

Placing Slums in the Globalized Tourist City: a performativity and Actor-Network approach

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyze the role of tourist practices and performances and their capacity, real and potential, to re-signify and transform the physical, social and cultural landscape of slummed communities at urban tourist destinations. Tourism in informal urban settlements is a phenomenon studied interdisciplinarily for about 20 years and covers fieldwork in destinations around the world. The transition of slums to tourist destination has been approached from its historical roots, tourist motivations, systems of representation, economic benefits and contested moralities. This paper seeks to address the literature on slum tourism and incorporate new insights from the Performative Turn and Actor-network Theory. This shift entails changing the focus from the representations of slums within a global audience towards the doings and behavior of human and non-human actors during slum tours and how the ordering of their relations and synergies -existing and potential- represent a possibility for new spatial-social-economic interpretations and representations of slums as urban agents.

Key Words: Slum tourism, Urban informality, Globalization, Performative turn, Actor-Network Theory

Introduction

Reflecting on Edward Said's (1978) conceptual analysis of Orientalism, Cohen and Cohen (2015) stay that the act of performing tourism is closely related with the tourist quest of *difference* from her/his everydayness: different natural landscapes to rest on or cultural scenarios to amuse with, different food to try out, gazes upon architecture icons and enjoyment of 'authentic' place atmospheres. Slums would not be traditionally considered as places to deliver such background for joy, diversion and relaxation; since they have historically embodied the "dark", the "low" and the "unknown" constructed by the hegemonic urban bourgeois as the place of the "Other". There is a contextual frame for this construction that allows the spatial-temporal mobility of this imaginary, as Steinbrink (2012) stays, every constructed otherness will exist as a mirror of current issues in society, targeting or forgiving certain social groups. In the case of some slums, they no longer represent only the place of the Other but the place of the "authentic" (Frisch, 2012).

The definition of “slum” carries with some structural difficulties because their characteristics, numbers and aesthetics are far from homogeneous. The UN Habitat (2003) defines them as a group of individuals living in an urban area who are lacking -one or more- of the following services: durable housing; sufficient living space; Access to safe and affordable water; Access to public or private sanitation; security of tenure. Slums are considered to be places of informality, dirt, insecurity, usually but not necessarily confined to the material poor and the cultural “Other”. For this analysis, poverty would be understood as a consequence of political and economic structural processes that define the material reach of individuals or sectors.

The shift from the Fordist model of organized capitalism and mass consumption-production to post-Fordism, placed the consumers individual needs and desires at the head of the production of goods and services and displaced industrial infrastructure from city centers to further districts. This transition has also been notable on the tourist sector. Poon (1993) defines ‘New Tourism’ to the flexible and customized travel patterns and tourist quest for ‘authentic’ experiences. The most evident aspects of the transition to a post-Fordist economy take place in cities, since they concentrate most of creative workforce that sustains such economic changes (Russo, 2012). Tourism -in its old, new and yet to come format- had and still have great deal of agency on the making and remaking of tourist cities, at a physical and symbolic scale.

Slum tourism (ST) defies traditional activities that tourists do while travelling. Despite the unclear boundaries in the ontology of ST, I will take Dürr’s (2012b:710) concept that defines it as a “type of mobility where tourists venture to an area beneath his/her own social category and beyond their socio-geographical space (Heap, 2009: 103)”. The hosts and guests asymmetry made ST controversial from its early beginnings, for contesting power relations and images of representation. However, as long as tours are complicit between visitors and locals, respectful of one and other, and mediated by local tour guides, the process of mutual recognition can be highly enriching for the actors involved (Williams, 2008).

