

NATALIA BOREK

borek.natalia@gmail.com

University of Nice Sophia Antipolis

#### ABSTRACT

This research project covers the role of artists in preserving the intangible heritage of coastal communities on the Brazilian shoreline and in turning it into a touristic asset. The sea heritage, represented by two traditional fishermen communities, will be studied in terms of interaction between the following three main actors linked to natural heritage: a local population, a tourist and an artist. The aim of this paper is to present the framework of two case studies – to be carried out among the communities of *Marujá* and *Quilombos da Fazenda*, situated in State Parks on the coastline of the State of São Paulo – on which further academic research will be based. These studies adopt a methodology of action-research, which consists in provoking a social situation that implies the active participation of all actors involved.

#### KEYWORDS

geography, intangible heritage, artists, community-based tourism

# THE ROLE OF ARTISTS IN SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES IN BRAZIL: BETWEEN PRESERVATION AND TOURISM PROMOTION

## AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTION-RESEARCH STUDY ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE ARTIST, THE TOURIST AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

### ILLUSTRATING INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Since the Portuguese colonisation, the land of Brazil has been attracting travellers and explorers who collect documentation and illustrate, through visual arts such as drawing and painting, an abundant cultural and natural heritage. The French Artistic Mission, created in the 19th century by Napoleon Bonaparte with the purpose of founding the first Fine Arts School in São Paulo, was the source of artistic works intended to appreciate the picturesque landscapes of Brazil. Jean-Baptiste Debret, a French painter and draughtsman, participant in this mission and author of the book *A Picturesque and Historic Voyage to Brazil*,<sup>1</sup> took deep interest in illustrating the history of the country – its indigenous people, their customs, their environment – through his drawings and paintings. In the historical context of the era, the work of an artist, focused on nature and local culture, consisted mainly in illustrating landscapes and in documenting knowledge related to a land still little exploited by Westerners.

Ever since the creation of the French Artistic Mission, the role of artists in society has been evolving in tandem with changing socio-economic contexts. The next century witnessed a change in the relationship of man towards nature: a transition from an excessive exploitation of natural resources to the implementation of conservation policies. This change also became manifest when the notion of intangible heritage was institutionalised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as: ‘practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity’.<sup>2</sup> Natural heritage, which refers to biodiversity and the natural environment, is also included in the notion of intangible heritage.

<sup>1</sup> Original French title: *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil*.

<sup>2</sup> Definition adopted by UNESCO during the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, which entered into force in 2006.

This process took place under the background of globalisation, which allowed a growing human mobility and accessibility of heritage sites. By showing their potential for tourism, heritage sites did not escape the negative effect of this process: mass tourism and increased environmental footprint. Indeed, tourism helps to boost the country's economy, having been statistically acknowledged as the second economic activity in terms of employment generation. In fact, in 2009 alone the picturesque Brazilian landscapes attracted five million tourists from abroad and domestic tourism accounted for almost 50 million trips (Bursztyn 2005). Therefore, natural heritage has been exposed to new challenges: taking into consideration the gradual deterioration it has been suffering, the intrinsic value of its intangible cultural heritage requires that it should be protected and preserved.

### THE EVOLVING ROLE OF ARTISTS

Since the public awareness of natural heritage has been raised in recent decades, it is interesting to examine the role that artists still play in representing and transmitting intangible heritage. First of all, the work of today's artists is done in a globalised context, which grants them a greater visibility and makes them more available. The artist can become an actor in the process of education and awareness-raising for social and environmental issues related to intangible heritage. We can mention the example of the Brazilian artist Rubens Matuck<sup>3</sup>, who works with different artistic forms of expression: painting, drawing, woodcutting and photography. His work translates his deep interest in landscapes and different lifestyles, which is the reason for the numerous journeys across his homeland. The impressions from his journeys are kept in illustrated travelogues for which he uses various techniques: watercolour, pastel, crayon. His books are also accompanied by photographs. The main thread of his work is the representation of Brazilian intangible heritage. He uses his artistic expression as a tool in his commitment to both education and environmental conservation.

As a different example, we refer to a multidisciplinary art project named Grupo do Risco<sup>4</sup>, which brought together ten artists from Portugal. Dating from 2010, the project's aim is to illustrate the fauna and flora, the natural objects and the landscapes that can be found in the Brazilian Amazonia, relying for this on the techniques of drawing in travelogues, photography, video and music. Their goal is to contribute to an enhanced knowledge and valorisation of its natural worlds and intangible heritage.

