

HERITAGE BUILDING IN THE 'HISTORIC VILLAGES OF PORTUGAL': SOCIAL PROCESSES, PRACTICES AND AGENTS

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ABSTRACT

'Historic Villages of Portugal' is the label of a tourist network created by a local development programme applied in twelve villages located in the Centro region of Portugal. This article* focuses on the social processes, practices, and agents involved in heritage building within the framework of this programme. The main argument is that heritage building entails processes of protection, appropriation, and manipulation of cultural expressions for tourist consumption, following international trends on heritage and development. These processes implicate tensions, conflicts, negotiations and cooperation among those who intervene, above all political authorities, specialists in historic conservation (principally architects) the tourism sector, and local populations. Historic conservationists have a 'monumental' vision of heritage, which does not correspond to the 'social' vision of the majority of the residents in the protected spaces.

KEYWORDS: cultural display • historic built heritage • Historic Villages of Portugal • time

INTRODUCTION

'Historic Villages of Portugal' is the label of a tourist network comprising twelve villages located in the Centro region of Portugal, mainly in the districts of Guarda and Castelo Branco (see Map 1). These villages are Almeida, Belmonte, Castelo Rodrigo, Castelo Mendo, Castelo Novo, Idanha-a-Velha, Linhares da Beira, Marialva, Monsanto, Piódão, Sortelha and Trancoso. The network was established by a political programme of local development entitled Programa de Recuperação de Aldeias Históricas de Portugal (Historic Villages of Portugal Recovery Programme). Implemented between 1995 and 2006, the programme was designed by the national government and the Commission for Coordination and Regional Development of the Centre Region (CCDRC). The idea was to use funds offered by the European Union for promoting tourist products (Silva 2009a; 2009b) according to a global "ideology of tourism" (Ribeiro 2003), which sees the

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Figure 1. The districts of Guarda and Castelo Branco, Portugal

sector as a prior and efficient tool for the development of depressed areas. Much like other countries where similar guidelines have been applied since 1980, such as France, the programme aimed to promote social and economic revitalisation through cultural tourism (PPDR 1995; CCRC 1999). The programme was started in collaboration with the former Portuguese Institute of Architectural Heritage (IPPAR), the now defunct General Board of National Buildings and Monuments (DGEMN), the National Institute for the Advantageous Use of Workers' Free Time (INATEL), local governments, and private agents.¹ The villages were selected in two stages, ten in 1995 and two in 2003, namely Belmonte and Trancoso. The over-

all managers of the programme justified the selection of these villages through various criteria, among them the "existence of architectural, archaeological or environmental classified heritage", "formal unity of the urban fabric", and "lack of tourist infrastructures" (*Programa de Recuperação...* 1994: 2).

The aim of the article is to reveal the social processes, practices and agents implicated in heritage building within the framework of this programme. To afford this, I will explore the design and implementation of the programme, the physical interventions on the urban environment of the villages, and the operations associated with their introduction into the global tourist market.

The data presented in this study was collected in 2008 and 2009 through anthropological fieldwork with direct observation, open interviews, and documental and bibliographical research. The study comprises two complementary strategies of data collection, and two scales of observation. I performed extensive research across the Historic Villages of Portugal, and intensive research in three villages, namely Belmonte, Castelo Rodrigo and Sortelha.

PRODUCING HISTORICAL TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

The majority of the Historic Villages of Portugal are small and concentrated rural communities which played major geostrategic and administrative roles for centuries, formed an advanced line of defence of the Kingdom of Portugal until the seventeenth century, and housed the municipalities up to the nineteenth century. In the late twentieth century, the villages suffered from depopulation and abandonment because of the colonial war, the rural exodus, and the crisis in the primary-sector-based economic model. Be-



*Photo 1. The village of Xystus, Piódão.
Photo by Luís Silva 2008.*

tween 1995 and 2006, the programme invested around 44 million Euros in the villages, mostly derived from the European Fund for Regional Development (EFRD). As Isabel Boura (2002) reports, these investments were unequally distributed through the villages due to the number and type of projects developed. Generally, the programme invested in historic monuments and basic infrastructures. Investments were also made in the paving of squares, in the placement of urban furniture, and in the renovation of the facades and roofs of most of the buildings located within the classified areas of the villages, as well as in the advertising and promotion of cultural activities, such as historic re-enactments. The programme also funded the creation of tourist trade and services, including tourism offices, local museums, country house hotels and tourist lodgings.

