

The 5th International Conference on Architecture and Built Environment with AWARDS

CONFERENCE S.ARCH 2018 ARCHITECTURE AWARD

CONFERENCE – THE WAY IT'S MEANT TO BE 22-24 May 2018 | Venice, Italy

THE BRAZILIAN SHANTYTOWN AS AN URBAN PROBLEM AND A COMPLEX METAPHOR: THE DESIGN OF THE CAMPANA BROTHERS

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1 Abstract

Countries on the periphery of the global economy have turned squalid, unhealthy and precarious conditions - among other adverse features often disapproved of by society - into 'different' and exotic images that can acquire a new value. This aggregate value and the resulting imagistic transformation is, for certain societies, turning these sights into a consumer spectacle, as is apparent on the hillsides of Brazil. Manipulating the image can distort the reality of a locality, society or culture, with a view to selling and purchasing a visual world that is seeking to become commercialized. The attempt by the global economy to take hold of certain peculiarly Brazilian features has reached the point of being "seemingly paradoxical", although in this case, key strategies can be noted that increase the consumption of its specific products. For example, there is the sale of particular Brazilian images to consumers in the tourism industry that seek to reconcile the "beautiful" with the "ugly". These include the commercial exploitation of slum tenements, the shacks in the shantytowns, all of which provide evidence of the social inequality in Brazil and in particular, the insecure state of the poor dwellings scattered throughout the country. All this is being appropriated and marketed as package tours or even as objects of design. In the light of this, this study seeks to analyze the appropriation of the irregular shapes of the shacks in the shantytowns formed by the duo of Brazilian designers Fernando and Humberto Campana, known as Campana Brothers, who aim to create different images and hence, make their products like the "*Cadeira Favela*" [Favela Chair] better known and more widely used. This provides striking evidence of the current economy strategies and seek to capture the peculiar urban space's features for the creation of images of products of design.

2 Keywords

Architecture; Visual Arts; the Campana brothers; Interdisciplinarity; Image.

3 Introduction

Based on the theoretical framework of the research studies conducted by Edgar Morin on Simplifying and Complex Thought, the Simplifying mode is regarded as being rooted in

reason, in rationalism and in rationalisation, in other words, in a simplification of thought. It can be noted that the foundations of this classical mode of scientific thinking, often referred to as "simplifying", are undermined by the development of a new, more global way of thinking, which does not aim to create a rupture with previous thought, but rather to develop a way of thinking together. This new way of thinking is called Complex Thought [1].

Complex Thought is based on complexity. The word is derived from the Latin *complexus*, meaning "to weave together". This contemporary approach to thought is capable of bringing together, contextualizing, globalizing and, at the same time, recognizing that which is unique, individual and concrete. According to Morin [2]:

"It should be noted that the principles that rendered scientific knowledge more dynamic, and which have proven to be extremely fruitful, now pose serious problems. What are these principles? We can summarise them as follows: it is the principle of simplification. The objective of scientific knowledge is to say: 'You see, we are apparently in a universe of multiplicity, of diversity, of chaos'. However, this apparent chaos dissolves as we discover the simple laws that govern it."

From a contemporary viewpoint, it must be understood that the Simplifying Thought has been supplanted and that Complex Thinking is still in development. The principle of simplification still remains largely dominating and this is reflected in the project-oriented design process. Some designers promote the espetacularization of "specificities", or peculiarities that make up the identity of certain communities and differentiate them from the whole of mass culture society, as a means to produce and market different products, thus turning this cultural singularity into a consumer good.

In this context, the main theme of this article can be introduced: the complex metaphor of the Cadeira Favela. Despite its various contradictions, many of the images that have been produced and sold of particular aspects of the *favela* (or slum) foreground it as a place that is different, exotic, eccentric, an area wherein multiple social and cultural dynamics converge, and not only as a place that is irregular and problematic, and the basis of drug trafficking and violence. In a certain sense, it is about rendering the problematic differential as something romantic, turning it into a saleable commodity. Grounded in a "Simplifying Capitalist Thought", the gravest, most important problems of the *favelas* are "relegated as second-order issues" when businesses champion their interests and needs for appropriating and exploiting different aspects of an image of the *favela* deemed as exotic. In this way, the real problems are trivialised for the sake of selling an exotic image solely intended for consumption, which will ultimately only bring benefits to and generate profits for big business owners.

