (Archaeological, Ethnographic and Landscape Registry): Registration number 16, p. 305, 9/8/1986.

⁶Livro do Tombo Histórico (Historic Heritage Registry): Registration number 279, p. 72, 7/18/1988.

preserve environmental and cultural heritage, therefore, ensure success on hospitality and tourist activities of the beach resort of São Vicente.

2.2 Final Remarks

Heritage safeguarding can become a way of residents symbolically recreate their relationship with the city and recognize their individual and collective memories as an integral part of these goods, regardless of their type. However, the development of conservation projects, the implementation of laws and decrees of preservation, and registration of goods are worthless if the sense of belonging is not rooted into the soul of the resident population (Pelegrini 2009).

This way, the propositions of Laenen (1997) concerning integrated conservation agree with the idea here defended: when the population is encouraged to participate in actions of protection, the "cultural personality" can be preserved, even in the face of information globalization or economic globalization.

In fact, it is essential to measure the benefits of joining cultural policies and development of tourist attractions, as well as protection and safeguarding of goods (Barreto 2007), however, without ignoring the interference of visitors in maintenance and transformation of recipient traditional cultures, since cultural boundaries are fluid, dynamic, and multifaceted, as suggested by Homi Bhabha (2013) and Néstor García Canclini (2006).

However, in the case of São Vicente, we observe that state and local public policies, besides not promoting conservation of landscape, natural and historical goods of the city, they did not take into account the issues referred by the authors mentioned above: business community, workers, children, young people, and adults have not been involved in heritage education projects or awareness programs regarding the vital need for protection of old buildings and the Atlântica forest, either of riparian forests, rivers or beaches, which resulted in degraded environments. Similarly, traditional practices, knowledge of fishing job, or preparation of food consumed by communities have not been valued—potential intangible cultural heritages to be safeguarded for future generations.

Same occurred with the creation of the "Staging of Foundation of São Vicente Village" (1982), idealized by amateur theater groups of the city, to celebrate 450 years of the city foundation. However, from its inclusion to the Guinness World Records' list (2002) as "greatest theater performance on beach sand in the world", the event has gained other dimensions. After 5 years, it was integrated into the tourist circuit and received some new features, such as inclusion of pyrotechnic show and "Espírito Santo" caravel.

At the time, in 2007, the show achieved national repercussion and started to be performed in parts, divided into several acts for 7 days; it has received an audience of about 56,000 people; 1,300 supporting actors from the community participated

and famous actors from Brazilian television were cast to take the protagonist roles of the plot.⁷ In other words, the spectacularization of the performance of a cultural good happened, which was simply elaborated for celebration of Martin Alfonso's arrival in the village located among the mountains of Serra do Mar and the south coast of São Paulo.

Regarding the considerations presented, this paper proposed a reflection about the complexity of preservation practices in cities that take a "historical vocation" for themselves, based only in the economic potential that this characterization can bring. In this perspective, it should be noted that actions for heritage protection, when articulated to tourism and public policies of economic planning and urbanization, education, and culture, can promote sustainable development and social inclusion of citizens, since by aggregating values to cultural and natural goods, they generate jobs and income, essential resources to improve quality of life of residents.

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⁷Among them, the following actors of Rede Globo de Televisão outstand: Alexandre Borges, Ary Fontoura, Bianca Rinaldi, Bete Mendes, Cecil Thiré, Francisco Cuoco, Humberto Martins, Isadora Ribeiro, John Herbert, Júlia Lemmertz, Malvino Salvador, Marcos Pasquim, Mauro Mendonça, Ney Latorraca and Nuno Leal Maia.

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