

The Covid-19 pandemic effects on the territorial dynamic of tourism in São Paulo state municipalities with heritage relevance

#### Gabrielle Cifelli

Universidade Estadual de Campinas.
Instituto de Geociências.
Campinas. São Paulo. Brasil
gcifelli@gmail.com

0000-0002-5118-7704

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# The Covid-19 pandemic effects on the territorial dynamic of tourism in São Paulo state municipalities with heritage relevance

#### **Abstract**

Tourism was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected the intensity of tourist flows and the territorial dynamics of potentially attractive tourist destinations, such as the tourist resorts with representative Cultural and Natural Heritage in the state of São Paulo. Thus, the objective of the present study is to analyze the tourism characteristics of such locations during the different stages of the pandemic to investigate the changes occurred in the territorial dynamics of the activity in relation to the intensity, purposes and destination of tourist flows. The data and information collected were mainly based on semi-structured interviews with the managers of the Tourism and Culture area of the municipalities surveyed, and the results reveal an increase in proximity tourism, mainly in the countryside destinations, and the practice of workcation in the coastal destinations.

Keywords: Tourism; Cultural Heritage; Natural Heritage; Covid-19 pandemic

#### Efeitos da pandemia de Covid-19 na dinâmica territorial do turismo em municípios paulistas de relevância patrimonial

#### Resumo

A pandemia de Covid-19 afetou de forma significativa a atividade turística resultando em transformações na intensidade dos fluxos turísticos e na dinâmica territorial da atividade nos destinos turísticos potencialmente atrativos como as Estâncias Turísticas do Estado de São Paulo detentoras de Patrimônios Culturais e Naturais representativos. Essa pesquisa tem como objetivo analisar as características do turismo durante o período da pandemia, em suas diversas fases, nos municípios

paulistas que possuem relevância patrimonial visando averiguar as transformações ocorridas na dinâmica territorial da atividade com relação à intensidade, propósitos e destinação dos fluxos turisticos. Os dados e informações coletadas basearam-se principalmente, na realização de entrevistas semi-estruturadas com os gestores da área de Turismo e Cultura dos municípios pesquisados e com guias de turismo, resultando na constatação do aumento do turismo de proximidade, principalmente, nos destinos interioranos, e do workcation nos destinos litorâneos.

**Palavras-chave:** Turismo; Patrimônio Cultural; Patrimônio Natural; Pandemia de Covid-19

#### Efectos de la pandemia de la Covid-19 en las dinámicas territoriales del turismo en municipios paulistanos de relevancia patrimonial

#### Resumen

La pandemia de Covid-19 afectó significativamente la actividad turística, lo que resultó en cambios importantes en la intensidad de los flujos turísticos y la dinámica territorial de la actividad en destinos turísticos potencialmente atractivos como los Centros Turísticos del Estado de São Paulo con Patrimonio Cultural y Natural representativo. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo analizar las características del turismo durante el período de pandemia, en sus diversas fases, en los municipios de São Paulo que tienen relevancia patrimonial con el fin de investigar las transformaciones que ocurrieron en la dinámica territorial de la actividad en relación con la intensidad, los propósitos y el destino de los flujos turísticos. Los datos e información recogidos se basaron principalmente en entrevistas semiestructuradas con los responsables del área de Turismo y Cultura de los municipios encuestados, resultando el hallazgo del incremento del turismo de proximidad, principalmente en los destinos de interior, y la ubicación laboral en los destinos costeros.

**Palabra-claves:** Turismo; Patrimonio Cultural; Patrimonio Natural; Pandemia de Covid-19

#### Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has promoted meaningful changes on the intensity and territorial dynamic of national and international tourist flows causes an exploration of new destinations and attractions. In addition, changes occurred on the periods of seasonal tourist activities, on tourist behavior and on the purpose of people circulation itself. These transformations all happened in a short period of time, more specifically between 2020 and early 2022, and must be critically assessed so that their effects on culturally and environmentally relevant tourist destinations can be better understood.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the State of São Paulo was one of the most impacted regions by the restrictions and bans of tourist circulation, since it plays an expressive role in national and international tourist flows. Before the pandemic, the state received, on average, 50 million tourists per year among which 2.7 million were foreigners, responsible for 10% of the São Paulo GDP and for the generation of 1 million direct jobs and 2 million indirect jobs, noting that tourism activities involve 56 sectors of the economy.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the services that support the tourism economic activity, the state of São Paulo has the largest concentration of tourist services in the country, such as travel agencies, operation services and major international hotel chains (CRUZ, 2020), in addition of having an extensive network of infrastructure and transportation services that enables the tourists to reach cities in all regions of the state.

Of the 645 municipalities in the state of São Paulo, 70 are classified as resort towns for having infrastructure, services and tourist attractions that meet the interests and needs of the sector (PLATUM, 2019). One of the main purposes to promote tourism in these cities is to decentralize the flow of tourists from the capital to inland and coastal cities that have significant natural and historical-cultural sites, especially those recognized as natural and cultural heritage by the official state, national and global organs of preservation, which raise their potential touristic attractiveness.

Municipalities with historic sites - both on the coast and in the countryside - listed by the São Paulo State Council for the Defense of the Archaeological and Tourist Heritage (CONDEPHAAT), in the Urban Areas and Sites category, are worth mentioning.

