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REPORTS IN CONTRAST

11 RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

SESC BERTIOGA

Building Hope Through Social Tourism

ERNEST CAÑADA



2nd revised extended edition



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11

SESC Bertioga.
Building Hope Through Social Tourism.
Ernest Cañada

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Among his latest work, mention must be made of [#TourismPostCOVID19. Lockdown touristification](#) (Barcelona, Alba Sud Editorial, 2021), and [Turistificación global. Perspectivas críticas en turismo](#) [Global Touristification: Critical Approaches to Tourism] (Barcelona, Icaria Editorial, 2019), both co-edited with Ivan Murray. He has contributed to the Reports in Contrast collection, published by Alba Sud Editorial, through the following studies: [Transformaciones en las relaciones de género en experiencias de turismo comunitario en Centroamérica](#) [Changes in Gender Relations in Central American Community Tourism Experiences] (Issue no. 7, 2019); [Conflictos por el agua en Guanacaste, Costa Rica: Respuestas comunitarias al desarrollo turístico](#) [Water Conflicts in Guanacaste, Costa Rica: Community Responses to Tourism Development] (Issue no. 6, 2019); [Dimensiones de género en el trabajo turístico](#) [Gender in Tourism Employment] (co-written with Daniela Moreno, Issue no. 4, 2018); [Turismo en Centroamérica, nuevo escenario de conflicto social](#) [Tourism in Central America. A New Scenario of Social Conflict] (Issue no. 1, 2010).

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This article is dedicated to all the people that work at SESC Bertioga, who strive day by day to guarantee a social tourism model that contributes to fairer, sustainable, inclusive human development.



Source: SESC Bertioga's archives.

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1.

INTRODUCTION

In mid-April 2019, I spent some time at SESC Bertioga holiday resort on the coast of the state of São Paulo in Brazil. It was my second visit. On that second occasion, I was gathering information for this report. One day, I arrived early for lunch with my colleagues Leila Yuri, assistant officer at SESC São Paulo social tourism centre, and Henrique Barcelos Ferreira, SESC Bertioga's deputy manager. While I was waiting for them, I sat at one of the shared dining tables in the huge restaurant. I remember sitting in contented silence, watching what was going on around me. Dozens of Brazilians, mostly from the working classes, were eating and chatting in carefree style. A group of women was admiring a fruit they had never eaten before. At another table, a family was laughing their heads off. The guests shared the restaurant with the tourist complex's employees, distinguishable by their work uniforms: the gardeners, chambermaids, and office staff. Everyone dined there together. The food was simple, with local cuisine and a self-service buffet. The image has remained etched in my memory. This is what tourism could be like!

My interest in SESC Bertioga started long ago. In September 2017, I was invited by SESC São Paulo to give a course on work and tourism as part of a [training programme on ethics in tourism](#). The heads of the social tourism centre invited me to visit its Bertioga resort. I really accepted out of politeness, without any special sense of motivation. Years ago, in October 2014, during the World Social Tourism Congress in São Paulo, I had turned down an offer to spend a few days in Bertioga and so on this occasion, I did not want to seem churlish and I joined the outing. As the visit progressed, so did my surprise until I was overcome by total admiration, especially after talking to a group of chambermaids, who explained their state of health and how their work was organized, taken back by my insistent interest. My impressions that day were reflected in a short article that I published upon my return to Barcelona in the newspaper *El País*, [SESC Bertioga: el turismo social es posible](#) [SESC Bertioga: Social Tourism is Possible]. During that short visit, I discovered that an alternative approach to large-scale tourism services and tourism consumption was possible, with results that had little to do with the "all-inclusive" hotels that are an unfortunate reality elsewhere in Latin America and the Caribbean. I began to think more seriously about relatively large-scale alternative types of tourism. That was what induced me to write a much more detailed report able to make SESC Bertioga known to a wider public and, above all, to people outside Brazil.

Why did that experience strike me as so important? What was its significance? In a context of increasing worldwide touristification, tourism development has led to problems of all kinds, accentuating inequalities (Cañada and Murray, 2019). Future prospects of post-capitalist tourism are hindered by the limited scale of the examples that manage

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to demonstrate an emancipatory approach to tourism; that is, models based on the ethics of avoiding any form of oppression or domination, while also encouraging human development in such a way that dignified lifestyles are fostered in a fair society at peace with the planet (Goulet, 1995; Wright, 2014). We often refer to community-based tourism as an alternative model based on a joint system of management that reflects organized local communities' desire to increase their control over how tourism is organized and how its profits are redistributed (Cañada, 2014). However, in a capitalist market like the current one, it is hard for many such initiatives to prosper in the long term (Cañada, 2019a). They tend to be concentrated in the rural areas of southern countries, with very limited capacity for visitors. This type of initiative, aimed at offering an alternative to prevailing tourism models, has only seemed to be conceivable on a small scale for minority groups; on many occasions, just for higher-class elites, with prices that most are unable to afford.

In contrast, SESC Bertioga –an initiative based on the finest traditions of social tourism in Latin America– demonstrates the feasibility of more sizeable models. With accommodation for some one thousand guests and a capacity to host over three hundred visitors a day, it is targeted at workers from the state of São Paulo in the low-to-medium income brackets and, to a lesser extent, to workers from the rest of the country. Hence, given the shorter travel distance, it has a low environmental impact. It specializes in a



Photo: Dani Sandrini. Source: SESC Bertioga's archives.

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tourism model with a strong underlying educational component, aimed at improving people's well-being and at boosting their personal development, within a framework of decent working conditions for staff and the complex's integration into the local community. This type of initiative fits in with the “**real utopias**” envisaged by American Marxist sociologist Erik Olin Wright (2014), construed as desirable, feasible alternative systems of organization –in this case of tourism activities.

This type of initiative construed as desirable, feasible alternative systems of organization –in this case of tourism activities.

Initiatives like SESC Bertioga also **demonstrate how broad-ranging tourism can be in terms of its capacity for inclusion or exclusion** (Cañada, 2020), despite which, from a critical perspective, emphasis tends to be placed on tourism's negative aspects. With the declining relevance of other formulae like sustainable tourism or responsible tourism, which once spearheaded efforts to make tourism fairer and environmentally friendlier, growing interest has turned to inclusive tourism (Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018). Although it is hard to define what sets inclusive tourism apart, initiatives like this show that tourism can take multiple forms and that its outcomes can also be assessed in terms of the capacity to foster exclusion or inclusion.

Given the effects of the current health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought tourism to a halt and called into question the model of worldwide touristification, it is crucial to find new approaches to tourism. Proximity tourism lies at the roots of this process of change, in terms of the shorter geographical distance and the possibility of educational interaction as a means of boosting human development, as opposed to a tourism model based on the reproduction of wealth. In this debate, social tourism and, in particular, long-standing initiatives like SESC Bertioga, with a history of over seventy years, can help to shed light on a situation that calls for urgent change.

2.

OBJETIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This report aspires to contribute to a raised awareness of SESC Bertioga –a beach resort run by SESC São Paulo, an organization that is a leading reference in social tourism in Latin America and an example of an emancipatory post-capitalist approach to tourism practices. The case study is based on a review of documents generated by SESC Bertioga and SESC São Paulo, together with secondary documentary sources and fieldwork carried out during a ten-day stay in Bertioga and São Paulo in April 2019. This stay was preceded by a previous visit in September 2017, when the case study was identified and the necessary contacts were made for the ensuing research. During the fieldwork, the compilation of documents from SESC Bertioga and SESC São Paulo was combined with observational work at the resort and interviews with 19 people directly involved with SESC Bertioga or SESC São Paulo in order to gain a better understanding of the organization to which the resort belongs and its social tourism strategy. In the selection process for the interviews, different work areas, responsibilities, job categories and duties were taken into account in order to conduct a comprehensive analysis. Lastly, a chambermaid and activist from the “Las Kellys” movement in Spain was interviewed and invited by SESC São Paulo to visit the Bertioga resort. **Table 1** shows the details of the interviewees and their corresponding job and/or post.

The compilation of documents was combined with observational work at the resort and interviews with 19 people directly involved with SESC Bertioga or SESC São Paulo.

The 19 in-depth semi-structured interviews were sound-recorded, transcribed, coded and manually analysed. They lasted for approximately 45 to 90 minutes, and they were held at SESC Bertioga or in SESC São Paulo’s offices. At the interviews at SESC Bertioga, first the interviewees were asked about their professional background and about their responsibilities and duties at SESC Bertioga. Then, the interview explored the functioning and characteristics of the department where they worked. Other interviews –mainly with people attached to SESC São Paulo and also, to a certain extent, with the manager of SESC Bertioga– focused on the prevailing vision of social tourism and the associated strategy and how it was put into practice at SESC São Paulo and SESC Bertioga.

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Table 1. Interviewees.

No.	Name and surname	Occupation / Position
1	Danilo Santos de Miranda	Regional Director of SESC São Paulo
2	Flávia Roberto Cortez Lombardo Costa	Coordinator of SESC São Paulo Social Tourism Centre
3	Lígia Helena Ferreira Zamaro	Accessibility consultant at SESC São Paulo's Education for Sustainability and Citizenship Department
4	Marcos Roberto Laurenti	Manager of SESC Bertioga
5	Henrique Barcelos Ferreira	Deputy Manager of SESC Bertioga
6	Thaísa Novaes de Senne	Coordinator of SESC Bertioga's programme of activities
7	Admilson Nascimento	Coordinator of SESC Bertioga's Reservations Centre
8	Simone Barbosa	Services & Housekeeping Coordinator at SESC Bertioga
9	Fabiana de Oliveira	Services & Housekeeping Supervisor at SESC Bertioga
10	Maria Aparecida Germano	Chambermaid at SESC Bertioga
11	Leticia Guidugli Dos Santos	Food Coordinator at SESC Bertioga
12	Lucas Eduardo Costas Salinas	Maintenance and Infrastructure Coordinator
13	Emerson Luis Costa	Supervisor of SESC Bertioga's nature reserve
14	Guilherme Leite Cunha	Administrative officer for SESC Bertioga's programme of activities
15	Angela Camino	Craft worker and user of SESC Bertioga
16	Dolores Freixa	Historian and tour guide collaborating with SESC São Paulo
17	Cristiane Sampaio	Tour guide collaborating with SESC São Paulo
18	Carlos Eduardo de Castro	Historian and tour guide collaborating with SESC São Paulo
19	Eulalia Corralero	Chambermaid and founder of the "Las Kellys" movement in Spain

Source: the author.

During my visit to Bertioga, in addition to the above interviews, I was also able to speak to several other people, including guests, workers, members of Bertioga's local community, and people attached in some way to SESC Bertioga, such as the craft workers who regularly exhibited their wares at the centre or tour guides. The data from the informal conversations and observation work was noted down in a field diary each day. This information was especially useful in the analysis and outline of the case study.

3.

SOCIAL TOURISM: A HISTORICALLY PLURAL CONCEPT

The origins of social tourism are complex and contradictory and, from the outset, it took different forms. In the 1930s and 1940s, increasing attention was paid to the working population's leisure time. Working class demands for the working day to be cut to 8 hours and, subsequently, for time off at weekends were followed by calls for paid leave. This last demand was recognized for the first time in France in 1936, when **Léon Blum's Front Populaire** alliance government approved mandatory annual paid leave of two weeks a year. This came after big strikes throughout the country, ending in the signature of the **Matignon Agreement** on June 7th and 8th 1936 by the government, employers' associations and trade unions, which recognized this demand (Cross, 1989). Shortly after, on June 24th of the same year, the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** approved its convention on paid annual leave, and the [first countries to ratify it](#) included Mexico (March 9th 1938), Brazil (September 22th 1938), Denmark (June 22nd 1939) and France (August 23rd 1939). Other countries, in both Europe and Latin America, gradually began to recognize it.

At the same time, there was dissent on how this leave should be organized and through what infrastructure, organizations and services. One possibility was passive consumption of market goods and services, although several contrasting policies were suggested that sought to use different channels. Religious institutions, trade unions, workers' associations, Socialist and Communist parties and others of a Fascist nature all came up with different ways of organizing workers' leisure time, given its increasing importance following the recognition of paid leave. These multiple approaches and objectives are reflected in the different forms that social tourism took. In some places, it was embodied in a philosophy of preventive social reforms in a bid to ensure social harmony and an attempt to control and integrate the working classes, given the risk of their growing organization into trade unions and the need to find a channel for workers' leisure time that suited the interests of the middle classes (Cheibub, 2014; Martoni, 2019). Other approaches can be construed as attempts to offer a response to social calls through official channels in a bid to ensure greater equality and to boost working class well-being, thanks to the headway made by the working classes (Falcão, 2009; Schenkel, 2017, 2019). Some outstanding examples are the public policies promoted by France's Front Populaire government (Cross, 1989) or the guidelines for the democratization of access to tourism drawn up in the 1930s and 1940s in Argentina (Schenkel, 2017; Torre and Pastoriza, 2002). In the Soviet Union, in the 1920s and 1930s, an innovative worker holiday programme was promoted by the Socialist government (Koenker, 2013). There

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were even places where this leisure time was used to bring the working classes into line and to indoctrinate them in accordance with early 1930s Fascist ideas (Baranowsky, 2004; Spode, 2004). One method that was encouraged by these Fascist regimes was to promote sport as a means of upholding certain national sentiments (Broder, 2019).

For years, social tourism has taken multiple different forms depending on countries' political tendencies, ranging from those with practically no public social tourism programmes to those that have acknowledged it to be part of their social policies and hence promote government initiatives in this field (Minnaert et al. al., 2009). Since the approval of the **1972 Vienna Charter** by the International Bureau of Social Tourism (BITS), founded in Belgium in 1963 and known as the International Social Tourism Organization (ISTO)¹ since 2010, social tourism has sought to find ways of contributing to greater social equality in access to leisure, given the handicaps faced by certain groups. In the international positioning of social tourism, ISTO has played a key role in the development of the concept, in public policies to promote it, and in fostering shared learning processes and links among academics, decision makers and tourism professionals (Bélanger and Jolin, 2011). In recent years, its regional Latin-American section has played a particularly active role in international coordination.

Since the approval of the 1972 Vienna Charter social tourism has sought to find ways of contributing to greater social equality in access to leisure.

