



Tourism in the slums of Rio de Janeiro: An analysis of the urban impacts in informal areas caused by recent public interventions for the big sports events hosted by the city

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The slums of Rio de Janeiro have been the stage of recent urban changes related to tourism-related activities, chiefly those linked to the large sports events such as 2014 FIFA World Cup, and the 2016 Olympic. The visiting by Brazilian and foreign people was always significant in the city, and the increase of the flow in the slums is a relevant fact. This article seeks to put the changes in the recent urban dynamics of those areas into perspective, as caused by popular settlements in which tourism has been bringing changes about, initially related to urban mobility, in the case of the large works done by the government. These interventions brought reflexes embodied in private and community-related investments, with the opening of hostels, bars and restaurants, along with the creation of new open spaces, such as parks and ecological trails. The work has been going on, with the mapping of these activities in the slums of Rio's South Zone, especially in the slum of Babilônia-Chapéu Mangueira, seeking data on their locations, and on the importance of community participation, and the relevance of public policies in the process at hand.

keyword 1, Tourism in slums **2**, Rio de Janeiro **3**, urban mobility works.

Introduction

Rio de Janeiro is one of the largest Brazilian cities, with a population of 6,520,000 (IBGE, 2010). From the start of the 20th century it has been considered as one of the world's most important tourist destinations (Perrotta, 2015), with a strong part in the imagination of tourism in the world, on account of its beaches, celebrations such as the Carnival and New Year's Eve and its image of a wonderful, joyful, and festive city. Its attractions are generally found in its South Zone, in a scenario where the ocean meets the hills, in boroughs such as Copacabana, Ipanema and Leblon.

It is a city fraught with contradictions, significant social disparities, a portrait of a Brazil divided and unfair, where the wealth is distributed in an extremely unequal way, something that is shown in the cities and in the way the urbanisation work has been taking place.

At the same time that this tourist-activity area concentrates its many attractions, there are many poor communities, the slums, where a large number of people dwell. The city has around 23% of its population living in these poor areas (IBGE, 2010), in many types of slums scattered throughout the whole metropolitan area.

For many years these areas were kept outside of the urban processes, with only a handful of interventions made in them that could bring any improvements for their dwellers. From the 1990s on urban projects such as Favela Bairro¹ started to treat the public areas of the favelas (slums) with urbanisation projects that did not manage to reach all the communities (Sakata, 2011). This has been a continuous process, in spite of its lack of efficiency for transformation, as it was initially desired.

The city also experienced a process of degradation of its safety conditions, with the increase in drug trafficking that, from the 1980s, started to use the city as a path for that, with the exporting of drugs to consumers in Europe and in the US (Coutinho Marques da Silva, 2015). The slums moved on to be the territory used as a base for those heavily-armed groups, generating a continuous growth of the violence and lack of security in the city.

One of the moments in which there was an expectation of change to this panorama was when Brazil was chosen to host the 2014 World Football Cup, followed by the 2009 announcement of Rio as a host of the 2016 Olympic Games. These two mega sports events should produce sizeable investments in urban infrastructure and also in security for the city, a requirement of the organisers after the selection of the venue. Wilhelm (2014), when mentioning the demands made by the organisers, points to the need to increase the number of rooms, along with

¹ Slum as a Borough.



improvements to public transport as some of their main items. This way, the growth of the tourist and urban infrastructure were basic requirements to enable the hosting of those events and an undertaken was then expressed by the Governments in Brazil, central, state and city-wise, to expand the transport networks and also improve the areas of public security, which saw the implementation in 2008 of a public security policy based on the occupation of the favelas, the Police Peace Corps, or UPPs.

The slums located near the tourist areas or along the routes leading to airports were the first to receive the major infrastructure work such as cable cars, inclined platform passenger lifts, and lifts, apart from inner way and housing projects, all part of the effort to change the image of the city, an attempt to create an image of safe city, a Wonderful City, an image that had been fading away in time. The initiative linked the notion of public security to the occupation of the warring territories, usually on the hills to sizeable construction work that would truly change the face of the areas. The idea that changes to the urban domain would produce changes in the society goes after what was said by Vainer (2013), when commenting on the big urban changes made to several global cities, as related to the ideas of marketing such cities, which has been the case since the 1970s, and which Ribeiro and Olinger (2012) claim included the slums, as shown in their relation with tourism and the changes to the image of the favelas, in line with the formal city scenario.

