

Theme and Water Parks in Brazil

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Theme and Water parks in Brazil

Abstract

Theme and water parks are leisure structures found across all continents which function as important tourist spaces. Brazil also integrates this system, with significant examples for analysis. Thus, we aim to apprehend the spatial logic of installation and functioning of these spaces in the country, which induces and at the same time is induced by the process of urbanization and metropolization of space, based on the institution of leisure as a central element in the reproduction of cities and the Urban. As a database, we obtained data from the Global Attractions Attendance report, by Themed Entertainment Association (TEA). The logic to the location of parks was analyzed through multi-scale cartography, mainly regional and metropolitan. The analytical choice highlights the possible relationship between the urban and the touristic by reflecting the role of these parks in the constitution of spatialities like tourist complexes in urban-metropolitan expansion zones.

Keywords: Leisure, spatiality, metropolis, touristification.

Parques temáticos e aquáticos no Brasil

Resumo

Os parques temáticos e aquáticos são estruturas de lazer disseminadas por todos os continentes, configurando-se como importantes espaços turísticos. O Brasil também tem participação nesse sistema e apresenta exemplos caros à análise. Assim, objetivamos apreender a lógica espacial de instalação e funcionamento dos referidos no país convergindo como indutora e ao mesmo tempo induzida pelo processo de urbanização e metropolização do espaço, em tônica basilar de instituição do lazer como elemento central na reprodução das cidades e do urbano. Para análise, tomam-se os dados do relatório *Global Attractions Attendance*, da *Themed Entertainment Association* (TEA). A lógica de localização dos parques

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foi analisada por meio de cartografia multiescalar, mas sobretudo a regional e a metropolitana. A escolha analítica destaca a possível relação entre o urbano e o turístico ao refletir o papel desses parques na constituição de espacialidades semelhantes a complexos turísticos em zonas de expansão urbano-metropolitana.

Palavras-chave: Lazer, espacialidade, metrópole, turistificação.

Parques temáticos y acuáticos en Brasil

Resumen

Los parques temáticos y acuáticos son estructuras de recreación diseminadas por todos los continentes, y son importantes espacios turísticos. Brasil también participa en este sistema y presenta ejemplos propios para el análisis. Siendo así, como premisa, el proceso de difusión de los parques temáticos y acuáticos se entiende como inductor-inducido de procesos más amplios, tales como la turistificación, la urbanización y la metropolización del espacio. Se piensa en un modelo de sociedad en el que la recreación es un condicionante de la reproducción de lo urbano. Como base de datos se utilizarán las informaciones del informe *Global Attractions Attendance*, de la *Themed Entertainment Association* (TEA). La lógica de ubicación de los parques fue analizada vía cartografía multiescalar, pero principalmente, la regional y la metropolitana. La elección analítica destaca la posible relación entre lo urbano y lo turístico al reflejar el papel de estos parques en la constitución de espacialidades semejantes a complejos turísticos en zonas de expansión urbano-metropolitana.

Palabras clave: Recreación, espacialidad, metrópolis, turistificación.

Introduction

In 1978, debuted in the US television the Fantasy Island show. The attraction took place in an insular space, in the Pacific, with access mostly by air. It was not a wild island like that of the castaway Robson Crusoe. In fact, its main attraction – and why not say touristic attraction? – was the fantasy experience based on the deepest desires of visitors.

Hotels, settings and attractions mark the stereotype of the tourist enterprise conceived in terms of leisure (Raluca; Gina, 2008; Milman, 2009). Fantasy Island is a fictional example of the most attractive theme park, given the flexibility of the attractions, capable of individually meeting the wishes of visitors. A bespoke tourist product.

Hollywood fiction reveals other cases creating unique theme parks. Such is the case of the Jurassic Park/Jurassic World film franchise. In the cinematographic sequence, the essence is to genetically recreate extinct prehistoric beings and present them confined to an island as tourist attractions. Based on the reconstructed imagination of film and television, companies disseminate images; studios and other understanding companies take “the worlds” and their respective characters, previously restricted to the screen, and dare to recreate them in theme parks. Spectacles, adventure and games are historical components of theme parks (Ryan; Shuo; Huan, 2010), however, current ones are also characterized by offering safety, control, unity and the commercialization of global attractions (Pan; Bahja; Cobanoglu, 2018; Brougère, 2000).

A world-renowned example is Disneyland. Even though the initial project was conceived and implemented in Anaheim, California, USA, in the late 1950s, it is in the state of Florida, in the early 1970s, around the current Metropolitan Region of Orlando (Sims; Mesev, 2011), that the company founded by Walt Disney is carrying out its far-reaching plan. Annually, theme parks, water parks and resorts attract tens of millions of visitors. This step taken by the Disney group and accompanied by other large companies, such as Universal Studios, produced urban spatiality associated with leisure and tourism. Unequivocally, this model has influenced the creation of parks and similar spaces on other continents (Brunel, 2017). It is even possible to mention the formation of the global “industry” of theme parks (Clavé, 2007).

The strengthening and diffusion of theme parks created a broader process, named disneylandization (Brunel, 2017). It refers to the homogenization of forms, practices and attractions to support the organization of artificial and natural tourist spaces. This process allows us to understand the changes in the imagination and in the view of the contemporary tourist (Urry, 2001). The parks are inscribed in a massification movement, associated with the desire for the simulacrum, for the traditional “false”, that is, “the authentic reinvented better than the original” (Brunel, 2017, p. 193) and, at the same time, they became a multimillion-dollar business (Deng, 2011).