Many of these municipalities have natural heritage sites of state, national, and global relevance. Except for Iporanga, all the others are considered "resort towns": Cananéia, Iguape, Bananal, Itu, Santana de Parnaíba, Amparo, São Sebastião and São Luiz do Paraitinga. However, the representativeness of this cultural and natural heritage, as well as the tourist flow propellers are variable; therefore, some of them were selected as case studies for this research: two inland cities (Santana de Parnaíba and Itu), one located in the Paraíba Valley (São Luiz do Paraitinga) and two located on the coast (São Sebastião and Cananéia). The coastal town of Ubatuba was included for having in its territory a natural heritage listed by CONDEPHAAT and for being very representative for the tourism in São Paulo, since it ranks first among the 70 tourist resorts in the state.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Data obtained from São Paulo State Government's website: Department of Tourism and Travel. Available at: https://www.turismo.sp.gov.br/. Accessed on: 5/13/2022.

<sup>2</sup> UBATUBA CITY HALL. Ubatuba ranks first among the 70 resort towns in São Paulo. Ubatuba: 03/11/2021. Available at: https://www.ubatuba.sp.gov.br/destagues/ubatubaliderakanking/ Accessed on: 07/13/2022.

This analysis aims to investigate the impacts of the Covid-19 on the tourism activity of small and medium-sized coastal and inland municipalities as well as the alterations in the tourism territorial dynamics during the pandemic.

#### Methodology

The present research was developed through a bibliographic review in national and international scientific articles about the dynamics of tourism during the pandemic to support the analysis of possible transformations in the intensity of tourist flows and the peculiarities of the territorial dynamics of the activity in the municipalities surveyed. A survey of the decrees issued by the São Paulo state government by the studied municipalities was performed to understand the relationship between the protocol measures taken to contain the spread of the pandemic and the tourist flows in historically and environmentally representative territories. The websites of CONDEPHAAT (Council for the Defense of the Historical, Archaeological, Artistic and Touristic Heritage) and IPHAN (Institute of National Artistic and Historical Heritage) were consulted to support the analysis of the heritage relevance of these municipalities both in historical and cultural terms and, in some cases, environmental terms. To understand the tourism relevance of the historic centers and the other heritage sites of the municipalities, the websites and the tourism flyers produced by the tourism secretariats and departments were consulted. This procedure revealed which heritage sites were advertised as tourist attractions and which of them were included in the tourist itineraries offered by the Municipal Tourism Departments.

Semi-structured interviews with Secretaries and Directors of Tourism of each municipality were of great importance to understand the most important tourist attractions, the relevance of the historical centers, the cultural/natural heritage in the territorial dynamics of tourism, and the profile of the tourists as well.

In addition to the secretaries and directors of Tourism, interviews were also conducted with a representative of the tourism guides of each municipality to obtain data regarding the territorial dynamics of tourism during the pandemic and in the first semester of 2022. The reports of the managers and guides interviewed were essential to understand transformations in the outbound regions and inbound destinations to identify the places with the highest tourist flow and the degree of tourist attractiveness of historical centers and other heritage sites throughout this period.

## The role of cultural and natural heritage as a tourist attraction vector during the Covid-19 pandemic

Cultural heritage, whether tangible or intangible, occupies a central position in the market of symbolic goods (BOURDIEU, 2004), since both its material and representational content are transformed into cultural products and, in many cases, become an asset of tourist attractions aimed at attracting tourist flows and enhancing the value of historically and culturally representative territories.

Patrimonialization (JEUDY, 2005) of objects, territories, and landscapes consists in ensuring a representation of history through its present material forms that were built in the past, as well as valuing the identity references of a community that are evidenced both by social practices and by manifestations of material and immaterial culture that, in many cases, are linked to symbolically and

historically representative parts of the territory, such as the patrimonialized central areas of cities commonly called historic centers.

The use of the term "historic center" is recurrent among official preservation agencies and community members to reinforce the relevance of the historic and architectural value of urban complexes and their landscape characteristics. According to Cifelli (2015, p. 129), "the use of the term historic center (...) aims to link the identity of certain cities with their historical relevance and the cultural expressions they hold." The term is commonly used in urban marketing and tourism promotion strategies to reinforce the condition of attractiveness of certain historically and culturally representative localities that are increasingly linked to the cultural goods market and tourism consumption. In this sense, the uses of heritage are therefore aimed at increasing the cultural capital that historic centers possess, valuing them economically (HARVEY, 1992; ARANTES, 2000).

The use of public and private spaces in historic centers for cultural and sporting events of various sizes and typologies aim to transform these locations into loci of cultural animation, leisure, entertainment and consumption. Also, to value and disclose the elements of intangible culture, such as gastronomy, dancing, music, religiosity, craftsmanship, among other manifestations that, while significant cultural and identity references for the community, add symbolic value to the historic centers and reinforce their condition of attractiveness.

The centrality of public spaces aimed at the promotion of cultural activities, leisure, consumption, entertainment, attractions and cultural equipment induces the territorial concentration of Tourism Characteristic Activities (TCAs) in historic centers, many of them located in heritage buildings that add more value to lodging facilities, restaurants, bars or tourism agencies. Consequently, it also induces the process of tourist re-functionalization of the cultural heritage, accentuating the territorial concentration of tourists in these parts of the territory (PAES, 2005; CIFELLI, 2010; PRADO SANTOS & PAES-LUCHIARI, 2007).

