



# Religious Tourism and Religious Monuments: the Politics of Religious Diversity in Brazil

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## Abstract

This article addresses the issue of religious tourism and the controversies around the construction of new religious monuments in Brazilian cities. First, I analyze a recent call made by the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism to all cities aiming at “the strengthening of religious tourism”. The results of that call show that “religious tourism” has been a way for Catholicism to maintain its hegemony at a moment when the presence of other religious groups is increasing in Brazil. In the second part, the article focuses on the case of the Brazilian town of Imbituba where a 46-m-high Catholic monument is being constructed on a hill. The municipality’s response to the protests of local Evangelical communities against the Santa Paulina’s monument has been the building of another religious monument. This second monument, located in the city center, represents a Bible. I analyze the official discourses by the municipal authorities to show how they reinforce the idea of a Christian identity. Both monuments and tourist sites are approached as entry points to discuss broader issues related to religious diversity and its urban governance.

**Keywords** Religious tourism · Religious diversity · Monuments

## Introduction

Since 2015, I have accompanied the construction of a monument in the city of Imbituba, a municipality with just over 40,000 residents on the coast of Santa Catarina state in southern Brazil. The monument, which began to be planned in the late 1990s,

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promises to be nearly 50 m tall and located on top of a 280-m-high mountain of the region, giving it great visibility. The monument portrays Saint Paulina,<sup>1</sup> whose official sanctuary is in Nova Trento, another city in the state. During my second visit to Imbituba in 2015, I accompanied the arrival of a group of “pilgrims” who are devotees of Saint Paulina. They had walked more than 200 km, from Nova Trento, and ended their journey with a mass. The leader of the group carried a placard announcing the construction of the monument. If the group had walked through the center of the city, it may have passed by another monument at the intersection of two main avenues. It is the sculpture of a Bible, which is less than 2 m tall.<sup>2</sup> The Bible Monument was the initiative of local Evangelicals and had received municipal government support. It was the municipal government that built the sculpture of the Bible and was also responsible for the Catholic statue, which is presented as a “religious tourism” attraction.

Inspired by this situation, this article reflects on the conditions of religious diversity in urban sites, specifically examining Brazil. These conditions necessarily involve forms of governance that must be considered in order to understand the configurations of religious diversity that are established in certain contexts. In the cases that will be analyzed, the theme of “religious tourism” is an essential part of the governance of religious diversity. Through religious tourism projects, different religious groups receive distinct treatments and gain differentiated access to economic and symbolic resources. I will demonstrate that what takes place by means of religious tourism is mostly a valorization of Catholic places and events. Religious tourism simultaneously opens space to a discourse that presents Christian references as sufficient expressions of religious diversity. This is what happens in the case of the Bible monument in Imbituba.

This article addresses two situations. The first is presented by a set of projects submitted in 2013 by municipalities in response to a call for projects from the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism that sought the “strengthening of religious tourism in Brazil”. Nova Trento was one of the five municipalities that received funding associated to this public bid. Its project, which was elaborated by the municipal government, will be the starting point of considerations about the general range of the projects.<sup>3</sup> The second situation is in the city of Imbituba, more specifically, the monument to the Bible located in the central area of the city. In addition to describing the sculpture, I will consider sources that allow us to understand the justifications given for its construction, seeking to relate them to certain forms of presence of Evangelicals in the city.<sup>4</sup> Although in this paper I will not enter into detail about the statue of Saint Paulina,<sup>5</sup> the relationship

<sup>1</sup> Santa Paulina, as Amabile Lucia Visintainer (1865–1942) became known, was canonized in 2002. She was born in Italy, and spent most of her life in Brazil, where she founded the congregation that would later seek her canonization.

<sup>2</sup> The group of pilgrims did pass in front of a temple of one of the main evangelical churches founded in Brazil. This was the scene that I witnessed, which inspired the conjecture that I propose in the article.

<sup>3</sup> The system that stored the material of the call for projects, provided access to a list with the title of all the projects. For 20 of them, access to the full content of the projects was available. I tried to contact the proponents of these 20 projects by email, which led to responses in some cases.

<sup>4</sup> The sources were accessed by Internet. But the three visits that I made to the city, in 2015 and 2016, were important for contextualizing those records and for generating information that I incorporated to the analysis.

<sup>5</sup> I present a specific analysis about the design of the monument to Saint Paulina in two other texts (Giumbelli 2018a, 2018b).

between the two monuments is central to understanding the conception of religion and religious diversity that is at play.