The objective of these investments was to convert the villages into tourist attractions that would relate to history and heritage. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998: 151–152) sees heritage and tourism as collaborative industries, and the world as a mosaic of destinations that compete with each other. In her view (1998: 149), “heritage is created through a process of exhibition (as knowledge, as performance, as museum display)”. In a similar way, Bella Dicks (2003: 1) argues that places are handled, modelled, and even simulated in order to become “visitable”. Accordingly, as I shall show below, the buildings of the historic villages were exhibited and staged in order to attract domestic and international tourists.



*Photo 2. 'Flowered houses', Monsanto.
Photo by Luís Silva 2008.*

The Historic Villages of Portugal network currently has various protected objects, namely 14 “national monuments”, 22 “buildings of public interest”, and 2 “buildings of municipal interest”. These include military and religious buildings, such as castles, fortress walls, churches, etc. Also included are archaeological relics and folk architecture, among them a necropolis, dwelling houses, barns, etc., a fact that indicates the extent of the concept of historic heritage (see Choay 2006 [1982]: 12; Lowenthal 1985; 1998). According to current Portuguese cultural heritage legislation, the Institute for Managing Architectural and Archaeological Heritage (IGESPAR) classifies national monuments, whereas the municipalities are in charge of classifying other kinds of objects (Law nº 107/01, article 15^o). In this case study, the protected objects are mainly owned by the state and the church, although some belong to municipalities, parishes and private entities. However, the state is responsible for the guardianship of national monuments (Law nº 107/01, article 31^o), even if their current management has been attributed to the municipalities. This situation proceeds from a differentiation between ownership and guardianship. As Pereiro Pérez (2009: 166) notes, the former is an inalienable right of the legitimate owner, whereas the latter demands a public responsibility for the object, which limits the actions of the owners.²

It follows that classification of national monuments also involves appropriation of space (see, for example, Gravari-Barbas, Guichard-Anguis 2003: 14). Thus, appropriation focuses not only on the objects protected, but also on the space where they are built.

In fact, each protection zone extends to 50 metres, counted from the external limits of the object, or to special zones of protection, which may include *non aedificandi* areas. The Historic Villages of Portugal have zones of protection, and special zones of protection.

In this case study, the classified areas have different administrative statuses: the historic centre of one town (Trancoso), the historic centre of two small towns (Almeida, and Belmonte), and two villages (Sortelha, and Marialva), as well as seven urban wholes (Castelo Mendo, Castelo Novo, Castelo Rodrigo, Linhares da Beira, Monsanto, Idanha-a-Velha, and Piódão). Although we are not dealing with a homogeneous group of places, they were all subjected to the same processes of heritage building and commoditisation. Any intervention into these protected areas must be signed by an architect, and approved by the governmental body responsible for the conservation of national relics, the IGESPAR. It is on this point that questions of authority come to the fore. The municipalities, the CCDRC, and above all the IGESPAR, decide what can or cannot be done, and how, in the classified area, and express judgements on all urban projects within it. There are two points worthy of mention here. On the one hand, there are cases in which these bodies express contradictory judgements, giving rise to cases of contested jurisdiction. This is the case with a restaurant in Piódão, which works with the permission of the CCDRC and the IGESPAR, but without the permission of the respective municipality of Arganil. On the other hand, there are cases in which the bureaucratic authority finds undesired interventions in protected spaces, such as the case of the sewage wastewater system constructed in Castelo Rodrigo, and certain appropriations of space presented later in this article. In Linhares da Beira, the question of authority is more complex as the village is situated within the Natural Park of Serra da Estrela, which is managed by the Institute of Nature and Biodiversity Conservation.

