



Overcoming urban frontiers: Ordering *Favela* tourism actor-networks

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Abstract

This paper examines the multiple and heterogeneous, current and potential, relations between hybrid actors of tourism in Favela Santa Marta, Rio de Janeiro. It seeks to elucidate the legitimizing potential of tourists acting as “connectors” that reach beyond formal politics’ hindrances. This work applies assemblage theory epistemological framework, and Actor-Network Theory ethnomethodological tools, to explore the issues and roles questioned, altered, made visible, or transformed through favela tourists’ practices and performances. Hence, avoiding the ethical dilemmas and representational concerns from slum tourism researchers in the past. Our fieldwork engages with two favela tours. We follow tourists as they stitch hybrid actor-networks that create multiple orderings in such assemblages, and their material and semiotic configurations. Our research reveals that such tours could be related to different shifts in the favela’s political, social, economic, cultural, and material dimensions.

Keywords

Favela, urban tourism, actor-network theory, slum tourism, assemblage thinking

Introduction

Slum Tourism is a niche market under the broad umbrella of alternative tourism where visitors venture to an area beneath their own social and economic status when visiting an urban destination (Dürr, 2012). Motivations range from a mere (and sometimes morbid) curiosity for other people’s lives in poverty and informality; to a quest for the

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authentic and unadulterated when gazing on a “complete” urban landscape. Also, there is a will to “contribute” that is enmeshed with political activism and social awareness (Freire-Medeiros, 2009a, 2009b; Frenzel, 2012; Ma, 2010). Slum tourism became popular in Global South’s urban settlements in the 1990s and was gradually replicated in other destinations worldwide. Different versions of this practice were adapted to take advantage of slum’s social and territorial singularities. From its early beginnings, this tourist phenomenon exposed contested power relations and ethical concerns (Frenzel et al., 2012).

Academic research has addressed the transition of slums to tourist attractions from their historical roots, visitor motivations, residents’ and stakeholders’ perspectives, economic benefits, and contested moralities. Previous research tackles these issues separately, and have mostly dealt with matters of representations and power relations: the consumption and (re)production of the slums’ symbolic meanings (Burgold et al., 2013; Freire-Medeiros, 2009a, 2009b; Rolfes et al., 2009), and the ethics around this practice (Chhabra and Chowdhury, 2012; Frenzel et al., 2012; Selinger and Outtersson, 2010). We argue that assembling these different approaches for study can offer rich insight into this field of tourism research, and step away from moral or ethical judgments. Instead, we base our analysis on events, connections, relational outcomes, and materialities.

Frenzel (2016) stated that the practices of slum tourists, which valorizes local assets and actors, may bring political power to host communities. In this paper we have elaborated on this notion and focused on the relational processes triggered by favela tourism practices. We examine favela tourism under an ontological politics lens (Mol, 1999). Thus, we interpret “reality” as multiple, sometimes contested, constantly rearranging, reshaping, and shifting. Above all, reality is a political accomplishment, “performed in a variety of [socio-material] practices” (Mol, 1999:74). Our empirical study focuses on the performances and the embedded relational processes, shaping two versions of reality drawn by two antagonistic favela tours.

To trace the practices of actors’ and their associative ramifications we apply Assemblage Theory epistemologies and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) methodological tools. The case study explores two tours in favela Santa Marta (SM), in Rio de Janeiro (RJ). The paper’s main contribution is its the empirical focus, which provides highly descriptive and visual accounts of the dynamic relations through time-space between humans, materials, objects, institutions, discourses, and technologies. Our goal is to analyze the current and potential role of tourist practices in reshaping the social and physical landscapes of favelas, reconnecting them at different scales to the rest of the city and the rest of the world.

In the following sections, we first set forth the issues and peculiarities of RJ’s favelas in general and our case study in particular. Later, we elaborate on the epistemology and research methods. In the fieldwork section, we first introduce the relevant actors within SM tourism relational networks. Next, we provide an ethnographic account of two different tours. Finally, we analyze the two resultant orderings relying on a series of diagrams to draw on which issues and actors are questioned, altered, made visible, or neglected on each tour.

A century of favelas

“Favela” is the vernacular name given to Brazilian informal urban settlements. Favelas are spread across the slopes of the hills that intersperse RJ’s central areas. They have been growing in population since the early 20th-century. Migrants from impoverished regions of the country settled seeking labor proximity; first, close to the city center, and later, favelas expanded to the wealthiest South of RJ (Lessa, 2005). Favelas are not confined to the margins but intertwined with formal and wealthier city areas. This entanglement makes the singularity of RJ’s cultural landscape. Due to favelas’ peculiar geographical standpoint, they provide a valuable locational element. From a favela viewpoint, one can easily spot the city’s inequalities while appreciating Rio’s overwhelming natural beauty.

Communities (as favelas are often called) have been historically neglected by governments (from federal to local) and stigmatized by social elites. Residents need to deal with the lack of security of tenure and durable housing; accessibility struggles; a lack of social services (from garbage picking to health assistance); police and gangsters’ brutality; and social stigmas related to violence and drug traffic. However, favelas are rich in cultural elements and traditions that represent Brazil’s stereotypical image, like samba and funk music, traditional gastronomy, and the famous worldwide Carnival (Freire-Medeiros et al., 2013; Williams, 2008). The cultural landscape and its associated myths attract curious visitors, and the vibrant culture of the favela invites tourists to stay.

The favelas of RJ were first officially visited during the 1992 Earth Summit. Attendees insisted on touring Rocinha, one of the largest slums in Latin America (Freire-Medeiros, 2009a, 2009b). Like other slum tourist destinations, in their initial phase tours were run mostly by external operators. However, local dwellers gradually became involved in providing tourist services, with some taking the work of entrepreneurs and guides. However, favela tours were condemned by local media and social elites, considering them voyeuristic and demining (Freire-Medeiros et al., 2013; Frenzel et al., 2012). On a political scale, official tourism entities had no interest in investing or developing tourism due to the fragility of State power in the communities and the fear of damaging the city’s international image.

A series of events contributed to placing favelas in the tourist city map. First, the global exposure on the media through movies, documentaries, music videos, and an aestheticized mobile image of favelas (Freire-Medeiros, 2009a, 2009b). On the other hand, the relative—and fleeting—increase in security brought about by the “Pacification Police Unite” (UPP) enabled a monumental rise in visitors from 2008 until 2018. In addition, between 2007 and 2016, RJ and the country went through a rebranding and sanitization process. This was carried out to meet the Olympic committee’s demands and international tourists’ assumed expectations, especially in terms of safety. Improving safety was one of the pillars of hosting sports mega-events, such as the 2014 Football World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games (Freire-Medeiros et al., 2013). The range of *festivalization* strategies associated with these changes included large investments from both public and private entities. The State Government and private international parties built and refurbished stadiums, sports and leisure facilities, public spaces like the Port Maravilha, mobility infrastructures, launched social and housing upgrading programs, and so on



Figure 1. Santa Marta (Dona Marta) on a RJ's city map from 2016. Emphasis added.
Source: Belloso (2016).

(Russo, 2012). In this context, the progressive “pacification” of RJ’s favelas—the violent displacement of drug lords by elite police forces, which then settle in favelas to guarantee the delivery of essential services and security—has been a new pillar of urban social policy (Steinbrink, 2013). Yet, it attracted vast criticism, because it was viewed as instrumental to the progressive eradication of these communities.