Theme parks are historical products that filter up a clear influence of the urbanism of garden cities, the grandeur of universal exhibitions, theme park games and increasingly, the scenarios and characters of globalized cinema (Clavé, 1999; Bajac; Ottinger, 2010). For Lukas (2008), theme parks can be apprehended by the notions of oasis, land, machine, show, brand and text. They are oases when perceived as a refuge in contrast to the chaos of the “outside world”. In turn, the notion of land reveals the theme park as a composition of places and landscapes in order to generate sensations. Highlighting the machine component reveals the incorporation of mechanized attractions that generate movement, challenge and adventures. These parks are linked to the notion of show, given the constant use of exhibitions and musical-theatrical performances capable of composing a plot. Modern parks build well-known and valuable symbols and brands, hence the notion of brand. Finally, because of the aforementioned ones, the text notion is related to the metonymy that the expression “theme park” embraces. This is because it adds objective meaning, which is naturally absorbed, that is, it becomes synonymous for a place capable of gathering the notions pointed here.

According to Duhamel (2017), such complexes are called *les comptoirs touristiques*, closed spaces with regulated access, occupying important extensions of territories and able to correlate

with other tourist and real estate forms (resorts, condominiums and condoresorts). In other words, it is both about seasonality and living.

As a premise, the diffusion process of theme and water parks is understood as an inducer-induced of broader processes, namely, the urbanization and metropolization of space. We think of a model of society in which leisure is a condition for the reproduction of the urban (Zukin, 1995).

The aim of this article is to understand the spatial logic of installation and operation of theme and water parks in Brazil. For this purpose, we used data from the Global Attractions Attendance report, by the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA). The analytical choice highlights the possible relationship between the urban and the touristic by reflecting the role of these parks in the constitution of spatialities similar to tourist complexes in urban-metropolitan expansion zones. Regarding the exposition of the arguments and procedures explored, the dialogue with foreign researchers stands out in order to mature the notions concerning the urban and tourist functions associated with the park models mentioned. The logic to the location of parks was analyzed through multi-scale cartography, mainly regional and metropolitan.

Parks, leisure and tourism

In countries of central capitalism, the number of parks and visitors indicates their importance for leisure and, above all, for the economy of places. The USA, Japan and Europe represent the main receiving and emitting basins. However, China, as in other activities, keeps strengthening its relevance in Southeast Asia. Like international tourist flow data, Brazil is peripheral both in theme park and visitor number.

The Theme index and museum index report (TEA; Aecom, 2017) inexorably expresses the relevance of the Walt Disney Corporation. Of the ten most visited parks, eight carry the Mickey Mouse brand (Table 1). Asia, and Europe next, represents an important market. Also, according to the report, among the 25 most visited parks are those located in South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, France, Germany, Netherlands and Denmark.

According to Clavé (1999), Walt Disney's feat was to transform the park into a tourist experience, given the lengthening of the stay and, mainly, the average expense per tourist. With the same planning principles, in Orlando, Florida, USA, the Disney and Universal groups produced a cluster of parks, a leisure mega-spatiality. In addition to these two, international groups such as Merlin (British) and Parques Reunidos (Spanish) are seeking new markets to build or buy parks, even in association with local groups.

As an expansion strategy, Marc (2006) recalls the association of American groups with other groups in order to expand borders, such as the opening of the Disney park in Japan in the 1980s, and in France in the 1990s (Altman, 1999; Deville Chabrolle, 1999). On the other hand, the Universal competitor was the first corporation to open business in China, despite the cases of Warner Bros. and Viacom/Paramount Pictures. Due to demographic conditions, cultural openness and purchasing power, the Asian continent has become a privileged space, especially Japan, South Korea and, notably, China.

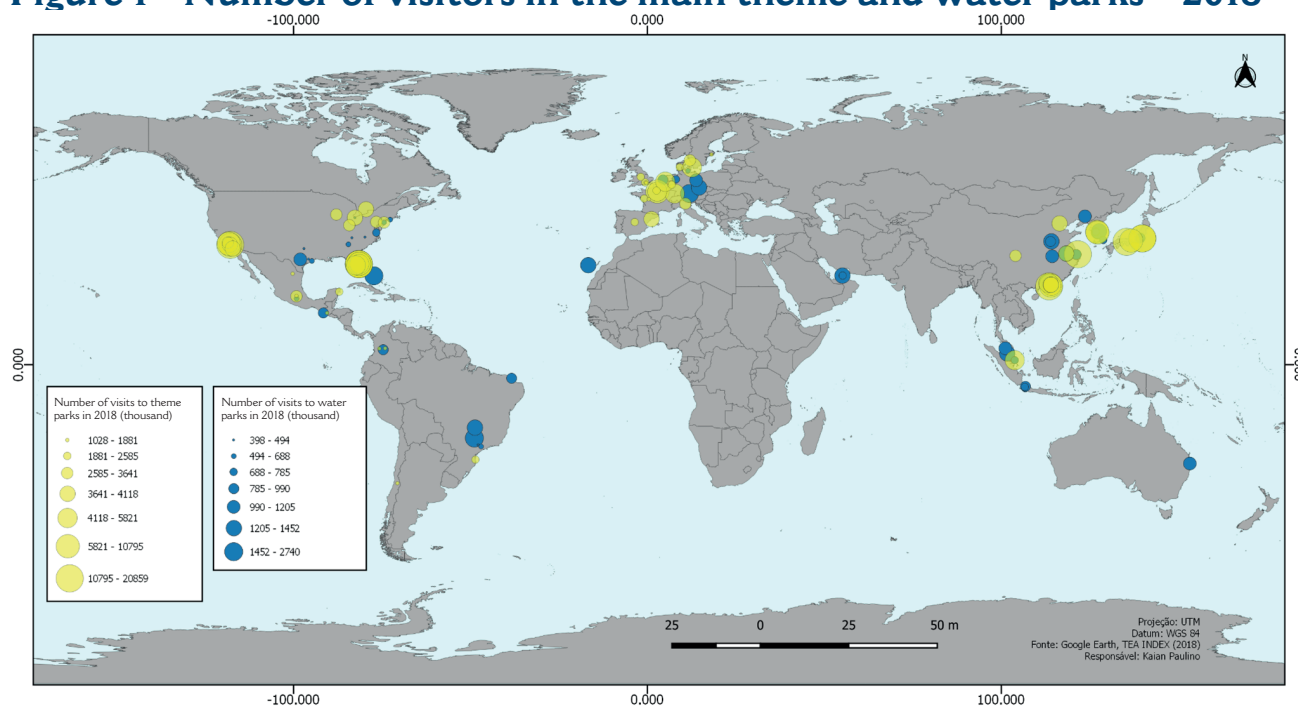
Table 1 – The ten most visited parks and the variation in number of visitors between 2016 and 2017