Experiencing the Other is the most primitive reason for visiting slums and it can be traced back to the 19th century Victorian London (Steinbrink, 2012). With the advent of industrialization many cities went through a rapid demographic growth followed by a dramatic rise of urban poverty, and new actors -government and charities- were trying to manage the moral and physical crisis (Seaton, 2012). In London, by then the most powerful city in the world, the elites would often visit the East End either with a philanthropic agenda, impelled by social paranoia or mere curiosity to observe how people lived in the chaos of impoverished conditions (Steinbrink, 2012). Modern historians recognize that those encounters were key to have a better understanding and empathy among social clusters (OBrien, 2011). Organized slum tours started in the beginning of the 90’s in South African Townships with a strong socio-political focus showing livelihood in communities under the Apartheid regime (Rogerson 2004), and were short after followed by Brazilian *favelas* (Freire-Medeiros, 2009). Nowadays, a growing number of tourists looking for unconventional and exciting ways to experience cities have turned ST into a global phenomenon challenging stereotypes and power relations.

As Crouch (1999,2004) stays, tourism is a process rather than a product, shaped by what people *do*. In this process tourists emerge as both consumer and producer of spatial and social events through embodied practices -tourist encounter with material and semiotic space- and performances -tourist experience of places achieved after a set of actions-. This paper will critically address the literature to date on ST to contribute on

its theoretical debate importing concepts from the realm of performance studies and Actor-Network Theory (ANT). The aim is to analyze the role of -culture based- tourism practices and performances on the re conceptualization of slums as legitimate actors in the neo-liberal urban fabric. The focus is placed on the *material outcomes* of ST rather than the systems of representations (re)produced by it. The networks interwoven among hybrid (human and non-human) actors resulting of ST practices and performances are to be considered the material outcomes of tourism. I will overlap the theoretical framework on the case of Brazilian tourist favela Santa Marta to show how this analysis can give insights on the potential of networks to produce new social spaces, re-signify slums at a spatial, social, cultural and economic scale, and the agency that brings to slum dwellers to break with the isolation of the powered class/hegemonic city.

Tourist cities on the making

The latest report made by the Organization of United Nations (2016) states that 54,5% of the world's population lives in urban areas and it is expected to reach 68% by 2050. This tendency can be framed within the intermingled processes that entail Globalization, understood as the restructuring of global capitalism that begun roughly around the '70. The geographer David Harvey recognizes a set of geographical implications of Globalization, since it fostered the (re)production of spaces to enable its systematic growth and resistance, thus producing "new forms of uneven geographical development, a recalibration and even re-centering of global power (with far greater emphasis upon the Pacific and newly industrializing countries) and a shift in the geographical scale at which capitalism is organized" (Harvey, 2001:24).

Globalization was partly achieved through what Harvey (2006a, 2001) coined as the "Spatial fix". Taken from Marxist Theory, Capitalism has the constant need to place surplus to create new capital that would otherwise become stationary. Hence, the geographical expansion of capital becomes desirable and necessary to prevent the system from an over accumulation crisis of uninvested capital. To enable this expansion surplus was initially invested in innovations of transport and communications that then made possible to move on into physical building. Urban development proved to be an effective tool to fix capital through the build environment; therefore, the mobility of capital has the potential to reshape the geography of the place it is embedded and empower new economic sectors, mainly the construction and real estate industry.

The restructuring and reshaping of cities following capital flows encompasses a contradiction: foremost, investments are placed to produce space and connectivity infrastructure guided by the spatial trends of global capital; on the other hand, they are highly speculative since their profitability depends on the continuity of that flow of capital, commodity and people towards that space, otherwise it would be devalued and lost. The result of this dynamics is uneven spatial (urban) development in which the State would play a key role by allowing or denying the spatial allocation of capital relying on regulation, planning practices and ideology. The softened policies of neo-liberal States to rule on capitalist flows accelerated the polarization of cities and crescent inequality of wealth and power pushing 33% of global urban population to city's edges or to downtown encapsulated slums (Harvey, 2001).

Cities assumed a central role as places of consumption enabling the mobility of goods, people and information, and the spatial support for the production of a wide variety of economic, cultural and tourist activities. This development strategy has been used globally and made evident that the neo-liberal market forces are the ones now shaping the urban landscape (Harvey, 2012). However, as Harvey (2012:15) notes “how we view the world and define possibilities depends on which side of the tracks we are on and on what kinds of consumerism we have access to.” Hence, the wealthy elites not only are primal users and consumers of the city’s services and infrastructure but have legitimate authority to play an active role on the decision-making process that shapes the urban space, leaving the poor and marginalized to suffer the consequences of neglect. Spatial thinkers often rely on the romantic ideal of the latest to rise claiming the right to the city; nonetheless, this desire lacks of further guidance on a practical *modus operandi* for how to actually accomplish it (Garnier, 2012).