The touristic use of Natural Heritage sites is also becoming increasingly significant. Preserved natural areas became object of a growing tourist interest reinforced not only by the aesthetic criteria of natural landscapes, but also by citizens becoming aware of environmental issues (BERTONCELLO & TRONCOSO, 2018). Due to the high rate of urbanization, protected natural areas such as the Natural Heritage Sites of the state of São Paulo, are object to tourist interest sharpened by the biodiversity of forest remnants (such as the Atlantic Forest); the appreciation of mountain and coastal landscapes; the various forms of relief and geological formations; the presence of rivers, waterfalls, lakes, among other natural attractions that stimulate the tourist imaginary in search of individual and collective experiences mediated by nature.

The diversity of nature elements present in São Paulo's natural heritage sites expands the possibilities of touristic use, including activities of observation and interpretation of fauna and flora, sports and leisure activities, ecotourism and adventure tourism (rafting, trekking, canyoning, rappel, cycling, among others). The conciliation of the tourist exploitation of landscapes and natural resources, transformed into products, and their rational use that meets the principles of sustainability is one of the great challenges of the sector, since a considerable part of these locations is subject to processes of disorderly occupation, real estate speculation, and the predatory use of natural resources that increase the environmental fragility of these territories. The presence of protected and registered cultural and

natural heritage in the same municipality increases the potential for the touristic use of these territories, raising awareness towards the preservation and appreciation of their cultural and natural heritage.

During Covid-19 pandemic, the tourist flow and the territorial dynamics of the activity presented significant changes from 2020 to 2022. These variations were directly linked to the evolution of the pandemic and the measures adopted by the state government of São Paulo through Plano São Paulo, a government plan establishing quarantine measures (phases) to contain the virus spread. During phase I (red), in which only essential services were allowed, the tourist flow was practically interrupted in São Paulo's cultural and natural heritage sites, with no visits or in-person service to cultural and natural attractions, cultural equipment or tourist shops and services, except for the hotel industry, considered an essential service throughout the pandemic.

In phases 2 (orange), 3 (yellow) and 4 (green) of the Plano São Paulo, the partial release of the activities with public limitation and respect for sanitary protocols allowed a gradual resumption of tourist activity between June and December 2020, even with the continuity of quarantine recommendations. Between December and March 2021, a new wave of contaminations resulted in the return to the red phase in the whole state, In April, there was a partial flexibilization due to the vaccination rollout and the reduction of infection rates. The resumption of tourist activities occurred gradually, implying new forms of tourist mobility (CARNEIRO & ALLIS, 2021). Tourists started to opt for municipalities that were geographically close to their residence, open public spaces such as parks, squares and beaches, and destinations with natural and cultural attractions, even if these were not open to visitation during the most restrictive phase of the Plano São Paulo.

The circulation of tourists from large urban agglomerations to smaller coastal or inland cities for longer periods of time to work remotely in more pleasant and, apparently, safer environments was also an alternative to face the quarantine period. Therefore, these tourist movements are different from those of the pre-pandemic period, and are based on short-distance travels (staycation), the use of private vehicles and compliance with health regulations (CRUZ, et. al. 2021, p. 89), although not all tourists respected such rules.

The proximity tourism or staycation, which grew considerably in the pandemic period, represents a form of domestic tourism consisted of short stays and trips to nearby locations (ZHIWEI, 2021), and can occur within a day, not requiring overnight stays at the destination (SUAU SANCHEZ, VOLTES-DORTA & CUGUERÓ-ECOFERT, 2020). This type of tourism allows tourists to contemplate the historical, cultural, and environmental wealth of nearby municipalities that, before the pandemic, did not arouse as much interest, and was identified in most of the cities studied. However, tourist circulation for medium- and long-term stays – workcation – was also observed in many locations (PECSEK, 2018). This situation enabled tourists to enjoy more freedom of choice of destinations and more flexibility regarding the duration of the trip, and motivated many people to spend quarantine in coastal or inland tourist locations. Workcation occurs when the individual is allowed to work remotely from anywhere, being able to work while traveling with the possibility to reconcile work and rest, using the internet, IT and communication technology on selected destinations (SATAWEDIN, 2021). Therefore, it is important to understand how each tourism modality impacted the tourism dynamics of the studied municipalities in times of pandemic.

### The patrimonial relevance and touristic representativeness of resort towns in São Paulo

The promotion of tourism in the state of São Paulo occupies a prominent role compared to other Brazilian states, since it was the first to establish public policies to promote the activity and issue decrees for the creation of seaside, touristic, hydro-mineral and climatic resorts. The first decrees granting the title of spa to all municipalities on the São Paulo coast occurred between the 1940's and 1970's, showing the tourist vocation of the coastal cities. Since then, beaches have been among the main attractions of these cities that, from the second half of the twentieth century, started to receive public and private investments for tourism development, increased by the implementation of infrastructure, such as roads, and "secondary residences or second homes" (TULIK, 1995). Such transformations resulted in a considerable increase in the tourist flow to these municipalities, mainly Baixada Santista and, more specifically, from the 1980s on, in the municipalities of the northern coast of São Paulo (São Sebastião, Caraguatatuba, Ilhabela and Ubatuba).

