



# GEO - TOURIST ITINERARY PLANNING IN LOCAL-BASED TOURISM PROJECTS

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**ABSTRACT:** The concept and practice of the geo-tourist itineraries were developed through research and intervention projects that aimed at the expansion of socio-spatial elements contained in the urban tours and the stimulus to the most authentic meeting between visitors and the visited place. The main objective of this paper is to systematize and propose the methodological aspects of geo-tourist itinerary planning to assist local-based tourism projects. Experiences of this type of itinerary demonstrate the potential of contributing to this kind of tourist route to local development. Then, the aspects presented were systematized from the report of the execution of a project in the Marajó Archipelago.

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## INTRODUCTION

The process of geo-tourist itineraries planning is a strategy for surveying the material and immaterial elements of cultural and natural heritage as well as their histories and symbologies for the local society in order to mediate the visitation and interpretation of this heritage.

The concept and practice of the geo-tourist itineraries were developed in the context of research and intervention projects that aimed at the expansion of socio-spatial elements contained in the urban tours and the stimulus to the most authentic meeting between visitors and the sociocultural dynamics of the visiting place, which does not occur in traditional tourist itineraries (Cordovil, Cabral & Cruz, 2016; Tapiassu & Tavares, 2017; Barros & Serra, 2018).

The use of the prefix 'geo' marks the Geography subsidy, mainly urban geographic studies applied to tourism analyses, for the construction of this methodological proposal of tourist itinerary planning. In addition, the use of the term "geo-tourism" seeks to differentiate terminology and conceptual practice of 'geo-tourism', that is Geology based and defined as the provision of interpretive and service facilities to enable tourists to acquire knowledge and understanding of the geology and geomorphology of a natural site (Downling, 2013; Evans, Clean & Thomas, 2018).

Then, the main objective of this paper is to systematize and propose the methodological aspects of geo-tourist itinerary planning to assist local-based tourism projects. Experiences of this type of itinerary demonstrate the potential of contributing to this kind of tourist route to local development. So, the aspects presented were systematized from the report of the execution of a project in the Marajó Archipelago.

The reflections brought in to contribute to the establishment of new ways of insertion of tourism in urban and natural spaces, to guarantee an increase of the participation of local social agents in decisions and gains with this activity, besides providing a relation between the tourists and visited places which guarantees the appreciation of the local culture and the diversification of the tourist spaces.

The study was developed by means of theoretical analysis that bases the construction of the presented concepts and an experience report, through a documental study and in situ observation report of the process of elaboration and test of the geo-tourist itinerary in Ponta de Pedras city, in the Marajó Archipelago, Brazilian Amazon region, as a project coordinated by the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Pará.

The work was developed from the survey and con-

tent analysis (Mayring, 2004) of documents that record the experience of the project of elaboration and implementation of the geo-tourist itinerary in Ponta de Pedras.

We analyzed the project designed for that city, the reports, and the photographs of the activities developed. In addition, the author actively participated in the developed project, which allowed the non-systematic direct observation (Patton, 2005) of the analyzed process.

Ponta de Pedras is on the east of the Marajó Archipelago, about sixty kilometers from Belém city. It is demographically characterized as a small town in the Amazonian estuary and has an estimated population of about thirty-thousand inhabitants, linked to the social, environmental, and economic dynamics of other small towns in the region (Rangel & Costa, 2013).

Considering the historical relevance that allows considering part of urban space of Ponta de Pedras as cultural heritage, it is worth to emphasize that the territory where this city is inserted was colonized by Portugal in the 17th century, in the context of the strategies of control of the Amazonian territory in a first moment for the exploitation of drugs from the hinterland.

During the 18th century, that area received religious missions from the Catholic Church in indigenous villages. In this context, it belonged to the municipality of Cachoeira do Arari, and then became an autonomous municipality in 1877. Ponta de Pedras interposes itself to the conjunctures of the extractives' economic cycles but also observes the insertion of the tourism activity as a matter of public policies for regional and local development (Costa, Montoja, Rangel, Lima & Issa, 2012; Dias, 2010; Tavares, 2009).

