C O N T R A D I C T O R Y A S P E C T S O F T O U R I S M  

Introduction

Urban intervention projects in rundown central areas of significant historical, artistic and cultural value are a new aspect of contemporary urban planning which aim to create greater visibility for certain sections of city territory by enhancing their cultural references in order to reverse the physical and social decay into which they have fallen and to boost their economy.

These strategies, adopted in recent decades in rundown areas in various European countries and in the United States, have been reproduced since the 1990s in cities in Latin American countries with the aim of combining local development with heritage preservation. Therefore, in many historic centres in large and medium-sized cities, investments destined to promote culture aim to increase their attractiveness in terms of tourism in order to boost this activity which, theoretically, leads to the creation of jobs and income by enhancing and marketing material and non-material cultural references.

In Brazil, these initiatives have taken place in some central areas of recognised heritage value, such as the historic centres of Recife and Salvador. They have also been converted into ways of boosting the economy...
in central areas of major Brazilian cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where projects are being implemented in which tourism is one of the economic activities being promoted. Amongst these projects, the one which is nowadays attracting the most attention due to its contradictory features is the Integrated Action Plan for the Historic Centre of Salvador (Plano de Ação Integrada do Centro Histórico de Salvador), drawn up by the state government under the direction of Antônio Carlos Magalhães during the 1990s.

The measures developed under this plan, which was executed in an area of the historic centre of Salvador known as Pelourinho, aimed primarily to transform this site into one of the most important tourism centres in Salvador and in Bahia itself, but, as is the case with many other projects with the same intentions, this did not take place as expected.

Repeatedly and increasingly viewed as a socially exclusive territorial development strategy, the intervention became one of the most symptomatic projects to take place in Brazil, demonstrating that tourism and heritage do not always converge as focal points for territorial development. It is therefore worth critically assessing the effects of this plan on the socio-territorial dynamics of the historic centre of Salvador, focussing principally on the relationship between tourism, heritage and local development.

1. The process of producing and appropriating the historic centre of Salvador

As the original capital city of Brazil until 1763, in the early years of Portuguese colonial rule the city of Salvador was considered the main centre of political power in the colony, a status it maintained until the capital was transferred to Rio de Janeiro. In addition to wielding significant political power, Salvador was also home to an economic elite that consisted of enterprising individuals and wealthy traders, the majority of whom conducted their business activities in the city, considered one of the few urban centres to exist in the colony until the mid 18th century. The Catholic Church also exercised power there, seeking to impose its