Social tourism steadily became more complex, with official approval in the **Montreal Declaration Toward a Humanist Social Vision of Tourism** in 1996 by BITS, insofar as it broadened its scope to include the well-being of tourism workers, local communities and the local background framework (Schenkel, 2017). In turn, multiple reasons for hindered access to tourism by different groups were acknowledged. From the initial basic criterion for inclusion in social tourism (a financial handicap), programmes began to be developed for the elderly, youths, people with disabilities or serious illnesses, and the marginalized, among others (Minnaert et al., 2013). This segmentation has opened up new business opportunities in the field of social tourism (Schenkel, 2020) and, to a certain extent, social tourism has also echoed the general trend in tourism, with the gradual consolidation of niche tourism products (Novelli, 2005) and markets segmented according to interests or special needs, based on post-Fordist capitalist changes in forms of production and consumption (Ioannides and Debbage, 1997).

There is widespread literature on social tourism (McCabe and Qiao, 2020). Despite its abundance, however, it stands out for its uneven geographical coverage, with greater attention being paid to wealthy countries and, in particular, to Western Europe. This contrasts with other regions (Thomas, 2018) like Latin America, where historically this type of social initiative has had a strong presence since the 1940s, although there are notable exceptions, such as the studies by Elisa Pastoriza (2011), Érica Schenkel (2017,

1 ¹ In 2010, the name in Spanish was also changed to *Organización Internacional de Turismo Social*. Initially, the Spanish acronym OITS was used, but as of 2019, an agreement was reached to use just the English acronym, ISTO, in communications.

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2019a), Marcelo Vilela de Almeida (2011, 2013) (Schenkel and Almeida, 2020), Louis Jolin (2013) and Bernardo Lazary Cheibub (2012, 2014).

In some specialist literature, a broad analysis has been made of the positive effects of social tourism policies as a way of combating exclusion and poverty (La Placa and Corlyon, 2014), improving the well-being and health of certain groups (Sedgley et al., 2018) and promoting social and inclusive policies (McCabe, 2020). Other studies have explored the effects of the broad long-term social benefits or the impact of the social policies that act as a framework for these initiatives (Diekmann et al., 2018). A third group of noteworthy research studies analyses the institutional structures that favour the

In some specialist literature, a broad analysis has been made of the positive effects of social tourism policies as a way of combating exclusion and poverty.

development of social tourism or assess its performance and impact, particularly in social or beneficial terms (Hunter-Jones, 2011; McCabe, 2009; Minnaert, 2020).

As social tourism policies have gradually come to focus on different disadvantaged social groups with hindered access to tourism, so academic literature has turned much of its attention to segmented analyses of this type of initiative. Thus, in third-age social tourism, the spotlight has focused on issues like the different benefits it can offer or programmes like IMSERSO in Spain (Ferrer et al., 2016; González et al., 2016; Lopes et al., 2020; Sedgley et al., 2018). In the United Kingdom, analyses also stand out in the field of social tourism for the elderly, drawing attention to the public bodies and charities behind these initiatives and the ensuing effects (Diekmann, 2018; Morgan et al., 2015). Similarly, mention must be made of studies of low-income families or marginalized members of society who would benefit from social tourism in different ways (Hazel, 2005; Hunter-Jones et al., 2020; Kakoudakis, 2017). In the case of Latin America, Érica Schenkel (2017, 2019a) made a detailed analysis of different ways of organizing social tourism and the results in terms of the effective inclusion of more disadvantaged sectors of society.

One recent field of debate in social tourism is the contrast between different initiatives, depending on their real objectives, with some being conceived to meet a certain demand, striving to satisfy the needs and rights of broad majorities, while others regard social tourism to be a mere business opportunity for private profitmaking, hence overlooking the needs of these majorities (Schenkel, 2019). Thus, niche-type initiatives can be found that seek to meet a legitimate specific need for access to tourism, while others take advantage of this segmentation, using it as a market opportunity. Other initiatives shun segmentation and niche-type models and, instead, they seek to provide broad inclusive alternatives that encompass different sectors of society, with special attention to workers and their families. Given today's urgent need to rethink tourism, analyses of successful social tourism experiences in this last field –able to meet different interests, along the lines of SESC Bertioiga in Brazil– could well be useful tools.

4.

SESC SÃO PAULO: A REFERENCE POINT IN SOCIAL TOURISM

SESC São Paulo has become a well-established reference point in Latin America in highlighting the potential of social tourism. This section analyses the origins of the organization, its structure and how it operates, in addition to SESC's specific evolution in the São Paulo region, where SESC Bertioga's holiday resort is located.

4.1. SESC'S ORIGINS, STRUCTURE AND OPERATING SYSTEM

SESC was founded in 1946 in Brazil by the business community from the trade, services and tourist sectors. Its early days were conditioned by the structural changes that the country was undergoing, together with political and ideological debate on social issues, seen from different perspectives.

In the 1940s, the country saw big socioeconomic changes as a result of early industrialization, a process that had hitherto made little impact. Throughout Latin America, the period was marked by an attempt to move toward a model of accumulation that would trigger an industrial process able to replace imports, while moving away from an international role as an exporter of unprocessed primary commodities from agriculture and mining (Urquidí, 2005). This process intensified during World War II, when Brazil joined the allied forces and, as a result, it negotiated United States' support in strengthening industry. The industrial sector's growing importance was accompanied by big demographic flows from inland areas to some large cities. During the period, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro grew chaotically, without the necessary infrastructure to take in the new migrants. The speed and intensity of the process made it difficult for these cities to assimilate the social, demographic and urban changes that accompanied it in any organized way.

In political terms, much of this change took place during the **Getúlio Vargas** dictatorship. He ruled, in a strong **populist manner**, through successive governments from 1930 to 1945. Vargas was then re-elected from 1950 to 1954. During the "New State" period, which began with the coup d'état orchestrated by Getúlio Vargas in 1937 and lasted until 1945, a series of labour laws was approved, leading to their consolidation through a decree issued on May 1st 1943, which covered all Brazilian workers with the exception of agricultural and domestic labour. At the same time, political and civil rights were suspended. **Daniilo Santos de Miranda**, regional director of SESC São Paulo, describes Getúlio Vargas' regime as standing out for "the harsh

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repression of his enemies and, at the same time, for a desire to protect the poorest, neediest sector of the population, the workers, to the extent that the most modern aspects of Brazil's labour relations date back to that period." In 1943, the Ministry of Labour, Industry and Trade launched the Worker Recreation Service (SRO), aimed at coordinating differing recreational activities for the working classes, organized by different bodies through collaboration and support. This is yet another example of what has been considered to be an attempt to consolidate a corporate federal model (Correa, 2008).

This led to attempts by different Latin-American nations to address social issues through the creation of official bodies and to set in motion public policies and institutions aimed at meeting the specific needs of this emerging urban working class.

In addition to this interventionist centralized approach, other intellectual movements helped pave the way for initiatives like SESC. For instance, inspired by Pope Leo XIII's "Rerum novarum", through the Church's social doctrine, a way of combatting the expansion of Communism was proposed while also offering a social alternative. According to **Danilo Santos de Miranda**, certain elements were common to both the populist approach and to the Church's social doctrine, because "both traditions share a paternalistic vision of workers". Likewise, among Brazil's business elites there was also **concern about the possible rise of Communist-influenced trade unionism**, as was occurring in many other countries back then, together with a desire to intervene at an organizational and doctrinal level to counteract this influence (Cheibub, 2014; Correa, 2008). This led to attempts by different Latin-American nations to address social issues through the creation of official bodies and to set in motion public policies and institutions aimed at meeting the specific needs of this emerging urban working class. In Brazil's case, the business community opted for an alliance with the State to promote this type of social action.

Meanwhile, **in the 1930s and 1940s, an intellectual and artistic movement with Modernist associations sought to forge a cultural identity all of its own**, embracing the country's racial mix from its colonization process. This movement began in 1922 with the Modern Art Week, organized by part of the São Paulo elite, who rented São Paulo Municipal Theatre for the purpose. During the early years, works and publications by authors like Oswald de Andrade and Mario de Andrade in the field of literature, Anita Malfatti and Tarsila do Amaral in painting and Heitor Villa-Lobos in music laid the foundations for a movement that sought to deconstruct colonial thinking. In subsequent decades, it lost impetus, although the spirit of a Brazilian cultural identity and its indigenous roots was maintained, reflected in literary works like *Manifesto Antropofágico* by Oswald de Andrade or *Macunaíma* by Mário de Andrade. In the opinion of Danilo Santos de Miranda, this intellectual backdrop would also contribute to a desire to seek Brazilian answers to the problems that the country was facing back then.

The structural dynamics and political and ideological movements of the 1930s and 1940s led the Brazilian business community to explore the possibility of a broad-ranging pact with the working classes (Gomes, 2005). A group of business employers came up with the idea of creating some kind of initiative in collaboration with the Brazilian State, with a capacity to help tackle the multiple problems that were emerging at the time so

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as to mitigate the risk of further trade unionization. They proposed a framework for intervention in the fields of worker education, professional training and welfare, largely inspired, ideologically and at an organizational level, by Portugal, which in 1935 had created the National Institute for the Productive Use of Worker Leisure Time (INATEL) (Cheibub, 2014). Thus, in 1942 they created the **National Industrial Training Service** (SENAI) and, based on that model, shortly afterwards they launched the **National Commercial Training Service** (SENAC), in order to train staff to work in both industry and trade.

At the same time, they promoted a process of dialogue and convergence through the **First Conference of Producer Classes**, organized by the Rio de Janeiro Trade Association with the support of various agricultural, trade and industrial associations. The event was held from May 1st to 6th 1945 in Teresópolis, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, with 183 national delegates representing various different associations and trades. At the conference, the Teresópolis Economic Charter was approved and, as a corollary, the Social Peace Charter was later formalized in January 1946.

The charter was based on the notion (expressed in point 2) that capital should not solely be regarded as generating profits, but “as a means of economic growth and



Source: SESC's Bertioiga archives.

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collective well-being". Thus, insofar as work is considered to be a right, wages should guarantee "a dignified, healthy, efficient existence." Consequently, it called for a prompt rise in the population's purchasing power, not only for reasons of solidarity but also due to its potential for strengthening the domestic market (point 3). It also proposed the creation of a social fund by the business community to benefit workers of all categories in addition to social support in general. More specifically, the aim should be "to apply measures that not only improve workers' standard of living, but which also facilitate the means for their cultural and professional improvement" (point 4). It also established that the funding should come from companies' net profits (point 5). These measures were promoted in parallel with a bid to rationalize work and to boost productivity (point 7). As for the workers, they were expected to commit themselves jointly and individually to improving production and to cooperating in the country's economic expansion by reducing absenteeism, avoiding disputes, maintaining discipline, preventing theft, loss and damage to equipment, helping to guarantee productivity, and undertaking to train professionally at the two already created professional training bodies, SENAI and SENAC.

Subsequently, the business sector also decided to intervene in the well-being of workers and their families in aspects like culture, sports, free time, the arts and formal education. To promote this, in 1946, the **Social Service for Industry** (SESI) and **Social Service for Trade** (SESC) were created, each linked to its respective sector. In SESC's case, the **National Confederation for Trade in Goods, Services and Tourism** (CNC) is responsible for its management and organization as the Brazilian body representing employers from these sectors. In São Paulo, the responsible body is the São Paulo Federation for Trade in Goods, Services and Tourism (**FecomercioSP**), founded in 1938.

Today, over seventy years later, these four bodies form a key network in social protection in Brazil. "Our problems would be far greater if they did not exist; inequality would be far worse than it is today," said **Danilo Santos de Miranda**.

Following the creation of these four bodies, further ones were founded for different sectors of activity, such as the National Service for Cooperative Training (SESCOOP); the Social Service for Transport (SEST); the National Service for Transport Training (SENAT); and the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE). This group of bodies began to be informally known as the **S System** although they have never functioned in an integrated way, since there is no joint legal framework and they are independent bodies. In the opinion of **Danilo Santos de Miranda**, the S System does not exist as such: "It's more like a set of systems. This current interest in referring to them as the S System is more like an attempt to disregard, discredit, question and undermine these bodies, arguing that they don't work and they don't meet the population's needs."

Right from the outset, the **funding** of these four bodies –SENAI and SESI for industry, and SENAC and SESC for trade– was based on mandatory contributions by the business employers of their respective sectors, based on a percentage of the wages paid to their workers. Initially, the percentage was 2% for those bodies dedicated to worker welfare, although it was later reduced to 1% for SENAC and 1.5% for SESC. The State collects

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this through the National Social Security Institute (INSS) and delivers the corresponding amount to each of them.

When the bodies were founded, business employers convinced the government to create legislation that would force companies to be part of this process. This system of funding has guaranteed these bodies' financial stability for over seventy years. However, they have been repeatedly questioned by some governments and certain business sectors, with the proposal of different alternatives, such as funding from their own activities or from private sponsorship. However, Danilo Santos de Miranda defends the existing model against these other options:

One possible complementary source of funding is to try and raise it through SESC's own operations. Today the amount we charge represents between 15% and 18% of our operating expenses. (...) This was a strategic decision so that SESC's users contribute in some way: we charge amounts that we consider to be appropriate for our services. These are social prices, not market ones, with an educational message by making it a habit for users of the services and activities to pay something for them.

(Sakate, 2018, own translation from Portuguese).

As for the possibility of private sponsorship, Danilo Santos de Miranda does not think it is viable. He advocates compulsory contributions so as not to jeopardize "a programme that must be permanent, with guarantees of continuity".

Each of these bodies is regulated by a specific law establishing its private administration. Through a federal initiative, employers' associations were given the responsibility for creating legal bodies under private law to provide support services for workers. It was also established that these bodies would be funded through mandatory wage contributions. Thus they are governed by their own legal framework and not by a federal body. In turn, the legal structure governing the four original bodies was laid down in **Article 240 of the 1988 Constitution**. This clearly establishes that the funding raised for each of these bodies cannot be used for anything other than what is established, and that their functions cannot be altered.

Despite the protection that their inclusion in the Constitution provides, throughout their history, these bodies have been attacked by different governments, partly in order to gain control of them and their resources. During the 2018 electoral campaign, **Paulo Guedes**, economic advisor to Brazil's current far-right president **Jair Bolsonaro**, announced their intended reorganization so that they would only focus on training activities (*Forum Magazine*, 2018). However, so far these attacks have not been able to alter the way they are run to any significant extent. Indeed, there is a legal precedent of particular importance. In 2014, the Federal Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the mission and running of these bodies could not be changed. Thus, their private nature as bodies not integrated directly or indirectly in the public administration was recognized (STF, 2014). Hence, if a certain government wanted to change the way they function, it would have to modify the relevant article of the Constitution and, for this purpose, approval in four voting sessions during two different periods would be needed.