In this way, the images of the labyrinthine/excluded/physical and social spaces of the Brazilian *favelas* are incorporated into products to boost their consumption and play up an image of slums as exotic and eccentric pieces of merchandise, "gift-wrapped" for the consumption of a global elite. Yet, merely carrying out an analysis of Simplifying Thought centred on capitalist profit strategies will only weaken the analysis of the aggregate whole, which essentially is the perspective we seek to provide through this study.

4 Critical Reasoning

In the global economy, images of what is deemed unique and distinctive are easily turned into products that are potentially suitable for consumption and marketing, in turn generating

high profit rates for companies. In this context, one of the main strategies adopted for generating profits is the creation of images considered different or 'novel' and unique, which can be rendered into "products" that can be commercialized in the global market. In many cases, the process of capturing particular aspects as well as encapsulating the product's specificities vis-à-vis cultural, local, urban, architectural, artistic and musical elements that are distinctly Brazilian, provides a unique image that is then used to promote products that are classed as "symbolic capital" to boost sales.

Corporations and/or designers frequently appropriate images related to "the minorities", such as blacks, Indian peoples, slum dwellers, converting them into a "commodity image/product". Individuals and/or companies that capture images pertaining to or involving minorities and those living under inequality, merely to improve sales performance, and are not concerned with the social problems affecting these communities, nor with ideals of equality of race, ethnicities or gender, but rather with the "use of their images of identity" as a product looked on as different and "exotic".

The creation of images interpreted as different, extravagant, exotic and eccentric - mainly to add value to the products - is one among many strategies of the global economy: image-consumption-profit.

In Brazil, both the specificities and the identities of Indian peoples, of the Amazon, of Carnival, of mulatto women, of beaches and the slums are often appropriated and manipulated by and for the market, qualifying them as marketable commodities offered as an "exotic view" of the country.

4.1 Tourist strategies and the image sale of that which is unique

Tourism features as one of the main economic activities that make use of the image of "uniqueness" as a product for consumption. The invention and mythification of cultures and places by the media and travel agents, which offers the advantage of selling them in advance as a commodity for symbolic and immediate exploitation characterizes tourism as a phenomenon of communication and consumption. Within this context, images, the landscape and the physical and visual attributes of places can be turned into products and enterprises - namely, into "invented places" [3], whereby consumption and fruition begins even before the consumer's actual physical displacement, simply by means of image contemplation and through the circulation and dissemination of information.

Goodey emphasizes that at this time and age the differential impact of tourist destinations is the variety of content and particular appeal of each destination. In this way, "any building, association or event can be marketed and consumed" [4]. Still, all things need to be prepared and made suitable for commodification based on leisure and consumption criteria formulated and inspired by the media, which transforms elements of daily life into a simulacrum, into fantasy, into representation and/or images packaged and sold by tourism.

In this sense, tourism directly promotes and even appropriates the creation of "scenarios", converting them into a commodity. This is no different in Brazil. Tourism was predominantly structured around the multiple cultures present in the country and their particular historical contexts and traditions, and around the remolding and blending of folklore and popular festivities into tourist goods, ultimately transforming culture into a spectacle for consumption.

Research studies such as "The Production of Tourism: Fetishism and Dependence", by Helton Ricardo Ouriques, and "Popular Cultures in Capitalism", by Nestor Garcia Canclini, are extremely important to enhance and deepen the understanding of the production and consumption of the "unique image of Brazil" in contemporaneity.

Ouriques [5] states that:

In the field of tourism, it can be observed that the issue of the "exotic image" is one of the principal dynamics of the production and sale of tourist commodities. (...) for example, it is not surprising that Caribbean voodoo rituals are staged for tourists, nor that visits to Candomblé ceremonies are offered on a regular basis in Bahia... The 'whimsical' and the 'exotic', namely these "primitive rituals" transformed into commodities, inevitably end up reaffirming the colonial stereotype: on the peripheral areas of the large cities, 'they' still perform barbarian rituals.