Public policies targeting favela tourism came as a counterpart of the pacification strategy. Communities with potential attractiveness, like Rocinha and SM, received financial support, infrastructure, and encouragement to develop as a tourist product. The State tourism office briefly included both favelas in the tourist city map during mega-events (see Figure 1). However, they are no longer featured on any official tourist map.

SM extends almost to the top of Morro (Portuguese for “hill”) Dona Marta at the edge of Botafogo, an upper-middle-class neighborhood in RJ’s wealthy South region. It has a population of between 5000 and 9000 dwellers (IBGE, 2010). Due to its relatively small size, proactive leaders, and privileged location, SM received many public policies, projects, and programs toward reinforcing tourism. These came both from the public and private sectors. Therefore, many would call SM a “Model Favela.” At the time of mega-events, SM went from a few hundred visitors per month to a few thousand (Frenzel, 2016). Currently, tourism development follows principles of community-based tourism. We chose SM as our case study, noting that, while it may not represent the broader situation of favelas in terms of policy and representations, especially compared with those on the city’s margins, this case effectively presents the potential of favela tourism.

A relational approach to favela tourism

Assemblage theory (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) uses post-structuralist and relational conceptual frameworks to describe the dynamic, fluid, and entangled processes that build and make sense of the socio-material world. Assemblage thinking emphasizes the potentialities of multiple and exchangeable relations among material and expressive components that come together and apart in a *constellation* of elements.

Assemblages are never static. Components connect, disconnect and reconnect in processes that define the assemblages’ spaces, identities, modes, and directions. One of these processes is *territorialization*, followed or preceded by *reterritorialization* and *detrterritorialization*. This process, establishes a common sense of identity within the assembled parts, through relations contained by more or less defined physical and symbolic borders. The second process, namely *coding*, *recoding*, and *decoding*, refers to genetic or linguistic resources that stratify the parts into hierarchies, such as laws, policies, and formal regulations (DeLanda, 2006). These epistemologies will help us analyze tourists’ practices and their effects at different scales.

The fluidity of assemblages engages with ontological politics, while assemblage thinking allows us to see the multiple versions of reality enacted (Mol, 1999). ANT provides methodological tools to analyze the practices that enact the different aspects of the real. Rather than a theory, ANT could be better considered a paradigm that brings an ontological stand to study reality as a complex set of relations between multiple and heterogeneous actors (Fariás and Bender, 2010). ANT provides a set of analytical tools to trace the relational practices and spatialized associations of human and non-human (hybrid) actors into more or less stable networks, to describe multiple and heterogeneous orderings of events (Latour, 1999; Law and Hassard, 1999; Van der Duim et al., 2012). When applied to tourist studies, it is a way of doing research that shifts the focus from *what* tourism is toward *how* tourism works (Law, 2014).

The principle of general *symmetry* (Callon, 1986) makes the application of ANT useful to break dualisms and admit analytic categories for a myriad of heterogeneous entities to be considered “actors.” The actors’ relevance and meanings should not be assumed a priori but are mutually constituted through relational processes and through the “intermediaries” they exchange with each other (Ren, 2010; van der Duim et al., 2005). Researchers have used ANT to follow tourism materialities, such as Northern lights (Jóhannesson and

Lund, 2017), tour buses in Berlin (Fariás, 2008), Cuban cigars (Simoni, 2012), and gorillas in Uganda (van der Duim et al., 2014). We see potential for this use of ANT in understanding the creation of the favela as a tourist site.

One of ANT's main goals is to describe the diverse and potential *modes of ordering* of the socio-material world, charted into networks through a process of *translation* (Callon, 1986). The orderings come from tracing patterned practices and relations between people and things that hold networks together (Van der Duim et al., 2012). In this analysis, we will refer to the heterogeneous networks dispersed through time and space as *constellations*.

Critics of ANT allege the difficulties of disentangling and categorizing the socio-material mesh that arises out of various relations. They usually point to ANT as a "weak theory," incapable of grasping political structures and power relations (van der Duim et al., 2017). However, we embrace socio-material complexity and combine ANT methods with assemblage thinking to connect unlikely yet related events, people, objects, and places that engage with tourists' practices through time and space. Moreover, this combined framework allows us to trace power dynamics and political effects, while avoiding moral dichotomies and prejudices. The method sheds new light on visitors' potential role in re-signifying and transforming SM's social and physical realities.

Research design and methods

We chose to analyze the constellations of two favela tours provided by different local guides: tour "with thrills" and "without thrills."¹ The author undertook participant observation from 17 tours in SM between September 2019 and February 2020. Even though the fieldwork strategy consisted of having minimal interventions on tour, all participants were informed of my role as a researcher. During the RJ stay, this author carried out 13 semi-structured interviews and more informal conversations with tour guides, local dwellers, tourists, policymakers, local artists, entrepreneurs, and other relevant actors. Interviews were taped, transcribed, and translated from Portuguese to English, following rigorous privacy protection coding procedures.

From this data collection an ethnographic study was created from field notes and observations, pictures and maps, and informants' reports. Following the general symmetry concept, discourses, objects, technologies, events and institutions were treated as categories of analysis, that is, as actors. This approach was used to trace the relations between hybrid actors by bringing together information from field observation and interviews.

Like most ANT inspired research, the cases provide thick descriptions. However, we sought to enrich the narrative with visual representations. Thus, we produced two diagrams with an application. The constellations' diagrams² help identify issues raised, questioned, altered, and actors made visible, invisible, or valorized within socio-material relations. The graphs were useful to unwrap actor-networks' "black-boxes" (Latour, 1999) since they synthesize complex, multi-scalar and multi-sited relations.

Ordering Santa Marta's mesh

Case study actors

SM hit global news for two reasons during the 1990s. In February 1997, Michael Jackson landed in the favela to shoot the video for his -politically charged- single “They Don’t Care About Us,” directed by Spike Lee. Rumors connected the production team with the local traffic gang (Comando Vermelho), who allegedly provided security staff for the singer. By that time, the government was fighting a war on drugs in SM, also reported worldwide. The video shooting was almost canceled, under the accusations of political and social elites that this would damage the city and country’s international image. Even so, Michael spent roughly 12 hours dancing on one of SM’s best-located rooftops. The video brought wide attention, attracting public figures like Alicia Keys, Madonna, and even Joe Biden. Jackson’s fans would also undertake a pilgrimage to the rooftop from that moment on.

In 2010, the Public Works Company (EMOP), commanded by the Prefecture of RJ, refurbished Michael’s rooftop. They placed a real-size bronze statue of Michael and a large mosaic mural, both made by Brazilian artists. In 2014, Coral Tintas paint company financed a plate telling the story of the rooftop, which the EMOP named “Michael Jackson Space.” However, the rooftop was previously known as *Dedé’s Ambulatory*, which locals named after the late local leader Dedé, who owned the house below. Before his death, Dedé donated the house to place a health care center³. He was a symbol of SM’s resistance and the fight for the community’s rights (Freire-Medeiros et al., 2016).