	park and location	growth (%)	2017 (thousand)	2016 (thousand)
1	Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World, Lake Buena Vista, FL, US	0.3	20.450	20.395
2	Disneyland, Anaheim, CA, US	2.0	18.300	17.943
3	Tokyo Disneyland, Tokyo, Japan	0.4	16.600	16.540
4	Universal Studios Japan, Osaka, Japan	3.0	14.935	14.500
5	Tokyo Disneysea, Tokyo, Japan	0.3	13.500	13.460
6	Disney's Animal Kingdom at Walt Disney World, Lake Buena Vista, FL, US	15.3	12.500	10.844
7	Epcot at Walt Disney World, Lake Buena Vista, FL	4.2	12.200	11.712
8	Hanghai Disneyland, Shanghai, China	96.4	11.000	5.600
9	Disney's Animal Kingdom at Walt Disney World, Lake Buena Vista, FL, US	-0.5	10.722	10.776
10	Universal Studios at Universal Orlando, FL, US	2.0	10.198	9.998

Source: TEA and Aecom (2017).

Updated data from the Theme index and museum index (TEA; Aecom, 2018) demonstrate the world's three great park hubs. The most important ones are the American East Coast, Western Europe and East Asia. In these spaces, the theme parks reach 20 million visitors a year. The water parks, common in the tropical zone, received a maximum of 2.7 million annually (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Number of visitors in the main theme and water parks – 2018



Source: TEA and Aecom (2018).

To explain these locations, Brunel (2017) relates the globalization process to moyennisation, or the growth of the middle class, lending vigor to the consumer market. According to the author, parks make a juxtaposition of reconstructed universes to provide the illusion of reality. The power of the tourism sector is evident, as it is capable of articulating, in each place, the idea of a succession of places (multiple scales).

According to Marc (2006), on average, one in two Europeans visit parks at least once a year. Americans, in turn, do more than once a year. In general terms, the social profile of visitors is made up of families and teenagers. In the case of the Spanish park Port Aventura, a quarter of the 3 million visitors are foreigners and approximately two million (2/3) live two and a half hours away from the park (Marc, 2006). In France, the five largest parks attract 80% of lovers of this type of attraction: Parc Walt Disney Studios (43 km from Paris), Disneyland Paris (42 km), Parc Asterix (46 km), Puy du Fou (382 km) and Futuroscope (322 km; Brunel, 2017; Cazes, 1988).

The classification of parks depends, for the most part, on the variables of magnitude of investment, project dimension, competence, prices, environmental conditions and quality of management (Clavé, 1999). From these, it is possible to correlate their location and coverage, whether regional (serving the nearby population – up to 2 hours of travel by car) or tourist destination (receiving national and international tourist flow). When presenting research results about water parks in Spain, Marc (2006) recalls the particularities of the water environment as a strong attraction and tourist appeal, for example, the Spanish Port Aventura and Costa Caribe. However, there are around 36 parks of this nature concentrated on the southeast coast of the country (Marc, 2006).

In turn, water parks represent an important segment of theme parks. Attractions based on slides and quick dives, currents and artificial beaches demonstrate the importance of water as a recreational and leisure element. For Marc (2006), parks offer an alternative to the pleasure derived from the sea and have been associated, since the 1970s, with the invention and/or adaptation of various nautical or aquatic sports practices. At the same time, in order to avoid loss of attractiveness, there is a continuous movement of innovation and modernization of the park's internal spaces, launching toys, shows and promotions.

Parks in Brazil and their urban and regional dimensions

The economic and touristic relevance of the parks is confirmed by the number of parks and visitors, by their worldwide distribution and, above all, by the economic power of the entertainment corporations involved. Parks are not simple tourist places (Behar-Bannelier, 2008), since they are related to the growth process of urban-metropolitan fringes and/or urban impacts on regional basins.

The location of the parks is explained by the simultaneity of conditions. The first, the favorable geographical situation, is capable of enabling access from urban agglomerations, and the second, of an inductive character, is the process of incorporation of areas, reorganized into urban forms and functions. Baron-Yelles and Clavé (2014) mention that such locational choices are dialectically related by separation and dependence (isolated location – induction – city growth – land price – new zoning). There are, of course, exceptions, given the locational isolation explored as an attractive power by certain theme park models (Brunel, 2017). Authors such as Clavé (1999, p. 96)

advocate for the primacy of analysis to highlight the urbanizing character of parks, since “similar to the city, a park is, fundamentally, a space for population concentration, for carrying out functions, for equipment localization and service provision, however, its urban character is fictitious”. The construction and operation of these leisure developments have a series of consequences registered worldwide: (i) they expand commercial areas, hotels and entertainment areas, (ii) they aggregate and form a broader tourist complex, (iii) influence the redesign of land use planning practices, energy flow management, transport, communication, water and waste management and space conservation and (iv) owner groups are able to associate with the State and acquire organizational and management “powers” over urban space, including public spaces (Clavé, 1999).