In fields dominated by tourism and the media, the intangible heritage faces a double challenge: its own preservation and its tourist-oriented promotion. To what extent do artists participate in this process? In their interaction with others, how can their work be characterised? What is the impact of their work?

<sup>3</sup> <http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/pessoa18856/rubens-matuck>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://grupodorisco.files.wordpress.com/2009/07/dossier-grupo-do-risco1.pdf>.

### CHANGING SPATIALITY OF TRADITIONAL COASTAL COMMUNITIES

This research is situated at the intersection of questions related to intangible heritage and tourism. As a part of this study, we will take interest

in the socio-spatial context of Brazil, and more precisely in coastal communities referred to as *caíçaras*, located on the Brazilian shoreline. Their traditional livelihood is fishing and agriculture and they live within the environmentally protected areas of two different State Parks: *Parque Estadual da Ilha do Cardoso* and *Parque Estadual da Serra do Mar*. The two parks occupy part of the coastline of the States of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In practical terms, this study will focus on two communities: the community of *Marujá* on the Cardoso Island, situated in the south of the State of São Paulo and the community of *Quilombos da Fazenda*, located in the Picinguaba Nucleus, in the north of the State of São Paulo. The choice of analysing the intangible coastal heritage through the prism of these two communities is justified by the fact that the wider social context of their lives illustrates the sometimes difficult reconciliation of environmental issues with the challenge to preserve the natural and cultural heritage of traditional local communities.

The history of the *Marujá* and *Quilombos da Fazenda* communities in Brazil is the result of encounters between Indigenous people, Europeans and Africans whose paths crossed in the course of different economic cycles. The present condition of traditional communities is the consequence of an evolution in temporal and spatial relationships. The opening of highways in the middle of the 20th century played a vital role in connecting the peripheral coastal area to the mainland. The highways fostered the development of the coastal strip, largely contributed to by the promotion of a beach culture and real estate speculation (Sansolo 2013).

The raise in tourism was then followed by the introduction of new policies regarding the protection of natural resources and, later on, by the establishing of conservation zones such as State Parks. The communities did not close in on themselves, but adapted to the new context of nature conservation and tourism. They adopted new uses of their spatiality while still keeping their memory and culture. They continued to cherish their relationships with people and the place, maintaining their sense of belonging (Sansolo 2013).

In this changing context, traditional communities are searching for ways of how to diversify their activities and revenues, launching forms of tourism entirely managed by them. They receive visitors in the context of mutual exchange: the tourist becomes a participatory agent and experiences a total immersion in the lifestyle of local people. This practice is referred to as a community-based tourism defined by Louise Dixey<sup>5</sup> as a situation where: 1) the local community holds all the property rights to tangible and intangible resources used for tourism; 2) the local community plays a direct role in decision making, supervision and management of tourism resources, through a legal entity that represents them; 3) the community receives directly or indirectly the benefits of tourism initiatives.

Coastal communities are considered to be custodians of intangible natural and cultural heritage as their relationship with the natural environment – coastal land and the sea – is an inherent part of their

<sup>5</sup> Louise M. Dixey. *Inventory and analysis of community-based tourism in Zambia*. PROFIT. Available at <http://fsg.afre.msu.edu/zambia/resources/PROFIT%20Community%20Tourism%20Survey%20-%20Final%20CBT%20Report.pdf>.

identity. In order to carry out the research related to the role of artists in safeguarding natural heritage, it is necessary to understand the nature of the relationship of local people with their immediate environment and with other people, in this case with tourists. The introduction of tourism changed the relationship of communities with their spatiality, as many areas exclusively destined to the use of communities have been made available to visitors and are shared daily with them ever since.

As far as the *Marujá* community is concerned, visitors come to stay in houses of local inhabitants or in hostels, which means that the domestic area is shared with tourists. Traditional trails, acknowledged as intangible cultural heritage of the community, are also used by visitors. In the same manner, the football field, bars and the community centre, originally reserved for the leisure of local inhabitants, are at the tourist's disposal. The tourist also participates in work activities such as fishing, harvesting cassava and fish, which means that the working area is also shared with visitors. Community-based areas are therefore combined with the areas of touristic activities. With regard to the *Quilombos da Fazenda*, traditional community areas cover the beach where fishermen construct their ships, and the sandbank where they build their houses. The hinterland is referred to as an area of agriculture and extraction, while the traditional trails are also acknowledged as an expression of their intangible cultural heritage. Here again, the community-based areas correspond to the areas of tourist activity (Sansolo 2013).