The declaration of Serra do Mar as a Natural Heritage site by CONDEPHAAT in 1985 and the creation of the Serra do Mar State Park and other Conservation Units accentuated the conflicts over the use of the coastal territory for tourism, forbidding the use of the listed territory for new constructions and, at the same time, turning the landscape and the natural resources into a product for tourism consumption. "This approach to nature undertaken by contemporary man feeds on a contradiction: while inducing and raising awareness for the preservation and conservation of our natural heritage, it promotes the expansion of its exploitation and consumption" (PAES-LUCHIARI, 2007, p. 36). The protected area of Serra do Mar encompasses 33 municipalities, 90% of which is constituted of parks, such as Serra do Mar State Park (DELPHINO, 2006) which has several centers open and structured for tourist visitation, making its natural attractions of great regional relevance.

In Ubatuba, in addition to the 102 beaches, which are its main attractions, 16 islands also stand out as tourist attractions; the State Park of Serra do Mar (Picinguaba nucleus); the traditional communities (caiçaras, indigenous and quilombolas), which have become increasingly more structured for tourist visitation through Community-Based Tourism; some buildings of historical and cultural relevance located, mainly, in its central area; in addition to the Aquarium and the Tamar Project.<sup>3</sup> In 2019, the municipality promoted 50 events throughout the year, with at least ten events related to the cultural manifestations of traditional communities, attracting both the local community and tourists. The promotion of events in tourist destinations aims to combat tourist seasonality by offering leisure, culture, and entertainment. They can also strengthen the cultural identity of local communities, enhance traditions and reinforce the image of cities as culturally representative destinations.

In São Sebastião, there are more than 30 beaches located along 100km of coastline that constitute its main attractions. Some islands such as "As Ilhas", between Juquehy beach and Barra do Sahy, have been protected by CONDEPHAAT since 1994, in the category of natural area or landscape site (CONDEPHAAT, 2022). Nowadays, they are projected as natural attractions and occupy a prominent role in the tourist advertisement material of the municipality. Since 68% of its territory lies within the

<sup>3</sup> Information from Ubatuba's Municipal Tourism Secretariat website. Available at: https://turismo.ubatuba.sp.gov.br/. Accessed on: 07/12/2022.

Serra do Mar State Park, the rivers, waterfalls and trails in the Atlantic Forest are also relevant natural attractions that encourage the practice of Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism. Among the municipalities of the North Coast and Baixada Santista, São Sebastião is the only one that has a historic center that has been protected by CONDEPHAAT since 1971, with seven blocks and some isolated buildings protected. The architectural heritage, consisting of buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries, located near the waterfront, goes back to the sugar cane and coffee exploitation phase, between the end of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century. The development of the coffee industry in the Paraíba Valley in this period contributed significantly to the economy of São Sebastião, due to its role as a commercial warehouse and route for the flow of goods. Nowadays, the concentration of restaurants and bars, lodging facilities and cultural equipment in the historic center increases its relevance as a tourist attraction site.

In the southern coast of São Paulo state, the municipality of Cananéia is among the first in the state to receive the status of seaside resort in 1948. Located in the Ribeira Valley, its territory is sparsely populous and populated, unlike the municipalities of the Baixada Santista and the Litoral Norte, which, during the second half of the 20th century, became urbanized and had an expressive growth of secondary residences that strengthened its tourist vocation. The economic marginalization of the region, associated with its environmental characteristics and the difficulties of access due to the precariousness of the roads, contributed to make it one of the richest in the country in terms of biodiversity.

The region was recognized as part of the Atlantic Forest Biosphere Reserve, and in 1999 acquired the seal of UNESCO's Natural Heritage of Humanity site (UNESCO, 2022), which comprises extensive areas of all municipalities on the southern coast of São Paulo, such as Cananéia. The municipality lies within the perimeter of the Serra do Mar protected area by CONDEPHAAT. It also has indigenous reserves, quilombola and caiçara communities that make it recognized and valued for its cultural richness and diversity, representative of the generating matrixes of the people from São Paulo. Cananéia has a great historical relevance, represented by its historical center that was declared historical heritage by CONDEPHAAT, constituted in its majority, by buildings from the colonial period. The historical center of Cananéia was designated as a preservation area by CONDEPHAAT in 1969, one year after its creation. The historical importance of Cananéia resides in its strategic position, as it is located in the divisional mark of the Treaty of Tordesillas, on the border between Portuguese and Spanish territory. Founded by Martim Afonso de Souza in 1531, it is considered one of the oldest and most relevant urban centers in São Paulo (PINHEIRO, 2013). Having of a natural harbor, the economic vocation of Cananéia was associated with naval construction during the 17th and 18th centuries, with the production of vessels that served as means of transportation for troops heading to southern Brazil. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the fishing activity started to have a great economic relevance in the municipality; however, its touristic vocation is undeniable for having a territory with a very expressive environmental and historical-cultural richness.

The Paraíba Paulista Valley is another outstanding region in terms of historical, cultural, and environmental relevance. Some cities, as São Luiz do Paraitinga and Bananal, represent the strength of the coffee economy in the region through their built heritage territorially concentrated in their historic centers listed by CONDEPHAAT. The historic center of São Luiz do Paraitinga was declared a National Heritage Site in 1982 and is composed of buildings from the 19th century, predominantly in eclectic

style, considered remnants of the period when this urban center was considered an important "supply center for the troops that transported coffee from the Paraíba Valley to the coast". (CONDEPHAAT, 2022). Even with the great flood that occurred in the city in 2010, and the serious damage to the heritage with the flooding of the historic center, IPHAN declared São Luiz a Heritage site in 2012 in the History and Landscape category, covering "more than 450 properties and the visual preservation of the surroundings. This environment comprises the "sea of hills" that surrounds the city, forming a green frame that enhances the architectural complex" (IPHAN, 2022).