In an approach like the previous one, Marc (2006) highlights the peri-urban location of these closed leisure spaces, which demonstrates, in European cases, the tendency of medium-sized parks to build resorts and accommodation in the surroundings.

When investigating Disneyland and Futuroscope parks in France, Baron-Yelles and Clavé (2014) defended the hypothesis that the way of thinking about parks influences the way of thinking about the city, urbanity and leisure. For the authors, the idea applied to parks represents a microcosm and a laboratory for actions (design, words, images, shapes) applied to another scale, that of the metropolis. Such leisure infrastructure would represent the modernization of the metropolis.

These transformations do not happen by chance, given the alignment and public commitment to the existence of parks such as those studied. For both Disneyland Paris and Futuroscope, Baron-Yelles and Clavé (2014) detect a strong transformation of the surroundings, in cities and neighborhoods, directly related to parks. There is spatialization and a large number of urban services powered by transport infrastructure. The suburban growth model is evident (Baron-Yelles, 2006).

But, in Brazil, what is the importance, and how are theme and water parks distributed? In what aspects is there, in fact, a relationship between the location of these developments and urban and tourist growth? In order to point out possible answers to these questions, the analytical-synthetic methodology is indicated, based on exposition from two scales, the regional-national and the urban agglomerations.

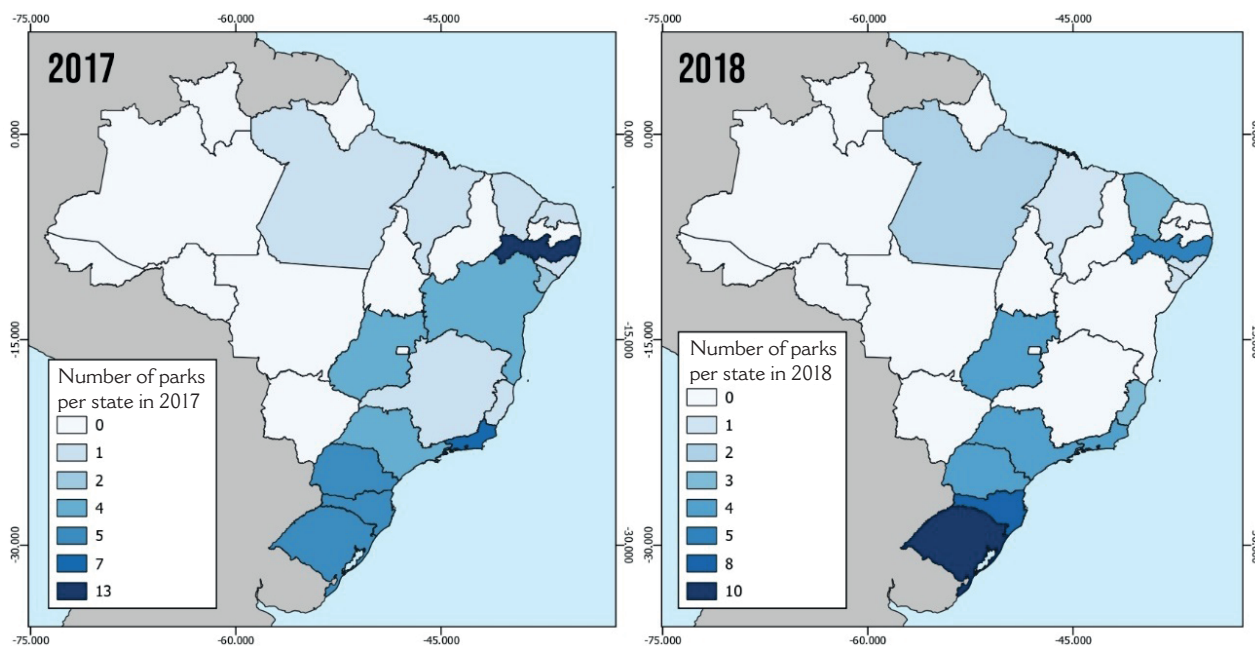
Brazil: parks and regional distribution

According to Ministry of Tourism records, Brazil had 50 theme parks in 2018, six fewer than in the previous year. The biggest change took place in the Northeast region, where this number dropped from 23 in 2017 to 11 in 2018. The opposite movement occurred in the South region, where seven parks were added between 2017 and 2018, recently totaling 22 (Figure 2). In general, the decrease represents the disqualification of small parks or even the closure of companies. But both in terms of size and capacity for modernization, Brazilian parks are modest compared to American, European and Asian ones.

Mapping the number of parks by state gives a first approximation of this geography in Brazil. The states with the highest number of parks are Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Pernambuco, with, respectively, ten, eight and five parks. In the North and Central-West regions, this typology of leisure ventures is concentrated in one state, respectively Pará and Goiás.

In addition to these data, it is necessary to consider information related to size and national and regional relevance, especially the number of annual visitors. Thus, Brazilian theme parks can be classified according to their spatial interaction capacity; in other words, due to the original scope of the visitor flow. About 80% of the parks serve the leisure of populations in cities close to, on average, two hours of travel by car.