This work shows some of these effects, as related to tourism, in the slums of Rio's South end. Due to their location near the tourist areas, an impact was found on the enterprises related to those activities such as hostels, bars, and restaurants, apart from an increase in tourist visitation, boosted by the creation of routes, ecological trails and parks, usually associated to a participation of the communities, with the so-called community-based tourism that could flower in those areas, with the possibilities of having a less invasive tourism that could really bring about change and the generation of income for these populations, along with a greater integration with the so-called formal city.

The tourism in slums activity got structured from 1992 onwards (Freire-Medeiros, 2009) and became a subject of study in Brazil and abroad, as an activity found in many countries of the Global South (Frenzel Koens, Steinbrink, 2012). In Brazil, authors such as Freire-Medeiros (2013, 2009, 2017, 2016), Moraes (2016, 2014, 2013), Fagerlande (2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2016a, 2016, 2015), Carvalho (Carvalho, T. L. G, 2016) and Carvalho (Carvalho, F.C., 2013a, 2013b, 2016), and Menezes (2012) have shown how tourism has affected the slums in so many aspects. The community-based tourism, as shown by Bartholo, Sansolo and Burzstyn (2009) and by Mielke and Pegas (2013) has played a relevant role to see tourism relate to the communities, which is shown by authors such as Rodrigues (2014) when talking about the Favela de Santa Marta and by Pinto, Silva and Loureiro (2012) who deal with the experience of the Museu da Favela in the Cantagalo Pavão-Pavãozinho slum. The participation of the CoopBabilônia NGO, located on the hill that goes by the same name and the Sitiê Park in Vidigal, as shown by Seldin (2017) show community-based initiatives of importance.

This article stems from a research effort that has been mapping the hostels, bars, restaurants, routes, parks, and trails, through the visitation of the sites, with interviews, photographing, and also with the research of tourism sites and social networks such as Booking (2017), Trip Advisor (2017), Brazilian Hostel World (2017), and Facebook (2017). The mapping of the hostels that has been going on since 2010 show a very significant picture of the changes, from the moment the public policies were implemented until now, at a post-Olympic time, in which the failure of the state brought the UPPs project to an end, along with a moment of change and apprehension for those involved with tourism in slum activities².

Tourism in slums: New possibilities for the poor areas

The tourism in poor areas started in England in the 19th century when the wealthier visited the more degraded areas of London in humanitarian missions, aimed at learning about these areas (Steinbrink, Frenzel, Koens, 2012). In the 20th century the poverty in the larger areas of the world saw the rise of an interest in the visitation of places such as the communities in South Africa and in Rio de Janeiro (Freire-Medeiros, 2009). There already was visitation in the 1970s of communities in Johannesburg and in Cape Town (Steinbrink, Frenzel, Koens, 2012) and the 1990s saw the tourism in slums take its present form (Freire-Medeiros, 2009). From the big meeting held in the city, namely Rio 92, the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED), there was great interest from its participants to visit Brazil' largest favela, Rocinha (Freire-Medeiros, 2009; Steinbrink, Frenzel, Koens, 2012). In the beginning the visits were called 'jeep-tours', taken on board

² The government announced the closure of many UPP² units in 2018, as the violence increased and they understand this program is not correspondin to the demands of society for security.



vehicles that would take the visitors up the hills, on roads that would go through the slums, with no contact with the locals. This kind of 'urban safari' was shown to be quite degrading and, although it still exists and has many people interested in it, especially foreign visitors, it is seen as offensive by the dwellers, as they feel like animals in a zoo.

Steinbrink, Frenzel e Koens (2012) state that the importance given by tourism in slums provides empowerment, income, and that it should be done with an ethical attitude, with respect for the communities and their dwellers. In that sense, the community-based tourism, as shown in the work of Bartholo, Sansolo and Burzstyn (2009), brings elements to support the notion that these activities can relate to local organisations. Public support to these policies comes from the launching in 2006 of a finance line from the Department of Tourism for actions in communities and, albeit their being aimed at the rural areas and small former slave enclaves and fishing colonies, it was soon perceived they were a path to the slums of Rio de Janeiro, being used to support action such as the *Morrinho na Favela do Pereirão* in 2008³ and the *Solidarity Tourism Weaving Hammocks Project*⁴ at the Cantagalo Slum in 2009 (Rodrigues, 2014).