The EMOP has run a series of urbanization programs since 2007 that drastically reconfigured SM’s physical landscape. They included housing consolidation and upgrading, the construction of sports and leisure facilities, a reforestation program, the provision of sewages and water networks, street paving, staircases, and mobility infrastructure. In 2008, the entity inaugurated the cable car or *bondinho* —as locals call it—which climbs up the hill through five stations with a car exchange in the third station.

Also in 2008, the Prefecture of RJ—requested by the State Government—launched the UPP to dismantle armed traffic gangs and re-establish State’s power. This policy had marketing strategies in its roots. The so-called “pacification” pretended to decriminalize the territory and gain a positive perception from the global audience (Freire-Medeiros et al., 2016). UPPs were placed mainly at favelas in the South area, the city center, and close to events’ venues. SM was the first favela to receive a pilot unit. UPPs still work even though they have been losing funds since 2016 due to the Brazilian economy and political system’s decadence. Hence, UPPs gradually lost power over favelas. This failure fostered the rebound of traffic gangs and more violence.

As controversial as UPP’s results may be, project managers, companies, and tour guides agreed their existence was decisive to booster tourism in SM. Most tourists also admitted that their perception of safety was crucial for taking a tour. Although there are no official statistics, local guides reported around 2000 visitors per month during the pacified years. This number dropped significantly after 2016 (Rodrigues, 2018). Nevertheless, there are still a few tourists almost every day by the time of this fieldwork.

The State Government launched the pilot project Rio Top Tour (henceforward: RTT) as a social counterpart of the UPP under the motto “*Rio de Janeiro under another point of view.*” It aimed to prepare the ground and professionalize dwellers to develop social and economic growth opportunities through tourist products. It combined efforts from the Federal and State governments, the State Secretary of Tourism, private companies like Coral Tintas, SEBRAE, Escola Prado Jr, among others (Freire-Medeiros et al., 2013). The project was funded by the State Secretary of Tourism and the World Bank through open tender. RTT was the first and only public policy to foster Community-based tourism in favelas (Rodrigues, 2018). It was supposed to be replicated in other favelas but then discharged for bureaucratic obstacles and lack of political commitment.

RTT provided professional education in tourism, craftwork, and management for local dwellers. The project also produced promotional material and signs (“no pictures” charts, a tourist map, and directions signs). Also, the State funding agency InvestRio opened a credit line for dwellers willing to start a tourism venture. As a result, two souvenir shops opened in SM and four local dwellers became State certificated guides. Nine other residents took the RTT course afterward, making a total of 13 tour guides. The project manager aimed to create a unified tour company (and brand), but differences between guides made it unviable. Instead, guides started individual or small companies.

In 2013, SM’s tour guides organized a committee to engage local and outside stakeholders. They sought to reinforce community-based tourism guidelines. The guides are also CONTUR (2017) members, a self-convened collective connecting tourism-related parties from 13 favelas in RJ. In addition, other public and private entities like The Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE), were actively involved in this collective’s foundation.

SEBRAE was one of RTT’s strategic partners. It is a private entity that provides training and assistance in sustainable development for micro and small business ventures. SEBRAE collaborated in many tourism projects in favelas from 2011 until 2016, envisioning the commercial opportunities they represented during mega-events. The company even developed a book guide for tourist favelas. SEBRAE’s structure and private status made tourism projects thrive more efficiently than public ones did. However, the company halted all programs after the UPP failure.

One of SM’s most transformative projects came from the marketing division of the Dutch-owned Brazilian-based painting company Coral Tintas. The company’s project “*Tudo de Cor*” was active between 2012 and 2015, and it involved favelas because they were considered as representative of the “carioca spirit.” One of Coral Tintas partners, EMOP, recommended SM for the campaign. The company donated paint cans and trained dwellers to color around 900 houses, made several murals, and garnished public spaces in the favela. The colorful final result is seen from a far distance and became SM’s trademark.

Since 2016, UNESCO protects SM’s picturesque surrounding landscape under the tag: “Carioca Landscapes between the Mountain and the Sea.” Among RJ’s listed reasons to UNESCO were the mountains’ dramatic shape, historical events, artists representations, and the cacophony of cultural identities—favelas included—. One of UNESCO’s primary concerns and requirements was to manage the “hills’ occupation” in the protected area. A State Committee developed a strategic plan to preserve the central and buffer zones in which SM is located, however, few measures were implemented.

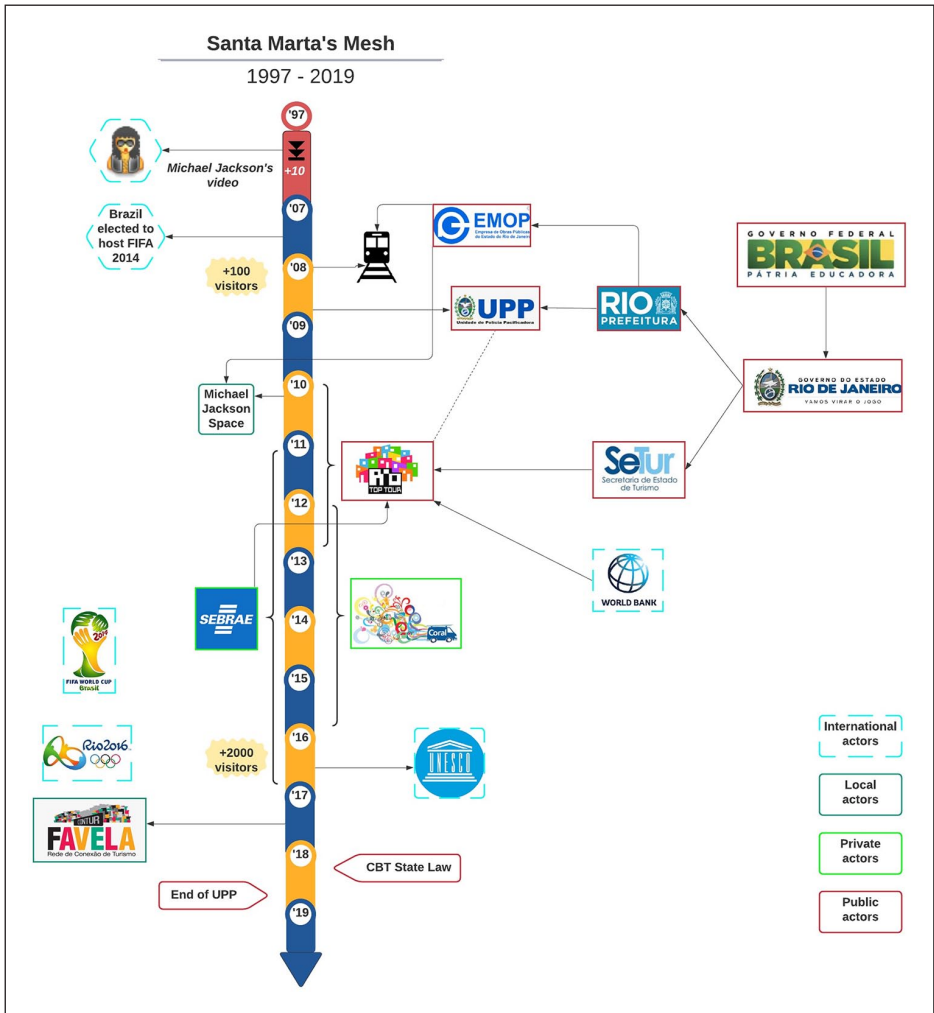


Figure 2. Santa Marta’s tourism actors over time and space.
Source: Own elaboration.