Tourism is a significant component to the political economy of many cities in the world. To thrive as tourist destinations, cities needed to go from good and services manufacture and distribution centers, to sanitized, safe, comfortable and service oriented places, affecting particularly down-town areas (Judd and Fainstein, 1999). Within the beautification, specialization and creation of what Judd & Fainstein (1999) coined ‘tourist bubbles’, often achieved by the use of violence and oppression, comes also a rise in the cost of living, gentrification and displacement of traditional local business and consequently creating not only new urban spaces but also new capitalist conglomerates (Yrigoy, 2014). This is the case heritage centers, inner-city areas (see Füller and Michel, 2014 on the case of Berlin-Kreuzberg) and former industrial neighborhoods (See Degen, 2003 for the case of Raval in Barcelona and Castlefield in Manchester) refurbished into hip and modern cultural hubs attracting dwellers from the ‘creative class’ (Florida, 2005), setting art galleries, shops and gastronomic enclaves that create a bohemian atmosphere attractive for tourists, commerce and real estate developments.

The discourse of local agents pushing towards strategic planning (that is to say the construction and service industry, political cluster, and the media) praise on the economic and cultural benefits of tourism within urban development. Given the competition of cities to attract global mobile capital investments, high skilled residents and visitors, almost every aspect of the everyday life can work as a commodity, having tourism, cultural and knowledge-based industries and the non-stop entertainment business on the bases of the city’s economic growth machinery. (Van Der Borg and Russo, 2008). Resuming the notion of the Spatial Fix, on his analysis Yrigoy stays that “the production of tourist spaces encompasses the double moment of the ‘spatial fix’: it implies a process of geographical expansion of capital, but also the fixation of this capital in physical buildings” (Yrigoy, 2014: 640). I argue that in the context of urban tourism, capital fixity may not only be materialized through physical buildings, but also through the material outcomes of tourism: the networks stitched between hybrid actors, as it would be more carefully developed.

The unexpected rise of a tourist attraction

The rivalry among tourist cities is so fierce, that unexpected assets have risen to become tourist attractions. Such is the case of a growing number of informal urban settlements in the Global South first and

then eventually also some in the Global North that have made their way to tourist attractions, often advertised by tour operators as an exciting opportunity to experience the “complete” and “real” life of the city. South African *townships*, Kibera in Nairobi, Dharavi in Mumbai, Brazilian *favelas*, Medellin *comunas*, the Parisian *banlieue* and the Neukölln district in Berlin, are some of the cases where informality was targeted by tourism global growth strategies pursuing the benefits expected from the tourist capital gear.

There won't be identical slums even within the same city, as they are compelled to the particular historical and physical context in which the slum is embedded; thus, tourism products -real and potential- will differ as well (Frenzel and Koens, 2012). Despite these singularities, the emerging of ST destinations show to follow a certain pattern highlighting the importance of mainstream events in the global projection of slums (Frenzel, 2012). The earliest slum tours developed in South African townships around 1990s for anti-apartheid activists and political motivated visitors and by the beginning of the 2000s they would become a “must see” activity for South African tourists (Rogerson, 2004). Almost simultaneously, attendees to the 1992 Earth Summit on Environment and Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro insisted on getting inside favelas; soon after this would motivate Marcello Armstrong to start Favela Tour followed by a growing number of favela tour providers (Freire-Medeiros, 2009). Similarly, Nairobi's massive slum Kibera was first toured by the attendees of 2007 World Social Forum (Mowforth and Munt 2009). Whilst in Dharavi, an English entrepreneur and his Indian partner opened in 2006 Dharavi Tours and Travel inspired by favela tours (Meschkank, 2011). And so the trend spread to slums in urban destinations North and South of the World.