The act of classification shows that cultural heritage is neither a natural nor a universal feature, but rather an artifice produced by someone in a particular place and time, that is, a “social construction” (Prats 2004 [1997]: 19–20). In Portugal, the classification of cultural heritage is a social process mainly performed by specialists, above all by architects, according to technical criteria. Architects also played a decisive role in the implementation of the programme since they had know-how to design the material interventions on the villages. They designed all the *Planos de Aldeia* (village plans) delivered by the municipalities to the coordinating institution of the program, the CCDRC, which approved or rejected each plan according to the judgement of the technical group. These plans identified the work to be done and the responsible entities (the DGEMN, the IPPAR or the municipality) in order to add value to heritage, promote urban rehabilitation and economic revitalisation (see PPDR 1995). The municipalities proceeded differently at this point. Some commissioned independent and celebrated architects to design the plans, while others worked with their own teams of professionals. The tasks specified in the plans were offered to contractors in public and limited tenders, depending on the value of the contract, whether above or below 100,000 Euros.

Considering the data collected through fieldwork and interviews with the designers of the village plans, material interventions in the villages were made according to the scientific and aesthetic criteria of the architects. The aim was to create a representation of the past, mainly the medieval period.

The interventions on historic monuments followed different philosophies, depending on the case. Some of the monuments were preserved, that is, the interventions main-

tained the stability of their structures, which may well be ruined. This took place in almost all castles and fortress walls,³ in the ruins of the palace of Cristóvão de Moura in Castelo Rodrigo, as well as in the churches of Santa Maria do Castelo in Castelo Mendo and Santa Rita in Sortelha. Other monuments, in turn, were conserved as “conservation may involve preservation but also restoration of the physical fabric” (Graham et al. 2000: 16). This could be observed, for example, in most of the churches, such as the church of São Vicente in Castelo Mendo, the church of Rocamador in Castelo Rodrigo, and the church of São Pedro in Marialva, as well as in the King’s riding school of Almeida.” In general, it was assumed that through the use of materials such as iron and steel, the modernity of the interventions was signalled, and the monuments were marked off and visits disciplined. In some instances, the interventions included modernisation, as in the case of the tourism office constructed near the ruins of the palace of Cristóvão de Moura in Castelo Rodrigo, in the virtual belvederes collocated in the castles of Castelo Novo and Linhares da Beira, as well as in the polemical amphitheatre and washing rooms made in the castle of Belmonte.

These interventions are closely related to national and international trends in interventions on historic monuments and built heritage, such as the Letters of Venice (1964) and Kraków (2000), as well as the recommendations of the European Council (EC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). As Françoise Choay (2006 [1982]: 172, 187) points out, in the last decades scientific knowledge and capacities gave a new actuality to the ideas of John Ruskin (1819–1900), allowing minimal and soft interventions on historic monuments, including the cult of ruins. At the same time the principle of preservation of antique extensions to the monuments and historic quarters is accepted as correct, as is the doctrine of Gustavo Giovannoni (1873–1948), which supports the integration of monuments into the surrounding space. The idea proposed by Camillo Boito (1836–1914), according to which modern interventions must be signalled, is also accepted as accurate.

Thus, intervention is now very different from those made on national monuments during the Portuguese dictatorial regime (1926–1974), in which Salazar’s doctrine of longing for the good old days applied one unique model of intervention, inspired by the ideas of Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879) (see Neto 2002). Viollet-le-Duc defended the restoration of monuments according to their allegedly original form and volume, that is, the restitution of a monument’s purity or unity of style, and the elimination of later extensions. Notwithstanding, the campaign of the dictatorial regime had the virtue of reanimating monuments that were very degraded and ruined due to abandonment (Correia 2000: 2). The Historic Villages programme produced similar effects. Most of the affected monuments were “failing in health”, abandoned, decayed and dirty. In the more or less recent past, some of these monuments were used as washing rooms by the local population, as places of sexual intercourse and as quarries for construction. With the programme, they acquired a “second life” as heritage, to use the words of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998).