Favelas were also listed in the 2018 Community-based tourism (CBT) State law nº7884. This policy declares *traditional* communities’ commercial value as tourist spaces and prevents them from being exploited by outside agencies. On paper, the law assures that benefits would return to the community, empower dwellers and be respectful of local culture. However, in practice, each tourist favela adjusted a CBT version to meet their physical, economic, and associative conditions (Rodrigues, 2018).

Figure 2 summarizes the actors’ relational practices and the events that produced Santa Marta as a tourist place from Michael Jackson’s visit until the issue CBT State Law.

Tour “without thrills”

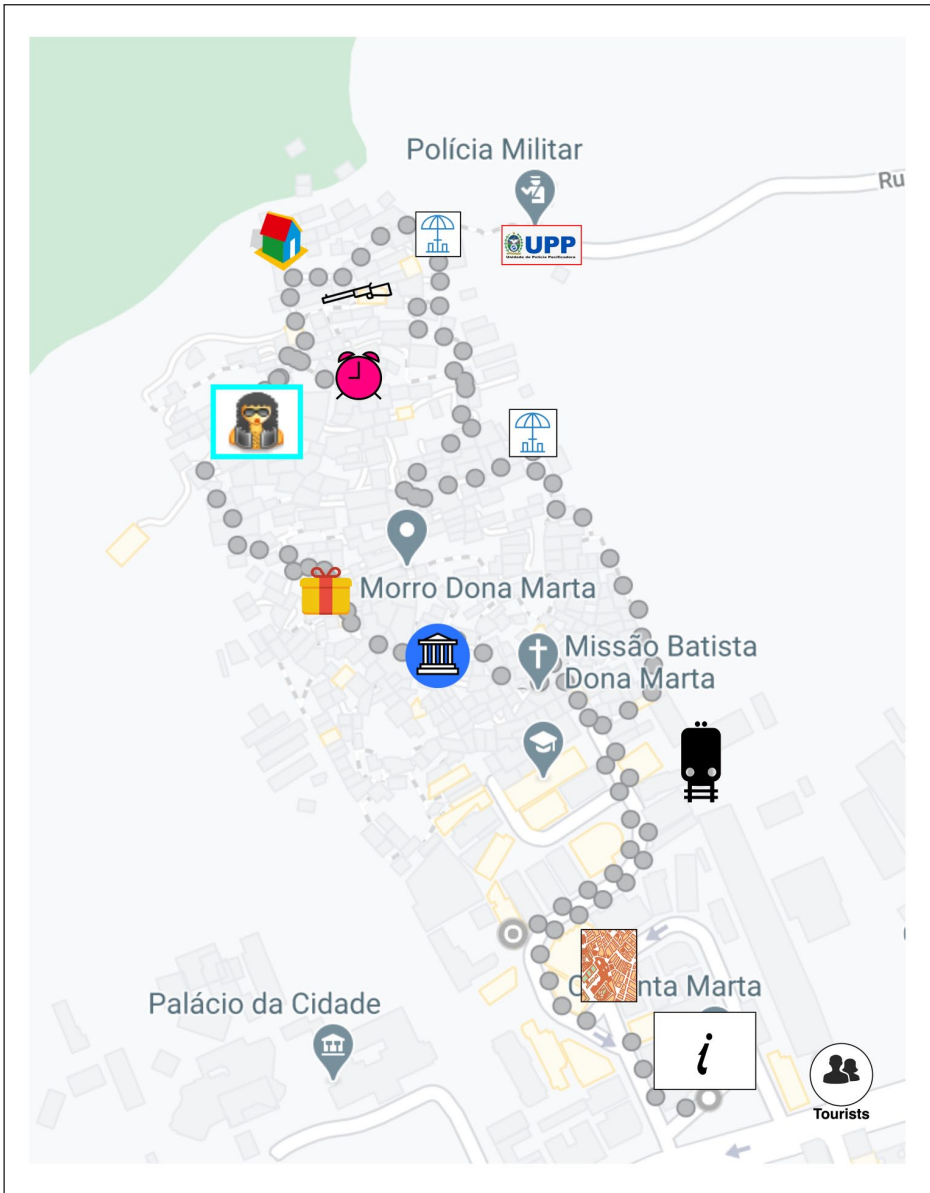


Figure 3. Itinerary tour without thrill.
Source: Google Maps and own elaboration.

Joana was part of the original four guides to receive certification from the Ministry of Tourism. The schedule of her tours used to be busier, yet she still works almost every day. We met with the 2 pm–4 pm tour group at Corumbá square, next to a washed-out tourist information booth. In 2013, the Prefecture allowed the construction of a temporary post for guides to meet their clients. Part of the funding came from the State Government as a donation to the Dwellers Association, plus a smaller amount Joana managed to raise. The guides built the booth with the operational and bureaucratic help from *Tudo de Cor* and RTT project managers. The structure's been there for 7 years and counting, instead of the initial 4 months allowed.

There were five tourists in the group that day. The first to arrive was a Dutch-Indian couple. Joana's friend David picked them up from their hotel. Daniel is a private driver from another favela downtown and ended up joining the tour as well. The couple came recommended by an online travel agency that Joana partnered with. The other three tourists were two women and a man in their 30s from the US. They found the tour in a brochure from the same travel agency at their hotel reception. Joana used to work with other tour operators, but one by one they stepped back due to violent events in SM after the UPP withdrawal. The agency advertises the tour as an unforgettable experience to glimpse residents' daily lives, culture, and social projects. Also, to discover Michael Jackson's music video backstage and legacy. Joana pays this company a third of her tour revenues. "It's still convenient for me; otherwise, it's hard to reach out to people staying at hotels," she explained.

A UPP car stands guard at the entrance of the community. Two, heavily armed officers eat *açai* from a cup, while tourists throw nervous glances at their large firearms. Before starting, Joana gives general information and explains the tour's itinerary on a large-scale map featuring SM's attractions and peculiar sites, which favela residents crafted during RTT workshops.

Before we start, she highlighted the basic rule: photographing people without consent is not allowed -this is to protect dwellers' privacy and for tourists' safety-, only landscape and architecture is permitted. Next, we set out on our way uphill on board the cable car. The car has a limited capacity of 20 passengers, so we waited in line. Some dwellers complained because we outsiders were taking most places in the car, and Joana had to interfere. We came down to the third station to exchange cars, and tourists took the opportunity to photograph the landscape at the viewpoint there. We passed by three unaccompanied tourists, even though the Municipal Agency of Tourism of RJ (RIOTUR) recommends on their website not to visit favelas without a local certificated guide. "THAT kind of tourism is voyeuristic and not supportive of local development! It's dangerous and disrespectful," Joana complained.

The ride ended at the fifth station, and tourists took more pictures at the viewpoint there. We continued to the top of the hill until we reached the UPP headquarters. Joana explained the police role in the favela, the war against drug traffickers, and how things were better during the pacified years. She showed us the bullet holes on a UPP side wall behind a colorful mural, which is a memorial that dwellers insisted on keeping. There were only a few pictures taken there, and more nervous looks at the surroundings.