Still, not every slum has the potential to become a tourist attraction. As Linke (2012) asserts, the success and expansion of ST is related with the (re)production of mobile images of slums. The media has a fair amount of responsibility on the creation of images and myths, and had successfully triggered ST destinations (Ma 2010). Brazilian slums experienced a popularity outbreak after the shooting of the polemic video of Michael Jackson's single “They Don't Care About Us” (1994) in favela Santa Marta; documentaries such as *Favela Rising* (Jeff Zimbalist and Matt Mochary 2005); mainstream movies like *Cidade de Deus* (Fernando Meirelles 2003) and *Tropa de Elite* (Jose Padilha 2008) successfully helped crafting an exotic, sexy and cool image of favelas that transcended geographical and political borders (Freire-Medeiros, 2009). Similar was the case of the movie *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle 2009) firing the number visitors to Dharavi in India (Meschkank, 2011). Travel book guides promoting slum tours as “must see” also make their contribution: most tourists in Dharavi were drawn by the featuring of the tour at Lonely Planet (Ma, 2010). With the advent of Internet platforms and the high reach of social media, tourist themselves became the most suitable agents to produce new narratives based on their unique experience and understanding and reproduce them globally (Williams, 2008).

Bianca Freire-Medeiros (2009) places ST in what she coined “Reality Tours”, a kind of tourist practice under the wide umbrella of alternative tourism that promises authentic, interactive and extreme experiences involving an exoticized Other. She breaks this conceptual category in two relying mainly on their motives, even though their limits are far from clear while performing. On one hand, she names Social Tours to those trying to bring social awareness through participative experiences in under privileged locations; it also includes tourist products intending poverty alleviation for the host community, labelled by Ashley et al. (2001) as Pro-

poor tourism. I would add to this sub-field slum tours designed and operated following Community-Based Tourism principles by local entrepreneurs with the aim of enhancing the socio-economic and cultural implication of hosts in ST practices. At the other end, Freire-Medeiros places what Foley and Lennon (1996) call Dark Tours referring to those offering products based on commodified real suffering. I argue that, even though poverty is a constant in the context of every slum tour, therefore it is a decisive factor that makes it ST and no other kind of tourism, poverty and its aesthetics are not always the core feature that tour guides - especially among local tour operators- are supporting their narratives on.

Slum Tourism in Debate

ST was first opened up to debate on the academia after the *Destination Slum!* Conference in 2010 (Bristol, UK) gathering researchers with diverse backgrounds and nationalities. Most research is primarily compelled to ethnographic fieldwork in urban destinations of the Global South, mostly featuring: Johannesburg, Cape Town, Rio de Janeiro, Mumbai and Nairobi. Although, the rapid spread and diversification of ST products provided for a wide variety of cases of study enabling researchers to establish parallels and influences among them; the theoretical achievements are constraint to the contextual reality of every case study. This limitation is partly due to slums spontaneous nature and high dependence on external conditions (Frenzel and Koens, 2012).

Regardless the particularities of each destinations, analyses of slum tourists' motivations often show similar results: curiosity for the cultural Other and how this otherness live and function in a poor environment were noticed among the primal motivations in academic research (Coles and Hall, 2006; ; Rolfes *et al*, 2009; Ma, 2010; Dürr, 2012a; Mekawy, 2012); closely followed by the desire of urban tourists to explore and experience the “real”/”complete” scenario of a city a priori assumed as fragmented (Freire-Medeiros, 2009; Rolfes *et al*, 2009; Ma, 2010; Meschkank, 2011; Dyson, 2012); Chhabra and Chowdhury (2012) also point out tourists desire to contribute to the socio-economic development in Dharavi; Rolfes *et al* (2009) added the wish to interact with locals and get some knowledge on Townships cultural products. There is also a certain homogeneity regarding slum visitors around the world. Most of them come from Northern and European countries, especially from United Kingdom, Scandinavia, United States and Germany. After the tour, tourists often express their surprise by the friendliness of residents, and a shift on their original preconceptions in matter such as safety, sanitation, and infrastructure development (Rolfes *et al*, 2009; Ma, 2010). However, interaction between visitors and visited it is scarce mainly due to the tight schedule during the tour and language barrier between hosts and guests (Rolfes *et al*, 2009; Freire-Medeiros, 2010).