This article aims to understand recent transformations in Brazil's religious universe. The main transformation is probably the Evangelical expansion. The percentage of Evangelicals in the population rose from 6.6% in 1980 to 22.2% in 2010,<sup>6</sup> but neither the "Evangelicals" nor their expansion are homogeneous realities. To cast an eye on religious tourism and on the monuments that mark the urban landscape with religious references is one way to examine the meanings and scope of that expansion, considering specific conditions and contexts. The same conditions and contexts require considering Catholicism and the ways in which it maintains and even extends its presence in Brazilian society. For this reason, religious transformations must be analyzed by contemplating dynamics that involve other fields, such as the urban landscape modified by monuments or the consolidation of religious tourism. To better support the need for problematizing the connections between these domains, this article, before entering the analytical section, begins with a discussion of the concept of "religious superdiversity", which will introduce us to the central theme of the article, the politics of religious diversity.

## Diversity in Discussion

Superdiversity is a concept proposed some years ago that has had a certain impact on studies about several topics (Vertovec 2007; Meissner and Vertovec 2015; Meer 2014). The central argument behind this concept is the complexification of the variables through which to analyze the groups of immigrants that increasingly populate Europe and transform its landscape, particularly, the urban landscape. One of these variables is the religious, which inspired the notion of "religious superdiversity". According to Burchardt and Becci (2016, 1), religious superdiversity intends to encompass debates in two dimensions: the first considers the agenda of the concept that inspired it, problematizing "the relationships between religion and other status categories in contexts of migration-driven diversification such as race, ethnicity, legal status, age, and gender"; the second intends to consider processes of religious innovation, not necessarily linked to migratory groups. The concept has led to studies of various natures, including comparative ones, as demonstrated by articles included in the special issue edited by Burchardt and Becci (2016), and with emphasis on situations that involve the "spatial strategies" of different religions in cities (Becci, Burchardt and Giorda 2017).

Given the theme of this text, I must agree on the importance of "better understanding how, in contemporary societies, religious diversity is afforded visibility, how it is spatially arranged and emplaced, and how religious diversity becomes a category whereby ordinary people render their social worlds legible" (Burchardt and Becci 2016, 1). However, there are some limitations to the way in which this set of questions is addressed in the two texts mentioned. Their concept of diversity appears to depend

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<sup>6</sup> The sources of the data are the official Brazilian censuses conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). Other numbers for 2010: Catholics, 65% (they were 89% in 1980); other religions, 5%; no religion, 8%.

on the existence of more or less well-defined groups as units of analysis. That is, in this concept, everything revolves around the actions that these groups take or the processes that they seek to conjugate or in some way profile these units. They are, evidently, important aspects, but they fail to encompass situations in which it is precisely the concept of religious diversity that is at stake or in which there are dynamics that can modify how the religious is delimited or how it operates in society. In these situations, state actions can have an important place and cannot be ignored—as recognized in another text by Burchardt (2017).

The article by Fabretti and Vereni (2016), included in the special issue edited by Burchardt and Becci, allows illustrating the point made above. The study of the Italian authors is about Rome. Their argument is supported by a paradox: the fact that the city so strongly carries the religious mark of Catholicism winds up attracting other religious groups and institutions, which use monumental projects to support or consolidate themselves. Rome hosts not only the Vatican but also the largest mosque in Western Europe, the largest Zen Chinese temple in Europe, and will soon have one of the world's largest Mormon centers. Even if this configuration can be presented as a case of religious superdiversity, as the authors do, it would be inappropriate to ignore that it illuminates two fundamental points: certain conditions of the production and definition of diversity—which are related to the place of Catholicism—and its expression in specific material forms—which is precisely related to a certain monumentality. In other words, it does not make much sense to refer to diversity—super or sub—if we do not consider the politics of how this diversity is defined and the forms in which it is materialized.

In the case of Brazil, an important point in the conditions of production and definition of diversity is the existence of a certain consolidated form of describing the “religious field”. I refer here to the tripartite division between Catholicism, the Evangelical universe, and Afro-Brazilian religions—or mediumistic religions, if we want to include Spiritism (Giumbelli 2006). This division is quite different from that which predominates in the European context with its reference to “world religions” (Masuzawa 2005). Given that this is not the space to elaborate on this distinction, what I propose to do is to examine how projects, such as those related to religious tourism and monuments, articulate and enact existing conceptions of religious diversity in Brazil. Projects supporting religious tourism and monuments involve agents and dynamics that include the state. As the monumentality of the temples of Rome attracts architectural proposals that include the urban aesthetic and localization as dimensions that participate in the religious, tourism too is something that, as I will show, has the capacity to modify the material forms that characterize religious diversity and how certain religions—in specific configurations—can represent, for example, a city.