We passed by the football field where some kids were playing. “This is where Michael [Jackson] landed with his helicopter to film the video.” She told us excitedly. The kids stopped their game to invite tourists to play. Joana translated and encouraged them to get into the field, but visitors refused with suspicion. “Damn! I have a dry mouth!” One of the kids yelled, disappointed. Joana and David bought them two big sodas, and we all walked away.

We walked through runways, stairs, and alleys, passed by several murals, dodged dog waste, waved hands with dwellers chatting outside their doors. “I can’t stop looking at how cute they [children] are,” one of the women said. “And dogs too!” the other replied, admiring a napping dog. We were passing by some bright colored houses, painted by Coral Tintas, when we ran into a teenager with a big rifle. Joana and David were ahead of the group and acted quickly. “Hey, kid! How’s it going? We are just touring around the place!” David threw himself at the boy to hide the gun while pretending a friendly hug. He was there most likely by chance and didn’t seem to care about us, so he complied with David and stayed behind. Only the Dutch couple got to catch the whole scene. They looked alarmed and anxious to finish the tour. Joana glanced at me, with a look of hopelessness. She’s very much against taking tourists to traffic-related sites because “tours should show the favela is not only violence and drugs.”

Before stepping into the Michael Jackson Space, Joana led us to Marcela’s souvenir store. Joana introduced her as the first souvenir shop owner in the favela. Her whole family of five works there. Her 11-year-old son drew a map of the community that they replicated in most of the merchandising products they have available: t-shirts, mugs, coasters, bags, keychains, mousepads, and so on. While I was shopping for yet another fridge magnet, tourists hurried out empty-handed. Outside the shop there were various performances. The couple continued to look uncomfortable, and remained indifferent to these performances. They took some landscape pictures and waited for us to get going. At a far end, the two US women were very excited, taking pictures all around. One of them told me, almost in tears, how surreal it felt to be at the same spot her music idol once was, staring at Jackson’s bronze statue.

We reached *Casa-Museo Dos Religios* after a short walk. Elena, the house owner, wasn’t home to greet us as usual but left her door open for us to visit her collection. Elena’s son is one of SM’s first and most active tour guides, also a local leader and activist. She has a collection of over 300 wall clocks covering every corner of her house. Friends and visitors have sent her pieces from Argentina, Sweden, Canada, Spain, Germany, the US, Mexico—the list goes on. The US men walked in the first, glanced at the clocks, walked into one of the bedrooms, then through the kitchen, and when he was venturing out of our sight to another part of the house, Joana gently prevented him from intruding. “Here’s a money box in case you want to contribute with the clocks’ batteries,” she said before leaving. Only one of the girls left some coins.

We continued our tour on to the second souvenir shop. Inside, we were invited to sit and watch Michael’s music video. Once again, we left our hosts empty-handed. “Enough asking us for money!” the US guy grumbled with one of the girls. The last stop of the tour was the Residents Association, but it was already closed. Most of the guides take tourists to meet with the President. Tourists can ask him questions, and they are always

invited to pose for pictures. Tour guides contribute to the Association with a percentage of tours' fees, which covers part of the electricity and water bills. In an interview, the President had previously acknowledged how valuable tourism was to create jobs and to shed light on SM's struggles. He stated that "international visibility gives us [favela's residents] better chances to step into the State's budget. That's why we post pictures of every visit on our social media." The tour ended shortly after, right where it had begun.

Tour "with thrills"

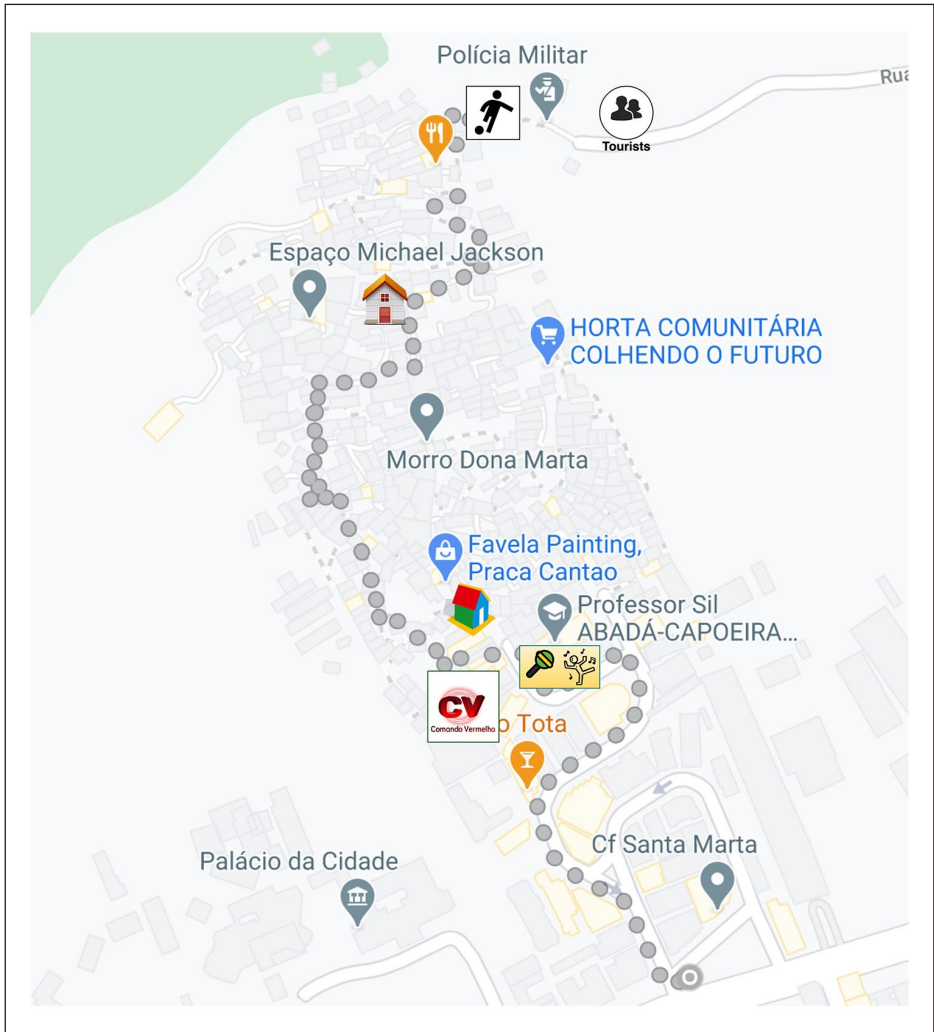


Figure 4. Itinerary "tour with thrills."
Source: Google maps and own elaboration.

The brothers Rafael and Mateo obtained their official guiding certification some years after RTT ended. That afternoon, the tour started on top of the hill in Osvaldo Seabra Street. They chose SM's alternative entrance to avoid fitting the group of 60 Israelis in the *bondinho*. It was the largest group I had seen on tour, but the guides assured me they had taken even larger ones at the best of times.

Rafael and Mateo are partners with an Israeli tour operator. The operator found success among young post-army Israeli travelers, mainly due to blog reviews and word of mouth recommendations. The operator used to take large groups to Jacarezinho, a peripheral favela, however, Jacarezinho lacks SM's charm and it became more unstable and unsafe after mega-events. "This agency works with us exclusively because we are flexible enough to design the itinerary they [Israelis travelers] want. They want to see the *real* favela, not the tourist one," Mateo told me in an interview.