As Maria Gravari-Barbas (2005: 11) remarks, heritage entangles two seemingly contradictory practices: the exclusion of the objects from their current life and their subsequent reintegration into society. In this case study, the exclusion of objects proceeds through the already explored processes of classification and appropriation. The reinte-



*Photo 3. The cult of ruins, Marialva Fortress.
Photo by Luís Silva 2008.*

gration, in turn, was realised in various cases through reutilisation. For example, some structures of the walls of the fortress of Almeida were re-employed as a tourism office, a museum and a centre for the study of military architecture, while the local King's riding school continues to function as such; the tower of the castle of Belmonte was converted into a museum, whereas the jail located there was transformed into a tourism and attendance office; in addition, the church of Santiago was transformed into an interpretative centre and the convent of Nossa Senhora da Esperança into a country house hotel; the cathedral of Idanha-a-Velha also functions as an exhibition room and playhouse; and one of the towers of the castle of Linhares da Beira was converted into a tourism office and exhibition room, while the other tower received a paragliding simulator. Other historic monuments were allotted exclusively to tourist functions.

Local populations tend to reprove the cult of ruins as well as the use of modern materials on monuments. On the other hand, the residents of Sortelha criticise the conservation of the church of Nossa Senhora das Neves, while the residents of this and other villages complain about the fact that the roof tiles used in their churches break and fall easily. However, they say that they can do anything because they are not the owners and do not have authority over the churches. Notwithstanding this, the residents of some villages, particularly Castelo Mendo, Castelo Rodrigo and Sortelha, say that their villages were spoiled during the interventions since some of the relics found there were stolen, including coins and gold, a statement that derives from the idea that they have property rights over these items.⁴



*Photo 4. Modernity in a monument, Castelo Novo.
Photo by Luís Silva 2008.*

In most villages, the programme also intervened to alter private buildings, representing both classical and vernacular architecture, located within the protected areas. In all cases, the intervention aimed to recover former building patterns as well as to “rectify architectural dissonances” (CCRC 1999; Boura 2002). The proceedings of these interventions may be summed up as follows: conservation of facades and roofs, aesthetic homogenisation of buildings, and the removal of all alleged modern impurities, such as television antennae, gutter pipes, clothes lines, aluminium. The stonework of the facades was in most cases uncovered and highlighted by putting mortar into the joins. At the same time, roof tiles were standardised and use of wood became compulsory for outward-facing doors and windows. It is a model of intervention in vernacular architecture that in recent decades has become common among architects. As Graham et al. (2000: 217) note, “conservation architects, builders and planners are as fashion conscious as other practitioners, while professional training and the transfer of technical and artistic practices establishes and transmits currently acceptable methods of working”. Therefore, these interventions were similar to those applied to national monuments during the Portuguese dictatorial regime, in the sense that all kinds of alleged impurities were removed. Nevertheless, in some buildings this model proved unworkable for a variety of reasons. On the one hand, there were owners who could not be contacted or whose properties were not correctly registered. On the other hand, the work was completed in stages, and funds were at times lacking. Another reason was the fact that these build-

ings were not made of stone, but of brick or cement block. In these cases the architects decided to cover the facades with plaster and paint.