The socioeconomic characteristics of the municipality point to a dynamic with a low level of indicators of development and quality of life, as in fact it predominates in the Marajó Archipelago. This can be exemplified by the absence of public spaces and public facilities for the leisure of local societies, such as squares, as Castro and Castro (2015) point out.

Table 1 presents some data that contextualize those characteristics showing variation between the years 2010 and 2017.

Observing the period presented we can note the population and the GDP per capita growth accompanied by the decrease in the Human Development Index (HDI), which indicates problems such as loss of quality of life and concentration of income. It is worth mentioning that such problems are attributes of the socioeconomic dynamics of the Marajó Archipelago, that historically presents the lowest HDI in Brazil (Tavares, 2009; Dias, 2010).

Another important characteristic of Ponta de Pedras is the high level of dependence of the local economy on financial resources derived from exogenous sources to the municipality (Costa, Montoja, Rangel, Lima & Issa,



2012). The main economic base of the municipality is the transfer of the public budget of the State of Pará and national scales in addition to the fact that Ponta de Pedras has practically no industry. Trade and services are complementary and auxiliary to the primary activity (Dias, 2010, p. 3).

In addition to these general indicators Rangel and Costa (2013), Costa, Montoja, Rangel, Lima & Issa (2012) and Dias (2010) present several socioeconomic problems that characterize Ponta de Pedras, as precarious urban infrastructure, housing shortages, educational

Table 1. Socioeconomic characteristic of Ponta de Pedras.

Indicator	2010	2017
Estimated Population	25,999 inhabitants	30,219 inhabitants
Human Development Index (HDI)	0,65	0,56
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita	R\$2,604.45	R\$5,777.87
Income from external sources	-	95.4%

Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE (2018).

deficits, lack of public transportation, and lack of public services in the health, sanitation, and electricity sectors. In addition, these problems also revert to environmental degradation, since the municipal sewage network covers only 12% of the households without performing the residual treatment, which causes the discharge directly into the integrated river system of the city.

As the main economic activity of the municipality highlighted by Costa et al. (2012) is the cultivation and collection of açai fruit (*Euterpe oleracea*) in the rural area of Ponta de Pedras, a production that occurs mainly in family farms initially to meet a regional demand since açai fruit is culturally part of the eating habits of people on Pará, and later to serve national and international markets, due to the expansion of consumption of products that have this fruit as a base.

Thus, Ponta de Pedras is the second-largest city that produces açai in Brazil, with about 10% of the national production. However, Costa et al. (2012, p. 66) pointed out that, "despite the economic importance, the production of açai does not generate resources directly to the Municipality, because it is considered 'extractive activity in an area of environmental protection', that makes it impossible to collect taxes on production".

As an alternative to the solution of these existing problems in the municipality and as a contribution to local development, and Advanced Pole of the Federal Institute of Pará was set up in Ponta de Pedras linked to Campus Breves, also in Marajó Archipelago, to implement professional education policies for the develop-

ment of sectors of construction, fishing, communication, and tourism, and thus try to remedy a shortage of 'urban' economic activities that can energize the local economy (Castro, Galvão & Binfaré, 2018).

The Technological Axis of Tourism, Hospitality, and Leisure is linked to several public policies that aimed to develop tourism as an increment to cultural and economic activities in Ponta de Pedras. Firstly, in the process of definition of tourist poles, in the territory of Pará (Pará Tourism Company, 2001) and later in the process of regionalization of the Brazilian territory (Ministry of Tourism, 2003), for the implementation of policies for the development of tourism in Ponta de Pedras and in Marajó Tourist Pole.