The favela tour comes in a package with other classic experiences in the city. The itinerary posted on the tour operator's website⁴ reads:

Our exclusive tour will show you the authentic favela culture. Samba, Capoeira, Carnival show and lesson and football game. We will go through the favela alleys and see the reality of life in the favela. Despite the incredible poverty, you will see the happiness of the people inspired by their rich culture of sports and music.

OVERVIEW

Football game

We organize a football game, Tourists X Favela locals

Alleys

You will walk through the favela alley's and see the poverty, culture and even meet an Ex-head of the mafia in his 3-story house

Shows

In the samba school of the favela, you will see a carnival samba show and also a capoeira show. This will include a lesson too.

At the end of the tour there will be a deep lecture about the favela culture, mafia, drugs, police, schools and more. . .

The group arrived with an Israeli guide/translator from the agency. The first activity was the football match with a few local teenagers against rotating groups of Israelis. Rafael bought five large sodas and some biscuits for the local team and everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. After 45 minutes, we left for the next attraction.

We reached Rafael and Mateo's second tourist venture -aka "the ex-head of the mafia three-story house": a hostel and rooftop bar under construction. First stop was an indoor jacuzzi facing Christ the Redeemer on the first floor. The rooftop has a hammock, a small pool, a bar and grill, and an impressive view of the surrounding wealthy neighborhoods, beaches, and Botafogo bay. Rafael urged Israelis to save the hostel's location on Google Maps⁵. He explained that Santa Marta is the only favela with most of its streets featured on the app.

After several pictures at the halfway hostel, we resumed the itinerary and ventured into the favela's alleys. I was at the back of the group to see two UPP officers following us. They kept five steps away from us, hiding suspiciously behind the corners and wielding their weapons. The photographer of the group noticed them too and hurried upfront. I got more and more anxious as we came closer to what I knew was our next station. Could that be a surprise police raid and they were using us as shields? No, tourism seems too good a business for everyone here. The officers went rapidly out of sight as we climbed down some wrecked stairs, took a left turn, and arrived at a gray concrete 10 m². The open-air drug market some people call "the Pharmacy."

The Israeli guide started a speech in Hebrew to all of us packed against one of the walls. Four armed young men on the watch, and another three running the exchange table, remained seated, silent and exposed. I asked one of the tourists in English what the guide was saying. "He's saying that if we want to buy drugs, this is the best place to do it because it's one of the largest distribution spots in the city and has the best quality and price." It didn't take 2 minutes for the line of Israelis to set up.

The next stop was the favela's colorful main square: Praça Cantão. Before *Tudo de Cor* project, Coral Tintas financed two Dutch artists to design and paint the houses surrounding the square. The artists used large amounts of green, pink, yellow, and blue, although they could not hide the many bullet holes scattered across the concrete walls. This is one of SM's best-known spots, widely reproduced on tourist brochures, the media, and blog posts.

Our last stop was the samba school. A local percussion band played samba while two women in carnival fantasies performed for us. After a vibrant session, the dancers gave the Israelis samba and funk lessons. Then the local capoeira squad came in to perform and gave lessons too. All of us participated enthusiastically and had fun trying to imitate the performers, with poor success. Mateo and Rafael pay performers a fixed fee to join the tours. They find it essential to distribute economic benefits among the community.

There was supposed to be a "favela masterclass" for the tourists to sum up the experience. Mateo told me they wanted visitors to know that "the favela is not just gangsters. It's the result of the lack of public policies, education, and State intervention." However, by the time the shows were over, heavy rain threatened to flood the place. Thus, unfortunately, the tour ended abruptly, with everyone running to find shelter.

Analyzing Santa Marta's constellations

In this section, we chart and analyze the constellations traced after each tour. The outcome is a messy entanglement of assorted actors. One of ANT's main methodological contributions is enable us to translate the complex and dynamic scenarios of favela tours without following strict categories of human or material elements. We seek to interpret how the assembled parts re-signify and transform during the relational processes that shape the constellations.

The Thrill-less Tour constellation (Figure 5) exposes the myriad global actors mobilizing power over the Brazilian public and private actors. The event showing SM's reterritorialization into global assemblages that are most evident in the example of Michael Jackson video clip. Jackson featured a colorful and joyful image of the favela out to the

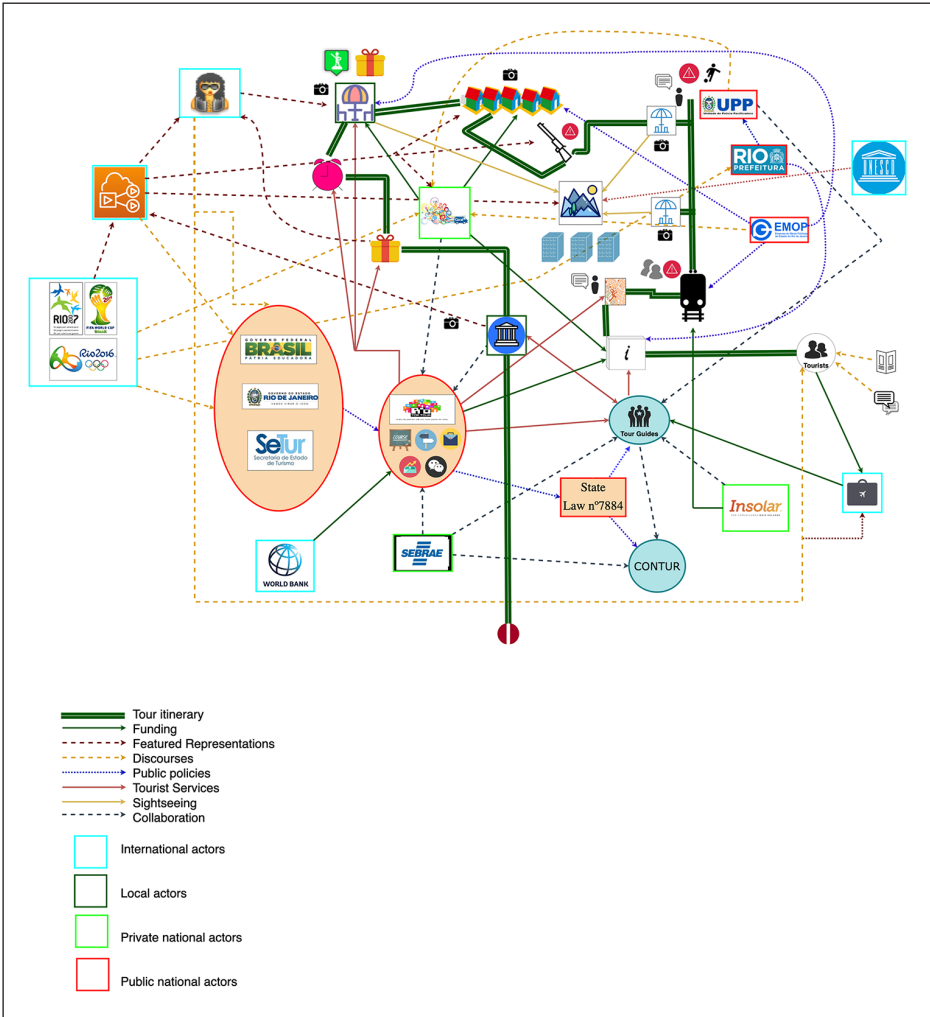


Figure 5. Constellation “tour without thrills.”
Source: Own elaboration.

world. However, that image conflicted with local media representations of SM at the time. The video recoded SM at a political scale: it was among the reasons for the State Government to refurbish the rooftop and name it after Michael Jackson, thus making invisible local narratives. Tourists became co-producers of the rooftop’s new narrative through their valorization of place and history. Hence, Jackson’s visit materialized into public space, while Dede’s Ambulatory disappeared from Google Maps and tour brochures, but not from local myths. Some dwellers and tour guides question this arbitrary attempt of erasing the story behind Dedé’s rooftop.