The majority of the changes to these activities related to tourism in slums and to the participation of dwellers in the process, something that grew from the projects related to the big events, with new public policies aimed at construction work and security-related work in the communities. The work aimed at accessibility improved the access through inclined platform passenger lifts, lifts, cable cars and new inner ways, along with the security policies that led to the installation of the Police Peace Corps Units – UPPs - from 2008.



Figure 1: Group of visitors on Cantagalo, with Ipanema and Leblon in the background, 2014.

The first community to receive these improvement projects was the Santa Marta in 2008. Along with the first UPP the Rio Top Tour project was created in 2010 to stimulate community-based tourism, with the training of local guides, all bringing new expectations for income generation and integration of the slum with the city (Rodrigues, 2014). Other slums had urban mobility projects related to tourism such as those that introduced

³This is a community art project that reproduces the Pereirão slum, and has been exposed in many countries since 2004,

⁴ A community handicraft project, held on Cantagalo Slum, as a Community Based Project, in 2009.



cable car services to the Alemão Complex and to the Providencia Hill, apart from the Panoramic Lift System at the Cantagalo (Izaga and Pereira, 2014; Fagerlande, 2015, 2016).

The communities were already organising themselves in other slums, though co-operatives, associations or local community work organisations, and tourism appeared as an option for the generation of income such as the case of the Babilônia Co-op (Moraes, 2016, 2013), of the Museu da Favela - MUF (Pinto, Silva and Loureiro, 2012) and of the Parque Sitiê (Seldin, Vaz, 2017), in enterprises related to tourism and the environment. As regards tourism, the visitation and the accommodation have been very important elements, showing urban transformations and a greater relation with the city, with the visiting activities relying on trails and parks, and with tourist accommodation, apart from the possibility of a greater integration with the availability of bars, restaurants and party events hosted in communities where tourism reached some level of development, as in the communities of Vidigal, Cantagalo, and Babilônia Chapéu-Mangueira (Moraes, 2016; Fagerlande, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d). The case of Rocinha, a pioneer in the work with tourism, more related to the 'Jeep Tour' visitation, shows that even amidst the severe crisis with public security the city has been going through after the bankruptcy of the security project of the UPPs, the visitation persists, attracting a great deal of interest, especially from foreign tourists.

Hostels in slums

When researching tourism in Rio's slums from 2010, it was found that, next to guided tours, enterprises were appearing, related to tourism, especially hostels. The appearance of a large number of hostels in the years prior to the big sports events seem to have a direct relation with them and with the work done in the slums to improve their urbanism features and mobility conditions.

In the slums studied in the North and central areas of the city, the Alemão Complex and the Providência Slum were shown to have no hostels, despite the fact that those slums were the object of improvement work such as cable car installation (Fagerlande, 2015), the slums located in the South End had a large number of such accommodation enterprises and, with no data available for consultation, and with only a handful of guides starting to mention the slums and some of the hostels, albeit not in a systematic way (Fagerlande, 2017a).