Along with the notion of religious superdiversity, this article contributes to reflecting on the concept of urban Christianities proposed by Bielo (2013). If the notion of urban Christianities refers to “Christian-inflected ways of urban dwelling”, then what I analyze below shows that these ways of dwelling can depend on actions that promote religious tourism. I will demonstrate how religious tourism in Brazil is associated to a Christian hegemony. Religious tourism can be treated as a matrix of discourses and actions that articulate the religious and state realms, constituting the conditions for the governance of religious diversity.

## Limits of Diversity in Religious Tourism in Brazil

In April 2013, the Ministry of Tourism issued the “selection process for projects to strengthen religious tourism in Brazil”. Its objectives were to increase the professionalization of the sector and organize religious tourism along an economic logic (transforming sites and events into a “product” to be commercialized). Also included among the objectives is the promotion of urban development, linked to ecological sustainability and the strengthening of local communities. There was an interest in promoting religious diversity, with the presumption that various local groups would be represented in administrative committees. Nearly 200 projects were submitted to the Ministry of Tourism, of which only 20 were considered eligible to receive the funds. Finally, the five which scored highest received funding.

Before reviewing the 20 projects considered eligible and the five that were awarded, we will examine how the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism focused on the theme of religious diversity. One of its publications declares that “Religious Tourism is related to institutionalized religions such as the Afro-Brazilian, Spiritist, Protestant, and Catholic religions and those with an Eastern origin.” (Brasil 2006, 2010). This is a declaration of principles that clearly embraces the idea of religious diversity, basically following the configuration that it takes in Brazil. The pronouncement by an employee of the Ministry of Tourism that accompanied the promotion of the call for projects for strengthening religious tourism reinforced this idea, in a more generic tone: “the resources of the Ministry aimed at stimulating the sector will be awarded regardless of creed, as long as they have the required touristic angle”.<sup>7</sup> This raises the question to what extent the situation delineated by the set of projects that responded to the public bid corresponded to this idea of religious diversity. I address this below, starting with Table 1, where the 20 projects that qualified for consideration by the Ministry of Tourism are presented.

As becomes apparent, Catholicism predominates among the projects approved. Cities that include sanctuaries, traditional and modern, appear a few times—including that dedicated to the patron saint of Brazil. Another highlight are the festivals, generally linked to popular devotions, many of which are events that mark the urban space of small and large Brazilian cities. The project sent by the municipal government of Nova Trento is part of this hegemonic Catholic scene. It focuses on the Sanctuary of Saint Paulina, expanded with the construction of a large temple in 2006. The project seeks to create conditions so that visitors spend more time in the region, proposing itineraries that include “attractions” in neighboring municipalities. Other religious expressions in addition to Catholicism (i.e., Evangelical churches existent in the region) are not even mentioned, a point that is repeated in most of the projects.

In what follows, however, I analyze some of the exceptions, that is, projects that include attractions related to more than one religious tradition. One of them (Foz de Iguaçu, a Southern town near the border with Argentina and Paraguay) promises a “religious tourist itinerary focused on the visitation of religious spaces and buildings”. This proposal includes two Catholic temples, one of them in construction, as well as a Buddhist temple and a mosque. In a message sent in response to queries by this study,

<sup>7</sup> Cf. <http://www.turismo.gov.br/ultimas-noticias/1093-projetos-de-turismo-religioso-ja-podem-ser-inscritos-para-pleitear-investimentos.html>, accessed on 09/06/2017.

**Table 1** Qualified projects for selection process to strengthen religious tourism in Brazil

Municipality	Attractions highlighted	Religions involved in the project
Nova Trento+	Sanctuary Saint Paulina	Catholic
Novo Hamburgo*	Religious itinerary—temples and historic monuments	Catholic and Evangelical (historical Protestant)
Foz do Iguaçu*	Buddhist temple, mosques, and Catholic churches	Buddhist, Islamic, and Catholic
Guarapuava	Festival of the patron saint, Passion of Christ, Evangelical churches	Catholic (and Evangelical)
Aparecida+	Sanctuary of Our Lady Aparecida	Catholic
Guaratinguetá*	Sanctuary Friar Galvão	Catholic
Nova Lima	Festivities of popular Catholicism, Evangelical churches, March for Jesus	Committee with representatives of various religious expressions
Paracatu*	Historic churches declared heritage sites; traditional festivities	Catholic
São João del-Rei	Historic churches; a beata	Catholic
Trindade*+	Sanctuary to the Holy Eternal Father	Catholic
Costa Rica*	Catholic festival	Catholic
Goiás*	Historic churches and monuments; traditional festivals	Catholic
Bragança+	Festival to St. Benedict	Catholic
Manaus*	Fluvial and terrestrial procession of St. Peter	Catholic
Santa Cruz+	Sanctuary to St. Rita de Cássia	Catholic
Bom Jesus da Lapa	Sanctuary Bom Jesus da Lapa	Catholic
Canindé	Sanctuary St. Francisco das Chagas	Catholic
Oeiras	Religious festivals	Catholic
Petrolina	Religious festivals (Festivals of São Gonçalo, Holy Week, etc.), March for Jesus	“Ecumenical encounter”
São Cristóvão	Historic churches and monuments; traditional festivals	Catholic