The different, the "exotic" are notions that structure the general capitalist dynamics of tourism. In their respective works, both Ouriques and Canclini address the production and consumption of a number of "exotic" images related to tourism which are also very close to the "images of singularity and uniqueness" employed in the production and consumption of fashion and design goods.

The commercialization of the image of culture and of place has long become an important product of the tourism industry. In many cases, for example, the image of the Brazilian Indian is sold, thus commercializing expectations about the traditions of the "exotic", the diverse and different Other. However, it is not always possible for the "scenario of the spectacle" to reproduce the image of that which is thought of as exotic, and at the time of consumption cause disappointment to tourists when they see that the Indians are not covered in body paint nor clothed in loincloths and headdresses. In this case, the image which is 'sold' of that "minority" no longer coincides with current reality, but the market (re)builds this image and sells it as an image of the singular.

Canclini [6], using this same line of approach, says that popular culture has become a commodity of global capitalism, and that traditional popular culture serves both for the reproduction of capital as well as for a hegemonic culture:

What does the tourist see: ornaments that he can buy to decorate his apartment, 'savage' ceremonies, evidence that their ["globalized"] society is superior, symbols of exotic trips to remote places, and hence, of their purchasing power. Culture is treated in a similar way to nature: as a spectacle. The past blends with the present, people have as much meaning as stones: a ceremony of the day of the dead and a Mayan pyramid are both scenarios to be photographed.

Thus, for the consumption of natural images, the spectacle and its scenario are (re)created, becoming important tools for the production of income. The spectacularization of culture/place creates expectations in the minds of the consumers and in this context as a whole, and the use of the landscape, either natural or constructed, as the scenario for the spectacles is absolutely essential. The consumption of the scenario of slums, paradisiacal beaches, urban regenerations and renewals (ports, central areas), areas of architectural heritage, architectural buildings, among others, are strategic for the consumption of the image of that which is different.

The manipulation of the image can distort the reality of a place, society or culture in favor of the sale and consumption of something intended for commercialization. The capturing of

some Brazilian singularities by corporations is "apparently contradictory" noting, in this case, important strategies to encourage the consumption of a specific product. For example, the sale of unique Brazilian images for tourism consumption that promote the reconciliation of the "beautiful" and the "ugly" (wholesome/insalubrious), such as the commercialisation of a landscape of tenements, *favela* shacks or squatter settlements set up by Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST), which reveals the social inequalities present in Brazil and, most importantly, the precariousness of housing across the country. Currently, all this is appropriated and traded as a mere commodity - in some cases as tourist packages and in others as objects of design.

Corporate business strategies transform the ugly, the insalubrious, the precariousness into images rated as different and exotic and render them into a spectacle for consumption across specific market segments and societies, as happens with the Brazilian *morros* (or hills, where most *favelas* are located, in the case of Rio de Janeiro), which became a marketable commodity.

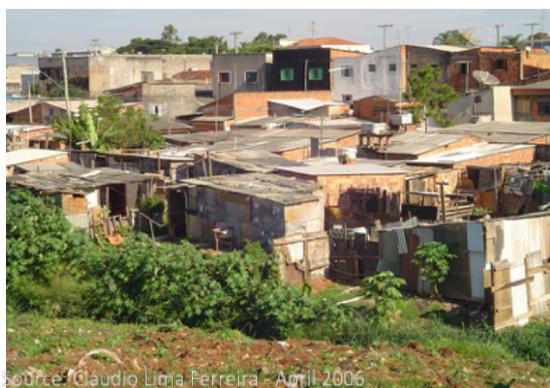
Discussing and understanding the production and consumption of the image of the singular in tourism helps improve the understanding and the development of critical analyses of other areas where the same issue arises. In tourism, the use of the image of uniqueness transformed into an organized spectacle of consumption can be more easily diagnosed due to its recurrent use in advertising and propaganda. When it comes to capturing and making use of the image, the dynamics of consumption is generally the same for most categories of products. What changes is the means employed: tourism, design, architecture, urbanism, natural landscapes, society, physical, urban or open spaces, among others. Based on the understanding of this correlation, an analysis of the "Cadeira Favela" and "Sofá Boa" is presented below - created by the Brazilian designers Fernando and Humberto Campana, known as the Campana Brothers - as the objects of study of unique design artifacts transformed into commodities that sell the image of specificities and elements of Brazilian identity worldwide.