Preservation and conservation of facades and roofs were the unique interventions on private buildings sponsored by the programme. Within the buildings, the programme only intervened to demolish or convert them into tourism trades and services, such as shops, lodgings, restaurants, bars and museums. For instance, the corn loft of the family of Pedro Álvares Cabral (1467/8–1520/6), the discoverer of Brazil, in Belmont, was converted into a museum; the historic court and jail of Castelo Mendo were transformed into a local museum; a set of stables in Idanha-a-Velha were restored and adapted to receive students and archaeology researchers, while the local press for olives, powered by animals, was converted into a museum; two manor houses in Linhares da Beira were converted into a country house hotel; and the ancient court and jail of Sortelha now functions as the seat of the local parish and a meeting hall, after being used as a primary school that was recently closed due to a lack of students. In some cases, local populations collaborate in the construction of these local museums, as in the cases of Castelo Mendo and Piódão.

The residents who want to improve the living conditions of their houses have to do so themselves, undertaking all the expenses. It is important to note the existence of different relationships between heritage and owners, which means that people inhabit heritage in different ways, as Maria Gravari-Barbas (2005) reports. There are those locals and non locals who live in the heritage space permanently, those who live there temporarily during weekends and holidays – including locals who live elsewhere in Portugal and abroad, and non locals who have made second homes there –, those who have abandoned it for several reasons (death, disease, old age, disinterest, lack of knowledge, etc.), and those who don't use it because of misunderstandings related to inheritance.⁵ Generally, the majority of the houses are unoccupied for the majority of the year, while a good number of other private buildings are unused.

The intervention on the houses was the most critical one for local populations because it related to their living places. Inhabitants of several villages criticised the following situations: i) the selection of some of the private buildings to be renovated, because this included empty houses, while not all of the occupied houses received attention; ii) the poor quality of the materials applied to the roofs, doors and windows of several houses, which are permeable, become warped, break and fall easily; and iii) the alleged favouring of some owners over others. On the other hand, most residents also criticised some architecturally protectionist measures created by the programme, and said that “with the [Historic Villages] programme they no longer possess their own houses”, and “cannot intervene in them except as they [the IGESPAR] want”. It should be noted that the disposition of historic conservation does not allow new construction within the protected areas, open windows and skylights in the facades and roofs, turning lofts into living quarters, and placing materials other than wood in the doors and windows that face outwards. The programme ended up promoting the “suspension of real time” (Herzfeld 1991: 11) in favour of an idealised past or an “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983).

For these reasons, most local populations have a bad impression of the architects, contractors and builders who have worked in their villages. In reaction to these situations, benefiting from the lack of vigilance and control, in some villages there are



*Photo 5. A garden in a small tower, Castelo Rodrigo.
Photo by Luís Siloa 2009.*

private owners who act in ways that differ from the dispositions of historic conservation. They install aluminium doors and windows in their street-facing houses as well as other forbidden objects like skylights, clothes lines, window awnings, aerials and TV satellite dishes. However, their appropriations of space go far beyond these. In several villages, people use public space to live, and some residents put firewood beds and bench shops on the streets, while others put chairs there or park automobiles. Moreover, children play in some monuments, and residents use them as meeting places or for drying clothes.

Therefore, the construction of heritage implies tensions, conflicts, and negotiations between specialists and other individuals. Michael Herzfeld's comparative study (1991) of the perspectives of the specialists and the inhabitants of Rethemnos (Greece) regarding heritage is illuminating on this point. This author distinguishes 'social time' from 'monumental time'. Specialists have a formal, technical, and monumental perspective of heritage, which doesn't consider the ways of life, feelings and ties of people to the spaces they inhabit. Residents, in turn, relate cultural goods to their everyday lives, memories and identities (ibid. 10–16; 248–259). This study shows that the same happens in the Historic Villages of Portugal. Specialists valorise monumental time to the detriment of social time, like almost all tourists and visitors. Residents valorise social time to the detriment of monumental time, with a few exceptions. These exceptions are the few non-locals who have recently come to live permanently in the villages, and also those

who have made second homes there, above all non-locals. This is related to the different ways of inhabiting heritage, mentioned above, and to the existence of different sensibilities, tastes and economic situations.