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El Social tourism's acknowledgement as a federal policy has proven to be a particularly important factor in contrast with other countries in the region.

Social tourism's acknowledgement as a federal policy has proven to be a particularly important factor in contrast with other countries in the region. For example, emblematic programmes like the National Social Tourism System in Uruguay (Schenkel, 2019) are currently in a state of decline, in this last case due to its neglect by the government of National Party president Luis Alberto Lasalle, whose election in 2020 brought to an end the centre-left Frente Amplio governments that had ruled in succession from 2005, together with some related policies.

The State also exercises supervisory functions over these bodies. By law, each one's budget and its budget implementation reports must be approved by the federal court of auditors known as the Tribunal de Cuentas de la Unión (TCU). The State is also represented on the board of directors of each body, at both a regional and national level. An auditors' committee is also in charge of approving the accounts, made up of seven members: four National State representatives, two representatives of business employers and one representative of the workers.

The bodies **are each governed** by a committee that represents business employers, at both national and local state level. The funds that are collected in each state are re-invested in the body, with 20% of the proceeds going to the national central division for federal programmes run throughout the country and to subsidize states with less funding. This means that the bodies are fairly centralized and independent in the way in which they are run.



Fuente: Archivo Sesc Bertioga.

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4.2. SESC SÃO PAULO: SEVEN DECADES OF SOCIAL TOURISM

SESC is organized into 27 regional groups, one for each of the 26 states into which the country is organized plus a national department in Rio de Janeiro. Although they carry out joint programmes, they vary considerably, depending on the characteristics of each state, its financial capacity and the approach taken by those in charge. Despite their internal support mechanisms, not all of them have the same budget or the same autonomy to decide what to do with the available funding.

When SESC São Paulo (SP) first began to function, its primary aim was to provide support by seeking to offer an immediate response to basic needs, especially in matters related to worker healthcare. This interest in improving worker healthcare was widely shared in many places elsewhere during the early days of social tourism, mainly due to the insalubrious hazardous conditions faced by the majority of the working classes. For this reason, hospitals were created, and an effort was made to improve worker hygiene and nutrition. In fact, SESC's Bertioiga resort was founded in this context in a bid to offer a place for rest and relaxation, with leisure activities in the open air, contact with nature, and the possibility of access to good food and sports activities.

SESC São Paulo gradually turned its focus from healthcare to non-formal education, leisure and culture. In 1951, at the **1st SESC Conference for Technical Staff**, one of the first steps in this direction was taken when it was agreed to stop providing medical and healthcare (although this care was not completely eliminated, since dental services are still offered nowadays²) and to give priority to cultural and leisure activities, including social tourism.

In the late 1970s, **Renato Requixa** took over the management of SESC São Paulo (1976-1984), taking the changes even further. During his period as director, there were also concerted efforts to improve the skills of its staff, combined with a greater institutional commitment to social tourism. Thus, in 1979, SESC São Paulo embraced the principles of the **Vienna Charter** (adopted by BITS in 1979) and it also joined BITS (currently ISTO) as a member in 1980.

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, several factors encouraged SESC São Paulo to specialize further in non-formal education, culture and leisure, including social tourism. In turn, its different activities came to acquire a humanist hallmark. One key feature of this process was the evolution of the leisure and tourism programmes that were offered to workers within the framework of its activities. During the period, the demand for tourism by low and middle-income sectors of the state of São Paulo rose. Initially, just a few privately run activities were available, although they gradually grew. Dozens of holiday camps were created, run by organizations of various kinds, such as trade unions or businesses, and a limited number of excursions were arranged, run informally or by tourist companies. For instance, CVC –currently the largest tour operator in Latin

² In 2019, SESC São Paulo's units provided dental services to a total of 44,030 people, according to its [activity report](#).

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America– was founded in 1972 in a very industrial part of Santo André, in the state of São Paulo. Its first customers were workers from these industries. Although relatively few tourism activities were targeted at these low or middle-income sectors, it was during this period that this type of service began to be developed.

SESC São Paulo met this demand for recreational and cultural activities by low and middle-income sectors by extending its range of services. The 1980s and 1990s “were years in which the number of units run by SESC São Paulo grew considerably within the framework of a social policy aimed at extending its spatial coverage and capacity to attend to the public. The units were built in response to a massive demand by the population of São Paulo,” explained **Flávia Roberta Cortez Lombardo**, the current coordinator of SESC São Paulo Social Tourism Centre. The extension of its services and, in particular, its excursions has been interpreted as causing conflict with private agencies, which supposedly regarded SESC São Paulo as a competitor. Companies from the sector are said to have sought the support of EMBRATUR (the country’s only tourism management body, as there was no Ministry of Tourism until it was created under the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2003) in order to limit SESC São Paulo’s activities. This was then supposed to have contributed to the revision and readjustment of SESC São Paulo’s social tourism policy (Cheibub, 2012, 2014). However, SESC São



Source: SESC’s Bertioiga Archives.

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Paulo minimizes the impact of any such conflict on the adaptation of its programme, with an ensuing reduction in travel and the promotion of day trips. According to Flávia Costa:

In 1998, just one travel agency in the state of São Paulo sent a letter to EMBRATUR protesting about unfair competition for local tourism agencies. EMBRATUR informed SESC and we decided to review our work, suspending trips that involved air transfers (a point raised by the agency) and just running excursions to places where SESC had accommodation centres. And at that point, there was also a rise in the number of available day trips.

(Flávia Roberta Cortez Lombardo Costa, personal statement).

Cultural initiatives and non-formal education began to play a central role in linking up all the activities it developed, with the ultimate goal of educating citizens.

At an internal level, changes in the available tourism activities were attributed to a process of in-house reflection promoted by **Danilo Santos de Miranda**, the new general director of SESC São Paulo, during his early management years, starting in 1984. This helped the organization to review its approach to different social practices, including its tourism activities. As a result, cultural initiatives and non-formal education began to play a central role in linking up all the activities it developed, with the ultimate goal of educating citizens (Dines, 2013).

Social tourism as an educational tool

In the tourist industry and in other spheres, this vision of culture as an instrument in human development also started to take hold. The big difference between SESC São Paulo and other companies that offered tourism activities to the working classes was the input, as opposed to the type of activity, as corroborated by **Flávia Costa**:

What we observed back then was that, in general, tourists tended to be the mere spectators of an activity designed and created by other people. They were ferried from one place to another, without being able to think about what they were seeing or hearing and with no critical thinking capacity. Tourism is an educational tool for SESC, and that's not the case with these other companies. Tourism is not just about offering cheap products for low-income consumers. It's about offering a product with a certain input, as opposed to entertainment for entertainment's sake or leisure for leisure's sake. It's an activity that offers a certain type of input to people.

(Flávia Roberta Cortez Lombardo Costa, personal statement).

The key change was **social tourism's role as a tool in education**. "Our approach is always educational, with a view to fostering human development," said **Marcos Roberto Laurenti**, SESC Bertioga's manager. This had been an ideological feature of social tourism since its inception, but it really took off in all senses in the 1990s in such an original way that it is hard to find similarities with other social tourism initiatives in Latin America. SESC's process of reflection was based on a widely shared basic principle: **a desire to democratize access to tourism for low-income sectors of society**. This

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principle was complemented by **linking social tourism in with education**. According to Flávia Costa, this was transposed into **education in tourism through tourism, with the participants' active involvement**. The idea was to update the social tourism programme, "making various issues related to ethics and sustainability more evident". Thus, according to the coordinator of the Social Tourism Centre, today "SESC's educational activities in the field of social tourism are aimed at fostering the development of citizens with a capacity for critical thinking in the world in which we live."

Thus, the main focus of the activities run by SESC São Paulo's different units is to **facilitate access to different forms of culture**, with special emphasis on the arts. The idea is that **by forming citizens with a capacity for critical thinking, they can fully develop their potential as human beings**, as its director explains:

SESC focuses particularly on cultural activities that are popular and inclusive, that provide added value for human beings, and that are democratically conceived to bring about a process of educational change. And all this is tied in with leisure time, holidays and physical activity, which are fundamental for humans, with an added environmental component. SESC's function is to provide and facilitate the tools for people to find their own path and to provide opportunities for human development.

(Danilo Santos de Miranda, personal statement).

For SESC, culture and different forms of artistic expression are the cornerstones of personal development. Art is regarded as a form of expression and as an aesthetic concept. One of the most easily identifiable features of all SESC São Paulo's units is the importance that is lent to their aesthetics. A clear desire to create aesthetically pleasing surroundings can be noted at the units as another way of contributing to human development. "Just because facilities are targeted at people with low incomes, it doesn't mean that they have to be ugly or shabby," said Flávia Costa. Art is also regarded from an educational perspective. In the words of SESC's director:

Art –that is, visual and artistic expression– contributes to people's pleasure and comfort. Art is vital in human development and that's why it's present everywhere. Forms of artistic expression act as magnets, gratifying people and making places much friendlier. Even architecture plays this same role and it's part of this visual concept, not a separate notion

(Danilo Santos de Miranda, personal statement).

This interest in fostering knowledge and engaging in different forms of artistic expression is deeply rooted in the everyday work of SESC São Paulo's different units. For **Thaisa Novaes**, coordinator of SESC Bertioga's programme of activities, this appreciation of the arts has a clear emancipatory value, encouraging human development:

Art has an enormous capacity to help people express everything they experience and feel. This artistic function is important, especially when people tune in to their inner self, when they produce something all of their own. Instead of simply replicating a technique, they manage to express what they want. For example, in the patchwork

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workshops, the ladies stopped copying what they saw on online tutorials and, when they were introduced to the idea of creativity, their work started to reflect what they felt and what they identified with. This opens up a world of amazing potential. It also involves a new approach to handicrafts –something that’s underestimated in Brazil due to the country’s history of slavery, and that’s something that remains in the subconscious.

(Thaísa Novaes de Senne, personal statement).

Guilherme Leite Cunha, the person in charge of SESC Bertioga’s programme of activities, reflected more deeply on the subject along similar lines:

I don’t regard art as a higher skill –it’s the outcome of human creativity. Art seems to be intrinsic to humanity. However, in a world that revolves around work, it’s increasingly difficult. People spend most of their time producing what someone else wants, not what they want, because someone is paying them to do that. So when a person manages to create something themselves, it has enormous value. Lina Bo Bardi, an internationally renowned architect who worked for SESC said something about the organization that I adore. Her words were: “It’s not about boosting people’s cultural knowledge; it’s simply about awakening the creative potential that workers have, which has often been suppressed by the world of work.” This is very important. I really enjoy the workshops and courses, seeing people realize that they can create something, given the alienation they experience at work. The fact that someone can dream something up, create it, externalize it and reflect on what they’ve created is



Source: SESC’s Bertioga archives.

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amazingly important in humanist terms. This intellectual movement is fundamental; that is, construing art as the outcome of human creativity.

(Guilherme Leite Cunha, personal statement).

To foster a capacity for critical thinking in people, it is essential for them to learn how to appreciate and enjoy different forms of artistic expression.

SESC São Paulo's management team believes that to foster a capacity for critical thinking in people, it is essential for them to learn how to appreciate and enjoy different forms of artistic expression, while also having aesthetically pleasing settings in which to hold these daily activities. This approach is echoed in **Martha C. Nussbaum's** defence of the arts and the humanities in the book *Not for Profit. Why Democracy Needs the*

Humanities (2010). In it, the American philosopher explains that, faced with the technocratic drift that higher education has taken, the arts and the humanities form the very basis of citizenship. As she sees it, these disciplines play a basic role in a person's capacity for critical thinking and reflection; in the development of empathy to other human beings and a sense of ethics; in the cultivation of imagination and

creativity when faced with complex problems; and, lastly, in the capacity to reason. Although they have followed different paths, Martha C. Nussbaum's thoughts and SESC São Paulo's vision seem to have converged.

Social tourism at SESC São Paulo

In the state of São Paulo, SESC has a **network of 43 units in 21 different towns**, 23 of which are located in São Paulo's metropolitan area, 17 in inner and coastal areas, including SESC Bertioiga, and 3 of which are specialist units. At these units, all kinds of artistic, sports and socio-educational activities are organized, in addition to the provision of low-cost dental services. It also has a television channel, an Internet portal, a publishing house, a DVD and CD label, and a research and training centre. Unlike other regional units attached to SESC, in São Paulo, no activities in the field of formal education are offered.

SESC São Paulo's target public is a very broad-ranging one: [in 2019, there were 2,935,800 accredited users, made up of 1,353,920 accredited workers and 1,581,880 dependents](#). Membership lasts for up to two years, with slight variations depending on the month when a person became an accredited member. **Flávia Costa**, head of social tourism at SESC São Paulo, acknowledges the diversity of this high number of users:

SESC is targeted at workers from the trade sector, ranging from people who clean restaurants to restaurant managers. This means that they have different wages, so SESC has diverse users. Hence, the organization is not only focused on low-income workers. Within its wide range of users, priority is given to those with an income equivalent to 1 to 5 minimum wages, and so there's a very big potential difference. However, the idea is that these different wage groups should coexist, since this also has an educational impact.

(Flávia Roberta Cortez Lombardo Costa, personal statement).

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SESC São Paulo's central management department is responsible for managing the different programmes, while also ensuring that the different units, with their differing local characteristics, adhere to its underlying principles when putting these guidelines into practice. SESC São Paulo's **Social Tourism Centre** is in charge of coordinating social tourism policies within the framework of an educational initiative aimed at fostering citizens with a capacity for critical thinking, based on five lines of action:

- 1. Social accommodation.** Provided through SESC Bertioga, the subject of this report, although SESC's different regions also have accommodation centres of similar characteristics.
- 2. Outbound tourism.** Through different local units, day trips, trips of over one day, and short tours (half a day) are given.
- 3. Other trips.** Access to different ways of thinking and discussions on tourism are promoted among tourists through conferences, conversations, and videos in which tourism or a specific tourist destination are discussed. This can be done from both a critical perspective or to prepare for a visit. For example, visits to *quilombos*, settlements of escaped slaves, are always preceded by an explanation to raise the participants' awareness.
- 4. Community development and the promotion of responsible tourism, based on ethical criteria.** Different initiatives are carried out, including an **agrotourism programme**, with visits to organic farms in the south of the state of São Paulo. SESC sends visitors to them, arranged through its units, and it also assists farmers in the organization of the visits. The second initiative of note is a "**cultural mapping**" process. This consists of regular visits to the local communities of certain areas to raise an awareness of their cultural potential, leading to the local population's cultural empowerment and, in some cases, the creation of their own local tourism services. This has also sparked off reflection on the kind of tourism that is most appropriate for their communities. Lastly, **training in sustainable responsible tourism** should also be highlighted. This involves meetings and conferences with different professionals from the tourism sector, such as guides, so as to ensure a shared ethical vision of tourism. A raised awareness among staff from SESC is also fostered in order to avoid situations like the engaged services of companies with workers in irregular employment.
- 5. Reflection and knowledge-building in the field of tourism.** Issues are raised within this framework such as tourism's links with human rights, sustainability in the broad sense of the word, or the values of social tourism. For this purpose, congresses, seminars, and activities by the Research and Training Centre are organized, and a digital library is fostered to provide access to knowledge, with the publication of books and other materials that can promote this vision.