Understanding tourist motivations is key to draw on the moral debate around ST (Ma, 2010). Critics often recall to the allegory of slum residents as zoo animals showcased in a romanticized scenario of poverty, asserting that slum tours suppose an invasion to dwellers privacy and emphasizing on the asymmetry of host-guest relations (Scheyvens, 2007; Selinger and Outterson, 2010; Dürr, 2012a). However, such considerations are often isolated and paraphrased opinions, which in addition to ethnocentrism and the author's baggage can jeopardize their accuracy (Frenzel, 2015). In opposition to this scepticism, some scholars advert on the

potential of ST to be social and politically transformative, with educational and philanthropist value and an opportunity for economic development (Rogerson, 2004; Freire-Medeiros, 2007; Williams, 2008; Frenzel and Koens, 2012; Burgold and Rolfes, 2013). Freire Medeiros (2009) explains how tours represented an opportunity to break with the isolation of favelas in Rio de Janeiro and how they effectively helped to change negative stereotypes of communities. Similar results were noted by Rolfes *et al* (2009) in South Africa claiming that tourist negative images had improved after taking a Township tour.

Some tours follow a cultural agenda re-directing the spotlight into their sense of community, cultural production, creative survival and historical background, rather than showing the slums crudest privations and struggles (Rogerson 2004; Freire-Medeiros, 2009; Rolfes *et al*, 2009). Only ST practices based on such assets could lead to create social awareness, economic development and cultural inclusion (Phillips, 2003). However, offering a superficial reading of livelihood conditions in slums to visitors can lead to undermining the complexity of struggles and romanticize an idea of poverty, making it look “poor but happy” (Crossley, 2012).

To date, there is a great amount of research focused on how were slums globally (re)produced and consumed as tourist attractions by mobile images and narratives (Phillips, 2003; Williams, 2008; Freire-Medeiros, 2009; Dürr, 2012b; Frisch, 2012; Linke, 2012; Steinbrink *et al*, 2012; Burgold *et al*, 2013; Chege and Mwisukha, 2013; Frenzel and Blakeman, 2015). Economic benefits and inputs to poverty alleviation were also addressed (Rogerson, 2004; Chege and Mwisukha, 2013; Truong, Hall, and Garry, 2014). Empirical findings reveals hosts perspectives in different destinations (Freire-Medeiros, 2010; Kieti and Magio, 2013; Slikker and Koens, 2015); as well as tourist profile, motivations and their perceptions (Ma, 2010; Dyson, 2012; Freire-Medeiros *et al*, 2013; Frenzel, 2014; Nisbett, 2017). And of course, a long-lasting debate regarding power relations and the ethics of this practice (Rolfes, 2010; Selinger and Outtersen, 2010; Whyte *et al*, 2011; Chhabra and Chowdhury, 2012; Burgold and Rolfes, 2013; Goodwin, 2014; Iqani, 2016; Giddy and Hoogendoorn, 2018). Hereby, instead of going after symbolic traces of meaning, branding or myth creations of slums, the importance is placed on the materialities of tourists embodied practices achieved after certain spatial performances and the consequent relations interwoven between human and non-human actors.

Moving forward: Performing networks

John Urry’s concept of the tourist gaze has been used in the analysis of ST to draw on how voyeurism sets the power relations between the Self (mobile subject) and the exotic Other (immobile object). However, travelling entails more than the mere visual, it involves walking, touching, feeling, reflexive thinking, smelling, meeting others, tasting and so forth; as Urry and Larsen (2011) already noted on the latest edition of the *Tourist Gaze*: is a multisensory embodied activity, in which the gaze is also seen as a *performance*. The Performative Turn (See also Crouch, 2004; Edensor 2001; Bærenholdt *et al*, 2004) is formed in opposition to Urry’s initial theory of the Tourist Gaze and other representational approaches privileging the sight. It was inspired by sociologist Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical metaphor of the world as a stage and comes after the development in social sciences and humanities of Non-representational Theory, which places the individual as a thinking agent bodily engaged with the world it inhabits. It was applied on tourist studies by arguing that “tourism

demands new metaphors based more on being, doing, touching and seeing rather than just “seeing” ’ (Perkins and Thorns, 2001:189; Cloke and Perkins, 1998)” (Haldrup and Larsen, 2010:3).