The territory of São Luiz includes the protected perimeter of the Serra do Mar and the Serra do Mar State Park, accessed through Núcleo Santa Virgínia, which is very popular with tourists for its trails through the Atlantic Forest and for rafting. It is important to highlight the richness of the intangible culture of the municipality expressed in its popular festivals, such as the 'carnival of luizenses' and 'marchinhas', in addition to the Festa do Divino (Holy Ghost Festivals), Festa Junina (Arraiá do Chi-Pupu) and other cultural events of great regional relevance.

In the countryside of São Paulo, approximately 30 km from the capital of the state, Santana de Parnaíba stands out for its historical, cultural and environmental importance. Its historic center has about 209 properties listed by CONDEPHAAT, most of them built in the 19th century. Located on the banks of Tietê River, Santana de Parnaíba was one of the most important points of departure of the Bandeiras expeditions to the backlands of Mato Grosso and Goiás (MAGNANI, 2007), which were in search for precious metals and were responsible for the imprisonment of indigenous people for forced labor. Thus, even today, the identity of the city is very much linked to the Bandeirantes and the city integrates the 'Bandeirantes route' that boosts the regional tourism.

Most of the heritage buildings were built in the 19th century during the development of the sugar and coffee economy. In addition, the territory of the municipality includes the Serra do Itaqui, listed by CONDEPHAAT in 2016 for having important remnants of Atlantic Forest near the capital of São Paulo, but it is still a destination little known and visited by tourists. In general, tourists are concentrated in the historic center, which is considered a gastronomic center visited by São Paulo citizens on weekends.

Located 100 km away from the state capital, Itu is nationally known as the "city of exaggerations" due to the fame it gained from the stories told by the character Simplício in the program Praça da Alegria, broadcasted by the former TV Tupi. Simplício, who played the role of a country bumpkin, exaggerated when describing the large size of objects in his hometown. His fanciful stories encouraged people to visit the city that currently has an oversized telephone booth and a traffic light, in addition to the Parque dos Exageros, considered one of its main tourist attractions. Besides being part of the bandeirantes' itinerary, Itu also has a historic center that has been protected by Condephaat since 2003, comprising around 240 buildings that were built between the 18th and mid-20th centuries. In this period, the region of Itu was very prosperous for congregating large sugar producing farms, between the end of the 18th century and the middle of the 19th century, and from this period on, the town became a major center of the coffee economy in the state of São Paulo.

Itu also gained political projection in the late 19th century when it hosted the first Republican Convention, in 1873, which strengthened the Republican movement and resulted in the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889. Located in the historic center of the city, the house that hosted the convention is protected by IPHAN and currently houses the Republican Museum, belonging to the University of

São Paulo, and is considered one of the city's main attractions. The Igreja do Carmo, Nossa Senhora da Candelária, the Energy Museum on Rua Paula Souza and eight panels by Father Jesuíno de Monte Carmelo, displayed in the conventual building of the Sisters of São José, are also federally protected (IPHAN, 2022). Some old coffee farms still preserve part of their buildings and are open to visitation and events, and one of them, the Pirahy farm, was listed by CONDEPHAAT in 2018.

The Varvite quarry, nowadays the Varvite Park, is protected by CONDEPHAAT within the natural area or landscape site category for having a rich geological heritage formed by varvite, a sedimentary rock that formed by the glaciation process that occurred in the region around 280 million years ago. The presence of this rich heritage, protected at state and federal level, is among the main attractions of Itú, considered a Tourist Resort since 1979.

## Vicissitudes of tourism in times of pandemic in São Paulo cities with heritage sites

The Covid 19 pandemic has significantly altered tourism flows in the state of São Paulo. In potentially attractive municipalities, such as those with protected cultural and natural heritage, the changes in the territorial dynamics of tourism have been significantly noticed since March 22, 2020, when the government of the state declared a lockdown with the "restriction of activities in order to avoid possible contamination or spread of the coronavirus". From this period on, only activities considered essential could function with face-to-face service to the public. The Article 4 of the decree reiterated the recommendation that "the movement of people within the State of São Paulo is limited to the immediate needs of food, health care and exercise of essential activities".<sup>4</sup>

The explicit measures limited people's circulation to avoid mass contamination; however, the possibility of performing work activities, studies, shopping, and other daily tasks remotely aroused the interest of many people to spend the quarantine period in more pleasant environments, such as the cities in São Paulo coast, locus of many secondary residences. This fact led the public management of São Sebastião and Ubatuba to face great difficulties in limiting the flow of people who went to such places to stay for a longer period. According to the head of the Tourism Department of São Sebastião (2022), "in the municipality, the movement of tourists occurred throughout the pandemic, resulting in constant problems on the beaches to avoid crowds (verbal information)", and the biggest setbacks to avoid the circulation of tourists occurred on the most popular beaches on the south coast of the municipality as Juquehy, Maresias, Camburi, Sahy, Boiçucanga and Baleia, characterized by the large concentration of second homes, many of them in luxury condominiums.