\*Municipalities with more than 20% of Evangelicals as part of the total population

+Municipalities-awarded funding

the Secretary of Tourism clarified that, with this itinerary, “tourists can contemplate the different architectures related to the religions of the different peoples that coexist at Foz do Iguaçu”. The aesthetic aspect related to the contemplation of different architectures is aligned with the ethnic aspect referring to “different peoples”. Perhaps for this reason, the Secretary of Tourism added in his message a “Ukrainian church”. Diversity, in addition to articulating the selection of the spaces included in the itinerary, is considered a criterion for the composition of the administrative committee of religious tourism that would be formed if the project was chosen.

Two projects mention the March for Jesus. In the form of religious events, such as the March for Jesus, these occurrences can be considered evangelical exceptions in an overwhelmingly Catholic universe. In various municipalities represented by the projects qualified for consideration, Evangelicals have a significant presence in the statistical

portrayal of the religious affiliations (see Table 1). The fact that their presence is limited—judging by the title of the projects that did not qualified for consideration and the content of those which did qualified—demonstrates the negative connotation that predominates the association between Evangelicals and tourism. The situation of the city of São Paulo, whose tourist information totems indicate the Temple of Solomon of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God as an attraction, is quite unique.<sup>8</sup> In the universe of projects under study here, the case of Guarapuava also fits into the considerations about the role of Evangelicals in the promotion of religious tourism.

The proposal from Guarapuava (a Southern town located in the State of Paraná) mentions Evangelicals, referring to the communities that correspond to specific churches, and the use that they make of a municipal park and its lake, where baptisms would be performed. The project calls for the construction of a baptistery in this park, which would coexist with a restored Catholic chapel. Despite this concern with the Evangelical community, the text of the project clearly focuses on Catholic sites and events; after all, as mentioned in a message received from an employee of the Municipality in response to the requests of this study, “most of the population of Guarapuava is Catholic”; or, in the words of the project, its “representativeness is aparent in the number of parishes, chapels, sanctuaries, and other items of religious appeal”. This correlation of forces appears to also be expressed in the so-called Praça da Fé (Faith Square), which was built at the site of an old quarry: although it is described in the message of the municipal employee as “a broad space for Christian conviviality”, its most important use is associated to Catholic celebrations (Loboda 2008). Significantly, Muslims, who have a mosque in the city, are not mentioned in the project.

While the presence of Evangelical references is very restricted, many more Catholic references are found in the project proposals submitted. Of the 173 projects that were not qualified for consideration in the selection process, even among the 96 projects that did not make evident their link to the theme of “religious tourism” in their titles, 18 had Catholic references. Considering the remaining 77 projects, the predominance is clear: they included 34 Catholic festivals, 9 Catholic itineraries, and 4 proposals to build a Catholic sanctuary. This Catholic predominance is also confirmed in the 20 projects approved for consideration, of which only five did not follow the general pattern (see Table 1). The same can be stated regarding the five awarded projects, all Catholic. None of the nearly 200 projects includes a direct reference to Spiritist or Afro-Brazilian religions.<sup>9</sup>

The association between religious tourism and Catholicism is also reinforced in statements from the Ministry of Tourism. The association is expressed in a news item displayed on the website of the Ministry in 2016, which presented statistics about religious tourism in Brazil and highlighted some locations.<sup>10</sup> The list included short notes about the Mosque at Foz de Iguaçu, two Buddhist complexes, and a memorial dedicated to a Spiritist medium. But these short notes are topped by longer descriptions of Catholic sites, which include the five projects that received funding from the public

<sup>8</sup> Personal observation made at the airport in Congonhas São Paulo. See <http://www.cidadedesao paulo.com/sp/o-que-visitar/atrativos/pontos-turisticos/4527-templo-de-salomo>, accessed on 20/06/2017.

<sup>9</sup> Afro-Brazilian religions are valued in heritage policies. This suggests an important difference between situations defined by what Selka (2013) calls “heritage frame” on the one hand, and “religious tourism” projects, on the other.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. <http://www.brasil.gov.br/turismo/2015/01/viagens-motivadas-pela-fe-mobilizam-cerca%20de-18-milhoes-de-pessoas>, accessed on 09/06/2017.

bid of 2013. The imbalance in favor of Catholics is confirmed in other news promoted by the Ministry, the images used to accompany official ministerial information, and the presence of authorities in Catholic events.<sup>11</sup> That is, despite the intentions expressed in certain moments to promote religious diversity, the situation that is produced around “religious tourism” emphasizes Catholicism and stimulates dynamics that may reinforce its hegemony over other religious groups.