4.2 The formal irregularity of *favela* shacks as the image matrix of the design

To extract the peculiarities of the Brazilian *favelas* for use in their project-oriented processes, the Campana Brothers found inspiration in the precariousness and in the irregularity that is typically found in the construction and erection of Brazilian *favela* dwellings. These traits were incorporated by the designers as a distinctive attribute of their new creations, being absorbed as symbolic capital and monopolistic income. With this appropriation, they worked with a mixture of forms, elements and constructive features, in addition to the feeling of disorganization and deliberate messiness that prevails in the reading of the shack-ridden *favela* landscape.

In Brazil, an array of different types of materials are often used in the construction of *favela* shacks, among which we can highlight the use of plywood and particle board, as well as wood shavings, masonry, clay bricks and clay tiles, asbestos-cement tiles, among others. In Figures 1 and 2, we can observe the "jumble" of shapes and materials used for the construction of the shacks of slums. This multiplicity of irregular elements together determine the formal characteristic to be transposed and incorporated as a factor of differentiation.

The capturing of aspects of Brazilian favelas is reflected in works of the Campana Brothers such as the "Sofá Boa" (Figures 3 and 4) and the "Cadeira Favela" (Figures 5 and 6), which allows one to demonstrate the use of the irregular shape of the favela shacks for the construction of an image used to leverage the sale of designer products.



source: Claudio Lima Ferreira - April 2006

source: <http://xaboo.blogspot.com.br/2005/05/d-pr-acredit.html>

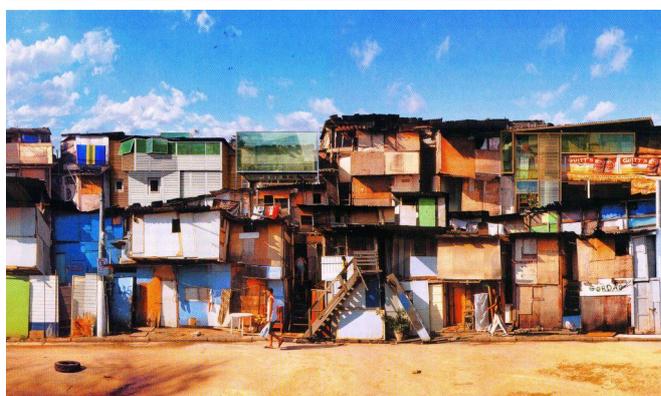


Figure 1: Photo of the *favela* shacks - Campinas-SP-Brazil

Figure 2: Image details of the *favela*

It is important to note here that in the case of the "Cadeira Favela" and the "Sofá Boa," there are important differences that changed and/or defined the initial reflections of the authors for creating the objects. In the case of the "Cadeira Favela," the creation process was instinctive for the designers, however, in the case of the "Sofá Boa," they were given a briefing by a furniture company.

Concerning the elaboration of the Sofá Boa project/product, it was found that one company in the sector requested the creation of a product that clearly exhibited the peculiarities or the precariousness of urban spaces, like the disordered forms of the *favelas*. In this way, different images were incorporated to the range of products developed by this company with the intention of increasing profits through the sale of this new item. This guideline can be identified in the discourse of the designers during a lecture held at the International Seminar on Design - Brazil Design Business Diversity, which took place in São Paulo in December 2002, wherein they cite the briefing produced by Massimo Morozzi, creative director of Edra, one of the major furniture brands in Italy, which manufactures various pieces conceived by the Campana.