The timeline and diagram show the triggering effect of sport mega-events in assembling multiple actors from 2007 onward. Policies like *Favela-Bairro* (1994–2000) had

already tackled infrastructure upgrading, shifting the focus from eviction to inclusion of favelas into the city's fabric (Valladares, 2005). However, subsequent policies, such as the *Programa de Aceleração del Crecimiento* (PAC 2007–2010) and the UPP, show how tourism development was instrumental to restructure and reorder favelas territory. For instance, the PAC turned some houses at the top of favela Rocinha into bed & breakfast accommodations (Freire-Medeiros, 2009a, 2009b). Thus, the focus of the policies implemented after favelas became popular among alternative tourists, shifted toward turning communities into productive territories. Even though policies intended inclusion of the favelas within the wider (urban) constellation, these policies prompted processes of gentrification, cost of living inflation and new waves of exclusion (Perlman, 2016). Thus, State-led orderings produced new forms of segregation and discipline, while making invisible other social uses of space (Comelli et al., 2018).

The role of tourist mobilities is evident in the case of the funicular tram. SM's bondinho was attuned with other "spectacular" mobility infrastructures, like the cable cars at Complexo do Alemão and Providência (inaugurated in 2014, yet out of service since 2016). With cable cars the result was a voyeuristic taken while traveling over favelas, and therefore from a safe distance. Yet, the bondinho was adequate for everyday use in SM adding to the quality of life of most favela residents, especially the elderly (Freire-Medeiros and Name, 2017). Moreover, the EMOP strategically included two photogenic viewpoints at third and fifth stations, reinforcing the value favelas could contribute to tourism.

The assembling of the UPP was crucial for the constellation to expand. By monopolizing the use of violence and then (re)ordering spaces and social relations in the favela, the State effectively turned SM (and favelas in general) into productive territories. Especially in the realm of cognitive capital production, where tourism plays a central role as the marketplace for cultural and cognitive products (Cocco, 2014). Hence, the UPP reterritorialized the favela into global -and formal- networks of capital mobility by promoting tourism practices.

Data shows that during the "pacified" years violence rates dropped (Cano et al., 2012), while tourist visits grew (Rodrigues, 2018). Tour guides agreed on the increased of work opportunities and better conditions in those years too. Moreover, actors like SEBRAE and Coral Tintas took advantage of the international promotion and greater accessibility of favelas, therefore recoding them as traditional and authentic cultural landscapes. UPPs performances were controversial and were criticized for the abuses of power and the fragile provision of public services in favelas (Freire-Medeiros et al., 2016). More importantly, the UPP's failure annihilated many of the relational assemblages forged years before.

In this constellation, RTT played a leading role in producing SM as a tourist site and rewiring and reconnecting social hierarchies. After gaining a new occupation with RTT courses, tour guides emerged as a novel social cluster and became local leaders. This allowed guides to reterritorialize their role within the community and facilitated in the assembling of myriad regional and global actors. Among these actors is the social company Insolar⁶, with whom Joana actively collaborates. The guides also act as mediators between hosts and guests' relational practices; they are co-creators of local narratives and co-producers of tourism materialities, like the information post.

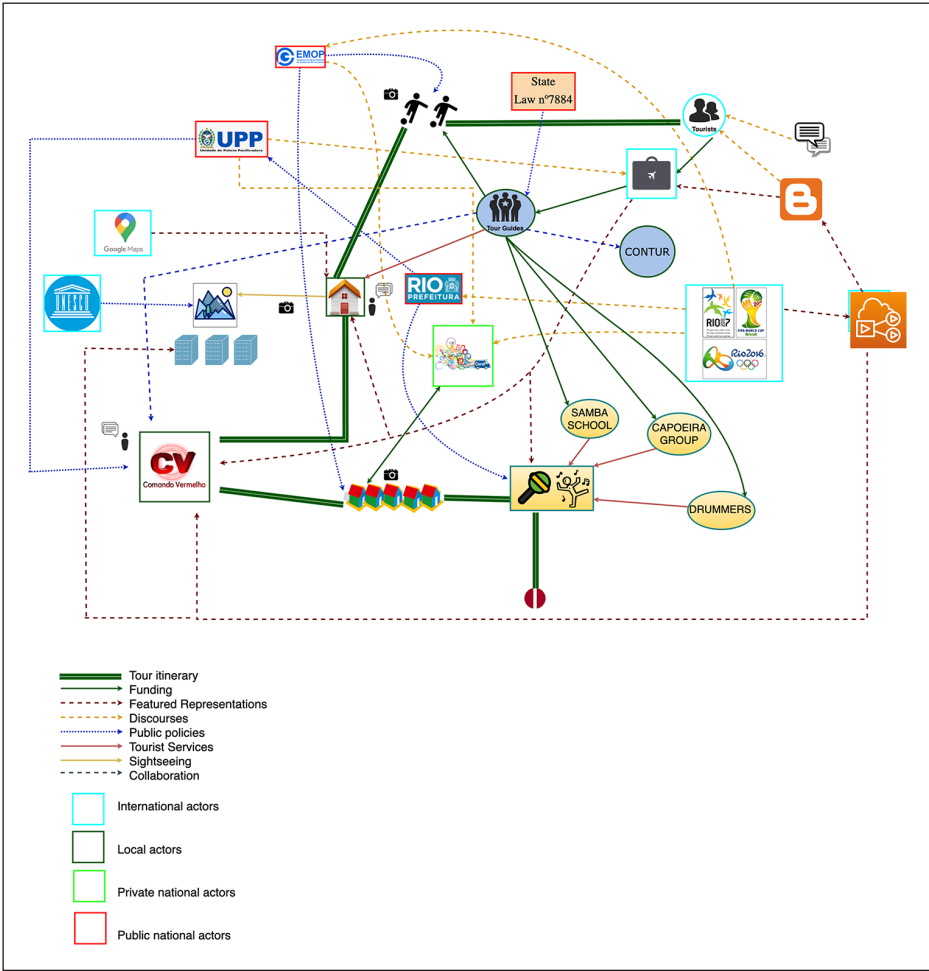


Figure 6. Constellation “tour with thrills.”