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According to **Danilo Santos de Miranda**, social tourism is a central part of SESC São Paulo: “We play a basic role in social development and in more fully realized citizens.”

Given how unique SESC São Paulo is, in terms of social tourism and the other activities that it organizes, it is hard to find similar types of initiatives. This means that its teams of staff have had to learn on an in-house basis. Several factors help to create a particularly conducive environment for learning within the organization. Teamwork is the main source of learning. Staff mobility between its units also boosts knowledge exchanges. Staff visits are made to learn about other initiatives and the staff can take courses and seminars organized by SESC São Paulo, aimed at boosting in-house skills, although they are also open to the public. Given its humanist vision, the organization fosters dialogue through an attitude and values that encourage exchanges of ideas. Because it lacks the financial pressure and assessment criteria typically found in private companies, this also generates an environment conducive to training and creativity.

Source: SESC's Bertioga Archives.



5.

SESC BERTIOGA: A HOLIDAY RESORT FOR THE WORKING CLASSES

The Bertioga holiday resort has been in operation since 1948. Located in a coastal town in the state of São Paulo, it is targeted at workers from the trade, tourism and service sectors. It was one of the first social tourism accommodation centres to be created in Brazil. With a history of over seventy years as a resort and a capacity for one thousand guests and three hundred visitors, SESC Bertioga has become an international reference point in social tourism. Its evolution reflects the main changes in the conceptualization of social tourism, with a vision that has opened up to include the rights of its workers, the protection and conservation of the natural environment and the resort's harmonious integration into the local community. In the ensuing section, a description of SESC Bertioga's origins will be made, followed by an analysis of three key aspects of the resort: guest and visitor care, staff conditions, and links with the local community.

5.1. BERTIOGA: A SMALL COASTAL MUNICIPALITY IN A PROCESS OF CHANGE

SESC Bertioga holiday resort opened in 1948 under the initial name **Colônia de Férias Ruy Fonseca** (Ruy Fonseca holiday camp) as a tribute to a vice chairman of Fecomercio. Bertioga is a small coastal municipality in the state of São Paulo. In the 19th century, Bertioga had a thriving socioeconomic reputation as a place dedicated to whaling, producing the oil used in street lighting. With the decline of whaling in the mid-19th century due to technological developments in lighting systems, the population of Bertioga fell, and it was scattered among differing settlements. Thus, in the decades prior to the foundation SESC Bertioga, the area was made up of a small town and different communities with strong family links, who made a living from fishing and subsistence farming. This was the typical population of coastal areas in the south and southeast of Brazil, known as "Caiçara", with a mix of Indian, white and black roots. In the early 20th century, some families mainly of Lebanese origin began to arrive. They worked in different trading activities and eventually they settled in the town. In the following decades, several guesthouses opened to accommodate the first tourists to spend their holidays there, although some visitors also stayed in the homes of members of the local community. For example, in several letters written in 1936, the well-known Modernist writer, poet and champion of Brazilian culture, Mario Raul de Moraes Andrade, explained that he was staying at the house of a "Caiçara", according to **Carlos Eduardo de Castro**, a historian and guide who has collaborated with SESC since 1999.

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SESC Bertioiga's location was chosen for its seafront position and also because the area was undeveloped and not particularly easy to reach, making land cheaper there than other coastal areas like Santos, on the same São Paulo stretch of coast. The plots of land belonged to wealthy big estate owners. SESC São Paulo bought several plots from different owners, grouping them into five large areas which together cover 3,500,000 m². This includes a big piece of land some distance from the coast, on the fringes of Serra do Mar State Park: a nature reserve and the largest park in the state of São Paulo, covering over 332,000 hectares, where the water supplies for the holiday resort come from.

Map 1. Location of SESC Bertioiga



Source: the author.

The aim was to create a “holiday camp” for workers and their families from the trade, services and tourism sectors for relaxation, leisure and cultural purposes. At that time, it could take almost a day to travel from São Paulo to Bertioiga. “In those days, there was no proper road to Bertioiga. It was an adventure. You had to take a boat and then everyone was driven there by truck,” explained **Marcos Roberto Laurenti**, SESC Bertioiga’s manager. In fact, there was no tarmac road until 1979. Guests had to travel to the town of Santos, take a boat there to Bertioiga, and then a truck to the resort. This also led to longer stays, lasting from ten to fifteen days.

In 1944, Bertioiga was a district of the town of Santos, and it did not become a separate municipality until 1991, after two previous frustrated attempts in 1958 and 1979. With the creation of SESC Bertioiga, the area gradually began to change and there was a sharp rise in the development of the land around it, partly to accommodate the workers

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and their families. Due to its proximity to the city of São Paulo and the characteristics of the area, numerous tourism and housing projects also flourished, stretching along the entire coastline of the municipality. In this way, Bertioga became a regular destination for São Paulo's middle and upper classes, allowing them to spend a few days at the beach. From the 1970s, with the construction of a large residential area, an intense process of real estate development began throughout the municipality. Since then, condominiums of different sizes have been built and, with property speculation, the price of land has increased. This has had a knock-on effect on the "Caiçara" community, who depend on the land for crops and the sea for fish, with this last activity also being affected by industrial fishing. The displacement of the Caiçara population has also been facilitated by the fact that they did not own the land where they lived and so they were legally forced to move.

With this process of real estate development, there was a big influx of migrant workers, especially from the northeast of the country. No accommodation was made available to them and they slept, for instance, on the worksite. Gradually, these workers and their families settled informally on the other side of the road, given its low attraction for the real estate sector. Because a large part of Bertioga is a conservation area and it cannot be developed, this has pushed up the price of land where building is permitted. Indeed, one of the town's pressing problems today is the illegal occupation of a stretch of land



Fuente: Archivo Sesc Bertioga.

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that cannot be built on between the main road and the mountains due to the shortage of housing. Most of these people are the building labourers who originally came to Bertioiga and ended up staying there. However, as no adequate facilities were built to meet their needs, they now live in extremely vulnerable conditions.

Despite all this, it was a chance event that put Bertioiga in the international spotlight. On February 7th 1979, the corpse of a drowned foreigner appeared on Ensenada beach, in Bertioiga. According to the documents found on the body, he was Wolfgang Gerhard, an Austrian who lived in São Paulo and had rented a house with some friends near the beach. In 1992, after long journalistic investigations, backed up by DNA tests, it was ascertained that, in reality, he was Josef Mengele, better known as the “Angel of Death”, captain of the SS and a physician in Nazi Germany who conducted barbaric experiments on prisoners at Auschwitz concentration camp (Rosas, 2014). As a result, Bertioiga’s name became sadly famous in newspapers throughout the world.

5.2. A WIDE RANGE OF TOURISM SERVICES WITH AN EDUCATIONAL FOCUS

According to guests and visitors to SESC Bertioiga, the two things that stand out the most are the overall quality of the services and their educational component. As **Cristiane Sampaio**, one of the tour guides who accompanies groups to SESC Bertioiga from SESC São Paulo’s other units, explained:

What stands out the most is the quality of the tourism services offered to low-income members of the public. They encounter high-quality cuisine, activities and accommodation. The big difference, in comparison with tourism services elsewhere by other companies, is the activities’ cultural focus. Conventional tourism only seems to be about taking photos and shopping, and people know nothing about the destination they’ve visited, while at SESC, importance is lent to cultural and historical aspects so that people gain an understanding of the place they’re visiting.

(Cristiane Sampaio, personal statement).

A review will now be made of the accommodation and visiting conditions, the guests and visitors to the unit, the characteristics of its culinary and cultural services, and its accessibility policy.

Accommodation and day visits

SESC Bertioiga is currently made up of five large areas, with **the resort itself covering an area of 439,000 m²**. It features all the facilities it needs to function as a holiday resort, with accommodation, a restaurant, bar, swimming pools, sports facilities, a multipurpose room, children’s playrooms, a library, exhibition rooms, a former chapel used for cultural activities, a nature interpretation centre, plant nursery, nature reserve, parking lot, training rooms, and offices. The beach, which is public and is therefore

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open to everyone, lies just in front of the resort. It is equipped with basic amenities like volleyball nets and huts for activities. These are for anyone's use, whether they are at the resort or not.

To move around inside the resort, there are bicycles and a communal bus. Private vehicles are left parked, since they are not used inside the complex but just for arrivals and departures. There is also a primary care unit. If more specialist medical care is needed, the person is taken to a public hospital, using an ambulance that is permanently available at the resort. A dental service is available for the local population, as with other SESC units.

SESC Bertioga first started operating with 28 wooden chalets and a capacity for some 250 people. Each chalet accommodated two families, one on each side, and single people were housed together, with an area for men and another for women. Over the years, an effort has been made to improve guests' privacy and comfort. The chalets were refurbished, and new accommodation units were built in order to provide more comfort.

The resort can currently accommodate 1,000 people in 50 chalets and 12 apartment complexes; 8 with 24 apartments, 3 with 16 apartments and 1 with just 10, coming to a total of 250 apartments. Close to the accommodation, there are washing machines and dryers for guests at a cost of R\$5 (€1.15) each. In 2019, work began on the refurbishment of some of the accommodation so that, by 2021, it would be able to accommodate up to 1,400 people or even 1,600, with some extra beds for families. Other renovations have also been made, including the restaurant's extension, the planned redesign of the reception area, and the installation of photovoltaic panels to produce solar energy.

The occupancy rate at SESC Bertioga is very high, with an annual average of 94%. This means that it has a very high demand, greater than its capacity.

The occupancy rate at SESC Bertioga is very high, with an annual average of 94%. This means that it has a very high demand, greater than its capacity. "This is surreal and practically unheard of in the hotel market," said **Marcos Roberto Laurenti**. Booking requests vary depending on the time of year, but there are always more requests

than the resort's monthly accommodation turnover of about 4,000 beds. In the high season (December, January, February, and July), there can be bookings by 55,000 to 60,000 people a month, with figures of 20,000 and 25,000 during the rest of the year, according to **Admilson Nascimento**, the coordinator of SESC Bertioga Reservations Centre. This high demand means that no advertising is necessary. The services it offers are publicized through SESC São Paulo's other units and, above all, by word of mouth. Although it has an accommodation capacity of about 1,000 beds, on a day-to-day basis, some 700 beds are occupied, because sometimes not all the available beds in a chalet or room are taken and not all the accommodation units are available at the same time. Except for certain times of year, during the high season, its accommodation is almost at full capacity.

To achieve this, concerted efforts were made to organize its reservations procedure. A package system was created, where groups of guests all check in and out at the same

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time so that work schedules and the staff's needs can be organized more efficiently. The arrivals and departure programme is organized by area to facilitate cleaning and maintenance work. In the past, these packages lasted for 8.5, 7.5, and 6.5 days. Although they were not expensive, the policy was changed to make it easier for people with lower incomes to stay at the resort. Thus, since 2010, short packages of 4.5, 3.5, and 2.5 days have also been offered.

Stays at the resort must be requested in advance through the **reservations system**, either online via SESC Bertioga's own website or in person at one of SESC's units. No other intermediary platforms are used. The **reservations procedure to stay there** is as follows: people can register for the type of package they are interested in (ranging from 2.5 to 8.5 days) when one of the three registration periods a year opens, five months before their stay. A draw is made and the selected candidates have 48 hours to confirm the reservation by making a first payment. The percentage of people failing to confirm their place is high, close to 50% or 55% according to Admilson Nascimento. In such an event, the reservation is cancelled and the next person on the waiting list from the draw is called and so on successively over a period of three months, always bearing in mind the requested period and number of people travelling together. One month before a certain date, if places are still available, they are put on direct sale on SESC Bertioga's website. Payment of stays can be made into the resort's bank account, by



Source: Ernest Cañada / Alba Sud.

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credit card or in cash at any of SESC São Paulo's units. The amount can be paid in full or in instalments: four instalments if paid by standing order or eight instalments if paid by credit card.

In addition to this booking system, **stays for groups accompanied by a guide** can be reserved through SESC São Paulo's units and other accommodation centres run by SESC in other states. These groups do not enter the general draw, but the draw held by their respective unit. Group trips of this kind are not organized in the high season. The Bertioga resort also receives groups from SESC units in other states. This is part of an exchange system, which also allows groups from SESC São Paulo's units to stay at other centres in the country. SESC São Paulo also has agreements for group bookings through trade unions. The groups that travel to Bertioga from other SESC units are always accompanied by accredited tour guides. **Dolores Freixa**, one of the guides hired by SESC São Paulo, highlights the importance of a guide for these groups:

The guide's role for these groups is to make sure that all their needs are met and that they feel accompanied and attended to. The guide is on hand whatever happens, if they get sick or they have a headache, or even if they feel sad. We show them round the whole of SESC Bertioga so that they can see exactly what there is because there's so much, and we also give them some guidance. Or I accompany them on an activity because they've never done it before and they feel insecure. Tour guides are very important because we represent SESC. Then, when we return home, evaluations are made and I'm thrilled when there are opinions about the guides. I feel very gratified, because I realize that I did a good job. That's something you can't put a price on.

(Dolores Freixa, personal statement).

Unaccredited members of the public can also use the facilities, although the costs are different, because only people accredited as belonging to the trade, tourism and services sectors are subsidized.