## Religious Monuments and the Politics of Religious Diversity in a Brazilian Town

In this section, I will focus on the situation found in Imbituba, where there is an Evangelical monument, while another Catholic monument is under construction. I will show that, on the one hand, the argument for religious tourism may also be used by Evangelical representatives in the dispute for space in the urban landscape. This dispute involves distinct concepts of public presence and religious diversity, something that I will explain by considering a contrast between visual privilege and visual pluralism. On the other hand, the tension between Catholics and Evangelicals is attenuated by the use of discourses that characterize the city as Christian. To the degree to which religious leaders and civil authorities share these discourses, it can be affirmed that they participate in dynamics involved in the governance of religious diversity.

Nova Trento and Imbituba are connected because the first miracle attributed to Saint Paulina (who lived in Nova Trento) took place in the coastal city of Imbituba. In 2015, I climbed the hill where the monument dedicated to the saint was about to be constructed. From there, it was impossible to see the Bible monument located at an intersection in the city center. The reverse is not true, because from the city center, it will be easy to see the statue of Saint Paulina. What is the relationship between the two monuments that share space in the city? What are the concepts of religion and religious diversity produced by this relationship? These issues will be considered here using as a reference the Bible monument in Imbituba.<sup>12</sup>

To begin, we can compare the Bible monument of Imbituba with another in the city of Novo Hamburgo (also located in Southern Brazil), which I learned about when reading the project that this municipality sent to the Ministry of Tourism. In the Novo Hamburgo monument, the Bible is represented by a circle that encompasses a “Triangle of Stones” and is surrounded by stylized figures that represent the twelve apostles. The nearly allegoric concept of the monument of Novo Hamburgo, inaugurated in 1980, is quite different from the literal representation adopted in Imbituba, where a monument exists since 2009. What we see in Imbituba is an open book where a verse from the Apocalypse is printed.<sup>13</sup> The message is a type of metatext, because it refers to the

<sup>11</sup> The presentation is available at: [www.turismo.gov.br/conselho-nacional-do-turismo/documentos-relacionados-as-reunioes/item/download/225\\_244a991436ece65762c7f9fca3e1122b.html](http://www.turismo.gov.br/conselho-nacional-do-turismo/documentos-relacionados-as-reunioes/item/download/225_244a991436ece65762c7f9fca3e1122b.html). Accessed on 23 July 2015; <http://www.turismo.gov.br/ultimas-noticias/838-ministro-do-turismo-visita-a-expocatomica.html>, accessed on 09/06/2017.

<sup>12</sup> I have discussed briefly the relation between Catholic and Evangelical monuments elsewhere (Giumbelli 2014, 161–163). For cases in the USA, see the instigating analysis by Howe (2008).

<sup>13</sup> A photo of the monument can be seen at <https://plus.google.com/100389458271672466193/posts/BMWucaxneJe>, accessed on 09/06/2017.



importance of knowing what is written in the Bible. Paradoxically, it is difficult to read it, given that, to do so, it is necessary to get close to the monument, which is located at the center of a roundabout without a pedestrian walkway. There is also a pedestal with inscriptions that are easier to see: the name of the monument, the name of the municipal government, the date of inauguration, and the inscription “Deus seja Louvado” (Praise God). The monument is made in granite and is 1.6 m tall.

For a discussion about religious diversity, a possible interpretation of the monument to the Bible considers precisely its dimensions and its location in contrast to the characteristics of the monument of Santa Paulina. The Bible is not located on a mountain and, although its dimensions for being a book are enormous, its proportions are modest. The same can be said for the monument in Novo Hamburgo, which is located in a park. Considering that when comparing statues of Bibles to statues of Catholic figures found in many Brazilian cities this contrast is recurring, it can be suggested that the Catholic monuments operate with a logic of visual privilege, whereas the Evangelical monuments have a logic of visual pluralism—that is, while public squares and streets can encompass many small monuments, the same is not true of hills that stand out in the landscape. A specific fact appears to confirm this. Close to the Bible monument, there is a temple of the Assembly of God Evangelical church. The presiding pastor of this church spoke at the inaugural ceremony of the Bible monument. I went to the temple in search of information about the monument. In a quick conversation with a pastor, he did not speak much about the comparison with the monument of Saint Paulina, but told me that there is a third monument in Imbituba, which celebrates the presence of Masonry in the city. The size and location of the Masonic construction are similar to that of the Bible monument.

