

Animals in Tourism: the case of São Lourenço, MG, Brazil

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Abstract

This article's objective is to describe the experience of visiting São Lourenço city (MG), and its focus is on the use of animals in touristic activity. The article brings up a brief discussion on morals and ethics, and suggests, besides changes in the State's view on animals, the construction of a new ethic for tourism. In order to achieve this, a descriptive research was made, along with a case study and document analysis, enabled by a participative view with the insertion of the researcher in the presented reality. It is expected that each visitor may rethink their concepts towards the use of horse-drawn carts in touristic sites and, from that fact, to suggest a constitutive moral, which transforms itself into a constituted moral.

Keywords: Animal ethic and moral; Tourism; Sustainability.

Resumo

O Animal no turismo: o caso de São Lourenço, MG, Brasil

Este trabalho tem como objetivo relatar experiência de visita à cidade de São Lourenço (MG, Brasil), tendo como foco o uso de animais na atividade turística. O trabalho traz uma breve discussão de moral e ética, e propõe, além de mudanças na visão do Estado sobre o animal a construção de uma nova ética para o turismo. Para isso, realizou-se uma pesquisa descritiva com estudo de caso e análise documental, viabilizada por uma visão participante, com inserção do pesquisador na realidade apresentada. Espera-se que cada visitante possa rever seus conceitos em relação à utilização do uso de charretes em localidades turísticas e que, a partir de tal fato, proponha uma moral constituinte que se transforme em moral constituída.

Palavras-chave: Ética e moral animal; Turismo; Sustentabilidade.

Resumen

El animal en el turismo: el caso de São Lourenço, MG, Brasil

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo presentar la experiencia de visita a la ciudad de São Lourenço (MG, Brasil), teniendo como foco el uso de animales en la actividad turística. El trabajo trae una breve discusión de moral y ética, y propone, además de cambios en la visión del Estado sobre el animal, la construcción de una nueva ética para el turismo. Para eso, se realizó una investigación descriptiva con estudio de caso y análisis documental, viabilizada por una visión participante, con inserción del investigador en la realidad presentada. Se espera que cada visitante pueda volver a ver sus conceptos en relación a la utilización del uso de charretes en localidades turísticas y que, a partir de tal hecho, proponga una moral constituyente que se transforme en moral constituida.

Palabras clave: Moral y ética animal; Turismo; Sostenibilidad.

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*For man, when perfected,
is the best of all animals, but, when separated
from law and justice he is the worst of all.*
(Aristotle)

INTRODUCTION

The word ethics originates from *ethos*, Greek word for “way of being;” the word moral, on the other hand, comes from the Latin word *mores* (customs). While moral is a set of rules of conduct held as applicable according to a specific time and place, ethics is the philosophical branch from which the moral will be pondered over.

According to Godoy and Trentin (2010), moral is expressed only in human societies, corresponding to norms and sociocultural relations, and accomplishing a determined role. As well as moral, tourism also develops itself according to historic-cultural singularities, at most diverse places. Therefore, a change in social structure can cause a shift in the moral ideas adopted by a determined social group.

Tourism has adopted the concept of sustainable development in the 90s and, based on the Brundtland Report (1987), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as the one that

meets the needs of present tourists and of the host regions while protecting and promoting opportunities for the future. It is conceived as a way to manage all resources so that they can meet the economic, social and environmental needs while respecting the cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems. (WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION, 2003)

For Krippendorff (2000), tourism should develop itself in order to cause the biggest satisfaction possible to all people involved: local population, tourists and trade (as long as that is not linked to unacceptable inconveniences). This way, in touristic activity, ethics also play an important role, because it suggests the actions to be taken for the positive activity ongoing.

According to Vieira (2006), ethics, to be consolidated, presupposes principles that should be respected. And the respectability attributes, although restricted to people and beings endowed with life, expands to our belongings, products and natural elements that we value.

ANIMAL ETHIC AND MORAL

The way some individuals treat animals reveals a speciesism that, as well as racism and other sorts of prejudice, is fundamentally mistaken. If a person desires to lead their life ethically, that person cannot only consider their own interests, but should, equally, consider the interests of all beings influenced by their actions.

If a being suffers, there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration. No matter what the nature of the being, the principle of equality requires that its suffering be counted equally with the like suffering of any

other being. [...] racists violate the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of their own race. Similarly the speciesist allows the interests of his own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. The pattern is the same in each case. (SINGER, 2010)

Regan (1991), who calls for a change in the system that allows us to see animals only as resources, compares moral to a contract, signed by the parts, in which rights are acknowledged. As an example, the author quotes the children's case, who although incapable of understanding morality and, therefore, unable to sign contracts, still have their rights guaranteed due to emotional reasons (inspired by motherly/fatherly sentiments, for example). This is the perspective that recognizes the so-called "indirect duties": "So we have, then, duties involving these children, duties regarding them. The same is true in the case of animals" (REGAN, 1991).