As a characteristic of these public policies, Tavares (2009, p. 255) points out that "just as for the entire Amazon, in Marajó actions are directed towards ecotourism", as recommended by the Program for the Development of Ecotourism in the Amazon (Proecotur) and the Tourism Development Program (Prodetur), both funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

In the Amazon, the 'natural' imperative by common sense understands that tourist activities in natural spaces should be prioritized, despite historical and cultural elements that are remarkable in the social dynamics of the region (Castro & Tavares, 2016a; Castro & Figueiredo, 2013).

In this context and considering the reality of Marajó Archipelago, Tavares (2009, pp. 258-259) warns that: "in the case of the Marajó Archipelago, actions cannot be directed only to the exploitation of the potential of natural resources without considering the historical and cultural heritage, and social diversity potential of the archipelago. Another tourism can be possible and implemented as long as it can incorporate the local society as being participant and active of the tourism policies for the municipalities selected for implementation of actions in the tourism sector".

Thus, in addition to the appreciation of the natural attributes of the Marajó often misrepresented in the tourist imagination on the archipelago as if it were an emptiness of humans, the same author emphasizes the existence of archaeological sites, ruins, and buildings of the colonial period, ceramic handmade production, among other cultural elements that must be inserted in the territorial planning and management processes geared towards tourism.

In this context, for example, the project of a geotourist itinerary in Ponta de Pedras incorporated the Municipal Market Hall as one of the stopping points and explanation about the local cultural dynamics, where can be presented aspects of local gastronomy. It is noteworthy that although the Marajó Tourist Pole is made up of all the municipalities of the Marajó Archipelago it is well known that the municipalities



of Soure and Salvaterra, those receive priority and sometimes exclusively public policies for the development of tourism, as exemplified by Tavares (2009:255), "because the Amazon tourist route of the Marajó presented by the Government of the State of Pará through Company for Tourism of the State of Pará (Paratur) for commercialization in the scope of the Tourism Regionalization Program (PRT) promotional actions, only contemplates those two municipalities". Thus, tourism can be an economic alternative that complements the current productive activities in Ponta de Pedras, and when seeking to overcome factors of exclusion of local social groups from the benefits acquired with the development of this practice the planning with participation of the local society becomes an imperative.

## METHODOLOGY

The work was developed from exploratory and qualitative research, considering the assumptions presented by Alves (2011), for this type of research in studies on tourism. For this author, qualitative exploratory research on the social phenomenon of tourism implies an inductive process "based on the discovery and understanding of human actions in their different cultural perspectives". In addition, it must be taken into account that the knowledge produced in these studies is collective constructions, which start from the reality of the subjects involved, being "mediated by processes of reflection and unveiling of the studied reality" (Alves, 2011, p. 600).

The article presents a case study (Jennings, 2011), which seeks to observe and analyze the specificities of the project of a geo-tourist itinerary in the Marajó Archipelago (Brazil), to reflect and point out contributions to generalities and development perspectives local-based tourism, as well as different guidelines for the elaboration of tourist itineraries based on the principles of this development model.

The collection of data and information took place, first, through systematic participant observation (Jennings, 2011), which consisted of the coordination and participation of the practical activities of the project to develop a geo-tourist itinerary in the city of Ponta de Pedras. This project was carried out by professors and students of the Federal Institute of Pará, and all its stages were monitored, with interventions in its way of implementation.

In addition, a content analysis (Jennings, 2011) was carried out on the documents that register the project, highlighting its intentions and its execution methodologies. The content of the report that records the stages and results of the project was also analyzed.

The systematization and construction of a methodological proposal for the elaboration of geo-tourist itin-

eraries, in line with the principles of the development of locally-based tourism, were the consequences of an analytical and reflective posture of these experiences, closely monitored. Thus, the work serves as a proposal for other projects, which when being elaborated, executed, and evaluated, tend to improve the proposal presented in this article.