While the egalitarian logic, with its at least implicit criticism of the proportions of the Catholic monument, may be a plausible argument for interpreting the presence of the monument to the Bible, the search for more information about this monument leads to alternative interpretations, namely the state support to the Bible monument. The fundamental element is the suggestion for the construction of the monument to the Bible made by a city councilman in 2007 and repeated in 2009.<sup>14</sup> His motion from the city council to the Imbituba municipal government appears to have been the legal instrument that allowed the construction of the Bible statue in 2009, the year in which news about the plan for the monument to Saint Paulina circulated. The justification for the project is composed of only two paragraphs. While the second indicates that, lacking public funds, the author of the proposal, that is, the councilor, would cover the costs of the work, the first paragraph gives the basis for the proposal: “My intention with this statement is to leverage religious tourism in our municipality, in addition to making a fair homage to all religions, given that the Sacred Bible is an inexhaustible source of knowledge where each day people discover the treasure of the Sacred Books, and progressively become aware of the relation that exists between the Bible and Life.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> I did not find indications that the city councilman was or would be evangelical. What is interesting is that his political career (he was in his third mandate in 2017) appears to have been constructed by his action as an employee of the hospital where the miracle attributed to Paulina was said to have occurred. See <http://www.imbituba.sc.leg.br/vereadores/parlamentares/luiz-claudio-carvalho-de-souza>, accessed on 09/06/2017. For a general appreciation of Evangelical activity in Brazilian institutional politics see Machado (2012).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. [http://www.legislador.com.br/img/Lei/122589165\\_12\\_1\\_6\\_2009.pdf](http://www.legislador.com.br/img/Lei/122589165_12_1_6_2009.pdf), accessed on 18/09/2018.

I will comment on the significant mention of “religious tourism” soon below. Firstly, I call attention to the argument that with the Bible an “homage is made to all religions”. In 2007, there was a debate in the City Council about this measure. Of the four council members who supported the proposal, two of them referred to the argument that the Bible represents “all religions”. One councilman questioned this idea by noting that “there are other religions in Brazil that do not use the Bible”; adding that Brazil “is a secular country”, religion and politics should not be mixed nor support be given to a specific religion. The debate was closed in an apparent climate of consensus after another councilwoman “declared that she does not believe that the Constitution prohibits the measure, because it involves the ‘foundation of life’”.<sup>16</sup> The debate raises common positions in polemics about religious symbols in Brazil (Giumbelli 2014), which include the notion that a universal value is conferred to the Bible, either because it intends to represent “all religions” or because the Bible supposedly relates to “fundamental” dimensions of human life (i.e., moral values) that are above religious doctrines. According to the news about the inauguration of the monument paid for with public funds, the Mayor of Imbituba recognized that the Bible monument was something “that was lacking in the municipality, being a sacred symbol that represents all religions”.<sup>17</sup>

There are records that representatives of the municipal executive branch made an effort to tighten relations with the Evangelicals of Imbituba—or at least the portion of them that were politically organized. In 2014 and 2015, an event bringing together various Evangelical churches held on the anniversary of the municipality counted on the presence of the mayor. In 2012, on the same occasion, the mayor attended a ceremony of the Four Gospel Church, which was a participant in the collective Evangelical event in 2014 and 2015.<sup>18</sup> In 2004, the executive branch had proposed a law that would “grant financial support to recording an Evangelical CD”.<sup>19</sup> During the inauguration of the Bible monument, the presiding pastor of the Assembly of God Church, whom the news identified as the author of the request for the statue, expressed his appreciation: “I cannot fail to mention how well attended we are by the Mayor”.<sup>20</sup> The appreciation is repeated on the church website, which identifies the Mayor of Imbituba as a “partner” in the project of construction of a “recovery center” for “drug addicts”.<sup>21</sup> In sum, there are indications of reciprocal approximations between civil authorities and representatives of the Evangelical community in Imbituba.