Seen in these terms, Singer (2010) supports Regan's quote, when the first criticizes a certain principle of human equality that uses as its basis alleged superior mental abilities. The author claims that, based on this criterion, some human beings could have the principle of equality denied to them, as the newborns, for example, who seem not to be rational or self-conscious, therefore, not having sense of morality or justice. Against the majority doctrine expressed in ideas such as that, Singer acknowledges animals, just like the other beings considered incapable, have rights, even though those rights need to be pleaded by representatives recognized as individuals, and not as objects of property.

This point of view is supported by the idea of sentience (the ability animals have of feeling sensations and sentiments). Philosophers such as Primatt, Ryder, Linzey, Singer, and Regan state that the sentience recognition by humans determines their biased thinking capable of referring us to an ethical judgement that, in turn, will lead us to having a moral consciousness towards animals, influencing our actions in relation to them. For the authors, then, sentience determines the inclusion of the relation between humans and animals on the moral scope.

Primatt (1992), based on the ethics of reciprocity and the mental experiment as an analogy, suggests in one of his thesis: "treat your horse, as you would be willing to be treated by your master, in case you were a horse." When human beings work in exchange only for food and housing, we call it slavery. Why should it be different for animals?

Bentham (1970) confirms Primatt's thought when claiming that the point is not if animals are able to think or even to talk, but if they are capable of suffering.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE BUILDING OF A NEW ETHIC

Sustainability embraces social and economic phenomena, as the history of environmental issues discussions catalogued in many documents shows us: Brundtland Report, Earth Charter, United Nations Millennium Declaration, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Agenda 21, among others.

Such happenings affected the world greatly, influencing norms that rule over society – which, in turn, influenced the ways of production and man's relationship with the environment and himself, thus bringing up consequences on the development of touristic activities.

In that sense, tourism has taken ownership over the sustainable development concept, and many researchers have expressed their opinions about it, mentioning rules of conduct involving tourists and inhabitants, and their relationship with the environment where the activities are developed. However, the concern and respect towards animals, weaker actors, have been ignored, challenging the sustainability concepts and the norms established by applicable regulations.

Romero (2004) presents the ethical scope of sustainability arguing that

the way society uses environment is a result of its worldview and its view on the man status in relation to all other life forms. Thus, society elaborates its environmental justice concepts in relation to non-human life forms, future generations and present generations, valuing and making decisions about the environment.

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism observes that responsible tourism includes the comprehension and promotion of humanity's common ethical values with the spirit of lenience and respect towards diversity, philosophical and moral thinking. Therefore, it is understood that tourism planning must respect and take animals, which are direct or indirectly involved in touristic activity, into consideration.

Regarding this, it is not tolerable that touristic activity should continue to overlook the animals it uses, for example, to drive carts, using the argument that it is a traditional activity or, using economic terms, the livelihood of tourism dependent families. Such discourse is based on the mundane argument of ends justifying the means. Still, ethical ends demand ethical means.

SÃO LOURENÇO'S CASE

São Lourenço (MG, Brazil), having around 45,000 inhabitants, is one of the busiest towns of the *Circuito das Águas* (Water Circle) region. Having a floating population, during holidays and high season the town accommodates up to 100,000 people (SÃO LOURENÇO, 2016). The tourist map provided by *trade* and easily found on hosting places has a printed horse-drawn carts advertisement comprising the following text:

One of São Lourenço's most traditional tours is the horse-drawn cart tour, available downtown, next to Parque das Águas. During the tour, it is possible to visit many tourist attractions, knitwear factories, sweets factories. **It also has mini carts and goats for children to enjoy.** (emphasis added)

We cannot ignore the lack of regard by tutors who exceedingly abuse their horses and other animals that drive carts. Exception being very rare, animals work all day long and, sometimes, even during night shifts, without eating, drinking or even resting. The equipment that bounds the horses to carts, not suitable to safety and comfort conditions, can disturb and cause wounds. Besides that, animals are exposed to the weather, strong sunlight, rain and cold. As a result, we can see sad, malnourished and subdued animals.

Notwithstanding the important argument of the cart's drivers, who claim it is a traditional town activity and, therefore, cannot be modified, it is necessary to

highlight that times have changed, the sociocultural and environmental context is also different, and a last-century activity cannot be compared to today's ones. Society, economy, town and, specially, regulations are different nowadays. In addition, there are tour options that do not require animals use.

Despite tourism being the inhabitants' main income source, and people having a relative concern, expressed in internet videos, towards animals, most of the tourists still ride horse-drawn carts and the attraction is still available prejudicing the animals' well-being.

It is important to emphasize that horse-drawn carts are already prohibited in many, foreign and Brazilian, cities and towns – At Ilha de Paquetá (RJ), for example, the carts were replaced by electric vehicles. That way, everybody wins: the visitor who wants to know the town, using for that a mean of transport that is considered ecologically proper; the workers who will not stop working and will earn more, since they will not have to spend money on the animals (food, medicine, vaccines, ironwork, trough, stable etc.); and the animals which, in Ilha de Paquetá's case, were send to a ranch in Teresópolis where they live free in nature.

STATE AND THE ANIMALS

Rodrigues (2010) quotes various pieces of legislation related to animal protection, in the international and national sphere, each one having its specificities. The Earth Charter, as an example, contains among its principles the respect for Earth and life in all its diversity, and the treatment of all living beings with respect and consideration.