## Geo-Tourist Itinerary Planning Process

The process of heritagization as an election and preservation of representative cultural and natural elements of a society (or classes of that society) has been related to the preparation of these same elements, and their respective territories, for the tourist use in a paradigmatic way, as it is exposed in Castro and Castro (2017) and Castro and Tavares (2016b). Thus, it is common for the culture and nurture places to become heritage to receive activities of visitation and that is incorporated in the tourist routes, as many results of public policies as produced by private organizations (Moulin & Boniface, 2001).

Nevertheless, tourism activity has historically received a series of criticisms about the ways in which it is practiced and the consequences it has caused to the spaces where that activity takes place. Among them superficiality, celerity, and exclusion referring to aspects of local culture provided by standardized types of itineraries of the 'fast tour'. This way of tourist practice allows a frivolous and partial contact with the local dynamics, often with spectacular cultural and natural elements, once these aspects of society are selected, recreated, and removed from their context for tourist leisure (Binfaré et al., 2016).

As a counterpoint to these types of tourism practices and based on the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological contribution of Geography, it is proposed the elaboration of geo-tourist itineraries, as presented in Tavares et al. (2012). This kind of tourist route presupposes a strategy of recognition of cultural and natural heritage supported by local social groups and the insertion of representations of the symbolic, landscape, and historical diversity of the place aiming at the proximity of the tourist with this diversity.

This strategy foresees the broad participation of the local society both in the preparation and in the presence during the realization of the geo-tourist itinerary. These assumptions are articulated with the principles for local-based tourism projects, as it was proposed by Irving (2009) and summarized in table 2, as an assertion of possibilities for tourism to occur in a different way, guaranteeing gains and inclusion to the local social groups.



Table 2. Principles of local-based tourism projects

Principle	Content
<b>Endogenous basis of local initiative and development</b>	Reception of tourists as direct demands of the residents of the place. External actors can act as inductors of this process. In addition to the economic aspect, local development results in the appreciation of local culture, traditions, and cosmologies. Endogenous power is linked to endogenous knowledge.
<b>Participation and social main role in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of tourism projects.</b>	It determines the timing of the project since the participatory processes are slow. It requires shared knowledge of the local issues and identification of essential needs, and an investment in training human resources and developing methodologies to deal with local specificities.
<b>Limited scale and controlled social and environmental impacts</b>	Spaces for visitation and volume of visitors are defined considering local resources capacity and potentialities. Tourism must take place in order to guarantee the quality of life of the inhabitants of the destination. It is also related to the requirement of the environmental and social quality of the destinations by the tourists.
<b>Generating direct benefits to the local population</b>	Strategies of inclusion of the local society in the economic gains of tourism. Gains also on the quality of life of local society. It must define the evaluation indicators of this principle.
<b>Cultural Affirmation and Interculturality</b>	Valuing the local culture, highlighting identities and feelings of belonging. Culture as heritage and history. The tourist place as the locus of meeting and sharing of multiple identities.
<b>The "meeting" as an essential condition</b>	The meeting between identities (tourists and residents), in the sense of sharing and mutual learning, with respect and commitment. Needs of spaces of interaction and hospitality.

Source: Irving (2009).

In this perspective, local-based tourism projects anticipate a strong involvement and protagonism of the society of the receiving place of tourist flows from the conception of the actions when values, principles, and symbolism of these agents can be incorporated, until the use of strategies to guarantee that socioeconomic gains are maximized and distributed in this society.

Thus, in the case of the analyzed project, it is observed that the designation of the Federal Institute of Pará occurred, initially, as an institution exogenous to the community. Therefore, this institution played the role of inducing the process of development of local tourism, sharing technical, conceptual, and methodological knowledge, as part of the education system. In addition, it was possible to present the principles of local-based tourism development to the community.

On the other hand, the very development of the intervention project itself functioned as an attempt to insert the institution as part of the local dynamics, to the point which Federal Institute of Pará became an institution of the appropriated place by the community, where the local knowledge can be built in dialogue with a network of academic and scientific knowledge, provoking the engagement of local actors.