The search for the underlying logics supporting these approximations leads us to the theme of religious tourism. In June 2013, a city councilman, the Evangelical one mentioned before who supported the construction of the Bible monument, proposed

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of the ordinary session held on July 9, 2007 in the City Council of Imbituba, made available in <http://www.imbituba.sc.leg.br/>, accessed on 01/10/2016.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. <http://www.santacatarina24horas.com/capa/cidades/117-imituba-sc/4280-inaugurado-monumento-a-biblia-em-imituba.html>, accessed on 09/06/2017.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. <http://www.engeplus.com.br/noticia/geral/2014/aniversario-de-imituba-e-celebrado-em-culto-ecumenico/>; <https://www.facebook.com/prefeituradeImbituba/photos/a.797735320341488.1073741915.308685275913164/797735537008133/?type=3>; <http://www.imbituba.sc.gov.br/noticias/index/ver/codMapaItem/16434/codNoticia/401770#.WS1NImiGPIU>, accessed on 20/06/2017.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. <http://www.imbituba.sc.leg.br/>, accessed on 20/06/2017.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. <http://www.santacatarina24horas.com/capa/cidades/117-imituba-sc/4280-inaugurado-monumento-a-biblia-em-imituba.html>, accessed on 09/06/2017.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. <http://www.leadimituba.com.br/acao-social-iead-imituba/147-associacao-beneficente-ebenezer.html?showall=&start=6>, accessed on 09/06/2017.

the institution of the Bible Day in Imbituba. The justification for the municipal measure referred to a federal law of 2001<sup>22</sup> and to arguments that are similar to those put forward in relation to the Bible monument. These arguments are one of the points that sustain the relationship between civil and religious actors. Since 1998, there is a resolution in the municipality that calls for a copy of the Bible to be exhibited together with other symbols in the City Council chamber.<sup>23</sup> The text from 2013 in support of the Bible Day affirms that the festivities could have the support of public authorities: “the Bible day is an event that will deserve emphasis. Encompassing practically the entire population of the municipality, this day has a common objective: to attract Christian tourism in a sustainable manner, because beyond the commemoration, this project sought to bring the highest number of tourists (people who want to get to know better and enjoy the comfort of our beaches), in which process they will leave resources in the municipality.”<sup>24</sup> There are no records that this proposal was accepted by the municipal executive. Nevertheless, even if the municipal government did not associate tourism and Evangelicals, the use of the argument by the religious actors is significant. It points to the willingness of Evangelicals to be integrated, through spaces and events, to the local circuits—of people, resources, and information—related to religious tourism.

After having visited the Bible at the center of Imbituba, I mentioned it to the president of the association of pilgrims I referred to at the beginning of this article and who is one of the main supporters of the monument to Saint Paulina. It was 2015 and the construction of the monument had not begun. My interlocutor responded to me that the existence of a monument to the Bible should be credited to Saint Paulina. That is, he associated the Bible monument to requests by the Evangelicals, who received this “gift” as a counterpart for the official government support to the construction of the Catholic statue. From this perspective, the silence of the Evangelical actors in relation to the monument to Saint Paulina makes sense—the monument is not mentioned in the documents that I analyzed for this article. In 2016, the silence was broken by two Assembly of God pastors in a news article in the most important newspaper in the state.<sup>25</sup> They raised religious arguments critical of statues and questioned the allocation of public money. Does this indicate a change in the position of the Evangelicals, with a new director leading the Assembly of God, thereby reactivating the critical potential contained in their monument? Or, considering that the works of the monument to Saint Paulina had already begun, is it rather a sign that can be interpreted as a demand for new “gifts”?

Another comment by the president of the association of pilgrims called my attention. He told me that Evangelicals were very strong in the city and equal in number to Catholics. However, according to the IBGE statistics for Imbituba, 71% of the population is Catholic and only 18% Evangelical.<sup>26</sup> That is, Evangelicals are able to appear

<sup>22</sup> The Law 10335 institutes the Bible Day as part of the official calendar.

<sup>23</sup> One of the articles still observes: “Whenever the President declares an ordinary session to be open, a city councilman will be invited to read a Biblical passage, after which legislative work will begin.” Resolution n° 11/1998 de 15/12/1998, <http://www.legislador.com.br/LegisladorWEB.ASP?WCI=LeiTexto&ID=316&inEspecieLei=4&nLei=11&aLei=1998&dsVerbetes=>, accessed on 18/09/2018.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. [http://www.legislador.com.br/imgLei/122589165\\_12\\_1\\_166\\_2013.pdf](http://www.legislador.com.br/imgLei/122589165_12_1_166_2013.pdf), accessed on 18/09/2018.