From this perspective tourism is seen as an encounter between people and spaces that entails a sensual set of *doings* (Crouch 2004). The negotiation of identities and power relations during ST encounter goes beyond the consideration of slums as object to be observed and tourist as passive observant subject. The comprehension that human actors may develop during that encounter is not only compelled on how they see each other, but on how they bodily experience and react to practices enacted in a certain time-space. Hence, a performative analysis of ST calls for redirecting the focus from the *posited meaning* -Representational Theory- of slum images (re)produced within the practice of tourism, towards the *material composition and conduct* of this representations (Dewsbury *et al*, 2002:439. From Haldrup and Larsen 2010). While playing tourists, the stages of tourism encounters come alive baring with the unpredictability of their behavior, producing and reacting to new images and myths whereas consuming the place and its hybrid elements, creating connections between people and the everyday, (re)structuring space and social life (Haldrup and Larsen, 2010). Hence, “Tourists emerge from this critical reflection on practice and performance as both consumers and, themselves, producers” (Crouch, 2004:86).

However, narrowing the analysis to ST practices and performances would fail to show the complexity of the interaction among people, objects and institutions and their implications at a spatial, social and economic scale. Actor-Network Theory is “an “alternative” social theory based on relationalism (Emirbayer, 1997)” (Van Der Duim *et al*, 2013:5) and influenced by post-structuralism that when applied to tourism studies shifts focus from *what* tourism is towards *how* tourism works (see also Law, 1999; Van Der Duim, 2007). This approach proposes to trace the practices of hybrid actors and their associations into more or less stable networks to describe the multiple and heterogeneous orderings of events. Actor-Networks link spaces that go from local to global setting fruitful conditions for different orderings to emerge and prevail. It can therefore give probabilistic insights on how tourist events make spatial/cultural sense of slums as urban actors, the collaborations and outcomes ST practices and performances are enhancing (Van Der Duim *et al*, 2013).

Identifying the Cast of Slum Tourism

Identifying the actors and the synergies (re)created by ST is crucial to understand the power relations that evokes or discharges. I will use the case of the tourist favela Santa Marta to overlap the theoretic principles of Performativity and ANT to analyze ST within processes of social and physical urban regeneration framed by globalized capital flows. I will identify the key actors playing on four scales at which power forces and negotiations are articulated: Local (L) for the supposedly immobile actors performing ST practices; Regional (R), for those whose actions reach the rest of the city and the State of Rio de Janeiro; National (N) referring on representatives and institutions with federal reach of action; and International (I) for the global stakeholders lobbying on tourism; the Tourist (T) will be the mobile actor (re)creating networks by consuming tourist services.

Favelas have been growing at a fast pace since 1920s in the biggest cities of Brazil and they've been target of public policies aiming their eradication since the 1970s. However, when Rio de Janeiro was being prepared to host of international events -specially the Olympic Games (2016) and the male Football World Cup (2014) (I)- the strategic relevance of favelas territory dragged even more the attention from the government, the media and private investors. With a double discourse of economic development and improvements in mobility and visitors/dwellers experience of the city, Rio's state government (R) allowed major urban development projects (such as the waterfront and port area regeneration, transport infrastructure, and sport and leisure facilities) that caused the eviction of informal settlements of the city center and southern area. Also, a special Pacification Police Unit (Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora, UPP) was set to sanitize communities, clear traffic gangs away and re-establish the State's lost power in the favelas (Freire-Medeiros et al., 2017). While some favelas were being displaced and replaced, others, especially those in the city center that already enjoyed some foreign popularity on their own, were thriving in the tourist sector and benefiting from investments and social projects, for instance: the Major's office (R) declared Morro da Providência (the oldest favela in Rio) an Open-Air Museum in 2005; the municipality (R) implemented housing and urban upgrading social programs that embellished house fronts and endowed communities with sanitation and infrastructure (mainly for transportation); favela tours are promoted officially by Brazilian Institute of Tourism (EMBRATUR) (N); EMBRATUR in alliance with CUFA (L) (an organization of young favela dwellers working to enhance education, sport, cultural and citizenship activities in their communities) developed an educational project to train young professionals for tourist related careers.