The total daily running cost per person at SESC Bertioga (including food, shows, wages, water and energy) is R\$263 (equivalent to about €60 in April 2019). However, accredited guests only pay R\$75 a day (about €17). During the high season, from the second half of December to February, access is solely reserved for accredited guests, who are each entitled to invite two other people. Outside the high season, unaccredited guests can also stay at SESC, but they are charged the full price of R\$263. There is a specific price policy for minors: children from 0 to 6 years old are free of charge; children from 7 to 12 pay half the adult rate; and from the age of 13, they are charged as adults.

SESC Bertioga also accepts **day visits**. In this case, it has a capacity for about 300 visitors a day, although the aim is to boost the figure to 450. Day visits are from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., including lunch and access to the full entertainment programme, the leisure activities and changing rooms. The cost for accredited visitors is R\$25 a day (less than €6) with lunch in the restaurant or R\$19 (€4.3) with lunch in the cafeteria. In the case of unaccredited visitors, the prices are R\$89 (just over €20) and R\$73 (almost €17), respectively, depending on the chosen type of lunch. As for children, the price policy is

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the same as it is for stays at the resort: children up to the age of 6 are free of charge; from the age of 7 to 12, they pay 50% of the corresponding rate; and from the age of 13, they pay the adult rate. There are high visitor numbers and practically all the tickets are sold out all year round.

What are SESC Bertioga's target markets?

In 2019, [SESC Bertioga had 46,898 guests and 76,816 day visitors](#). As for its guests' socio-demographic characteristics, in 2017, 99% of them were workers from the trade, services and tourism sectors and their companions. These guests were mainly made up of families, as shown by the age ranges of the guests that year: 0–12 years old, 18%; 13–20 years old, 7%; 21–28 years old, 6%; 39–44, 29%; 45–60, 18%; 60+, 22%.

In terms of their income level, the distribution of the guests was as follows: 87% earned the equivalent of 0 to 5 minimum wages; 8% earned 6 to 9 minimum wages; and 5% earned over 10 minimum wages. The minimum wage in 2019 was R\$950 per month, about €220, which means that the maximum of five wages would be approximately €1,100. Most of the people who stay at SESC Bertioga would not be able to do so at other resorts. **Dolores Freixa**, one of the tour guides who accompanies groups from other units attached to SESC São Paulo, also highlights how important it is for these people to be able to afford services of these characteristics:



Fuente: Archivo Sesc Bertioga.

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They're simple people. They don't have the opportunity to stay elsewhere at a hotel. Very often, this is the first time that they've been to the seaside. Many have never seen it before. They're people who would find it very hard to get to know somewhere as beautiful as SESC Bertioga. I talk to them a lot, and I see that they're enchanted; first of all, with the food. Sometimes they cry, saying that they've never had this opportunity anywhere else. São Paulo is a city with many difficulties and few opportunities; everything is very expensive. If you haven't got much money, it's very hard to afford services of any kind. Cinemas are expensive, food is expensive, everything is expensive, so these people only watch television, and the TV is awful in Brazil and it's getting steadily worse. Here, at Bertioga, they have countless activities, in contrast with São Paulo, where everything's available, but only if you have money.

(Dolores Freixa, personal statement).

This is very positive feedback in terms of SESC Bertioga's affordability for workers in the low to medium wage bracket. However, although 87% of the resort's guests

Although Bertioga's prices for workers and their families from the trade, tourism and services sectors are very economical, given that they are subsidized, the transport costs to Bertioga still need to be met.

have an income equivalent to 0 to 5 minimum wages, this is a very broad-ranging interval, perhaps concealing widely differing realities. Unfortunately, the current registration system does not break down the information any further. However, SESC Bertioga's manager believes that the majority of these people are not in the 1 to 2 minimum wage bracket, as these are very low wages that would barely cover their basic needs, let alone a holiday. Although Bertioga's prices for workers and their families from the trade, tourism and services sectors are very economical, given that they are subsidized, the transport costs to Bertioga still need to be met. A bus ticket from São Paulo to Bertioga costs R\$44 per person (about €10), and this

represents a significant percentage of a person's wage. What is more, the travel costs by private means of transport are also very high, as explained by Flávia Costa:

In Brazil, it's very common for the lowest income sectors to have their own car, due to the country's unreliable public transport systems. When guests travel by car to Bertioga, the expenses not only include the fuel costs, but also road tolls. From the capital to Bertioga, the toll cost for Complejo Anchieta –Imigrantes (the main road system used to reach São Paulo's coast) is R\$27.40. If people travel from other cities, additional tolls must be added.

(Flávia Roberta Cortez Lombardo Costa, personal statement).

One possible solution to a situation that troubles SESC Bertioga's management team is the creation of specific policies for the lowest-income sector. A wage differentiation system is already used for its dental services, subsidizing the same treatment to different extents, depending on the member of staff's wage. Some time ago, a similar strategy was introduced by boosting the number of shorter packages, hence reducing the cost of access to the resort, while also introducing payment in instalments. According to Marcos Roberto Laurenti, with this type of measure "the profile of our target public changed, and people with a lower purchasing power had progressively more access to SESC Bertioga, as demonstrated by their clothing and vehicles." There are

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also proposals under study to outsource services to companies so that workers who earn between 1 and 2 minimum wages can take day trips at a very low cost, booking a guide, a one-day ticket, food and transport from São Paulo for R\$15 to R\$20 (between €3.5 and €4.5).

Gastronomy

Over 3,000 meals a day are served at SESC Bertioga, taking into account the staff, guests and visitors and the different meals throughout the day. Thus, food takes centre stage at this unit. Traditionally it is one of the best rated aspects in questionnaires. However, in 2010, an opportunity to improve this service was identified and, with the coordination of central management, various different measures were planned. A series of culinary training courses was provided for all the staff working in this area on topics like the preparation of meat, bakery produce and desserts. The aim was to improve the standard of the service through seasonal produce and high quality standards, as opposed to luxury cuisine. Local dishes were focused on as part of a cultural experience, with the revival of local recipes that were no longer used. According to Flávia Costa, these changes were very positive and they were much appreciated by guests and visitors: “We had to find a balance between mass production and high quality food with



Source: Ernest Cañada / Alba Sud.

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cultural interest value, through high dietary and nutritional standards. Over the years, ratings have improved dramatically. They were already good, but afterwards they shot up.”

Leticia Guidugli Dos Santos, food coordinator at SESC Bertioga, explained that the general guidelines for the preparation of food at Bertioga are the same as those at all SESC São Paulo’s units. They are expected to serve regional Brazilian cuisine, prepared in modern style, with a healthy makeup and presentation. People with specific dietary needs can make them known to the nutrition expert at the unit for them to deal with at an individual level.

The menus change each week, and there is an educational component by introducing the diners to new dishes or new ways of preparing them. The aim is for people to learn things that they can put into practice later at home. “Everything has an educational purpose, even the restaurant’s decor,” said Leticia Guidugli Dos Santos.

Programme of cultural activities

SESC Bertioga has an extensive programme of cultural and artistic activities, including shows on a par with top-ranking Brazilian ones. In fact, it offers the same cultural activities as any other unit attached to SESC São Paulo. Initially, that was not the case, but the programme was reorganized on the understanding that many guests and visitors to SESC Bertioga do not have easy access to other units run by SESC São Paulo, and that their first contact with different forms of artistic expression –such as music, theatre, dance, or reading– might take place at Bertioga. Thus, “guests and visitors to the resort can have the same all-round experience that they would have at other units run by SESC São Paulo,” according to Flávia Costa.

These activities have an enjoyable recreational purpose and an educational goal, as explained by Marcos Roberto Laurenti:

All the activities that are run have a non-formal educational objective. We seek to transform people by creating the right conditions for them to develop a critical approach to everything in their every-day lives, so as to help them exercise their rights as citizens and improve their quality of life. SESC is a democratic, heterogeneous place where diversity prevails, combined with a respect for minorities –who, in reality, are the marginalized, neglected majorities.

(Marcos Roberto Laurenti, personal statement).

Likewise, sports and recreational activities of all kinds are organized, as well as activities in the fields of healing or physical health. At the resort, about thirty different places are set aside for groups or interests of different kinds, and there is a regular programme of activities for boys and girls. When an activity is just for small numbers of people, prior registration is necessary, but at no additional cost.^{3*}

3 * The programme of activities is explained in more detail in section 5.4. A resort in the community. [NOTA DISSENY: AFEGIR ENLLAÇ AMB HIPERVINCLE]

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The testimonies of two members of staff clearly illustrate what it means for many low-income workers to have access to SESC Bertioiga's cultural resources for the first time.

For many people who stay at SESC Bertioiga, the experience is a wonderful one, not only thanks to the conditions, given that generally speaking they wouldn't have access to such a place, but also because, for the first time in their lives, they can watch a movie on the big screen or see a dance show. It's lovely to work at a place that does people good.

(Thaís Novaes de Senne, personal statement).

For these sectors of the population, access to facilities like these is important for multiple reasons. For people with low incomes who manage to stay at Bertioiga for a few days, as well as being in such an amazing beautiful place, very often this is the first time they've come into contact with the theatre or seen a circus, so it's a very enriching cultural experience. It's always amazing to talk to them. They're delighted. Their memories will stay with them forever.

(Guilherme Leite Cunha, personal statement).



Source: SESC's Bertioiga archives.

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Accessibility

At SESC São Paulo, accessibility has become one of the main focuses of action within the framework of its educational and social tourism services. A specific member of staff has been dedicated to accessibility since 2015, acting as a reference for other departments and units. The organization was already concerned about this issue, but initially just from the perspective of physical accessibility to different places. The restructuring of the organization's policies occurred in parallel with the approval of a law on the inclusion of people with disabilities, based on the [United Nations' International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), which entered into force in 2008.

Accessibility was regarded in a broader, more complex sense that takes into account physical, sensory, and intellectual aspects.

From that moment on, accessibility was regarded in a broader, more complex sense that takes into account physical, sensory, and intellectual aspects. An attempt is also made to take into account other groups that tend to go unnoticed because they do not have a clearly defined disability, such as people with psychosocial disorders, autism or illiteracy problems. Given SESC São Paulo's numerous units and the multiple activities that they hold –such as shows, workshops, courses and sports or social tourism activities–, as well as the huge potential demand, with nine million people in the state of São Paulo who have some kind of disability (Zamaro, 2017), there was a need for knowledge to be built up at a centralized organizational level in order to help promote accessibility and draw up systematic guidelines on how to achieve this.

According to **Ligia Zamaro**, accessibility officer at SESC São Paulo's department in charge of education for sustainability and citizenship, the inclusion of people with certain disabilities is seen by the organization as a reflection of the wide variety of personal situations found among the population. Hence, it aspires to extend its educational initiatives to include accessibility. The conceptual model used to tackle accessibility is based on the social model of disability. This implies an approach that:

systematically assesses barriers (social, cultural, communication-based, and physical), focusing on the relationship between people and their surroundings. From this standpoint, a disability is not just related to the individual in question. It is linked in a complex way to their background context and to the latter's relational, cultural, and physical barriers, which can hinder participation. Disabilities are understood to be a human characteristic and they must be accepted and taken into account in a plural society. People cannot be defined solely on the basis of their organic or biological characteristics. They must be regarded in their totality with all their human complexities, taking into account fundamental aspects (subjectivity, personality, identity) in a dynamic, socially constructed context.

(Zamaro, 2017)⁴

This is transposed into efforts by the organization to ensure that everyone can take part in all the activities and services offered by SESC. Thus, special attention is paid

⁴ Own translation from the original in Portuguese.

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to making sure that people with disabilities have access to and can take part in the activities run by SESC São Paulo. The idea is not to segment members of the public according to their needs or capacities, but to come up with activities and initiatives able to integrate them, allowing for diversity. This type of strategy began with sports activities and it has gradually been extended to other areas, including social tourism. Likewise, the staff also includes workers with some kind of disability and they account for about 500 employees out of a total of 7,000 people. This is a legal requirement under the 1991 Quotas Act, although their skills and abilities are also taken into account since, for some members of the public, these workers might be the best mediators in a particular cultural experience. Lastly, the artists hired by the organization also include people with a disability and, on other occasions, a performance might be given by artists with a disability. This vision has nothing to do with assistentialism but with a desire to transform the whole of society, according to **Ligia Zamaro**. Furthermore, given the volume of people dealt with by SESC São Paulo, its actions in the field of accessibility bring about changes that have repercussions outside the organization.

In SESC Bertioga's case, since the resort was built a long time ago and it covers a very large area, substantial efforts were required to put the accessibility policy into practice, especially in terms of physical access inside the resort. Because it is so big that it is easy to get lost, the whole signage system was improved to make it more visually effective and to prevent guests and visitors from losing their way, especially the elderly.



Source: SESC's Bertioga archives.

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Another problem was the frequent rain, and so gravel was laid in many areas to avoid slips or falls, although this hindered mobility for wheelchair users. Several changes were made, replacing the gravel on the paths leading to the restaurant and communal areas so that wheelchair users could move around more easily. Also, since private vehicles cannot be used inside the resort, a communal bus service for people with low mobility, in particular the elderly, was created. The buses, which are fitted with wheelchair lifts, run around the whole complex. What is more, alterations were made to adapt the accommodation, particularly the bathrooms. All this was done in accordance with the specific 2015 Brazilian state regulation and with suggestions by guests and visitors.

Another aspect worth highlighting is the loan of **amphibious wheelchairs** for guests and also for anyone else. These chairs are adapted so that people with a disability have access to the sea, thanks to their highly stable design. They have double wheels that do not sink into the sand, allowing users to enter the sea safely. This was originally a state initiative, encompassing all beaches on the São Paulo coast, but after six months it was discontinued, with the exception of Bertioiga, where SESC Bertioiga took over its management. Normally the users of these chairs are accompanied. However, during the hours when they are available for use, there is always a member of staff from SESC on hand to help. In addition to managing this service, SESC also stores the wheelchairs and takes care of their maintenance.

5.3. WORKING CONDITIONS

In keeping with the finest traditions of social tourism, promoted for decades in Latin America, not only does SESC Bertioiga's management team strive to make high-quality tourist facilities accessible to workers from the organization's related sectors, but it also seeks to guarantee decent working conditions for its staff. The **Montreal Declaration**, which was approved in 1996 by BITS (today ISTO), to which SESC belongs, establishes that the tourism sector must also guarantee the fundamental rights of tourism workers (Art. 6) (ISTO, 1996).