On the other hand, the majority of the residents feel disturbed by the fact that the entities related to historic conservation oblige them to use traditional materials in their urban properties, and use modern materials in their own interventions. These include not only the historic monuments, mentioned above, but also newly constructed buildings, such as the tourism offices of Castelo Novo, Castelo Rodrigo, Marialva, and Sortelha, as well as the mortuary house in Castelo Rodrigo, the multifunctional building in Monsanto, and the country house hotel in Piódão.⁶ Reacting to these situations, the employees of the tourism office of Castelo Novo refused to work in the new facilities, and the inhabitants of Marialva vandalised, with paint, the local tourism office, which was later repainted in a different colour from the initial pink.

However, the construction of heritage in the Historic Villages implies not only friction, but also cooperation between specialists and local populations. Inhabitants of most villages participate actively in the process of embellishment and cleanliness of spaces. They pick up garbage from the streets and clean space near their houses. They also put flowerbeds near their homes, and flowering creepers and flower pots at the fronts of their houses.⁷ These are appropriations of space allowed and applauded by the historic conservation organisations, which is not the case with the other appropriations described above.

COMMODITISING HISTORIC PLACES

As already mentioned, the processes of cultural display analysed in the previous pages aims to create a product for sale in the global tourist market. In the process, heritage has been transformed into a commodity. As Eric Wolf (1982: 310) notes, commodities are “goods and services produced for a market [...] [that] can be compared and exchanged without reference to the social matrix in which they are produced”. According to Yorke Rowan and Uzi Baram (2004: 6), “not only has heritage become a commodity, it is a wildly popular one around the planet”. This situation derives from the democratisation of the interest in heritage (Choay 2006 [1982]: 184–185; Lowenthal 1998: 10–11), and from “the universalisation of the tourist gaze” (Urry 1999: 224; 2002 [1990]). But it is also related to current capitalist ideology, which impels the production of authentic and differentiated endogenous goods and practices that were, until 1960–1970, outside the market sphere, in the domains of tourism, leisure, cultural activities and personal services (Boltanski, Chiapello 1999: 37, 533–534). Accordingly, the Historic Villages of Portugal result from “a strategy [...] focused on the promotion of genuine and differentiating resources, such as history, culture, and heritage”, as mentioned on the official website of the network (Aldeias Históricas de Portugal).

As Françoise Choay (2006 [1982]: 185) remarks, the industry of heritage implies not only the production, but also the packing and advertising of heritage. In her view, this is done by so-called “cultural engineering”, a task performed by public and private agents and entities – animators, communicators, agents of development, engineers, and cultural mediators –, who act in order to enhance the number of heritage consumers.

The current case study reiterates this idea. The question of production was explored earlier in this text. Its analysis supports the idea of Rautenberg et al. (2000: 2) that heritage is a question of social agents and its construction has normally to do with a personal or a collective, economic and cultural project, in which there are several individuals and institutions. Rautenberg et al. (2000: 2) note that the list is huge, and includes people with different opinions, such as inhabitants, elites, agents of public entities, potential investors, researchers, mediators. In this case study, I have already identified political authorities, architects, constructors, builders and local populations. However, tourists also play a role, as happened in Castelo Rodrigo, where the parish president asked authorities to protect the surroundings of the ruins of the palace of Cristóvão de Moura after the complains of tourists.

As for the packaging of heritage, it should be noted that this is made through the creation of tourist itineraries and packs elaborated by official Portuguese tourism departments, associations, national and international tour operators and other kinds of enterprises. These tourist routes and packs are multiple and varied. For example, there are cases that promote visits to all villages, like the Historic Villages itinerary elaborated by one of the public tourism departments, and Great Route 22, developed by one private enterprise. At the same time, there are cases in which a visit to some villages is integrated into a tourist pack that includes visits to other attractions, such as a cruise on the Douro river or a visit to the Naturtejo Geopark. Additionally, there are cases in which a visit to one or another village is integrated into a pack that includes lodging and food with the aim of selling domestic objects, such as those promoted by some types of enterprises.