Figure 2 – Theme parks in Brazil – 2017 and 2018



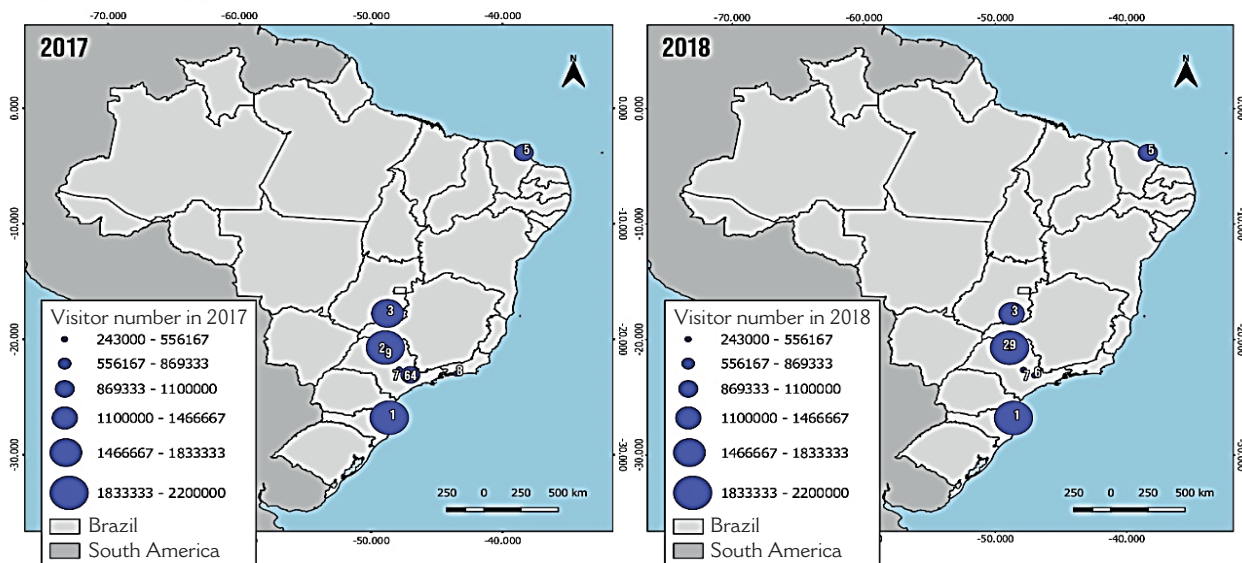
Source: Brazil (2018).

Of the dozens of parks registered in the Ministry of Tourism, data from the TEA and Aecom (2017) highlight nine of regional or national scope, receiving between 243 thousand and 2.2 million visitors/year. In 2018, the number drops to seven, due to the closure of the Rio Water Planet (RJ) park and technical/financial problems at Hopi Hari (SP).

As shown in Figure 3, there are four main hubs to host theme and/or water parks in Brazil: (i) Penha, in Santa Catarina, headquarters of the Beto Carrero World park (2.1 million visitors/year), (ii) Olímpia, in northwestern São Paulo, base of the Thermas dos Laranjais (1.9 million visitors/year) and Hot Beach Olímpia (462 thousand visitors/year) parks, (iii) Aquiraz, in Ceará, Metropolitan Region of Fortaleza, where the Beach Park (950,000 visitors/year), and, finally, (iv) Rio Quente, in Goiás, home to Hot Park Rio Quente (1.4 million visitors/year).

Figure 3 – Visitors in Brazilian theme and water parks – 2017 and 2018

MAPA COMPARATIVO DO NÚMERO DE VISITANTES EM PARQUES TEMÁTICOS E AQUÁTICOS BRASILEIROS, ENTRE OS ANOS DE 2017 E 2018



LIST OF BRAZILIAN THEME AND WATER PARKS IN 2017/2018

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 - Beto Carrero - 2.200.000 / 2.122.000 | 6 - Wet'n Wild São Paulo - 476.000 / 500.000 |
| 2 - Themás dos Laranjais - 2.007.000 / 1.971.000 | 7 - Themás Water Park - 392.000 / 481.000 |
| 3 - Hot Park Rio Quente - 1.481.000 / 1.433.000 | 8 - Rio Water Planet - 372.000 / 0** |
| 4 - Hopi Hari - 1.028.000 / 0* | 9 - Hot Beach Olímpia - 243.000 / 462.000 |
| 5 - Beach Park - 1.028.000 / 950.000 | |

* In 2018 the Hopi Hari park does not feature in the list of most visited parks of Latin America, thus data are not shown in the TEA Index 2018 / **In 2018, Rio Water Planet Park resumes activity.

Projeção: UTM
Datum: SIRGAS 2000
Fonte: TEA INDEX (2017,2018)
Responsável: Kaian Paulino

Source: TEA and Aecom (2018).

Among the aforementioned poles, a subdivision based on the origin of the flow of tourists can be established with two deriving categories. The first includes parks that are heavily dependent on a nearby state or region. In this category are the parks in Olímpia and Rio Quente. Data from the Convention & Visitor Bureau indicate that, in 2014, in Olímpia, about 82% of the visitors resided in the state, whereas in Rio Quente, 63% of the visitors were from São Paulo and 13.5%, from the Federal District (Carvalho, 2015). The proximity and easy access to large urban basins, located in important economic centers in the country, contribute to understanding this picture. The second category is that of parks with national tourist attraction, in which Beto Carrero World and Beach Park are classified. These are important tourist anchors of their respective states, which are on the package itinerary of national tour operators and, consequently, receive tourists from all regions of the country and, to a lesser extent, from abroad (Santos, 1997; Rodrigues, 2016).