As a result, SESC São Paulo has a labour policy based on higher-than-average wages for each of its employment categories, strict compliance with labour legislation, broad-ranging social benefits, regular opportunities for information exchanges and dialogue between workers and the management staff of the respective units, support for staff training, and the possibility of promotion and a professional career at the organization. All in all, this leads to a particularly pleasant working environment with few conflicts. Additionally, with just a few exceptions, SESC São Paulo has a general policy of staff retirement at the age of 57 on full wages. SESC's in-house staff is entitled to both a public and a private retirement pension, to which both the employees and SESC contribute. This leads to a fairly high staff turnover, staff rotation among the units and possibilities of promotion.

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In April 2019, SESC Bertioiga had 400 in-house employees, distributed among its eight different work areas and the management department. Their main functions and the corresponding number of staff are as follows:

- **Management.** This department is made up of the managers, deputy managers, and general secretary. Attached to the department is the IT unit, with four members of staff, and the nature reserve, with eight. The nature reserve is very shortly expected to become an independent section, no longer directly linked to the management department.
- **Administration.** This department deals with cash flows, purchases, property, logistics, contracts, and human resources. The team consists of 60 people.
- **Customer service and communications centre.** This department deals with the reception of guests, customer service, and informative activities, including the creation of materials. The team is made up of 37 people.
- **Activity programming.** This department is divided into three areas: socio-educational activities, sports activities, and education for sustainability. The nature reserve was initially included in this department, but with new expansion plans, it became part of the management department. The team consists of 43 people.
- **Reservations Centre.** This is the department responsible for dealing with members of the public interested in staying at the resort and for managing the system. The team comprises eight people.
- **Food.** This department is responsible for the restaurant's catering service, bar service, and nutritional tasks. It is the largest department, with 115 people.
- **Services and housekeeping.** This department deals with the cleaning of rooms and communal areas (the streets, pool, and spa). The team consists of 65 in-house employees. The department is also responsible for two outsourced services: the cleaning of communal areas, surveillance and security –which will be explained later on– and the laundry service.
- **Infrastructure and maintenance.** This department is in charge of maintenance tasks (electricity, painting, carpentry, utilities, the sewage system, and the plant nursery). The team consists of 46 people. This area is responsible for coordinating the outsourced gardeners and other specialist services.
- **Dental clinic.** The team is made up of 9 people.

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Employment conditions

In organizational terms, SESC Bertioga functions much like other units attached to SESC São Paulo, with the addition of its housekeeping and central reservations departments, which add to the complexity of its management. In general, its **wages** are above average for Brazil, especially in the lowest ranking positions. For example, maintenance workers at Bertioga, such as electricians or painters, can earn double what they would be paid in similar jobs in the town of Bertioga. In higher ranking positions, this gap is not so big, especially in the early stages of a career. However, as a worker progresses to a higher position within the organization, they receive perks that are attractive enough not to want to seek a job elsewhere. Despite the high volume of work, **timetables** are adhered to, and no overtime is required. In some areas, like maintenance services, timetables are arranged so that the staff can take two days off one week and three days off the next.

In general, its wages are above average for Brazil, especially in the lowest ranking positions.

Certain steps have also been taken to substantially improve working conditions and the background context. For example, all the staff at SESC Bertioga has regular meetings with management at the resort.

These meetings are held with different groups of staff so as to avoid the disruption of the resort's public services. At the meetings, the managers or departmental heads explain anything new that might affect or influence the running of the resort and the staff also has the opportunity to discuss any issues that have arisen. This means that the workers are kept up to date and understand what is happening and they can discuss these things and suggest improvements, as well as having more information at their disposal to give guests in certain situations. These information exchanges and discussions are highly valued by both the workers and the departmental heads and it is conducive to a better working climate. For example, as a result of these meetings, the number of staff rest areas throughout the resort was extended from two to five. Likewise, each week, the two managers meet up with all the coordinators to address any general issues affecting the unit. If they just affect one work area, the managers meet with the coordinator of that area alone. The coordinators of the different sections hold a weekly meeting with their entire team. This dialogue intensifies when alterations are made to guest or work areas, as explained by **Leticia Guidugli Dos Santos**, the food coordinator, who told me that during the construction of the new restaurant and kitchen area, the workers were consulted so that they could contribute with suggestions "like the layout and organization of the spaces so as to cut down on movement to and fro, and the introduction of trolleys to improve the working conditions".

It is also important to emphasize that all the staff at SESC Bertioga has breakfast and lunch in the same restaurant and at the same time as the guests, and they eat exactly the same food. This is a policy very different from beach resorts found anywhere else, especially in very touristy areas, like northeast Brazil or the Caribbean. For Flávia Costa, this is such an obvious idea that she was taken aback when it was highlighted: "The workers have access to the same products as the guests. This is a matter of dignity and respect." Twice a year, a **Wellness Week** is held for all the staff, an initiative that is only held at Bertioga and not at other units, with relaxing activities and creative or recreational

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ones. Some workshops and activities are organized by the staff themselves, although on other occasions, they are outsourced to a company. A committee made up of staff from the different departments is responsible for suggesting a programme for its approval by management.

The dependents of anyone working at SESC Bertioga, including its outsourced staff, have free access to the facilities and activities. Access is only restricted at certain times of the year, when the demand is very high, such as New Year.

These working and employment conditions mean that there is a low turnover of staff. When it does occur, it is mainly due to promotion within the same organization. Thus, long professional careers at the unit are common. It also means that, in critical areas like maintenance, there is no expectation of sabotage by unsatisfied workers, as occurs in many other places. In the words of **Lucas Eduardo Costa Salinas**, maintenance and infrastructure coordinator, “there hasn’t been a single case in the more than six years that I’ve been working at the unit.” This was noted by the departmental staff when they visited several 5-star resorts to compare and improve certain technical procedures. According to the departmental head, what really made an impact on them was the difference in the treatment:



Source: SESC’s Bertioga archives.

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What was most surprising and disappointing to them was the fact that the higher up a person was in the company hierarchy, the bigger the distance with the workers, with different dining areas and different food, while at SESC they eat the same food alongside the guests. They also noticed that the work schedule was quite long and arduous, and people worked crammed together in unsuitable places. They realized that the difference was not so much a professional one, but in how valued they were made to feel. They also talked to workers who were concerned that if there were low occupancy rates, they might lose their jobs. It was far more obvious that the main goal was profit-making. That was what they noticed.

(Lucas Eduardo Costa Salinas, personal statement).

The chambermaid's experience

Let us look in more detail at the **chambermaids** in charge of cleaning the guest accommodation, traditionally one of the most unstable jobs in the hotel sector (Cañada, 2019b). SESC Bertioga has 35 male and female chambermaids, 1 supervisor, and 5 housekeeping managers, in addition to a head of department. Their **wage** in 2018 was R\$1,989 a month (approximately €515), “well above the amount established by law,” according to **Simone Barbosa**, coordinator of services and housekeeping, when the minimum wage in the country was R\$937 (approximately €243). They work 40 to 44 hours a week and the shifts are organized in such a way that by working 40 minutes more each day, to a total of 8 hours, they have six days off a month instead of four. Their workload consists of cleaning five apartments a day when guests check out or eight if the guests are still staying at the resort. They spend approximately 40 minutes on each one.

Among the aspects that were highlighted by the workers, it is noticeable that they do not consider their workload to be particularly hard and it is fairly regular.

Among the aspects that were highlighted by the workers, it is noticeable that they do not consider their workload to be particularly hard and it is fairly regular, with no peaks when they are under pressure. This is due to a management policy that seeks to make cleaning and maintenance work easier, without overloading the staff, despite the high average occupancy rates. Usually, when guests check out, the accommodation is not reoccupied until the next day.

This allows the chambermaids and maintenance staff to work without feeling rushed. For example, if a guest leaves the accommodation at 2 p.m., cleaning and maintenance work can be done until 8 p.m. Thus, when guests check out, the staff does not need to hurry to get the apartment ready for the next person, which makes it easier for workloads to be more regularly distributed. This policy also facilitates maintenance work, which is particularly necessary due to the high humidity of the seafront location. In addition to the salt in the air, Bertioga also has one of the highest rainfalls in Brazil. “The annual average is around 6,700 mm,” said **Henrique Barcelos**. Hence, the high humidity makes cleaning and maintenance work especially complex.

Without this system of not reoccupying a room the same day that it becomes vacant, the rooms would need to be closed to guests from time to time for maintenance. Also,

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at specific points, there would have to be more chambermaids or their workload would increase. Another policy that helps to reduce the workload is the fact that occupied rooms are only cleaned every two days. With this organizational system, it is not normal to have to do overtime and, when it is necessary, at most, it is just for an hour and a half, and the time is then deducted from another day's work hours.

During the last refurbishment work that was done at SESC Bertioga, the chambermaids were asked what changes might improve their work. At their suggestion, all the furniture in the apartments, like the beds, wardrobes and refrigerators, were fitted with wheels to make them easier to move. The amount of furniture and objects in the rooms has been kept to a minimum and the design is simple, which also reduces the amount of cleaning. In each pavilion, there is a storeroom for all the cleaning materials, bed linen and towels to serve the apartments there, thus avoiding trips with heavy loads. Also, dirty laundry is left at the door of each apartment for collection by a motorized trolley, thus saving the workers from having to push heavy trolleys, as is typical at most beach hotels. "Everything was gradually changed to make their work more practical," explained Simone Barbosa. One of the chambermaids who has been at the unit the longest, Maria Aparecida Germano, explained that when they were consulted, they made the following suggestions:

We asked to change the equipment and to have a place to store things, because before we had to go to and fro carrying everything, and to have wheels fitted on the beds and wardrobes, so we can move them easily to clean.

(Maria Aparecida Germano, personal statement).

As with other employment categories, the chambermaids can change to another job with support from the organization. Job promotion policies have been boosted through internal and external training programmes and financial support, allowing staff to apply for job vacancies at SESC São Paulo. In the case of the chambermaids, there have been numerous promotions to the fields of customer care and guest information. This is because it was realized that one of their functions as chambermaids was to provide guidance and customer care to guests.

All these factors contribute to a lack of health concerns among this group of workers, in contrast with what is widely described in literature on the subject (Cañada, 2019b). This might be explained by a workload that is not particularly heavy, sufficient support mechanisms, and opportunities for information exchanges and participation, combined with an extensive, broad-ranging reward system. The main key factors in psychosocial occupational hazard models are the "effort-reward" model –which analyses the imbalance between the performed work and the obtained rewards, such as wages, possibilities of promotion, job security and recognition (Siegrist, 1996)– and the "demand-control-support" model, which focuses on interaction among professional demands (the workload, difficulty, pace and demands), the ability to control this or to be able to make decisions, and support in terms of the socio-emotional and instrumental backup that is available in a person's job (Karasek and Theorell, 1990). In the case of SESC Bertioga, although the chambermaids' work is physically demanding, they do not seem to identify themselves as having problems relating to either of the above factors.

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One sign of how well this department works is the fact that neither the departmental head nor the management staff has identified any significant problem in absenteeism or its staff turnover at any time. Indeed, most of the workers who leave the department move to another one within the same unit.

In November 2019, **Eulalia Corralero** –a Spanish chambermaid and the founder of the “Las Kellys” movement through a Facebook group of the same name, which later led to the organization of multiple associations– was invited by SESC São Paulo to participate in a [seminar on gender and work in tourism](#). At the end of the event, she spent few days at SESC Bertioga to learn about it. In her appraisal of the visit, she highlighted the working conditions of the chambermaids:

In my opinion, everything at Bertioga was great. What struck my attention the most was the fact that the rooms were only made available the next day, and so the chambermaids could clean them without rushing, with no stress, and anything that was broken could be repaired. I was also impressed by the way the work was distributed, by how the housekeeper took into account the chambermaids’ opinions of how the work could be organized, by the fact that a workout chart with exercises was made to avoid physical problems, and by the dental service for the staff. Everything was great. Another thing that impressed me a lot was how simple and practical the



Source: SESC’s Bertioga archives.

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furniture was, with wheels. And they were all part of SESC Bertioga and they all ate together. There was a strong bond among all the workers.

It's a pity that this approach to tourism and the way it's organized is not taken as an example. One thing I always say in interviews is that here (in Spain), everything is wonderful and pretty-looking for the guests, but the staff facilities are pathetic and very cramped. We barely have a toilet for the chambermaids and only in places where some kind of space has been set aside for us. It's a continual "just get on with it". So it was a huge contrast when I went to Bertioga and saw all that. Here, in most hotels I've worked in, there wasn't even a goods lift and we had to walk up and down the stairs with bundles of dirty laundry. I don't know if I've had very bad luck, but they were hotels where guests paid good money, and everything was made to look fantastic for them, so finding a place like Bertioga was simply surreal.

(Eulalia Corralero, personal statement).

Outsourced work

Despite the obvious headway in working conditions at SESC Bertioga, there are aspects that need to be improved on. The main one is that **some of the staff are outsourced**, and so they do not benefit from the same working conditions as the rest. This is the case of the 49 people in charge of cleaning the communal areas and the 22 gardeners. A number of other jobs has also been outsourced because they are technically related. They consist of the security staff, made up of 36 workers, and specialist maintenance services, such as air conditioning work, supervision of the quality of the water and swimming pools, and the inspection of electrical enclosures, in addition to the off-site laundry service. There are different reasons for outsourcing these tasks. In the case of the cleaning of the resort's communal areas and gardening activities, it was to reduce labour costs. The aforementioned cleaning staff earns slightly above the minimum wage, about R\$1,000, with an extra supplement that brings it to a total of almost R\$1,400 a month, since it is considered to be hazardous work as these are areas with high mobility. In the case of the maintenance tasks, they were outsourced due to their technicality or because they do not require daily attention. In the improvement of the resort's labour conditions, it is important to address the case of the cleaners of its communal areas and the gardeners in a national framework in which this type of flexibilization and reduction in labour costs is a very common, well-established situation.

There has been a big surge in outsourced labour in Brazil; something that has been legally permitted in companies' secondary activities since 1974, and, in particular, as part of a big process of restructuring production practices from the late 1990s to the early years of the 21st century. Subsequently, with the 2017 labour reforms, this process was accentuated and it became even more widespread. SESC São Paulo has not applied this labour policy in a widespread way and nor has it taken advantage of the intermittent worker category created under the 2017 labour reforms. Outsourcing some workers in very specific areas, in particular for the cleaning of communal areas and gardening activities, was part of a general strategy by SESC São Paulo to slow

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down the sharp increase in its own staff, who rose in just a short time from 3,000 to 7,500 people. According to Henrique Barcelos Ferreira, the deputy manager of SESC Bertioga, this growth in its workforce was due to the increase in accommodation and the internalization of some tasks, such as customer care or part of the catering. Agreements have also been reached for the provision of external services, like the ambulance or the maintenance of its cold storage chambers.