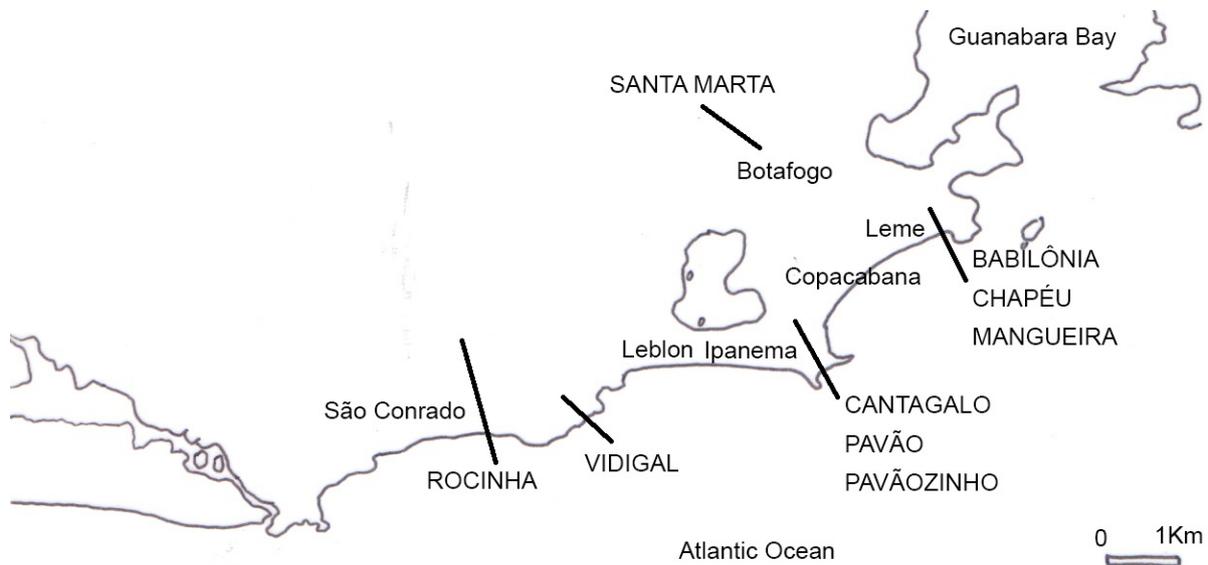


Figure 2: Location of the slums studied in Rio's South End

This way, a mapping effort was started for 5 slums in Rio's South Zone, which are close to the most tourist-friendly boroughs of the city, where, it would later be found, there was a substantial number of hostels. All of them are communities that received UPPs, and infrastructure work, usually related to the sports events the city



would host. As a result the communities in the slums of Santa Marta in the borough of Botafogo, Babilônia Chapéu-Mangueira in Leme, Cantagalo Pavão-Pavãozinho, sitting between Copacabana and Ipanema, Vidigal between Leblon and São Conrado, and Rocinha in São Conrado.

These are slums that have a panoramic view of the city and the sea below them, apart from being close to areas that have a big tourist and transport infrastructure. The access to these slums is made through streets and uphill streets of the formal city⁵, and the location of the hostels uses either the streets and the inner portion of the urban street grid around the slums themselves. When considering the areas surrounding them, the researchers saw these are considered by many as slum areas, despite their legal and formal differences.

An analysis of the graph below⁶ shows in its time line that the growth of the number of hostels in the slums occurred from 2013, possibly as a result of the imminent 2014 and 2016 sports events. The dates for the installation of the UPPs and the execution of the urban mobility works in these slums happened just before the hostels opened, showing that without these public projects there probably would have been no conditions for these enterprises to come to life. It was also possible to see that the slums have different scenarios, as regards the number of enterprises, with the Vidigal one having the highest number of hostels.

On the other hand, Santa Marta, despite being the first slum to receive an UPP and being the stage for a Government project aimed at stimulating community-based tourism, namely Rio Top Tour, conceived as a prototype of what should have been a larger project for other slums, despite the fact that it encouraged the appearance of local guides and a growth in visitation numbers, it did not boost the number of hostels, with only three until 2016, with only one in existence at this moment.