The marketing and advertising of heritage, in turn, is made through websites, leaflets, tourism guides and other texts, as well as informative panels disposed in different parts of the villages. Most of these advertisements have narratives that focus on the history of the villages, their importance in national history, and their monuments, pointing out what deserves to be seen (see Graça, Espírito Santo 2000).

The texts advertising the Historic Villages of Portugal present the villages as picturesque, beautiful, extraordinary, and fixed in a certain historic period; that is, as unique (Rowan, Baram 2004: 20). This image building is performed by architects, journalists, travel agencies, tourism public entities, and the Association for the Tourist Development of the Historic Villages of Portugal. There is a promise of travel in time, usually to the medieval period, which invites the visitors to “travel into history”.

The narratives included in these advertising texts, which I do not explore here, show that the construction of heritage implies not only the appropriation of space, but also the appropriation of time. The appropriation of space is legitimised through the appropriation of the past, which requires the construction of founder discourses (Gravari-Barbas 2005: 615–616).

The production and consumption of heritage can be associated with heritage or cultural tourism, depending on the definition adopted. Cultural tourism has been defined as a kind of tourism related to the production and consumption of cultural products, such as museums, palaces, churches, historic and archaeological sites, and festivals (McKercher, du Cros 2002: 3–8; Pereiro Pérez 2009: 108, 120). Heritage tourism has been defined as the “travel to archaeological and historic sites, parks, museums and places of traditional or ethnic significance. It also includes travel to foreign countries to experi-



*Photo 6. Making and selling craft items, Sortelha.
Photo by Luís Silva 2008.*

ence different cultures and explore their prehistoric and historic routes” (Rowan, Baram 2004: 8).

The idea of the programme was to convert the historic built heritage of the villages into a source of revenue, that is, to monetise it. This operation is conducted through the collection of fees from foreigners who intend to get into the castles of Linhares da Beira and Marialva, into the ruins of the palace of Cristóvão de Moura, and into the museums of Belmonte and Piódão, as well as to those who intend to use the King’s riding school at Almeida. It is also conducted by the merchandising of products of current use and mnemonic objects (books of local history and other themes, postcards, pencils, craftsmanship, etc.) in tourism offices and local museums, as well as through the renting of places to produce movies, television series and advertising spots. Other forms of heritage tourism are guided visits by the employees of the tourism offices, rides on donkey and cart in Castelo Rodrigo and Linhares da Beira, and the sale of craftsmanship in the streets of Monsanto, Sortelha, and Idanha-a-Velha. This process of monetisation extends to local trade and tourism services, such as lodging, restaurants, bars and shops.

The creation of most of these local trades and services were funded by the programme. This process differs from village to village due to the unequal investments made by the programme, local governments and private agents. Because of these differentiated public and private investments we can segment the Historic Villages of Portugal network into three groups of villages by considering the importance of tourism

in local economies: those with good implementation (Almeida, Belmonte, Castelo Rodrigo, Monsanto, Piódão, Sortelha, and Trancoso), those with moderate implementation (Castelo Novo, Linhares da Beira, and Marialva), and those with weak implementation (Castelo Mendo, and Idanha-a-Velha).

In order to attract more tourists and visitors, most of the villages stage cultural activities, some of them developed in historic monuments, such as theatrical and musical performances, exhibitions, feasts and festivals. These include the cattle market of Castelo Rodrigo, the folklore festival of Sortelha and the paragliding festival of Linhares da Beira. These cultural activities also embrace medieval markets and historic episodes such as battles and attacks on castles, which produce "living history" (Handler, Gable 1997; Dicks 2003: 122–126). Examples are the cases of the historic re-enactment of the siege of Almeida by Napoleonic troops in 1810, the medieval markets of Belmonte, Castelo Mendo, and Monsanto, and the feast of history of Trancoso.