Despite this policy of outsourcing these two activities, SESC São Paulo and its Bertioga unit have tried to improve these workers' labour conditions as much as possible. The deputy manager of SESC Bertioga pointed out that its outsourced staff receives the same treatment and benefits as its own workforce, such as the use of changing rooms, food in the restaurant and participation in wellness weeks.

Although they are outsourced workers, we've tried to apply the same conditions in terms of our food policy and access to the facilities and activities for them and their families.

(Henrique Barcelos Ferreira, deputy manager of SESC Bertioga, personal statement).

When they first start working at Bertioga, they are introduced to the rest of the staff and integrated. In the case of the cleaning work, a decision was taken, which would later be emulated by other units attached to SESC São Paulo, to mechanize some of the tasks. Following a study of their working conditions, a proposal was drafted to mechanize part of the work in order to significantly reduce their workload and it was set in motion with the purchase of new cleaning equipment. This led to a drop in health problems and the permanence of female workers in these jobs increased.

SESC Bertioga monitors the subcontracted company on an ongoing basis to make sure that it strictly complies with the terms of the contract, as explained by the person in

charge, Simone Barbosa, in order to avoid any situation of abuse or non-compliance with its contractual relations with its workers.

Because SENAC gives professional training courses in SESC Bertioga's facilities, many outsourced cleaners have been able to take them.

These outsourced cleaners normally do not have a sufficient level of education to apply for better jobs. Because SENAC gives professional training courses in SESC Bertioga's facilities, many outsourced cleaners have been able to take them. Following the said training, different workers have successfully applied for an in-house job.

5.4. A RESORT IN THE COMMUNITY

One common phenomenon widely described in academic literature is the fact that the existence of a tourist resort in a particular community does not necessarily lead to the local community's improved well-being or development. Generally speaking, the opposite happens, with dynamics that foster exclusion and marginalization (Blázquez et al., 2011).

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Initially, SESC Bertioga mainly sought to improve the health of workers and their families from the trade, tourism and services sectors. It gradually broadened its vision, nonetheless, in keeping with the evolution of social tourism. One of these new concerns was the type of relationship that it would build with the local community.

With this shift in its general perspective, SESC Bertioga discovered that the resort had grown without any contribution to the local community, and that it was becoming increasingly similar to a traditional beach resort. **Thaís Novaes de Senne**, the coordinator of SESC Bertioga's programme of activities, described the organization's concern during this process, as new reflections on what tourism development should mean were incorporated:

There was no sense in having a resort like SESC Bertioga if it overlooked how miserable the town was and its inhabitants' lack of access to suitable sports or cultural amenities. That led to a shift toward the mixed model we now have: a holiday resort and a SESC unit. This relationship is wonderful; it's very rewarding. (Thaís Novaes de Senne, personal statement).

Marcos Roberto Laurenti was one of the people responsible for this transformation and, for him, it was clear that they did not want to be like any other tourist ghetto: "We cannot become an island, with high walls that protect those who stay here." This led to the notion that the unit should develop in harmony with what was going on outside it so as to avoid an environment that might foster exclusion. The process was a progressive one, achieved in different ways, bearing in mind the need to avoid demands that could not be met, as explained by the deputy manager, **Henrique Barcelos Ferreira**:

There were several reasons. First, the concept of SESC São Paulo and its work gradually changed, giving rise to a change in its relationship with the community. In turn, there was a process of reflection at SESC Bertioga. Initially, to avoid broken contact between SESC Bertioga and the local community, activities began to be run outside the resort, but then we realized there were many spaces inside it that were unused. So we wondered why not let people from the community use the soccer field, for instance, without it being a problem for guests.

(Henrique Barcelos Ferreira, personal statement).

According to Flávia Costa, this process was part of broader debate within SESC São Paulo and she explains these reflections on how to improve the resort's integration into the local community:

Bertioga started out as an accommodation centre and it continued that way through to the early 21st century. About fifteen years ago, we made a change. Until then, the unit offered things for people from the local community, but not educational activities. It offered jobs and opportunities for service suppliers, but we gradually realized that it was not enough. That was when we thought about ways of opening up the unit to the community. Other accommodation centres in other regions were going through the same situation. How could something that was inclusive for tourists also be inclusive

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for the local community? Some solutions were more obvious, like opening up facilities like the swimming pool or the soccer field to the community. However, at the same time, we had to continue offering activities to tourists. Our concern was how to make activities with an educational component open to both the guests and the community. So we brought other programmes run by SESC to Bertioga, such as its dental, nutritional and artistic services, and sports for children (*curumin*): all the programmes that might be important for the community. And we opened up the resort for local people to spend the day there as tourists. They have access to everything –the activities, the facilities and the food. They just can't stay overnight. The idea was for the resort to become an activity centre too, like any other SESC unit. This didn't entail opening the doors to all and sundry, but it meant keeping the resort running while also offering the programmes available at any other unit to the community and to achieve both uses.

(Flávia Roberta Cortez Lombardo Costa, personal statement).

What is more, the municipality's sharp demographic growth had to be taken into account, which boosted its needs. In recent years, the town of Bertioga's population has grown substantially, especially in residential areas and in the part where its condominiums can be found. This has created a high demand for different services for the inhabitants of these residential areas. Most sources of employment in the town are in the civil



Source: SESC's Bertioga archives.

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construction sector, in domestic work and in services linked to tourism. In fact, one big problem was the lack of adequate facilities and spaces to meet the needs of the population, with 70% of the working population earning a wage equivalent to less than 3 minimum wages, according to **Carlos Eduardo de Castro**, a historian and local activist. Also, SESC Bertioga's workers had to be taken into account within this demand by the local population, since almost all of them live in the town.

Consequently, in agreement with SESC São Paulo, a policy was designed to open up the resort and to integrate it into the town of Bertioga in a structured way. Initially, occasional activities were organized by SESC at the unit. Gradually these activities became more regular and many people from the community began to attend them. For Marcos Roberto Laurenti, this represented a paradigm shift in the concept of a resort like Bertioga, which maintained its tourism function while also becoming another tool in the community's social and cultural development. This line of action was very different from typical corporate social responsibility policies:

The relationship with the community not only involves a policy of responsible marketing, through sponsorship of various things, but also of community development, joint ideas, joint creation, and social change.

(Marcos Roberto Laurenti, personal statement).

There are no restricted areas for people who come to SESC Bertioga to take part in an activity.

This means that there are no restricted areas for people who come to SESC Bertioga to take part in an activity. They can move about freely, with no sense of anything being hidden from them. Guests at the resort, day-visitors and anyone taking part in any activity can all interact in harmony. There are activities just for guests, activities that are mainly for people from the community, and others held inside and outside the unit for guests and people from the community. Likewise, SESC's workers can also take part in the different programmes of activities, just like any other person living in Bertioga who has accredited links with the trade, tourism or services sectors, and the same registration procedures are followed.

This policy of inclusion for the local population of Bertioga is currently put into practice through **the different programmes run by SESC São Paulo**, as occurs in other units. These programmes were gradually brought to Bertioga, "bearing in mind that there are almost a thousand people staying at the resort, and they mustn't feel that they're being invaded," explained Thaisa Novaes. **The programmes are divided into three types: physical activities and sports, socio-educational activities and artistic ones:**

a) Physical activities and sport

For these activities, there are several instructors trained in physical education, whose main goal is to encourage people to do sport, not for professional reasons, but rather to contribute to their health and well-being. For example, different **sports activities are organized simultaneously on the beach**, with three people from the team in charge.

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Anyone can join in –both guests and local people– and no prior registration is required. In addition, other activities are scheduled throughout the day in different parts of SESC Bertioga for which prior registration is needed.

Another programme called “**Sports and Children**” is also run, attended by some 200 boys and girls from 6 to 10 years old, in which they learn to do multiple sports activities to help them choose which sport they prefer to do. Activities are scheduled for both guests and the local community.

b) Socio-educational activities

Most of these activities are designed for people from the town of Bertioga, although there are activities that guests can also participate in. They have a broad-ranging purpose and they encompass several programmes. One that stands out is the **environmental education programme**, which has grown in recent years, linked to the nature reserve managed by SESC Bertioga. This will be explained in more detail later. One of the main functions of this programme is to promote environmental education projects in the town. Thus, **community vegetable allotments** have been promoted because it was found that most of the food eaten at Bertioga was all from outside the municipality. The purpose was to promote the growth and consumption of local food,



Source: SESC's Bertioga archives.

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and to promote a local style of cuisine. Thus, native plants that grow wild, which the population had stopped using, were reintroduced to the local diet. Also, an organic farmer's market has been promoted in the region. The idea is one day to be able to use this local produce in the resort's cuisine, as explained by **Thaïsa Novaes de Senne**, coordinator of SESC Bertioiga's programme of activities.

Our dream is that in the future, this produce can be eaten in our restaurant because so far, the region's organic farmers haven't managed to comply with all the required purchasing regulations that SESC, as the supervising body, is expected to meet. But the idea is to be able to start with salad vegetables and then to extend the produce. The same also applies to fish, as all our fish is from elsewhere. Unfortunately, the way the fishermen here store their fish does not comply with all the requirements that SESC must meet.

(Thaïsa Novaes de Senne, personal statement).

Similarly, they try to train farmers and fishermen so that they can comply with the required regulations to be suppliers of SESC Bertioiga. **Leticia Guidugli Dos Santos**, food coordinator at SESC Bertioiga, explains some of the limitations that hinder local purchases:

The food is mostly bought in São Paulo. Orders for purchases are centralized and based on the forecasted number of guests for the next two or three weeks and the planned menu. This is for two reasons. Firstly, due to SESC's control system, we must comply with certain requirements in order to guarantee transparency throughout the process and this is why large-scale corporate purchases have to be made. Secondly, due to the huge volume of purchases we have to make, local producers currently don't have enough potential to supply us and they don't comply with all the legal requirements that SESC must meet.

(Leticia Guidugli Dos Santos, personal statement).

Curumim is another of SESC São Paulo's best known programmes that was put into practice at Bertioiga. Aimed at boys and girls from 7 to 12 years old, the objective of the programme is for them to learn through games. About 160 children are registered on it. They live in Bertioiga and their parents have to be linked to the trade, tourism and services sectors and have a low income. This is a very popular programme, and even with the above application criteria, vacancies are quickly filled. Twice a week, these boys and girls and the teachers in charge of them spend the day at the resort, participating in recreational activities, arts and crafts, and sports, all from the perspective of education in values, in line with SESC's principles.

The **elderly** is another group that is given priority at SESC Bertioiga. There is a programme in operation that gives them free access to the unit, as the town does not have suitable facilities for them to socialize or interact. Every six months, about 700 elderly people sign up. They have free access to do what they want: to have a coffee with friends, to chat or read, and to attend shows or participate in activities. Only the restaurant and the pool are out of bounds, since they are the places with the highest demand.

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Adults can register to do workshops, courses or programmes of activities on a regular basis. Among these activities, the sports and artistic activities, in their broadest of expressions, stand out particularly, given their very limited availability in the town. A wide range of outings on foot or by bike are offered to guests to get to know the resort's surroundings, and people from the town of Bertioiga can also sign up. Some of these outings are coordinated by specialists in environmental education or historians.

c) Artistic activities

Every night, shows of different artistic disciplines are programmed. In addition, activities in the fields of cinema, literature, theatre, music, circus, dance, crafts and the visual arts are organized where the participants can learn by actively doing or making something. The objective is for them to try out a certain technique. These activities are aimed at both guests and people from the town, sometimes jointly and sometimes separately. They can be short, for instance 3-hour sessions, or they can last for weeks. The guests participate in the short sessions and the local community can attend longer programmes. Courses are also offered in coordination with the municipality of Bertioiga, such as courses in music or culture, or travelling shows and exhibitions (ones also held in different cities).

As is also the case at SESC São Paulo's other units, two types of initiatives are carried out in the field of artistic creation. One is aimed at helping people to develop artistically, with courses and workshops on different techniques and forms of artistic expression. The other involves the promotion of certain social groups by identifying financially marginalized groups. Bertioiga collaborates with them by providing advice and training and by facilitating the necessary conditions for them to do artistic activities.

One initiative with a combined socio-educational and artistic focus that stands out among the organization's different programmes is a **training programme for craft workers**. SESC Bertioiga assisted a group of craft workers from the town for six months within the framework of its "Craftwork Creation Lab" through courses to boost their skills. Prior to this, their work was basically a copy or an imitation of what they could see on the Internet, with low artistic and technical value. "They made products lacking in identity that had nothing to do with the local setting," said Thaisa Novaes. Through courses in design and creativity, attended by 22 people, each of them began to develop their own signature products. They were also encouraged to create items identified with the municipality's coastal backdrop, using local fauna and flora as potential sources of inspiration. This training process was organized so that each semester, new courses could be announced. **Angela Camino**, one of the participants, described what she learned during this training process:

I wanted to learn how to create things. The theme of the course was creativity. I wanted to learn something that would be representative of Bertioiga. I liked that idea because it was exactly what I wanted to learn, how to create something of my own, and that was what caught my attention. And what I learned was to do more research,

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to pay more attention to things. For example, the route I take is full of flowers and birds, so I tried to discover what birds they were and what their names were. We learned to think about what Bertioga is like, to investigate more. Now I walk round Bertioga and I observe everything around me much more carefully, and it gives me ideas for embroidery and lots more. I've learned how to look at my surroundings more closely.

(Angela Camino, personal statement).

When the first group finished their training, a fair was organized at SESC Bertioga called “The Craft Bazaar.” Every week, 25 craft workers –15 from the first group and 10 who apply to take part– exhibit and sell their craftwork at the fair, free of charge.

In Guilherme Leite Cunha’s opinion, the fair has been a success: “They sell a lot –craftwork worth an average of R\$100 to R\$200 a day (between about €22 and €44). In other words, during the four days a month spent at the fair, they earn practically half the minimum wage.” They also have somewhere to shelter when it rains and they can continue to exhibit their goods.

For the guests, the fair is an opportunity to see, learn and talk to the craft workers, and so it has an educational component. This also enriches the quality of the cultural services on offer to guests.



Source: SESC’s Bertioga archives.

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The resort's links with its beachfront clearly demonstrate its inclusive vision of tourism and a concern for the personal development and well-being of its guests and the local population.