The same problem occurred in the municipality of Ubatuba, which adopted more restrictive measures to contain the flow of tourists with the publication of Municipal Decree 7312, dated March 23, 2020, which prohibited public access to all the beaches and commercial or service activities that would promote agglomerations. The measure was in force during the red phase of the Plano São Paulo and the use of the beaches and islands was only allowed after August 2020, with the publication of Municipal Decree 7407. With the return to the red phase in March 2021, the municipality decreed again

<sup>4</sup> SÃO PAULO. Decree 64881, March 22, 2020 – São Paulo state government. Available at: https://www.al.sp.gov.br/repositorio/legislacao/decreto/2020/decreto-64881-22.03.2020.html Accessed on: 07/28/2022.

the prohibition of beach use through the publication of Decree 7579, 03/042021, except for individual sports. These measures were only flexibilized on April 24th of the same year when the municipality entered the orange phase, which allowed partial operation of the activities and established sanitary protocols.

In both coastal municipalities, workcation was the predominant modality of tourism during the pandemic. In Ubatuba, there was an expressive increase in the rental of secondary residences, significantly boosting the real estate market for of seasonal properties. It is estimated that 20,000 people<sup>5</sup> stayed in the city for workcation. Graph I shows the increase in the supply of seasonal renting properties disclosed on the hosting platform Airbnb and Vrbo, from the last quarter of 2019 to the second quarter of 2022.

12000 10000 8000 6000 4000 2000 1t. 2t. Зt. 4t. 1t. 2t. Зt. 4t. 1t. 2t. 2019 2020 2020 2020 2020 2021 2021 2021 2021 2022 2022

Graph 1 – Quarterly variation in the supply of rental properties on the hosting platform Airbnb and Vrbo (2019-2022)

Source: Elaborated by the author based on data from the AirDNA platform (2022)

The graph shows a significant decline in the number of properties for rent by the hosting platforms in the second quarter of 2020. However, in the following quarters of the same year, the supply of properties increased, exceeding the pre-pandemic period in the first quarter of 2021. In Ubatuba, the first half of 2021 already showed a 7% increase in rental properties compared to the fourth quarter of 2019, and in the first quarter of 2022, this variation reached 23%. In São Sebastião, the variation was less significant during 2020, increasing in the third quarter of 2021 with 20% more supply in comparison with the fourth quarter of 2019.

A reduction in the tourist seasonality is also observed for the supply of rental properties. Such variation was directly linked to the phase established by the Plano São Paulo, rather than to the low and high season periods. In times of pandemic, the territorial dynamics of tourism changed significantly. According to the tourism guide and representative of travel agencies in the Municipal Council of Tourism of the municipality (2022), in São Sebastião, during the years 2020 and 2021,

<sup>5</sup> The estimate refers to the increase in energy consumption measured by Elektro (local energy company) and in the generation of solid residues measured by Sanepav in residences that used to be occupied only in the peak tourist flow period, i.e., vacations and weekends.

Besides the expressive movement of tourists on the hottest beaches like Maresias, Juquehy and Cambuí, there was an expressive increase in the number of tourists on the north coast beaches (Arrastão and Cigarras), which have houses for rent and cheaper lodging facilities. There has also been an increase in the demand for nautical tourism to visit the islands in the municipality (verbal information).<sup>6</sup>

Except for the beaches, all the other attractions were closed to visitation for a long period, such as the Serra do Mar State Park, the traditional communities involved in Community Based Tourism, the churches and the cultural equipment. In the historic center of the city, the process of tourist heritage refunctionalization is evident due to the large concentration of properties used for Tourism Characteristic Activities, such as restaurants, bars, hotels, cafes and cultural equipment. Such activities, associated with the events frequently held at the square across from the historic center enhanced tourist attractiveness.

The prohibition of events from March 2020 until the beginning of 2022 and the closure of other activities to the public drastically reduced the circulation of tourists. This situation changed with the reopening of the cultural and services equipment and with the resumption of events in 2022, which served as a strategy to boost tourism and increase the number of tourists in the historic center, considered as a gastronomic and cultural center. "In São Sebastião, besides the beaches, other tourist attractions have gained prominence, such as birdwatching, Community-Based Tourism, visits to the islands, trails and waterfalls" (verbal information) and part of these attractions are in protected areas of Serra do Mar.

In Ubatuba, the spread of information regarding more isolated beaches and islands resulted in a significant increase in the number of tourists going to these places, such as the Couves Island, in Ubatuba, which has controlled visitation. There was also an increase in demand for nautical tourism and for the practice of surfing and stand-up paddle. (verbal information).<sup>8</sup>

The significant increase of tourists in these protected areas resulted in greater difficulties in the surveillance of these areas and of places of more difficult access, such as isolated beaches and islands. The less impacting tourist activities such as educational tourism and ecotourism are taking longer to be reestablished in relation to sun and beach tourism - that did not stop during the pandemic even with the restrictive measures - having an expressive increase during the period of greater flexibility (verbal information).<sup>9</sup>

In the other municipalities studied, the proximity tourism presented a significant increase in the number of tourists from nearby municipalities, in general, with their own transportation, e.g., in Cananéia, there is the so-called 'weekend tourism'. According to the director of Tourism of the municipality (2022),

<sup>6</sup> Interview with the tourism guide of São Sebastião and representative of the tourism agencies in the Municipal Tourism Council of São Sebastião, on 10/14/2022.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with the Head of São Sebastião Tourism Secretariat on 07/20/2022.

<sup>8</sup> From an interview with the Secretary of Tourism, the Deputy Secretary of Tourism, the Director of Management and Fundraising, and the Head of Events and Reception Section of Ubatuba.