It should be noted that the programme analysed in this article was the first step of a work in progress that is transient and dynamic. The practices associated with the construction and commoditisation of heritage must be continuous in order to guarantee its perpetuation, including physical maintenance, animation and marketing. This is the task of those who intervene in the heritage industry, especially political authorities, experts on heritage management, tourist entrepreneurs and local populations. The Historic Villages of Portugal programme, and the involvement of the national government in it, finished in 2006. Private agents can still obtain funds for their tourist projects from a national programme of economic valorisation of endogenous resources created thereafter, called PROVERE. However, the managing of the product is being handed over to local and municipal political authorities and local business people. Driven by the leader of the programme, Isabel Boura, from the CCDRC, the creation in 2006 of the Association for the Tourist Development of the Historic Villages of Portugal derives from this. The main objective of this private-public association is to consolidate the label 'Historic Villages of Portugal' as a tourist product with potential in the areas of cultural tourism, ecotourism and rural tourism.

FINAL REMARKS

The anthropological study of the Historic Villages of Portugal has shown some relevant trends within the construction of historic built heritage. The construction of heritage comprehends processes of classification, appropriation, manipulation and commoditisation of cultural goods for consumption in the global tourist market, according to international trends in heritage and development. These processes imply tensions, conflicts, negotiations, and cooperation among those who intervene, above all formal political powers, historic conservation experts, the tourism sector and local populations.

Historic conservation organisations and the majority of the inhabitants of the Historic Villages have different visions of heritage. As in the case study by Michael Herzfeld (1991), specialists have a formal, technical, and monumental perspective of heritage, which doesn't take into account the ways of life, feelings or ties of people to the spaces in which they live. In contrast, the majority of residents relate cultural goods to their everyday lives, memories and identities.

The main objective of the programme that led to the creation of the Historic Villages of Portugal network was to promote the local development of some rural villages through heritage or cultural tourism. This is due to a global “ideology of tourism” (Ribeiro 2003: 54), which sees tourism as a priority and an efficient tool for the development of depressed areas; and also to the existence of funds offered by the European Union for the creation of tourist products, such as the EFRD and the LEADER. In this process, heritage has been converted into a commodity, something that is produced, marketed, managed and consumed in the global tourist market. The construction of heritage is related to the creation of visitable tourist destinations through operations of cultural exhibition or display (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Dicks 2003). The marketing of heritage insists on exclusivity, and is performed by individuals and entities related to the tourism industry. The management of heritage is the task of experts, municipalities, parishes, one association and local populations.

The daily presence of tourists and visitors in the villages is one of the local impacts of the programme. However, questions remain to be answered, such as: what are the impacts of this initiative in terms of local development? How does this initiative impact on local stratification processes? Answers to these questions permit us to evaluate the success of the programme as it relates to the desired regeneration of the social and economic fabric of the villages, and to perceive other societal transformations, including those on the local social and power structures.

NOTES

1 The changes in the institutions relating to cultural heritage in Portugal resulted from the establishment of the Institute for Managing Architectural and Archaeological Heritage (IGESPAR) in 2007 (Decree-Law No. 96/2007).

2 The IGESPAR also has legal attribution enabling it to judge the preference rights, obligatory for the state, in every case of transaction or alienation of a classified good.

3 The more recent intervention on the castles of Belmonte, Marialva and Trancoso was made under the framework of a national programme developed between 2000 and 2006, entitled the Castles Recovery Programme (IPPAR s.a.).

4 Outside the framework of the programme, residents of Castelo Mendo, Linhares da Beira, and Monsanto complain about the pillage of sacred art from their churches, which is the reason why they tend to be closed. On the other hand, inhabitants of several villages complain that external lighting for historic buildings is frequently vandalised, while those who live in Monsanto complain about the theft of the coat of arms from one of the doors of the fortress.

5 I use the term “locals” to designate people who were born in the villages or come to live there in their childhood. The few non-locals who live there permanently tend to be linked with tourism.

6 All the villages have tourism office, except Castelo Mendo.

7 On flower decorations as a way to appropriate cultural heritage, see Hamon (2003).

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