The Sofá Boa was a briefing that we received, and a very funny one too. It was also to Edra by Massimo Morozzi, who said that he wanted an embedded sofa or armchair with no structure, which looked like a favela, a striking piece. We devised a sofa with metallic no metal or wood structure. [7]

Although the designers emphasize that "they live in a poor country and try to draw beauty from impoverished contexts, taking special note of the dwelling forms that exist in Brazil," it should be observed that in many cases those who seek to appropriate the "poverty" and "precariousness" of urban spaces are Brazilian companies in the sector that aim to incorporate different images (exotic or eccentric, to be specific) into their range of products. It is noteworthy that both these companies' headquarters and the consumer market for their products are not located in such poverty-stricken, precarious places. This strategy of appropriation of local aspects and the creation of different images is largely due to the capitalist need for innovation. The inclusion of the image of precariousness of the Brazilian *favelas* (or at least, the ideological discourse related to the creation of furniture design), and particularly in the case of the Campana brand, makes each piece of the Sofa Boa line is sold at approximately US\$ 24 billion (twenty-four thousand U.S. dollars) [8].



source: www.padra.com

source: <https://www.dailycraft.com/products/21973>



Figure 3: Sofá Boa

(detail)

Figure 4: Sofá Boa

Besides the Sofá Boa, the capturing of the irregular shapes of the *favela* shacks was also used for the creation of the Cadeira Favela. However, this was an instinctive creation related to the project-oriented design process. In this specific case, the project was developed in 1990. It should be noted that the designers could create "freely", as there was no briefing to speak of concerning specificities. Hence, the designers appropriated the image of only one type of material used in the construction of *favela* shacks, namely pieces of pinewood, and with this, created a "designer product" [9].

These chairs (Figures 5 and 6) are produced with pieces of wood fixed together in an apparently irregular and disorganized manner, just like some of the shacks found in the Brazilian *favelas*. This appropriation of the "different" in slums also underscores the idea of handicraft and the utilisation of cheaper materials, "values" which are also incorporated into the product's image. In the case of the Cadeira Favela, it can be verified that the use of a "low-cost" material does not bring down the price of the product. Quite the contrary, it actually increases its value, mainly as a result of the discourse in favour of using simpler and/or recyclable materials, in other words, on account of the need to express concern for the natural environment. In this project, the designers have incorporated the Campana brand into the product, as well as a rejection of serial production, ultimately conferring a character of exclusivity to each piece and transforming the chair into an object that starts to be viewed as a work of art, which in turn also raises its economic value.



Source: Cláudio Lima Ferreira, Atelier Campana - SP, 10, 2010.



Source: Cláudio Lima Ferreira, Atelier Campana - SP, 10, 2010.

Figure 5: Cadeira Favela

Figure 6: Cadeira Favela (detail)

The appropriation of the *favela* shack as a different image bestowed a "distinctive status" on the design of objects. This "distinctive status" produced "symbolic capital" that led to the creation of a monopolistic income for the Campana Brothers, who hold the product patent.

Like the Sofá Boa, the Cadeira Favela is produced by the Italian furniture manufacturer Edra. This company has purchased the exclusive right to manufacture and sell the product, which is

produced by this manufacturer since 2003. Many of the products made by Edra are considered "handicrafts" and are only produced by order, that is, through a system called Just-In-Time (JIT). That being so, this chair can be considered a work of art, made by an artisan, whose price is based not only on the cost of production, namely the labor force utilised and the capital invested, but above all with the rarity factor. In some cases, Edra assigns only one employee responsible for the manufacture of a given product, thus also sustaining the image of the artisanal process - the unique and the rare.

Even the production and sale of the image of a product regarded as "simple" like a chair requires a great effort to have success in selling it. The strategies implemented on the production and promotion of the product vary according to the objective or the needs of the consumer market. In many cases, the construction of the image is based, first and foremost, on the appropriation of peculiarities, specificities and/or singularities, on the distinctive factor, on the symbolic capital, on advertising and on monopolistic income.