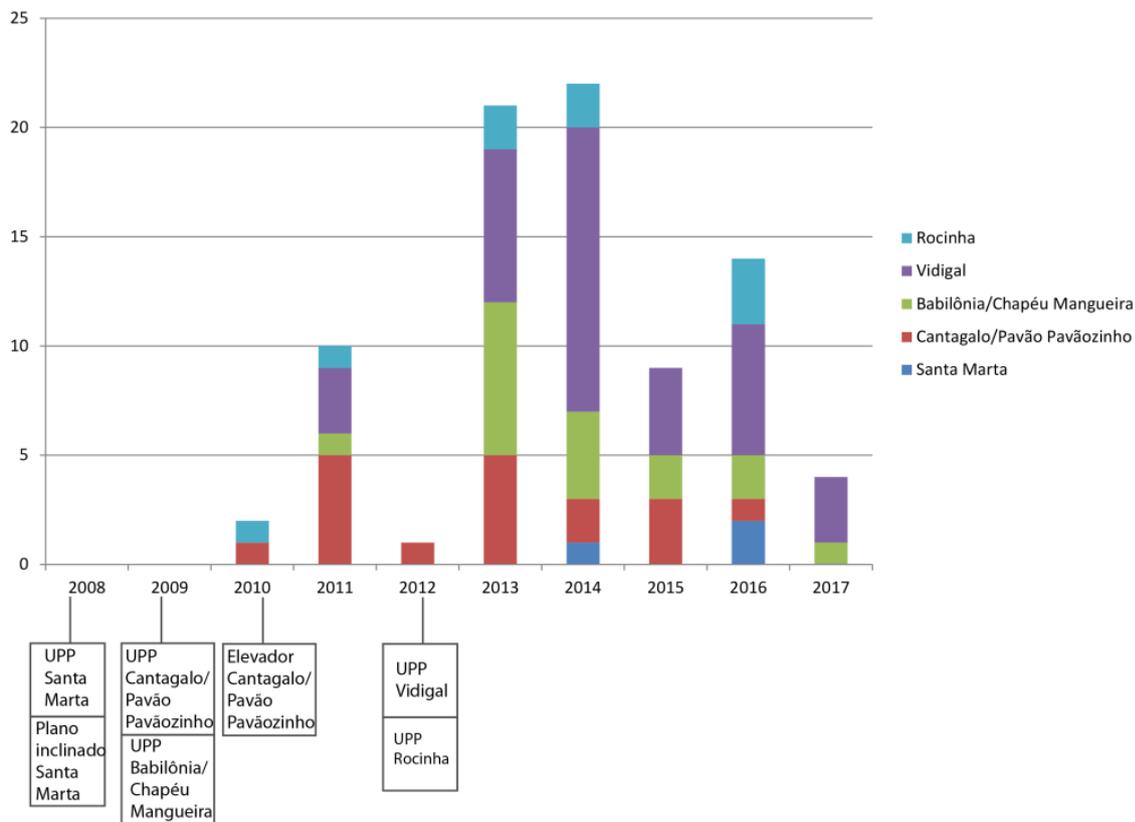


Figure 3: Relation between public works, UPPs and hostels in the slums surveyed between 2008-2017.

⁵ In this case formal city means the traditional areas of the city, in opposition of the slum areas, usually built as informal construction, without observing the legislation.

⁶ The graph shown in Figure 3 was created before 2018 when there was a reduction in the number of hostels, as shown in the Figure 4 table for 2018.



Slums	Number of hostels								
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Santa Marta	-	-	-	1	1	3	3	3	2
Babilônia Chapéu- Mangueira	-	1	1	7	11	13	14	16	8
Cantagalo Pavão- Pavãozinho	1	6	7	12	14	17	18	18	15
Vidigal	-	3	3	10	23	27	33	36	27
Rocinha	1	2	2	4	6	6	9	9	8
TOTAL	2	12	13	34	55	66	77	82	60

Figure 4: Hostels surveyed between 2010-2018

The location of hostels in these slums, partly inside them and partly on their fringes, brought new urban dynamics to play, where the relationship of the slum with its surroundings becomes simultaneously an example of an urban conflict whilst displaying the dynamics related to tourist-related activities as new possibilities to mitigate these very conflicts. The occupation of these areas by hostels caused a valuation of the areas surrounding the slums and allowed the occupation of buildings previously degraded and with little use, bringing a new movement of tourists and visitors, with changes that bring an improvement to the image of those areas, previously seen as very dangerous (Fagerlande, 2017d). If on one hand it is possible to see the possibility of gains and of income for the dwellers of the slums and of the areas affected by these changes, the possibility of gentrification cannot be overruled, as pointed by Pearlman (2016).



Figure 5: Casa Babilônia Hostel, Ladeira Ari Barroso, access to slum, 2016



Figure 6: Cariquinha Hostel, Morro da Babilônia Hill, inside the slum, 2016

The survey shows that the start of the installation of the hostels in these slums started from 2010 and had a peak in growth from 2013, when Rio hosted the Confederations Football Cup, a preview of the World Football Cup that would use Rio as one of its main stages and the scenario of the final match. The direct relationship of these events with a growth of the interest in hostelling in slums was found in the survey as it entailed a public consisting of foreign visitors that saw hostelling in slums as an opportunity to cut costs and also as something that many times is considered as an authentic place to stay in the city. One of the catchphrases to market these hostels was the notion of 'becoming a local', that is, a true 'carioca', as one took up accommodation in a slum. The globalisation trend brought aspects such as the standardisation of places and attractions (Urry, 1990) and the possibility of being in that which is different, local and authentic becomes appreciated.