The common area shared by the community inside the State Parks is based on built relationships. The local population answers and adjusts to external determinations such as tourism or park management, at the cost of confronting the possible conflicts that result from this configuration. However, even if *Marujá* and *Quilombo da Fazenda* communities were exposed to a conflictual relationship with the park management, e.g. because of imposed limitations, their integration into the park contributes to their protection and to the conservation of their heritage.

#### RESEARCH QUESTION AND MAIN HYPOTHESIS

The challenge of combining intangible heritage with tourism and the role of artists leads us to a research question that highlights the interaction of the three main actors: the artist who represents and interprets the intangible heritage, the tourist who wishes to discover the richness of the coastal heritage, and the local population considered to be the guardian of this heritage. Thus, further study will be dedicated to the analysis of the interaction between these different actors whose common denominator is intangible heritage.

The graphic presented below (Figure 1) shows how the interaction between the three main actors is structured and brings to light the character of the mutually established relationships between them. It serves as a support to illustrate the three main hypothesis retained in this study.

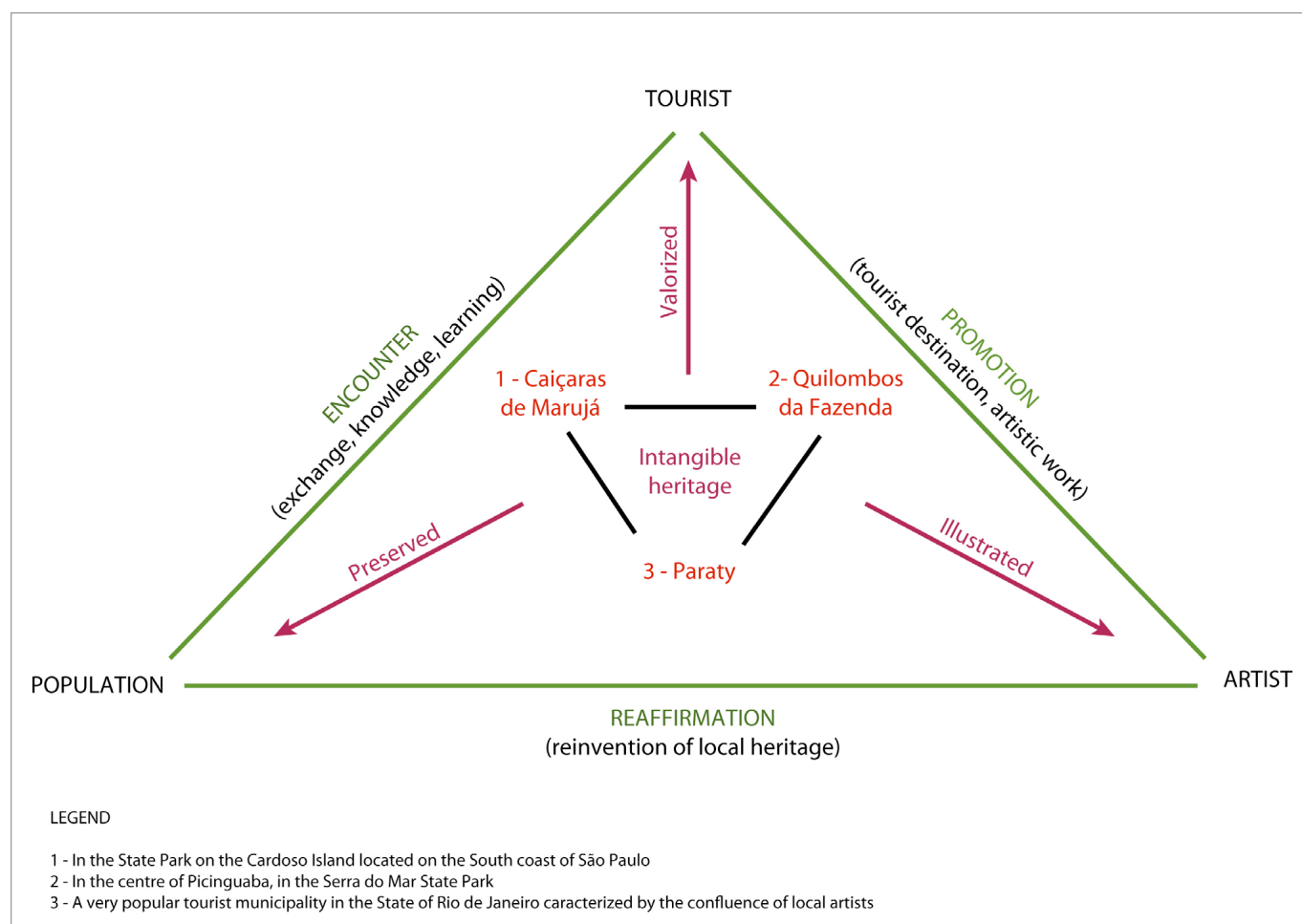


Figure 1 – The interaction between local communities, tourists and artists

Firstly, our study will be dedicated to the relationship established between the artist and the local community looking after the natural heritage. Our first hypothesis consists in presupposing that the quest for authenticity and the will of getting to know the population through art contributes to the reaffirmation of the local population's heritage, at the same time allowing the community to reinvent their heritage through the prism of an exterior artistic look.

The second area of study will analyse the interaction between the artists and the tourist. In our second hypothesis, we assume that the artist contributes to the promotion of community-based tourism and intangible heritage, and also plays an important role in the process of awareness building, generally related to environmental and social issues, and specifically to the sea heritage of coastal communities. On the other hand, the tourist contributes to the valorisation and promotion of the artist's work, also with regard to financial aspects.

The third main focus will lie on the interaction between the tourist and the local population. The third hypothesis asserts that there is an exchange between the local community and the tourist, since the latter immerses into the reality of a local population who cherishes their natural and cultural heritage. The tourist also learns about the local heritage through local art. Discovering local lifestyles and customs, and immersing into the context of everyday life, the



tourist discovers and valorises the natural heritage through direct confrontation, by the mere act of enjoying the tourist services of the community, and also by financing the local art. In addition to this, the local community, who receives a tourist within its domestic areas, opens up to a human and cultural exchange. They also seek financial gains in order to sustain their lifestyles and to contribute to the conservation of their heritage.

#### ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

This research project has an interdisciplinary character within the social sciences. Though structured in the discipline of human geography, it will also resort to sociology, anthropology and philosophy in order to enhance the study with a more comprehensive approach. This project is developed under the supervision of two geographers: Professor Jean-Christophe Gay from the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, specialised in tourism, and Professor Davis Gruber Sansolo, a Brazilian researcher from the São Paulo State University, specialised in coastal and environmental issues and in community-based tourism.

As far as methodology is concerned, this project will be carried out through the application of two different approaches, the first one being a traditional field research. Here, we will rely on the techniques of sociological research: participatory observation within the two communities and observation of the artists' environment. Their work is meant to illustrate the natural heritage of the communities and will be exhibited in the towns next to where the coastal communities are situated, such as the town of Paraty in the State of Rio de Janeiro. The project's immersion in the local context will contribute to the establishment of human relationships and the forging of closer links. Progressive integration in the environment will help to better structure and carry out the interviews with the representatives of the communities and the local artists. We presume that this part of our research will last approximately two months.

#### ACTION-RESEARCH APPROACH

The second approach that will be applied in this study is the method of action-research, carried out in a slightly different context than a field research. This methodology is efficient when it comes to working on interdisciplinary dynamics and a system of interaction which, in this case, refers to the relationship between art and social issues.<sup>6</sup> The method of action-research consists in provoking a situation that involves a collective action in the aim of bringing about a social transformation. The nature of this method is interdisciplinary, as it will involve an inter-action analysed in terms of its geographical, sociological, anthropological and philosophical impact.

In action-research, the feasibility of the method is a question of the process and not the contents. The process is characterised by group learning, sustained by a group dynamics. The intervention is struc-

<sup>6</sup> *Questions fréquentes sur la recherche action*. LISRA (Laboratoire d'Innovation par la Recherche-Action), 2009. Available at <http://recherche-action.fr/download/M%C3%A9thodologie/Questions-en-recherche-action.pdf>.

tured in a set of interactions between the actors, who act respecting the values of cooperative spirit and social responsibility. The actors of the interaction are submitted to analysis, but at the same time they play the role of researchers who analyse. In fact, they participate in establishing the modalities of the intervention and contribute with their reflections during the course of the research. The driving force of this method resides in its potential for development and transformation of a social reality. The aim of the action–research is to understand the social functioning of a provoked interaction.