Regarding the theme, the water element is the fundamental component of the attractions. Both Themás and the Hot Park, located in continental regions, were built from old thermal water stations. The Beach Park, in turn, is entirely based on aquatic elements and, above all, is located by the sea, including a service structure in the beach area. Beto Carrero World Park is the most diverse, with different stimuli for fun (mechanical toys, zoo, themed shows), including attractions based on aquatic environment (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Mosaic of images and representations of park attractions



Caption: (1) Graphic representation of Thermas dos Laranjais park. (2) Figuration of the attractions of Beto Carrero World. (3) Overview of the Hot Park Rio Quente park. (4) Recognized brand of Beto Carrero World and its attractions. (5) View of the water slides and the Beach Park beach area.

Sources: (1) <https://www.acquathermas.com.br>. (2) and (4) <https://www.betocarrero.com.br>. (3) <https://www.rioquente.com>. (5) <https://www.beachpark.com.br>

Indirectly, Beto Carrero World is linked to maritime activities, given its installation in the Armação seaside resort, one kilometer from the beach area. As with Beach Park, tour packages usually include itineraries that include stays at the main beaches (Florianópolis and Balneário Camboriú) and at least one day for visiting the park.

Parks, the urban and the metropolitan

In cases such as the urban sprawl of Orlando, or even cities in Île-de-France, theme parks induced major urban and regional transformations. For the American case, Clavé (1999) describes the impact of the Disney company on the spatial organization of more than 1,100 hectares. The entertainment company received different conditions to manage the urban space according to its needs, including the possibility of controlling land use zoning and administrative regulation. An urban planning and management model based on business strategies is envisaged.

In Brazil, transformations of the same magnitude and direction are not perceived; however, the urban relevance of parks for the municipalities where they are located is verifiable.

The population profile of the municipalities varies between the small Rio Quente, with an estimated population of 4.4 thousand inhabitants, and the metropolitan municipality of Aquiraz, with 80 thousand. The socioeconomic conditions summarized by the indicators average salary, gross domestic product (GDP) *per capita* and municipal Human Development Index (HDI) indicate similar conditions in the cities of the Center-South and higher than the data found in the city of Ceará (Table 1).

Table 1 - Socioeconomic data of the cities that host the theme parks

Municipality of the parks	estimated population in 2019	average salary (in minimum wages)	GDP per capita in 2017 (thousand)	Municipal HDI 2010
Penha	32.531	2.2	21.7	0.743
Rio Quente	4.493	2.2	74.6	0.731
Olímpia	54.772	2.8	38.3	0.773
Aquiraz	80.271	1.9	27.8	0.641

Source: IBGE (2020).

The annual flow of visitors attracted by the parks compared to the number of inhabitants in the municipalities is an interesting indicator of the socio-spatial impact. Beach Park annually receives 12.8 times the population of Aquiraz; Thermas dos Laranjais, 36.5 times the population of Olímpia; Beto Carrero World, 67 times that of Penha and Hot Park, 318 times the population of Rio Quente. These flows refer to the need for transformations, especially in view of the construction of tourist and real estate projects in the areas surrounding the parks.

In 2010, the city of Olímpia had 3 thousand accommodation beds and, in 2018, the number increased to 22,700 beds. These changes are explained by the construction of 6 resorts, 22 hotels, 55 inns, 2 farm hotels and 2 hostels, and, equally, modern ways of acquiring the right to use real estate can be seen, such as the multi-property model (Toledo, 2020).

The other thermal water station, Rio Quente, is the tourist destination with the highest level of organization regarding national and international tourist demands. In addition, it has 45.46% of its households in the occasional use category, the majority in flats, residential hotels, condohotels and in the form of traditional second homes (Carvalho, 2015).

In the case of Beto Carrero World (BCW) and Beach Park (BP) parks, there are noticeable differences in the spatial organization of their respective surroundings. On the one hand, constructive impacts can be seen following the standard of a bathing resort, that is, agglomeration of secondary residences, real estate-tourism projects, in addition to other means of accommodation. On the other hand, the relevance of tourist flows attracted by parks is diluted or reverberated in broader urban and regional contexts.

The municipality of Penha, and more specifically, Praia de Armação, host BCW and present economic and tourist repercussions to the point that the city is known as the city of theme park tourism. However, in addition to the area occupied by the park (more than 1.5 million m²), modest means of accommodation are found, such as inns and small hotels. There is a significant difference regarding the concentration of real estate and tourism patterns found in Olímpia and Rio Quente.

It is believed that the effects, in this case, are spread in other resorts and cities, as seen in the park's proximity to the cities of Florianópolis (110 km), Curitiba (198 km), Balneário Camboriú (35 km) and Itajaí (23 km). In addition to distances, the access infrastructures facilitate travel by air (Florianópolis and Navegantes airports) and, by land, via the BR-101 coastal road (Figure 5). At the same time, it is worth remembering the distribution of tourist effects in a circuit of coastal resorts, called Rota do Sol and including the beaches of Balneário Camboriú, Itapema, Bombinhas, Porto Belo, Itajaí and Balneário Piçarras. Thus, the model based on accommodation

(stay) at any of these beaches and daily displacement (without overnight stay) to visit the park is understandable.