Santa Marta is a tourist favela located on a hillside in Botafogo, a middle-class neighborhood in the prestigious South Zone of Rio de Janeiro. This was the first favela to have an UPP (R), which contributed to improve safety standards for tours to succeed. Santa Marta also received public investments with the "Rio Top Tour – Rio de Janeiro from a new perspective" program (R) from the state government to upgrade tourist infrastructure in the context of urban regeneration for mainstream events. Probably the most iconic outcomes of that project is the construction of a funicular -free of charge- and the colorful painting of house fronts that will later on turn into the most featured image of that community. Even though the number of visitors have dropped due to the economic and political instability that have been shaking the country for the past years, tourists still take tours mostly during the weekends and demand rises in the summer season.

Favela Scene (L) is a community based tour operator performing tours in Santa Marta since 2012. The very first activity of the tour is taking the funicular: there tourists (T) would share with local residents not only their mean of transportation but their daily routine. This first encounter represents the primal spatialized ordering of hybrid actors triggered by a single tourist practice. At a glimpse, it could be schematized as: Tourist - Favela Scene - Funicular - UPP - Rio Top Tour - Megaevents. By the act of taking the funicular, made possible by the mediation of the local tour guide, tourist are justifying physical changes -by being consumers of it- that was initially motivated by international trends of capital investments allowed by the state government. Even though the utility and beneficiaries of these transformations are arguable, the display of networks shows the direction on the flow of capital, people and information, placing favelas no longer on the margin but on the center of certain political and economic decisions.

The example set before can be transposed to urban geography to draw on the mobility of capital and shows existing, potential and even failed synergies within ST. This practical focus goes beyond the analysis of ST (re)production of representations and contributes to have a more visual sense of the material outcomes of tourism and its capacity to shorten the semiotic and economic distances among urban spaces and communities. This approach encourages to deconstruct the system of representation of slums and reinterpret their spatial-social-economic status based on the ordering of relations with other hybrid actors, disclosing the political implications of ST and its potential to introduce material and practical changes.

Conclusions: towards an interdisciplinary research agenda

In this article I review the literature to date on ST deviating the scope from representations, ontologies and ethical concerns towards the material outcomes of tourism to assert the quest of how ST could be a potential avenue to legitimize slums as urban actors at a spatial, economic and symbolic scale at urban destinations. Applying notions of non-representational geography, I focused on spatially embedded and embodied practices and performances that trigger a certain ordering on the relations between ST heterogeneous actors. By departing from the stand that ST opens a contact zone for tourist, operators, institutions and dwellers, I argue that is during these encounters that actors have the opportunity to (re)negotiate and (re)define the representations on each other.

This field of study calls for interdisciplinary research efforts with a post-structuralist and holistic approach highlighting the entanglement of processes that make sense of the world. Urban geographers can enrich this debate by unveiling the spatial consequences of the power relations that ST entails at every range. At a political economy level, the exposure gained after ST practices and performances can redirect the fixation of capital towards urban slum and potentially re-signify communities due to the global reproduction of myths and images that represent them. On this scenario, slums could be relocated in the center of a political agenda conducted by actor-networks and materialized through urban development policies and tourism governance strategies.

The conceptual framework exposed on this article aims to be empirically applied in the future with field study in Rio de Janeiro. I sought to identify specific culture based ST practices and performances in tourist favelas and trace down the networks created along to draw on the influence these connections have on the making of slums both as urban agents and tourist destination. This methodology yet to be tested could be helpful to analyze the intermingled processes and events on the stages of ST destinations and enhance our understanding of the role that tourism plays on tourist cities all over the world.

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