<sup>9</sup> Information obtained from the report of the tourism guide, professor of the technical course in tourism and owner of a tourism agency in Ubatuba, in an interview held on 10/15/2022.

"the city started to be more visited by the population from neighboring towns and from the Sorocaba region, who, in general, stay in the town during the weekend" (verbal information). Therefore, the tourist flow is better distributed throughout the year, not suffering with seasonality as before the pandemic, a period when educational tourism was more significant. This modality of tourism did not occur in 2020 and in 2021, having started again in the second semester in an incipient way (verbal information). <sup>10</sup>

The occupation of summer houses for longer stays occurred during the pandemic; however, on a much smaller scale and intensity than on the north coast. According to the Director of Tourism (2022), "between the years 2020 and 2021, nautical tourism stood out, with the use of private boats without hiring boatmen, with visits to the small towns of Lagamar", since the Ilha do Cardoso State Park, considered the main attraction of the municipality, remained closed to tourists.

The traditional communities (indigenous, quilombolas and caiçaras) that live in the municipality also stopped practicing community-based tourism during most of the years of 2020 and 2021 to ensure the health and safety of their members (LINHA D ÀGUA INSTITUTE, 2022). At the end of 2021, the traditional communities of Marujá, on Ilha do Cardoso, started to receive tourists during high season; however, as reported by the director of tourism of the municipality, "this process of resumption of tourism in the locality resulted in mass contamination of the residents and a new closure of Ilha do Cardoso in January 2022 with testing of the local population and tourists (verbal information). Despite the historical relevance of Cananéia, represented by its Historical Center, this attraction is not as valued by tourists as the natural attractions represented by the Ilha do Cardoso, the Baía dos Golfinhos and others located in the protected area of the municipality. The lack of training of guides and monitors to present the historical, architectural, and cultural richness of the buildings are among the reasons that led to a lower rate of tourists visiting the historic center. However, as the natural attractions were closed to visitation, there was a greater movement of tourists in the historic center, circulating by streets and squares and contemplating the aesthetic dimension of the landscape, without necessarily understanding the values and meanings attached to the architectural complex. According to the director of tourism (2022),

during the pandemic, tourists started to circulate through spaces that were not visited before during the flexibilization phase. During this period, new rural properties were opened for visitation and there was an increase of motorcyclists, cyclists, and hikers to unveil the natural and cultural attractions of the extensive territory of the municipality (verbal information).

In the Paraíba Valley, proximity tourism is prominent in São Luiz do Paraitinga, a location with tangible and inntangible heritage, its main tourist attraction. Nevertheless, the picturesque and festive town was silent during the peak of the pandemic. Unlike neighboring Ubatuba, the tourist flow was quite small in São Luiz, with little visitation to the historical center. According to the Secretary of Tourism and Culture of the municipality (2022), "in the more flexible phases, there was an increase in the practice of individual sports in rural areas, such as mountain biking, and an increase in visitation to the district

<sup>10</sup> Information obtained from an interview held on 10/15/2022, with a tourism guide who has worked for 25 years as an environmental tourism monitor in Cananéia.

of Catuçaba and natural attractions" (verbal information), <sup>11</sup> especially after September 2020, with the reopening of the Serra do Mar State Park (Santa Virgínia Center).

The resumption of the flow of tourists occurred effectively in 2022, with the return of live events, linked mainly to expressions of popular culture that express the cultural identity of the city and its rich tangible and intangible heritage. The events are regarded as the main strategy for the diversification of tourism in the municipality and give greater visibility to its historic center.

According to the Secretary of Culture and Tourism (2022), "a significant increase of all tourism segments, such as adventure, ecotourism, cultural, rural and educational is currently observed" (verbal information). <sup>12</sup> The improvement of virtual communication with the production of a tourism website in the city, the training of professionals linked to the tourism trade, with the offer of online courses held during the pandemic; "the generation of a rich material to advertise the work of the artists and the city, online cultural events" (verbal information); <sup>13</sup> and the project of guided tours to the historic center held by high school students could improve the mediation process of the heritage with the public. These initiatives have raised the interest of tourists in visiting the historic center from a more interpretative – rather than contemplative – point of view, so that they can understand the historical and cultural richness represented by its tangible and intangible heritage.

The proximity tourism predominated in inland cities as well. According to the service provider in the area of tourism and heritage education of Santana de Parnaíba (2022), "in the city, especially in the orange and yellow phases, there was an increase in regional tourism, with tourists coming from neighboring cities, such as Osasco, Jandira, Cotia, Embu, Jundiaí and others, something that was not common before the pandemic (verbal information)". <sup>14</sup> Besides the historical, architectural and cultural relevance of the historic center, the city is an important gastronomic hub attracting many tourists from the city of São Paulo who stay in the locality for a few hours and return to their home cities, usually on the same day. The pedagogical tourism is also prominent in the city, especially for school groups that follow the Bandeirantes route. For both modalities, the historical center stands out as the most visited attraction in the city. During the years from 2020 to 2021, pedagogical tourism no longer took place; however,

With the flexibilization of bars and restaurants, these were crowded on all weekends, especially in 2021 and 2022, resulting in a lot of movement of tourists in the historic center even with churches and museums closed to the public. "There were many visitors who came to the historic center to sit in the main square to talk outdoors" (verbal information). <sup>15</sup>

During the pandemic, there were several innovations in the strategies to advertise the cultural and natural attractions of the city and the interpretation of its heritage, especially the launch of the virtual tour of the Historic Center with 360-degree images. This resource, along with other existing

<sup>11</sup> Interview with the current secretary of the Tourism and Culture Board of São Luis do Paraitinga, on July 5, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with the Secretary of Culture and Tourism of São Luis do Paraitinga on July 5, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with the tour guide, representative of the Saci Observers Society and of the third sector in the São Luis do Paraitinga Municipal Tourism Council, on October 14, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Information obtained from an interview on July 27, 2022, by the Santana de Parnaíba Tourism and Heritage Education service provider, who has worked in the Tourism Department for 17 years.