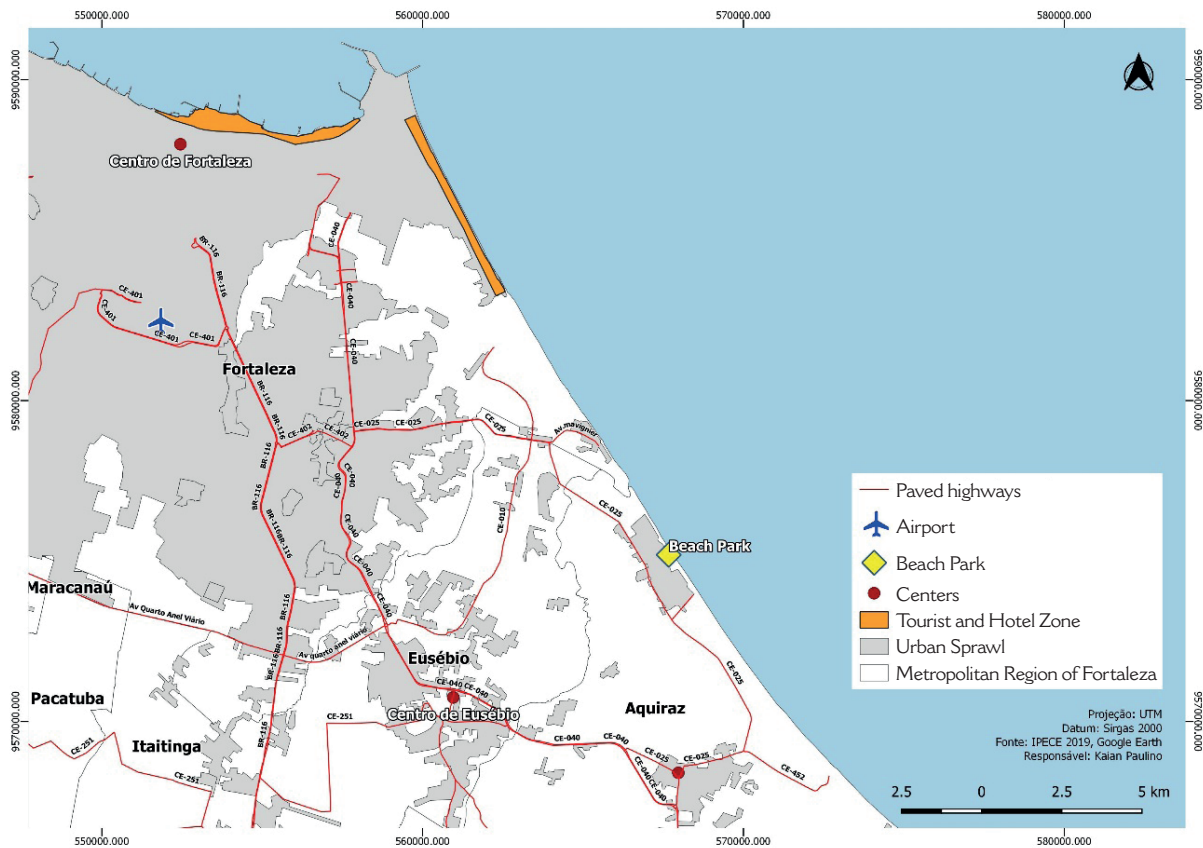
Figure 5 – Geographic location of Beto Carrero World



source: IBGE (2020) and field work.

The geographical situation of BP and the effects on the spatial organization of its urban site are hybrid compared to the other cases described. The first difference is its insertion in the fabric of a metropolis with more than 3 million inhabitants, as well as its proximity to the city of Fortaleza (23 km from the international airport and the main hotel zone; Figure 6). This location allows part of the BP visitors to visit Aquiraz solely to use the park on the CE-025 highway and stay in the state capital or other resorts in the metropolis, a possibility that shows the flows capable of interconnecting intra-metropolitan leisure spaces.

Figure 6 – Geographic location of Beach Park



Source: IBGE (2020) and field work.

BP derives from a restaurant by the sea, occupying a megalot in a land parcel established in the 1980s; the diversification of attractions and national recognition began in the 1990s. Initially surrounded by individual (single-family) secondary residences, in the 2000s the large seafront lots were occupied by vertical residences and resorts. The business group that manages BP increased its strategy and, in addition to entertainment, included itself in real estate and hotel production with the construction of projects fully or partially integrated into the park (Acqua Beach Park Resort, Suites Beach Park Resort, Wellness Beach Park Resort and the Beach Park Oceani Resort; Paiva; Diogenes, 2017).

In an interview recorded on the website of the Association for the Development of Tourism Real Estate (ADITBrasil), Murilo Pascoal, CEO of BP, records the changes in the park's business plan, highlighting the growth in the number of employees, visitors and the opening to hotels and real estate. Recalling the importance of the Vacance Club for the company, the manager highlights the objective of expanding the number of available apartments, reaching 1,000 units. At the same time, the interview highlights the importance of land ownership in coastal spaces, given the lack of empty lots continuous with the park. The respondent mentions plans to build a new park, smaller than the current one, also located in Porto das Dunas and with capacity for 2,000 people/day (Cavalcante, 2020).

From the first decade of the 21st century, in the Porto das Dunas resort, under the strong influence of BP's tourist image, one finds developments such as Aquaville, Parque das Ilhas, PortaMaris Resort Condominium, Vila do Porto Resort, Paraíso das Dunas, and Oceani Beach

Park, Atlantic Palace Apart-Hotel, Scopa Beach Resort, Beach Living, Beverly Hills, Condomínio Mediterraneo, Condomínio Porta Firenze, Beach Way Residence, Condomínio TerraMaris, Condomínio Gransol, Condomínio Costa Blanca and, the newst, Golf Ville Resort and the Mandaras Lanai and Kauai. Unequivocally, the taste for the sea and the maritime associated with the positive synergies derived from the constant updating of the park provided a significant dynamic in the real estate and tourism market (Pereira; Gomes, 2018; Pereira; Cunha, 2019).