Otherwise, the methodological proposal of the geo-tourist itineraries is also presented as a strategy to expand the theoretical discussion about the development of this alternative tourism usually linked to rural communities or to natural spaces, including, nevertheless, realities of urban spaces, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the search for integrated approaches to aspects of that space with the nature and culture of the place.

The intervention project developed in Ponta de Pedras contributes to the expansion of the scope of local-based tourism projects as it occurs in urban space and has the cultural heritage as the main resource in addition to the natural elements such as heartwood of attractiveness, and thinking about the development of local tourism. On the other hand, the very notion of cultural heritage is amplified to be perceived as the integration of nature and society present in space.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) presents a proposal for the classification of tourist routes, as shown in figure 1. Thus, tours vary on a geographic scale of scope, content intent, and operational aspects. The geo-tourist itinerary elaborated and implemented in Ponta de Pedras fits into the local short-term itineraries, with the purpose of presenting tourists with local tourist attractions.

Thus, the itinerary elaborated in Ponta de Pedras is characterized by being linear, historical, local, redesigned in present and no overnight stay. From a methodological and planning point of view, the geo-tourist itinerary project in Ponta de Pedras followed the elaboration

Table 3. Categories of cultural tourism routes

Design and structure	Theme	Territory	Origin	Overnight stay
Linear	Cross-country pilgrimage	Local	Historic	Several overnight stays
Archipelago of points	Historic	Regional	Redesigned in present	Few overnight stays
-	Art	National	-	One overnight stay
-	Identity	Transnational	-	No overnight stay

Source: UNWTO (2015).

stages suggested by Berti et al (2015) and Tresserras Juan (2006), presented in figure 1.

Figure 1. Geo-tourist itinerary elaboration stages



Source: author.

At the 1) conception stage, the idea of applying the geo-tourist itinerary project was shared between professors and students of the Technical Course in Events of Federal Institute of Pará through meetings that presented the project applied by the Federal University of Pará (UFPA) in Belém, and these premises of local tourism. At that moment, all those involved could contribute to the construction of the premises of the project, where it was mainly established that the reality of Ponta de Pedras required the integration of elements and natural landscapes to the urban cultural heritage. In this initial moment also the cultural and landscape elements that will compose the script are established. It is the moment in which the local society decides what of its history, culture, and territory will be shared with the visitors at the moment of the 'meeting' that tourism provides.

After defining the concepts and main elements that will be part of the script the 2) research stage begins, which consists of gathering and analyzing information about points, landscapes, and contexts of the script. This approach also highlights the integration of the intervention project with teaching and research activities as

advocated by the Brazilian educational policy.

At that moment the historical, aesthetic, and symbolic aspects, as well as the relations of spaces and cultural phenomena selected with other aspects. The context of the city and the region were raised and criticized. For example, the meanings of the names of the selected streets have been raised an aspect of the place incorporated into everyday life, which, however, becomes unknown to many inhabitants and consequently difficult to share with visitors.

At the moment of defining the 3) preliminary itinerary, the design of the tour was defined. This is the stage when defining the route of the tour, setting the stops and passages, thus the landscapes and aspects of the local culture to be presented.

When the above aspects were established it should be achievements a 4) test of the elaborated script, which implies in the simulation of the realization of the tour with the technical team and people who can contribute to the evaluation of the execution of what was planned. This pilot is key to making adjustments and improving the roadmap.

The test script in Ponta de Pedras was held in 2012, with the participation of the team of professors, students collaborating in the extension project, and representative of the Municipal Tourism Office.

The implementation of the pilot of the preliminary route subsidizes the 5) evaluation process of what was planned, validating the effective aspects, according to the objectives established in the project, and adjusting those that, when applied, do not reach those objectives, to later establish the final script to be offered are public housing and city visitors.

In the evaluation process, the time taken to complete the tourist itinerary, the quantity, and quality of the information presented during this itinerary, and the relevance and consistency of the stops were considered.