<sup>15</sup> Idem 17.

projects and actions, such as the display of QR Codes on the facades of the main buildings in the historic center, a permanent program of heritage education with the local schools, and free monitored visits, allowed the location to be seen not only as a gastronomic hub and a center of consumption, but also as a reference to the history, identity, memory and culture of São Paulo.

Itu was also one of the most visited cities during the pandemic, receiving tourists from the state capital and neighboring municipalities. Between 2020 and 2021, there was little visit of excursion groups and educational tourism returned only in 2022; however, with low intensity. According to the Tourism Director of Itu (2022) (2022), <sup>16</sup> between 2020 and 2022, in the phases of greater flexibility, tourists started to prefer more outdoor spaces, such as squares and parks when they were open for limited public. Even with the commercial establishments and tourist attractions closed in the historic center, the Praça Padre Miguel, better known as Praça da Matriz, had many tourists throughout most of 2020 and 2021, getting crowded on some occasions.

According to the report of the tourism guide and turismologist of the Department of Tourism, Leisure and Events of Itu (2022),  $^{17}$ 

Even in the red phase, when everything was closed, some groups circulated in the Historical Center, especially in the Matriz square. As only commerce and essential services were allowed to open, the souvenir stores located around the square started to sell food to remain open (verbal information).

During the various phases of the pandemic, tourists and residents began to visit more public spaces, to walk through the streets of the historic center, and to sit on the benches in the squares to enjoy the movement of passers-by and the aesthetically pleasing landscape of the heritage buildings.

According to the Tourism Director, the historic center has a more intense nightlife nowadays, especially in the squares. The restaurants and bars that were not open every day are now opening to service the large number of tourists and visitors. This increase in circulation also benefits the local commerce and tourism, since the historic center has mixed uses. Therefore, most passers-by who visit the historic center circulate by the streets more with the purpose of consumption, leisure and entertainment than to interpret the historical, architectural and cultural richness of the location. The director of tourism reiterates that the pandemic has generated a significant increase in the movement of tourists in the rural area of the city for the practice of rallies, meetings of bikers and motorcyclists, hikes, among other sporting events organized by private groups. Many weddings are also taking place in the rural area, some of them in historical farms, overwhelming the hotel network on weekends and allowing a greater movement of tourists both in the historic center and in the other attractions of the city.

<sup>16</sup> Information obtained on July 26, 2022, in an interview with the current Administrative Director and Director of Structuring and Promotion of Tourism in Itu.

<sup>17</sup> Information obtained through an interview held on 10/15/2022, with the tourism guide and turismologist from Department of Tourism, Leisure, and Events of Itu.

#### Final Considerations

The present research verified significant changes in the tourist flows in the state of São Paulo during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the quarantine, the workcation resulted in a high movement of tourists to coastal cities, such as Ubatuba and São Sebastião, without conditions for enforcement of protocol measures and adequate supply of services to meet the high demand during the most critical phases of the pandemic. In Cananéia and inland cities like São Luiz do Paratinga, Santana de Parnaíba and Itu, the proximity tourism is more evident, resulting in an increase in the visitation of tourists from neighboring cities with shorter stays and less seasonal variation of the tourist demand.

In these municipalities, the increase in the visitation to the more distant and less known beaches of continental and insular parts, and the strengthening of nautical tourism show the growth of a tourist profile that values the visitation to public, open spaces, with fewer people and a greater contact with nature in search of new experiences. It is also a tourist who values sports and leisure activities in places of beautiful scenery and relevant natural attractions. These territorial dynamics can result in greater problems of management, sustainable use, and appropriation of protected and heritage natural areas for the practice of tourism and authorized sports activities. A similar situation can be observed in Cananéia, which started to face these challenges more effectively in the phases of greater flexibilization, with an increase in the tourist flow in rural areas and in the lesser-known attractions of the protected natural areas.

In urban areas, the historic centers became pleasant outdoor meeting places visited by many tourists. In some cases, like Itu and Santana de Parnaíba, there were agglomerations in periods when the WHO (World Health Organization) recommendations were to respect social distancing. The economic and cultural centrality they held was shaken by the pandemic, on the other hand, they became more noticed and valued, not so much for their historical and cultural relevance, but as aesthetically attractive public spaces and as locus of sociability and leisure in cities where this kind of urban amenity in central areas is increasingly scarce.

Popular festivals and other cultural events were resumed as of March 2022 in the studied historic centers or in their surroundings, highlighting the role of territorially concentrated cultural entertainment as a strategy to attract cultural consumers to the historic centers and boost consumption and tourism in the re-functionalized central areas. In this context, one of the main challenges for the government is to promote strategies and actions to interpret the cultural heritage in order to transform historic centers in São Paulo into loci of knowledge diffusion and appreciation of history, culture and identity.

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