<sup>25</sup> <http://dc.clicrbs.com.br/sc/estilo-de-vida/noticia/2016/05/monumento-gigante-de-santa-paulina-gera-controversias-5821456.html>, accessed on 09/06/2017.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. <https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/v4/brasil/sc/imbituba/panorama>, accessed on 20/06/2017.

larger than they are—at least for Catholics, who see them as competing actors. This idea allows reconsidering the logic of visual pluralism. Even if the Bible monument had characteristics that allowed it to coexist with others, in practice, it is only the Evangelicals who were able to mark the urban space—making a counterpoint to the Catholic predominance. The small size and simplicity of this mark is attenuated if we recall that the proposals for the monument and for the Bible Day are based on arguments that are not pluralist. The Bible is presented as something capable of representing “all religions” or even something more “fundamental”. To the degree to which this argument is articulated as a political vector, given its presence in the legislative realm and considering the approximations between Evangelical leaders and municipal government authorities, it gains a significance, as the leader of the local pilgrims perceived. As we saw, the discourse allows Evangelicals to dream of being part of the “attractions” of religious tourism, something that the monument to Saint Paulina, if it is completed, intends to promote.<sup>27</sup>

## Final Considerations

The fact that the call for projects from the Ministry of Tourism for the “strengthening of religious tourism” received nearly 200 projects is significant. Even if the large majority of the proposals did not meet the minimum requirements, all the cases included some initiative—which requires a reflection—that responded to the demand from the Ministry. This points to promising horizons for religious tourism, at least in the sense that help generate new material and symbolic structures and resignify old spaces and events. It is possible to glimpse similar horizons for monuments that contain religious references. Monuments of the scope of the statue of Saint Paulina are not very unique—as shown by the recent constructions in Canindé and Santa Cruz (both cities in Northeastern Brazil), to consider only the projects analyzed previously. It would certainly not be for lack of space that more simple monuments would be proposed and eventually built. But how do religious tourism and religious monuments intervene in the contours and definitions of religious diversity in Brazil? How does religious tourism play out as an instrument to govern religious diversity?

Judging by the set of projects presented to the Ministry of Tourism in 2013, “religious tourism” in Brazil has been constructed with strong references to Catholicism. Something similar to a conversion appears to have an important role in this construction. An event or a site with a long historical association with religion is now presented as a religious tourism attraction. The chances that this religion is Catholicism are great, considering its institutionalization (we recall that the ministerial definition of religious tourism mentions “institutionalized religions”) and its condition as a parameter of what came to be religion in Brazil (Montero 2014). The projects in Aparecida and Trindade—both cases of sanctuary cities—are perhaps the best illustrations of this operation of conversion, which allows tracing continuities between present and past and at the same time introducing changes (even material ones) that meet the

<sup>27</sup> In reality, there is an irony in the situation of Imbituba. The monument to the Bible was built rapidly. But work on the monument to Saint Paulina has been halted, and in the current political situation, there is little chance that it will continue soon.

expectations of tourist structures. Converted into a touristic attraction, religion is inserted in a network of potentially new agents, which would always involve the state.

Conversion in many cases is accompanied by totalization. In this way, Catholicism—disguised as religious tourism—serves to articulate various social aspects and globally characterize entire cities and even regions. Here, the consequences for religious diversity are clear. As several cases show, through this totalization, the population appears more Catholic than the statistics about religious affiliations indicate. It is possible to affirm that, in most cases, the relationship with religious tourism implies forms of representation that reinforce an identification of place with Catholicism. The presence of other religions tends to be made invisible. In addition, justifications are constructed for the erection of structures that mark urban space, magnifying and monumentalizing the Catholic references.

But this panorama that privileges Catholicism has some gaps. They can be identified examining the case of Foz de Iguacu. We recall that the itinerary proposed by the municipal project included Catholic, Muslim, and Buddhist temples. This design of religious diversity corresponded more with the configuration that involves global religions than that of the three main religious sectors in Brazil (Catholicism, Evangelicals, and mediumistic religions). One of the effects of this understanding of diversity as in the “world religions” model is the absence of Afro-religious or mediumistic references, a general trait among all of the religious tourism projects. At the same time, we should consider that the municipality of Foz do Iguacu presented a second project, specifically seeking to promote the March for Jesus. In addition to this march being mentioned in some of the 20 projects approved for consideration, three other projects of those dismissed involved Evangelical events. Although they are limited references in a universe dominated by Catholicism, it is possible for us to identify in this a symptom of the Evangelical expansion and the pressures that it exercises to be present in the public space.

This comment leads us to the situation of Imbituba. While in Nova Trento the project of the municipal government invested in religious tourism as a distinction of the city and the region and was content to include only Catholic references, in Imbituba, the option for religious tourism has been considering other forces beyond the Catholicism monumentalized in the statue of Saint Paulina. I have indicated that the municipal authorities cultivate links with Evangelical churches, with the Bible monument being a materialization of those links. At the same time, the idea of religious tourism has been incorporated to justifications for Evangelical monuments and events. In relation to religious diversity, I suggest that the Bible monument is a response to the logic of the visual privilege sought by the Catholic statue of Saint Paulina. But, after all, what is dominant is the idea that Christian references are sufficient or even suitable for representing “all religions”, thus reducing diversity to the pairing of the Bible and the Saint.

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