The park and the tourist and real estate developments are the basis for the production of space on this stretch of coast. Companies, by spatial selection, repeat the practice of cohesion, interconnectivity and synergies between leisure enterprises. However, unlike the large urban operations of parks in Orlando or around Paris, especially in the case of Porto das Dunas, the transformation of the area takes place through the addition of buildings, but without urban redefinitions to improve public spaces (streets, sidewalks, squares, beach access). The basic marks of the occupation are given by the subdivision in the 1980s, and services are the responsibility of the municipal administration, including serious complaints about the lack of paving, drainage of streets and urban furniture.

In addition to infrastructure, another mark of the relationship between parks and the State is the fiscal issue. In this sense, both for expansion and operation, there is constant negotiation in order to convince public administrations to grant exemptions or reductions in tax rates. BP, for example, for future installations, announced an agreement with the state of Ceará and the municipality of Aquiraz and guaranteed 100% exemption from the Circulation of Goods and Services (ICMS), in addition to other benefits associated with municipal taxes (Tax on the Transmission of Goods and Taxes – ITBI, Tax on Services – ISS and Urban Property and Land Tax – IPTU). The company J. B. World Entertainment, owner of BCW, pleads with the city of Penha to pass the ISS rate from 5% to 2%, a reduction that would yield million-dollar annual savings. In addition to tax exemptions, lower cost loans also mark the relationship of this type of undertaking with the Brazilian State. For its expansion, the park located in Santa Catarina invested around R\$ 89 million in 2019, of which R\$ 50.4 million were lent by the National Development Bank (BNDES, 2019).

Undoubtedly, parks in Brazil transform places through installations and the attraction of developments aimed at leisure, tourism and real estate dynamics. Furthermore, when considering the urban population expression of the municipalities where they are located, it is possible to verify the promotion of urbanization in the territories. Nevertheless, they represent, first, decisive economic players for the municipalities due to services; and second, its leaders become agents producing the territory, given the growth of the hotel and real estate market that they induce.

Final considerations

Theme parks reach the 21st century as important inductors of world tourist flow. They gain space both in consolidated destinations (Paris, Orlando) and new ones (Singapore, Seoul, Shanghai). For this, the big entertainment companies have a prominent role, especially Walt Disney. These are effective in disseminating, modernizing and creating patterns that are replicated in parks around the world. Even today, companies promote an inseparable relationship between cinema, television programs and the reinvention of these tourist spaces.

Brazil is on the periphery of this circuit, with modest numbers compared to Europeans, North Americans or from East Asia. As is characteristic of the Brazilian tourist flow, the four main parks have most of their visitors in domestic tourism. With regard to the thematic dimension, the spatialization of parks in Brazil is clearly explained by its relationship with water. The main parks are located in three states located in the Central-South region, with Beto Carrero World being the most complex and close to the international models of theme parks. The locational exception is Beach Park, in the Northeast, intrinsically associated with modern maritime life.

On the scale of induced urban transformations, one can see the level of centrality constituted with the installation and development of parks. In the case of those located in Olímpia and Rio Quente, there is a redefinition of the built space with functional specialization and association between parks, hotels and buildings for seasonal use. Urban centers become intrinsically dependent on these leisure structures, more strongly in the case of Rio Quente. In Penha, Praia de Armação hosts the Beto Carrero World and is part of a network of coastal resorts, including the beaches of Florianópolis and Balneário Camboriú. The park is an important element of a network of tourist spaces, the main one in the southern region of Brazil, which also comprises a dense road network and two airports.

Of the large parks in Brazil, Beach Park is the only one located in the metropolitan fabric. It integrates and promotes centrality in the metropolis with a strong tourist and leisure function. From the 2010s onwards, the association between the activities of the park, hotels and the interests of real estate development guides the production of urban space. The road axis of CE-025, in addition to accessing and connecting the metropolitan headquarters to the park, becomes a zone in demand for tertiary activities and other real estate products, with a certain densification of urban forms. It is thought that there is a direct relationship between the spatiality of leisure in Porto das Dunas and the mentioned metropolitan changes.

Finally, both due to changes in the fiscal order and investments in access infrastructure, public resources are used for such changes in the tourist space. The managers of parks and other leisure companies are constantly negotiating with different executive public managers in order to expand tax exemptions (Beto Carrero World) and build non-existent urban infrastructure (Beach Park).

A logic of spatial planning is established, associated with a model of society in which leisure has a preponderant role in the constitution of the city and the urban, reinforcing the urbanization and metropolization process associated with the interests of tourism and real estate entrepreneurs on a national scale. A fundamental approach genre that will be complemented, in future studies, with an analysis of social impacts (slow and gradual expulsion of traditional communities from their territories) and environmental impacts (degradation of geosystems).

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Authors' contribution:

Alexandre Queiroz Pereira: systematized secondary data and interpreted the relationships on the international and national scales; tracked and interpreted the state of the art (parks and urbanization); organized and produced the cartography and other illustrations; constructed the method of exposition, the arrangement of arguments and the interpretation of all data; did the fieldwork and evaluated the post-review text, suggesting parts of the conclusion.

Eustogio Wanderley Correia Dantas: systematized data and secondary sources to analyze facts on an urban scale; interpreted the state of the art in themes related to metropolization and urbanization of the coastal space; organized and produced the cartography at the metropolitan and regional scales; constructed the method of exposition, the arrangement of arguments and the interpretation of all data; evaluated the post-review text, suggesting the insertion of new international references.

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