The CBT State Law consolidated the relation between the political role of favelas with that of tourism. The law recognized the value of favelas as an important part of the city’s tourism offer while it ordered how tourism should be run. In other words, CBT law recoded favelas as “traditional communities,” thus empowering dwellers to lead tourism development, which left external tour operators outside of the network. However, the outcomes of the law are diminished by the lack of consistency in translating legal discourses into practices and the impact this then had on public policies. This assemblage is probably the most promising to examine for potential avenues of favela tourism development.

At first, the Thrills Tour constellation (Figure 6) seems to assemble fewer actors in a relatively compact network. However, the guides managed to assemble more local actors and intrinsic cultural elements. They made it by mingling dwellers and tourists through

performative events and spatialized practices. In this constellation, Social Networks had a deterritorializing effect on SM's parts. Through social media, tourists became autonomous co-producers of the images and myths associated with favelas, thus valorizing actors beyond hegemonic or formal standards. For example, the Israeli tour operator picks up on what tourists sought to experience in the favela, so, he produced an itinerary "off the beaten track" while coding the favela as a real and authentic place. The UPP's role was decisive in assembling the operator, although the police behavior during the tour was puzzling. Could tourism be translated as a sort of truce between gangsters and the police?

The most radically questioned role in this constellation was the trafficking gang. On the first tour, such trafficking was meant to remain invisible. When coming across a trafficker unexpectedly, tourists experienced discomfort and fear. However, traffickers perform a leading role in this constellation, taking part even in the promotional material available worldwide. Therefore, guides reterritorialize the drug market as an accessible productive place. The traffickers' identities were also recoded: they are part of this version of SM, they are not ruthless gangsters but businessmen. Within this constellation, the drug market was normalized and turned into a common ground for a global encounter.

This constellation brought the most visibility to local cultural actors. Guides managed to engage guests in cultural practices and performances. This bodily engagement recoded the artistic and creative value of the favela's actors. First, tourists and locals stepped away from their cultural differences to have a fair exchange during the football match. The role of the guides as mediators was crucial for this smooth encounter. In the case of the samba and capoeira shows, the performances reinforced the favelas' exoticized myths. The origins of these cultural elements date back to African slavery and emerged in slummed communities. Although samba and capoeira were despised in the early days by the elites, they now lie at the core of Rio de Janeiro's image and imagery. Tourists play a part in popular traditions assimilation by the hegemonic city since they make for an attractive and solicited tourist product (Barbosa, 2010). To an extent, the commodification of popular culture may banalize and jeopardize it. However, the tour gave visibility to cultural producers, giving them a facilitator role of dance and fighting techniques. Tourists' first-hand experience opened the ground for new meanings to emerge beyond the hegemonic staged performances.

The presence of public actors was not as relevant in this constellation. Materials and services that came from public policies like the football field, the lanes, stairs, and the samba school, act as mere containers for other grounded cultural practices like sports, dance, and music. In addition, the media and global actors did not define people and places as happened in the first tour. For example, Joana introduced the football field as "Michael's landing strip," while tourists dismissed local players. On this second tour, Jackson was not even mentioned, and football became the intermediary in which Israelis and locals could encounter one another.

Finally, Google Maps had a reterritorializing and recoding effect since it literally put SM on the map. Through the app, the favela's spatiality found an avenue for legitimization beyond public actors' approval. The Favela actors can potentially take advantage of the freeware that the internet provides for counterhegemonic realities.

To summarize, each tour staged very different socio-material realities. The first diagram highlighted the power of international events and public actors in ordering

SM's spaces and identities. The second one showed local actors still have autonomous capacity to renegotiate the symbols, myths, and tourism places of encounter. The UPP's role proved to be essential for other actors to assemble in both cases. Although sports mega-events triggered new key assemblages, their end meant a setback for favela tourism development. We also identified the role of tour guides as cultural mediators are vital for respectful and fluid interactions.

In both diagrams, landscape played a central role in assembling public and private actors to the constellation. Social media, brochures, and book guides featuring the view. Also, tourists consume and valorize favelas' landscape by various practices, namely photographing and gazing. However, both tours showed how UNESCO's label was not very effective. It was absent in the actors' discourses, and we could not identify any current public policy in this regard. Still, UNESCO recoded SM as a valuable part of the cultural cacophony that makes RJ's cultural landscape unique.

Conclusions

Favelas have a long history of State abandonment and cultural invisibilization by political and social elites. We argued that tourism plays a role in legitimizing and transforming the physical, social, and cultural landscape of favelas. The rational processes that favela tours entail open the possibility for multiple realities. Within these dynamic socio-material realities, favela actors may take new roles and significance.

Combining ANT methods and assemblage thinking was useful to trace the material and associative outcomes of tourist practices. These methodological and epistemological frameworks allowed us to encompass myriad events, people, institutions, and objects, through space-time and beyond moral assumptions. The use of diagrams as a tool for analysis was the paper's most valuable contribution to trace unlikely connections and their effects on people and places. They also helped contrast the very different "real favela" constellations. Moreover, they showed how structures of power and hierarchies were rewired within the relational processes.

Before tourists stepped into SM's assemblages, they were highly territorialized. There was a relative homogeneity in local identities among well-defined symbolic and physical borders, isolating the favela from the rest of the city and the world. SM's cultural elements had low commercial value, as the favela was less accessible to external actors. When international events and potential tourists assembled, the favela was reterritorialized by transcending public/private and national/global scales. The constellations confirmed the relevant role of tourism in making counter-hegemonic cultures and places visible and a significant focus for public policies, and helped question tourist relations with controversial actors like the drug cartel and the police. SM recoded some cultural elements through the valorization practices of tourists. The favela was formally acknowledged as a "traditional community," its members carriers of the "carioca spirit," and a new capitalist marketplace for dwellers, tourists, companies, and governments. However, the lack of continuity and enforcement of public policies, after the hype of events, left a scenario of uncertainty and insecurity for local actors engaged in favela tourism. In addition, the limited understanding tourists had of the complex realities of favelas, and the strong dependence tourists have on guides, might be a source of conflict and lead to the production of additional stigma.

Tourism cannot resolve structural political failures that produced favelas in the first place. However, the visibility brought by tourist practices shift favelas from the margins to take a leading role in negotiating public policies and collecting State funds. As the Residents Association's President stated: "tourists are not the ones connecting the favela with the formal city. It's the State recognizing favelas as a part of the city."

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Notes

1. Tour guides themselves use these tags depending on how tourists sought to experience the favela. "With thrills" if they want to see traffic-related paraphernalia or visit the most impoverished and desperate sections of the community; "Without thrills" if they only want to visit classic tourist sites (like Michael Jackson Space).
2. The apps used for the diagrams were: <https://lucid.app/> for the timeline and <https://app.diagrams.net/> for the constellations one.
3. Currently, the house holds a cultural center run by the NGO *Atitude Social*.
4. Accessed on January 2021: <https://tailorluxurytravel.com/favela-tour/#1545342324506-8e303cc5-b20aedf5-cba1>
5. <https://www.google.es/maps/place/R.+do+Coco+Verde,+3+-+Botafogo,+Rio+de+Janeiro+-+RJ,+21043-042,+Brasil/@22.9470671,43.1965165,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x997fc29f75200d:0xb94cbca29ec34f9c!8m2!3d-22.9470721!4d-43.1943278?shorturl=1>
6. The company installed solar panels to fuel public spaces in the favela, like the nursery and the Residents Association.

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