One outcome of this strategy is the townsfolk of Bertioiga's high participation in activities run by SESC in the municipality. Bertioiga has approximately 60,000 inhabitants, 11,380 of whom registered in 2018 to take part in different activities and programmes run by SESC Bertioiga. It should be noted that, as with other units, to be a fully accredited user, the person who registers must have links with the trade, tourism or services sectors, or be a dependent of someone working in these fields. A total of 360,000 visits to SESC Bertioiga were made by people from the local community to take part in its programmes and activities, including repeat visits by the same person. Altogether, approximately 700 local people from Bertioiga attend regular programmes, mostly about twice a week.

The resort's links with its **beachfront** clearly demonstrate its inclusive vision of tourism and a concern for the personal development and well-being of its guests and the local population. For instance, the resort has a stretch of beach with fixed sunshades, which guests and anyone else can use. It also offers a regular series of activities that are open to everyone free of charge. Yoga, gymnastics and dance classes are offered at the stands on the beach from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. There is also a shady reading area with newspapers and magazines, as well as children's games and the loan of sports equipment if the user deposits their identity document with staff until they have finished with the equipment.

Occasionally this policy has led to some unease among guests preferring to have sole rights. Nonetheless, educational advantage is taken of the situation, as **Henrique Barcelos Ferreira**, the unit's deputy manager explained, to help guests understand that the beach is public and that conditions must be facilitated for everyone to use it. Most guests, however, have no problem with the policy. Guilherme Leite Cunha thinks that this interaction between guests and the townspeople is possible because most of Bertioiga's guests have no prior experience of exclusive types of service. For most of them, staying at an all-inclusive resort with such a high standard of service is "wonderful", and so they do not care whether other people are entitled to the same access under different conditions.

In fact, there can be just the opposite type of problem in the use of these spaces, with staff having to intervene on behalf of guests. For example, some people from Bertioiga play volleyball practically every day in the area made available by SESC, and the staff has to make sure that guests can also play and are not excluded, because they are not used to having so many things at their disposal.

On these beaches, it is customary to see little stalls set up by street vendors. SESC has no specific responsibility to help them, but it sometimes provides them with electricity connections or training courses in hygiene and food handling.

The beaches are also used as a tourism resource for guests at SESC Bertioiga. For instance, activities are organized like meet-ups between tourists and local fishermen, so that the latter can explain their way of life and their work to guests. Since they fish

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right in front of SESC, the tourists can watch them at work, fishing, collecting their nets and so on.

In addition to these forms of participation, SESC Bertioga has also demonstrated a firm **commitment to local events in the municipality** and to its future through three initiatives. Firstly, when discussions are needed on some kind of controversial issue in the town, related to things like healthcare, urban mobility or sanitation, SESC finds expert speakers and arranges seminars and debates. For instance, a programme has been organized called “**The town and us**”. During the discussion of the master plan for the municipality, SESC Bertioga brought different urban planners to the town to present their ideas and it invited the population to get to know and discuss the ideas. On another occasion, a series of fortnightly meetings were organized for two months to discuss what kind of tourism model people wanted for the town. In total, there were seven sessions attended by public authority managers, neighbourhood leaders and different experts. An average of 70 people participated in each of the meetings, according to deputy manager Henrique Barcelos Ferreira. SESC Bertioga also arranged a seminar on tourism to support the town council. For **Carlos Eduardo de Castro**, a historian and guide who is actively involved in life in the municipality, SESC plays a very important role in providing expert knowledge and in generating opportunities for public discussion. The resort also acts as a **convention centre for the community**, and any activity organized in the town that might be of interest to its population is hosted by SESC Bertioga and held free of charge at its facilities. Finally, SESC Bertioga is also involved in **committees created by the municipal authorities**, such as the Municipal Tourism Board, the Senior Citizens Committee and the Environmental Council.

Environmental concerns

Among the changes that have been made in recent years to improve SESC Bertioga's integration into the local community, a progressive concern for the environment has become evident, both inside the resort and through a bid to improve the nature reserve on its property, together with a strong interest in anything relating to the environment within the municipality.

When SESC Bertioga started operating in 1948, its **urban and scenic setting** was designed by **Francisco Prestes Maia**, a civil engineer, architect and two-term mayor of São Paulo. From a scenic perspective, it reproduced the ideas and style typical of the time, like other tourism facilities on the Brazilian coast, based on a certain idealized vision of tourism landscapes. Thus, the mangrove swamp and vegetation were removed and, instead, grass and coconut palms were planted, which are not native to the area. This model not only had a big environmental impact, but it also led to big drawbacks, like the need for the grass to be mown, since it grows very quickly in the local climate.

In the early 1990s, changes began to be made to the resort's ecosystem. In 1992, the “Bird/Fauna” project was set in motion, aimed at encouraging higher numbers of native birds. 52 species had been identified in the area. In order to attract them, fruit trees

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were planted, and various “islands” of native vegetation were created to provide them with food and places to nest. Bird feeders and bird baths were also installed to create a more bird-friendly setting. Thanks to this initiative, 190 different species of birds can now be seen at SESC Bertioga. More recently, a project was launched to bring back all the native vegetation, with the start of a 20-year intervention plan in 2019 to restore the original shrubs. The aim is to change the landscape completely. In order to do so, a plant nursery was created at the resort.

Re-used treated water is used in the toilets, for cleaning and for watering plants.

This concern for the environment also extends to how the unit functions and to building and refurbishment activities at SESC Bertioga. A **wastewater treatment** plant was set up close to the resort. Re-used treated water is used in the toilets, for cleaning and for watering plants. Marcos Roberto Laurenti, SESC Bertioga’s manager, told us that with all the modifications that are being made, 92% of all consumed water is expected to be re-used. Likewise, a **compost site** is being made, where the organic waste from the restaurant and mowed grass (60 tons a month) will be taken while the resort is being re-landscaped. This concern for the environment is also evident in how the unit functions and in different construction projects and alterations to SESC Bertioga. Furthermore, special architectural techniques and systems have been used in the construction of **new**



Source: SESC’s Bertioga archives.

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apartments to help reduce energy consumption, using natural lighting, cross ventilation, and solar energy panels. Likewise, the wood from the chalets that were demolished to make way for the new apartments has been re-used to make furniture designed at the resort. Companies are also hired to recycle all kinds of discarded equipment and objects, and a used battery collection system has been set up.

SESC Bertioga's nature reserve covers an area of 60 hectares adjacent to the resort. It is currently in the process of being declared a Private Natural Heritage Reserve (a RPPN, in accordance with its Brazilian acronym), a designation that must be granted to SESC São Paulo by the Brazilian Government. Even though it has not yet received this designation, SESC follows all the guidelines that have been established for this type of nature reserve. Bertioga's nature reserve is a rare example, since it is located in an urban area. This leads to special challenges, in particular how the community should interact with the reserve and, indeed, it is actively involved in its conservation. The nature reserve has three objectives: preservation, visits, and research. In 2018, it was visited by about 4,000 people, including guests, school groups and the general public.

The project aims to transform the nature reserve into a big space for education, research, and environmental conservation, with a design accessible to everyone.

In recent years, a big project has been underway to transform the nature reserve. This involves reforms and the integration of all SESC Bertioga's different environmental activities, including wastewater treatment, the compost site, the plant nursery, the

nature reserve, the landscaping project, the bird and fauna project, and environmental education activities. The project aims to transform the nature reserve into a big space for education, research, and environmental conservation, with a design accessible to everyone. It will act as attraction in itself, separate from the resort.

6.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The increasing worldwide touristification of our societies has led to repeated examples of dispossession, exploitation, and destruction, characterized by physical, symbolic, and structural violence (Devine and Ojeda, 2017). At the same time, tourism services have become increasingly segmented, aimed at meeting specific demands in the form of niche tourism. This segmentation in itself, which contrasts with standard mass tourism products, does not mean greater sustainability, equality and inclusion. More to the point, it reflects a form of tourism production and consumption typical of current models of post-Fordist capitalism. Thus, niche tourism can have multiple consequences. These segmentation-related dynamics can also be seen in social tourism, with programmes that are increasingly more tailored to meet the needs of different groups. This trend seems to respond to market needs and possible private business opportunities more than greater efficiency in meeting the demands of certain sectors of society.

In this context, it is far from easy to find alternative ways of organizing tourism production and consumption. However, the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic –which brought tourism to a halt, particularly international tourism, calling into question the global tourism model– has made it even more crucial to rethink and transform tourism. These alternatives –if indeed they should be seen as such–, which we identify as post-capitalist proposals (Murray, 2020), must be based on emancipatory principles, with the moral goal of doing away with any form of oppression or domination (Goulet, 1995; Wright, 2010).

SESC Bertioiga is an example of the finest traditions of social tourism in Latin America, demonstrating the potential of initiatives targeted at low and middle-income working class groups living within a short distance of the holiday resort, thus reducing the environmental and energy-related footprint. In the current emergency situation in which crises of different interrelated kinds overlap, proximity tourism, based on domestic markets and nearby areas, takes on a new strategic importance. Social tourism and, in particular, initiatives like SESC Bertioiga clearly signal the need to continue along this kind of pathway. The resort's tourism services are aimed at improving users' well-being in a broad sense, with an added educational component by encouraging critical thinking and personal development. This goes hand in hand with decent working conditions and the resort's integration into the local community and inclusion of the local population. In contrast with the logic of segmentation that social tourism has followed elsewhere, SESC Bertioiga is designed to meet the needs of a broad variety of people. The three aspects of SESC Bertioiga described in this report –the resort's target public, working conditions, and its integration into the local community– are key analytical tools in exploring tourism from an emancipatory perspective.

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SESC and other related bodies were created in the 1940s to meet a need by part of the business sector to influence and integrate growing urban working-class groups that were starting to organize themselves into trade unions. However, these origins should not condition debate on appraisals of a body that has functioned for over seven decades and is currently one of the main means of access to culture and leisure for an important part of the working classes. Several factors offer a more complex insight into the organization and its subtle nuances. Although SESC was first created for mitigatory reasons to offer an institutional response to working class demands, given the potential capacity of the working classes to organize themselves and to fight to uphold their interests, this does not mean that that it cannot be beneficial to workers and that, in time, these workers might actually come to uphold what it stands for (Correa, 2008). Bodies such as these have a long-standing history, particularly SESC. It would be naive to believe that SESC's influences and practices have remained unaltered over the last seventy years. In other words, instead of prejudging the organization, more rigorous analyses should be made from a longer historical standpoint.

In my opinion, SESC São Paulo and, in particular, SESC Bertioga, clearly illustrate the **potential for transforming tourism in an emancipatory sense through a humanistic approach present throughout the whole organization**. Obviously, as one might expect, there are limitations and shortcomings to SESC Bertioga. However, its



Source: SESC's Bertioga archives.

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management team and staff seek to identify, understand, and overcome these problems or, at least, to reduce their impact. Highlighted below are a few examples, related to the different areas described in this report.

First, **low-income sectors of the population with potential access to the resort have more difficulty in access than other groups with a higher purchasing power.** Although 87% of the guests have incomes equivalent 1 to 5 minimum wages, the percentage of guests drops as their purchasing power falls. People who earn from 1 to 2 minimum wages have to cover their basic needs and they have no money to spend on holidays. Even though the cost of stays at Bertioga are relatively low, the transport expenses must also be taken into account. SESC's management body has made changes, with the introduction, for instance, of shorter stays to bring down the cost and to facilitate access for those with lower incomes. However, the problem still persists.

Another issue relating to **unequal access to social tourism services** is the fact that these services are mainly conceived for workers formally employed in the trade, tourism and services sectors and their families. Hence, grey economy workers are ruled out. This is by no means a minor problem, given that, in 2020, [36.9% of the working population was employed in informal sector jobs in Brazil, with a figure of 28.6% for the state of São Paulo](#). This means that most working class families in more precarious conditions do not have access to services like those provided by SESC São Paulo. In this case, it is not a problem attributable to SESC, but the outcome of a lack of public policies able to guarantee universal access to this kind of service, with equal quality standards, by all low-income members of the public. It is the state's responsibility to achieve this. SESC São Paulo merely highlights the need for a public policy that provides far broader

In this case, it is not a problem attributable to SESC, but the outcome of a lack of public policies able to guarantee universal access to this kind of service, with equal quality standards, by all low-income members of the public.

coverage. Concerns about unequal access to social tourism are not just limited to this particular body. It is an issue that has acquired special relevance in Latin America, as Erica Schenkel highlighted in the case of Argentina (2018).

Secondly, **as with other units attached to SESC São Paulo, some tasks at SESC Bertioga have been outsourced.** This is of greater import in the case of gardening activities and the cleaning of communal areas, since this work was outsourced to reduce the labour costs and not because specialist technical staff was needed. This situation is attributable to a guideline by SESC aimed at halting the growth of its in-house staff, following a rare inverse exercise when workers were taken on directly. Despite this, SESC Bertioga's management tries to ensure that these workers receive the same treatment and benefits as the rest of the workforce. Steps have also been taken, like the mechanization of certain cleaning tasks, to reduce the workload and to limit health problems and staff turnovers. SESC Bertioga has also offered these workers professional training through the resort's SENAC department. However, despite SESC Bertioga's bid to reduce the impact of its outsourced services, this type of worker should not be hired in the case of tasks that are central to the resort, since this is not consistent with the notion of decent labour.

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Third, because the units' workforces are **not organized into an independent trade union**, this could leave them without the capacity to react if there were changes in the management of SESC São Paulo, with ensuing repercussions on its labour policies. SESC's workforce depends too much on a willingness to apply certain guidelines, but this could change. Hence, this possibility should be taken into account in order to guarantee the stability of a model of social tourism that shows a concern for the quality of its workers' employment conditions.

Finally, due to administrative supervision by the Brazilian government, **SESC Bertioiga cannot promote a policy of food purchases from local producers**, since they have difficulty in complying with the stipulated requirements. Thus, an opportunity to help revitalize the local economy has been lost. However, initiatives aimed at improving the procedures followed by local producers have been taken in order to facilitate their future incorporation as suppliers.

Despite these limitations, **SESC São Paulo and SESC Bertioiga both show that tourism can be transformed to offer a response to broad majorities of the population**. If services of this kind are an established fact at Bertioiga, it is feasible to believe that changes in tourism are also possible. Bertioiga shines out as an example of how to transform tourism in an emancipatory way.

Source: SESC's Bertioiga archives.





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