The ease in locomotion, brought to some slums by urban mobility works such as the panoramic lift on Cantagalo[Hill], the new internal ways implemented in the Chapéu- Mangureira Babilônia Hill and the incline platform lifts installed in the Santa Marta slum, along with the aspects of acknowledgement of interest in Rocinha, a pioneer in this aspect, where the circulation of vehicles facilitates the transport of visitors, and the landscape observed from the vantage point of Vidigal, definitely the place with the closest relation with the ocean, make these slums and their hostels places of immense attraction to tourists.

There is no doubt that the feeling of security brought about by the UPPs from 2010 led the tourism-related activities in the slums to prosper, through the hands of local agencies or not, accommodation included, or just in visitation tours. Gastronomy is yet another important aspect in the tourism activity in slums. The creation of a guide specialising in popular gastronomy was published in 2012 by the Rio de Janeiro City Administration, showing the interest that tourism in the slums had in the consolidation of public policies that focused on the image of the city, as regards the big events (Bloch, 2012), and the initiatives of SEBRAE⁷ (2015) aimed at mapping the tourist slum.

⁷ Brazilian Office for the Support of Small and mid-Sized Companies, a public body set up to boost entrepreneurship.



Figure 7: Bar do David, Favela Chapéu-Mangueira [Slum], 2016

The domain of gastronomy is well represented in the Chapéu-Mangueira slum, in places such as Bar do David, which won numerous Brazilian awards and attracts a large number of patrons. Located near the main access to the slum, it is another case of success, and is easy to get to by car, which offsets the feeling one might have of being in the middle of the slum (Fagerlande, 2017d).

Conclusion

As it was chosen to host large sports events such as the 2014 World Football Cup and the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Rio de Janeiro started to prepare, as it underwent major infrastructure work and the installation of a sizeable public security project, namely the UPPs, or Peace Police Corps Units.

In the slums, the interest to bring security to those areas included a project aimed at changing their image, with policies geared for tourism, focused on income generation and the improvement of the living conditions in the communities, based on the Community-Based Tourism project of the Federal Government, and with the implementation of projects such as the Rio Top Tour, initially in the Santa Marta Slum, the first one to get an UPP in 2008. The works for urban mobility such as the lift installed in the Cantagalo community also had tourism as one of its inspirations, as the panoramic observation terrace that was built there would eventually show.

One of the results of these actions was the appearance of numerous enterprises in many of the slums, presented in this article as examples for the five communities that, from 2010 to 2017 saw the installation and growth of the hostels. The location of these hostels in the slums is also an important point for a reflection on the effects of the policies aimed stimulating tourism in slums. As one discovers that the new hostels are placed not only inside those areas, but also on the ways that give access to them and that sit on the fringes of the slums, a new dynamic was set in motion for the urban scenario, with the re-use of old buildings that no longer had any use, to produce urban vitality and income in those areas, along with a higher sense of security, as it boosted the number of visitors in areas that were previously regarded as of difficult access to those who did not live there. The possibility of a greater integration of the slum with the cities areas that are considered as formal by the travel trade is a huge advance, but one that requires more investments in security as the failure of the UPP project after the 2016 Olympic Games has led to a reduction in the number of hostels in those slums, as shown by the research data. The interest of those who live in those communities and the involvement of their associations in the communities, as they saw the visitation by tourist as a real perspective of empowerment and income generation should be an important factor to see this process continue on, even with the changes that will come about.



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Image sources

Figure 1: Photograph by the author, 2014.

Figure 2: Author's drawing using Google Maps image, 2017.

Figure 3: Author's research, 2018.

Figure 4: Author's research, 2018.

Figure 5: Photograph by the author, 2016.

Figure 6: Photograph by the author, 2016.

Figure 7: Photograph by the author, 2016.