Additionally, the Brazilian Federal Constitution in its article 225, section 7, places the public authority in charge of “protect the fauna and the flora, with prohibition, in the manner prescribed by law, of all practices that represent a risk to their ecological function, cause the extinction of species or subject animals to cruelty” (BRASIL, 2015), recognizing, then, the animal as a sentient being, capable of feeling pain and suffering. Thus, it can be inferred that animals cannot be considered a thing or an object.

That was the understanding of the ministers from the Supreme Federal Court, who considered that the *vaquejada*¹ inflicts suffering on the animals and, therefore, harms the constitutional rights prescribed on the aforementioned law, and, thus, prohibited its practice at the state of Ceará, in a decision that gave jurisdiction to the rest of the country.

A month after the decision, however, the Comissão de Educação, Cultura e Esporte do Senado (Senate's Commission of Education, Culture and Sports) passed, on November 1 of 2016, a bill which defines the *vaquejada* as national cultural expression and country's intangible cultural heritage. At the time, protesters friendly to the bill occupied the central lawn at the Esplanada dos Ministérios, in Brasília, claiming that *vaquejada* is an important economic activity that moves about R\$ 14 thousand per year.

1. TN: Cultural activity of Northeastern Brazil in which cowboys have to throw down a bull. Such activity started being questioned in the 2010s concerning animal abuse.

It is important to highlight that, according to the Federal Decree No. 3,551/2000, which establishes the register of intangible cultural goods that constitute Brazilian cultural heritage, there are phases to be fulfilled before an expression can be considered an intangible cultural heritage good (BRAZIL, 2000). In the case of *vaquejada*, the procedure was not obeyed.

Going back to the legal analysis, the environmental crimes law (BRASIL, 1998), in its article 32, classifies the crime against fauna for whoever "Practice abuse, mistreatment, injury or mutilate wild, domestic or domesticated animals, native or exotic," charging the offender with "imprisonment of three months to one year and fine." Are also charged, "Whosoever, in any way, contributes to the practice of the crimes foreseen," as well as the authority who, "knowing of the criminal conduct of another, fails to stop its practice, when he could act to avoid it" (BRASIL, 1998). In the same way, the Misdemeanor Law (Decree-Law No. 3,688/1941), in its article 64, refers to ordinary detention, of ten days to one month, or fine, to whoever treats animals cruelly or submits it to excessive work (BRASIL, 1941). In case the animal is exposed to the public, the penalty is increased twofold.

The Master Plan of São Lourenço, in its article 144, describes the prohibition of:

- I – transporting on animals or on animal traction vehicles, load heavier than their strength;
- II – making wounded, ill, exhausted, weakened, or extremely thin animals work or abandoning them;
- III – martyring animals in order to obtain from them excessive effort;
- IV – conducting animals in any abnormal condition that may cause them suffering;
- V – piling up animals in warehouses with insufficient space or without water, air, light and food;
- VI – using harnesses that may constrain, wound or hurt the animals, or using them on top of injured, bruised or wounded areas;
- VII – practicing whatsoever act, even if not specified in this Code, that may result in violence and suffering for the animal.

Notwithstanding the existence of various environmental regulations, as well as the responsibility by touristic activity developed within the area of jurisdiction, it is observed that the executive local authority seems not to take any measures in order to solve the problem. It should also be highlighted the Decree-Law No. 24,645/1934, which settles, in its article 1, that all animals existing in the country are protect by the State. (BRASIL, 1934).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Considering that touristic sustainability is molded on social, economic, cultural, political and environmental principles, it is understood that, if everyone is engaged on the building of a new ethic that changes the view on man's relationship with other life forms, maybe we will be capable of suggesting a constitutive moral, created from living experience, which will then influence the constituted moral. Therefore, if each visitor refuses to ride horse-drawn carts, its owners will have to reconsider their concepts, adapting themselves to this new reality.

Regarding the appliance of existing regulations (federal, statewide or municipal) at the discussed destination, it is assumed that the executive authority action showed itself inefficient in offering any protection to animals explored by touristic activity, a fact that can be attributed to the absence of any inspection board that deals specifically with these cases and enforces regulations.

There are practicable alternatives, such as bicycles, mechanically drawn vehicles or tricycles, or means that use eco-friendly energy sources, such as electric cars, which can be used by visitors. Then why use animal-drawn carts, sacrificing them in the name of tradition and an unacceptable cultural conservatism? Present times asks for model changes, and we should not, to the harm of living beings that suffer in the name of touristic activity, remain attached to pre-steam vehicles values. Facing this scenery, the greatest challenge is to raise visitors and society's awareness on the respect of all life forms, being not entitled to humans to mistreat animals, whatever species they might be.

Finally, Image 1 shows all that was described throughout this article. May your pain be our pain.

Image 1 – Your freedom



Source – Silvia M.²

2. Available from: <<http://www.uniaolibertariaanimal.com/site/index.php/faces-da-exploracao/instrumento/transporte.html>>

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