After the process of evaluating the execution of the test script carried out and considering the technical aspects (such as the order of geo-tourism attractions elected, the quality of the information covered in the itinerary, the duration of the tour, the level of representation of local socio-geographical dynamics, etc.) a 6) definitive itinerary is defined, which is intended to be used by the local community and by organizations that market this type of service.

In the case of Ponta de Pedras, examples of buildings of pre-temporal temporalities that help in elucidating the socio-spatial formation process of the place, such as residences of well-known families, are exhibited in the geo-tourist itinerary with specific historical and economic contexts, as shown in figure 2.

However, other landscape elements are also included in the geo-tourist route developed in Ponta de Pedras, which demonstrates the existence of diversity, including the stilts, a striking residential feature in the Ama-

Figure 2. Example of an architectural style in Ponta de Pedras historical town



Source: author.

zonian riverside reality. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the technical team to prepare the itinerary decided to start the journey in the docks of the city's Waterway Terminal, considering the strong symbolic and economic relationship that the place has with the river.

Based on parameters established by Trindade Jr. (2010), Ponta de Pedras can be characterized as a "forest city", being associated with river circulation, intense connection with the local natural dynamics and nearby localities (villages, settlements, riverside communities, etc.), with rural life and with a temporality different from the big cities, therefore, "slower".

This categorization differs from 'cities in the forest', which are articulated to the external demands of the Amazon region, with little local integration, sometimes even denying them, considering them only as a space for economic exploitation, materialized in the 'company towns' of the great economical projects implemented in the region.

This aspect, then, guides the choices of cultural elements and the temporality of the geo-tourist route developed in Ponta de Pedras, with the intention that the local cultural heritage is experienced and shared with those who practice such tourism activity, rather than just be "seen".

## CONCLUSION

The elaboration of the geo-tourist route in Ponta de Pedras occurred from the active involvement of the local community, although with the guidance of a teaching and research institution, therefore, it constitutes a procedure of tourism planning as a contribution to the socio-economic development located.

This process took place with the survey of what is important for the resident, which represents the history and culture of the place and what this society would

like to display and share with the tourist as a stage of planning policies for the development of tourism and the involvement of local society in this process.

The practices that involve geo-tourist itinerary compose a method for the organization of the cultural and natural elements, among others, linked to the territorial identities and the consequent sharing with the visitors of the place, considering, therefore, tourism as an interactive practice, however, considering that it is the local community itself that the elements to be shared, from a different ethic that considers 'culture lived' to the detriment of the spectacularized culture, often invented by a touristification from exogenous agents.

Thus, these scripts present a broad vision of how local culture integrates with tourism, beyond what is prepared for the tourist, but that daily and productive economic activities are also cultural elements with which tourists can (and should) get in touch. There is, therefore, an extension of the common conception of cultural heritage and its inherent process of tourism.

The script is also an opportunity for heritage inhabitants to review it, with a different look from what it has in everyday life, from the production of knowledge about history, symbology, and spatial contextualization of cultural heritage.

It is important to highlight the inclusion of unconventional tourist areas, where important aspects of the history and culture of the place are manifested, where it is possible to have a more authentic 'meeting' between visitors and local society.

These spaces are usually intentionally excluded from tourist itineraries because they present aesthetic uses different from what is defined by a common sense of what can be considered tourist or what the tourist can see of a place. However, diverse forms of traveling and practicing tourism require contact, sometimes not only in a passive way, with other spaces and other cultural forms of the places visited, aside from the consolidated tourist routes.

It is important to highlight that the natural and cultural elements inserted in the Ponta de Pedras geo-tourist itineraries are neither legitimized nor institutionalized as cultural heritage. However, the activities of elaboration and implementation of the script contribute to the process of identifying these symbolically relevant elements, to subsidize a process of heritagization.

As an institutional project, the roadmap has no commercial objective. However, it may be the basis for commercial appropriation and use, preferably by local economic agents (a local tourist cooperative that offers or monitors the roadmap, for example). Also, a re-signification of the place in front of external agents.

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