In this study, we will lean on the action–research methodology proposed by a French sociologist living in Brazil, Michel Thiollent (2011), and by a French researcher in social sciences, Hugues Bazin (2006), who has been applying this method in cultural and art–related actions.

In practical terms, the action–research in this study will be designed as an exchange between four Brazilian artists from São Paulo, and the inhabitants of the local communities of *Marujá* and *Quilombos da Fazenda* in their respective State Parks. The aim of this encounter will be, on the one hand, to illustrate portraits of local inhabitants by telling their life stories and, on the other, to illustrate their everyday life by exploring their relationship with the space they inhabit, the sea and the traditional activity of fishing. Painting, drawing and woodcutting will be used as traditional techniques of illustration. The project will gather four main artists who are considered to be the core team of this exchange.

These four artists have already worked together on a project entitled *Maré*,<sup>7</sup> aimed at illustrating the sea tides and their impression through their engraving on wood. The coordinator of this team, Ernesto Bonato,<sup>8</sup> has been working with drawing, engraving, photography and installation for the last 20 years. He exhibited his works in more than 140 individual and collective exhibitions in Brazil and in 28 foreign countries. In 1993 he founded the *Piratininga* art workshop in São Paulo and has been its coordinator ever since, apart from working as an illustrator in various educational projects in the country and abroad. At present, he dedicates himself mainly to painting and to engraving on wood. He already has experience in illustrating the local communities in Brazil, just as the other three artists involved in the action–research.

Marina Faria<sup>9</sup> is a professional freelance illustrator who has worked for many companies and publishing houses. Her illustrations for children have appeared in a series of already published books. She is the founder of a graphic design studio and belongs to the managing group of the *Piratininga* multidisciplinary workshop in São Paulo. She also gives workshops in drawing and in storytelling. In 2013–2014 she participated in a collective artistic experience organised by a local community of *São Francisco Xavier*.

João Paulo Marques de Lima is a polyvalent artist who has been working with multiple art techniques, though he dedicates himself mainly to

<sup>7</sup> Website of the project *Maré*: <http://www.iar.unicamp.br/galeria/ernestobonato/index.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Ernesto Bonato: <http://www.escriptorio-dearte.com/artista/ernesto-bonato/>.

<sup>9</sup> Website of the artist Marina Faria: <http://marinamaricota.blogspot.fr/p/e-mari-cota.html>.

painting and drawing. Having worked 11 years as a professional illustrator, he already exhibited his works in Brazil and is currently participating in an artistic exchange with Portugal, where he is working on a project which aims at depicting the inhabitants of the city of Oporto.

The fourth artist, Deni Lantzman, favours drawing and painting in his artistic work. Since 2008 he has been exhibiting his works in various art galleries in São Paulo. He also participated in an artistic exchange within the communities of *Barra do Turvo* and *São Francisco Xavier*, in the State of São Paulo, where he painted the portraits of local inhabitants.

The aim of this action-research is to analyse the interaction that will take place in the course of the encounters and the possible social transformation they will bring about during this artistic exchange. The outcome of the artistic work will be assembled in form of a travelogue and of an exhibition, whose main goal is to bring to light the social and environmental issues studied within this PhD research. The exhibition is supposed to take place in French and Brazilian academic institutions – such as the University of Campinas, the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis and the University of Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III – as well as in institutions favouring bilateral French-Brazilian cooperation in both Brazil and France, namely the House of South America and the Brazilian Embassy in Paris, or the French Institute in Rio de Janeiro.

The interaction between the artists and local people will be equally documented and analysed by means of a documentary film and photographs. In the course of the research project, the monitoring and follow-up results will be regularly updated via a specifically created online blog.

The research will be accomplished within six months, in two separate parts. The beginning of the first part is scheduled for April 2015, with a period of approximately two months for data collection in Brazil according to traditional sociological field research under the supervision of Brazilian researcher Davis Gruber Sansolo. This will be followed by three months of data analysis and the organisation of the modalities for the action-research. The second part of the research, scheduled to start in September 2015, will consist in organising the social environment intervention and will last for a period of four months.

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