5 Conclusões: "Simplifying and Complex Thought"

The creation of images, especially of images considered "different, exotic and eccentric", consolidates itself as an important product for commercialization, and can effectively generate high profit rates for corporations. In many cases, the very act of capturing particular aspects and cultural specificities, and to the local, urban, architectural, artistic and musical domains, can be transformed into images, and subsequently transformed into products of high "symbolic capital". Some designers use the spectacularization of "specificities" for the production and marketing of different products, appropriating even the irregular shapes of *favela* shacks to transform them into "different and exotic images", as paradoxical as may first appear. This is the formula for their success.

Despite the various contradictions, many of the images produced and sold of aspects of the slum present it as a place that is different, exotic, eccentric, a realm where various social and cultural dynamics coexist, rather than a place for all that which is irregular and problematic, the nerve centre of trafficking and violence. This is a romanticized view of these such communities, and an unreal one too. It is widely known that more often than not the *favelas* are set up in high-risk areas, formed by strips of land on hillsides, on upslopes and on downslopes and near streams, and are hence subject to flooding. *Favela* shacks are often self-constructed housing units, insalubrious, without proper ventilation, lighting or access to running water, set amid "open sky sewers", with several *gatos* in the electricity grids (namely illegal and improvised forms of electrical installation). In other words, these places face high risks of landslides, floods, fires, etc. on a daily basis. As the access to these areas is often poor with narrow and winding passages, communities have great difficulty in designing and installing water, sewage and electricity grids, among others. And to top it all, solving or at least mitigating the problems of *favela* residents is not as simple and easy issue as the images incorporated and customized by designers portray.

In these cases, the most important and serious problems of the *favelas* are "relegated as second-order issues" when companies advance their interests and needs for appropriating and exploiting the space of the favela in different ways to create an image that is interpreted as "exotic". In this way, they banalize and trivialize the real problems of slums to their own advantage to promote the sale and consumption of an exotic image, which only provides benefits to the large company owners.

From the perspective of Simplifying Thought, based on capitalist profit-yielding strategies, it can be verified that the creation of designer products Cadeira Favela and the Sofá Boa by the Campana Brothers aim at stimulating consumption and boosting profits through the creation of an "image of the different", apparently showing no concern for the the social and housing problems of the slums. However, analyzing the critics who study social and urban issues, that the *favela* is evidently much more than design and architecture; rather, it is home to thousands of families, and therefore it could be said that it is not coherent to analyze it in such a simplifying way.

This banalization of the real problems of the *favelas* can be verified in the images that are assimilated by tourism, by the music industry or by the industry of furniture design. In the case of tourism, what is promoted is a fantasy adventure in a "forbidden" place, where customers can face challenges and experience danger in a trafficker-dominated area. In music, hip hop lyrics take the reality of life in the *favelas* to other social groups. In design, what is explored is the precariousness and the element of irregularity found in the construction processes and dwelling types for the creation of different products, which evince the disorganization of forms.

In this way, the images of the spaces of the Brazilian *favelas* are incorporated into products to boost their sales. Transformed into commodities, their image is sold as an exotic and eccentric product, "gift-wrapped" for the consumption of a global elite.

It is important to emphasize that it would be of great value if the designers and architects could balance their capitalist profit-making strategies with the social and environmental issues reflected in their design. However, this is not something that can be specified as a requirement, but should rather be exercised by design professionals as a choice. It is believed that reflecting on the *complexus* (weaving together) would in itself be a great learning experience, with the purpose of trying to strike a possible balance between the individual and the whole.

However, if examined closely from the standpoint of Complex Thought, and not just from the perspective of Simplifying Thought, it can be argued that this appropriation of urban space in the *favelas* made by designers is an "inadequate" appropriation. Inadequate because nothing is given in return to the favelas, and there is no positive social or economic return to the local population, consisting only of appropriation made in an irregular way of the construction of shacks for the creation of an image with the sole aim of increasing consumption of a given product, rather than forming a view of the whole.

Creative professionals can and should be transdisciplinary, and question the mode of Simplifying Thought, and even that of Complex Thought. This is necessary to ensure that the design practice evolves and does not become "vulgarized", or be rendered into a profession that is solely focused on the "production of new objects".

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