

RODEO FEST: FROM THE COUNTRY CITIZEN TO THE HYPERMODERN CONSUMER

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the way how the capital reproduction reaches different spaces of life in the hypermodernity, reproduced through an induced consumption by the establishment of a programmed quotidianness. The analysis is focused, then, on “Festas de Peão de Boiadeiro”, the main purpose of this article is to point the symbiosis that exists between the production of this space and the reproduction of the capital. Thus, under the so said cultural “allegations”, there is the appearance of spatial forms coupled with constant capital revaluation. The space production of a fest which was cultural turns into, then, ideological, because it simulates a very distant reality from the interior of the Sao Paulo State one.

KEY WORDS: Rodeo Fest – consumer – Space Consumption - Ideology

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RESUMO:

Assiste-se, na contemporaneidade, a uma relação profunda entre cultura e capital, que requer escrutínio matizado. Constata-se que a cultura vem se transformando em algum gênero de mercadoria, num processo, em que se acredita que algo especial enreda os produtos e eventos culturais. Neste trabalho, a fabricação da imagem de marca aparece acoplada a mercantilização da cultura caipira que existia no sertão paulista, cuja exemplificação empírica pode ser visualizada através do movimento presente no espaço das festas de peão de boiadeiro.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Festa de Peão, Consumidor, Consumo do Espaço, Ideologia

We see, in the contemporaneity, a deep relation between culture and capital, which requires a variegated scrutiny. We perceive that culture is being transformed in some kind of merchandise, in a process, in which we believe that something special entangle the products and cultural events. Therefore, merchandises constantly needing to create new addresses which give them attraction, as foreshadowed by Debord (1997), find in culture a fruitful field for such realization, because it offers the distinction marks (HARVEY, 2005). We must highlight that culture when becomes industrialized is constituted in an alibi for the extended capital reproduction.

It is under these cultural allegations that the places are presented in the contemporaneity what implies in considering a new face of the urban space production, through the strategic planning, that with the marketing help, builds a new image for selling the place (ARANTES, 2000). According to Carreras (2005, p.26),

The growing importance of consumption in the urban space put on the first plan of many cities policies a special interest for the urban landscape related to the so called spectacle society and image culturing. [...] The cities increasingly invest in fixing a competitive image in the international market in order to attract all kinds of investments such as productive, real estate, touristic or any other kind.

From the space-merchandise now we have the city-merchandise, reinvented by the branding present in the globalization culture, and the space turns into one more subjectively valued merchandize, because it needs to call the attention of the social subjects. For Sánchez, (2010, p. 470 e 471),

In the spectacle-city, the permanent actuation of the urban images as a power legitimating strategy is constituted in appearance affirmation, of social life as appearance. The overwhelming presence of the images in the quotidian life transforms it into the reality itself.

This means that the construction of a brand image for the touristic appreciation is precisely the new facet of the cities competition in the actual globalization net. In this work, the building of the brand image appears coupled with the commodification of the countrified culture which existed in the interior of the Sao Paulo State, whose empirical example can be viewed through the movement present in the rodeo fest space. If before the space gave conditions for highlighting the symbology which is always linked to culture (BAUDRILLARD, 1995), now, the space offers the possibilities for the publicizing of the semiological universe which demands consumption. In other words, the space that was for the fest turns into an event, and the centrality now is the merchandise universe.

Thus, under the so “said” cultural allegations, there is the appearance of spatial forms coupled with constant capital revaluation, and the “cultural consumption” generates the simulacrum in/of the rodeo fest space. The space is turned into Americanized, building one more spatial form of the hypermodern consumption society.

The space production of a fest which was cultural turns into, then, ideological, because it simulates a very distant reality from the interior of the Sao Paulo State one. The image that came from the hollywoodian imaginary makes the space more fluid for the strategies of the extraction of the capitalist income. After all, how this simulacrum involves the person, coopted to be part of this pretending game? Well, if the rodeo fest space is turned into a marketing product of this contemporary consumption society, what is its contribution for the forming process of the subjectivities modeled by the market? In other words, what is the contribution of this space in determining the passage of the person linked to the culture to the hypermodern consumer?

The hypothesis raised here is that the space for being the maximum expression of the social reality, or in the words of Pintaudi (1981), for being “the most material reality of the social existence”, has an important role in the formation of the social subjectivities. That is because in the dialectical relation

between space and society, where the first appears as product and conditions for the reproduction of the second, we need to consider that if in fact men produces the space of life, on the other hand, men is produced by this same space. In other words, if the social relations are concretized as special relations, the space relation is modified from the different places. Thus, if the fest space involved the person by the cultural factor, now, the event space has aesthetics that invites for the consumption act. It is the consumption, then, the producer of new (non) sociability and the newest centrality in the rodeo fest spaces.

It is consumption the maximum indicator that the subject does not live a cultural moment anymore, and, moreover, that he does not recognize the social relations that constituted that space formation that for being of a social nature has an accumulation of social practices. Differently, the subject only contemplates and marvels the place. Or better, what matters is to be recognized in a place that now is “central” for the society with hypertrophied values in the consumption. So, what the subject wants is only to see and to be seen in the spectacular society, being constituted true piece of the cultural industry machinery (Arantes, 2004). Thus, the social recognition happens at the souvenir buying, in the register of the market signs with their sophisticated picture cameras.

The behavior of the tourist-consumer in the event space denounces that he fetishizes the place, or better, fetishizes the space merchandize, which is turned essential, for it is the precisely merchandise which involves all the other merchandises. “But after all: what does it mean to say that the new” social subjects fetishizes the rodeo fest space? With the support of the freud-marxist perspective, Safatle (2009) states that what characterizes the fetishism is precisely the destruction of the social relations which constituted the merchandise, with the successive naturalization of the exchange value. The fetish would be exactly this movement. So, erasing the historicity of the countrified culture and naturalizing the exchange value in a semiological space of the great capital, the subjects start fetishizing this space. What seems proved with the consumption of the space,

once the identification of the place is now abstract, because provided by the market strategies, that is, the tourist is conditioned by being involved by the place which stimulates the consumption.

We have to add that this space becomes imaging², starting to be recognized by the consumers as “ideal”, suggesting an “amusement experience”, status or, even, a life style. By becoming another market object, the space sends an ideological message through image. Here, there is an approximation of the ideology concept present in *Theodor Adorno*, when he states that the ideological placement would not be in the speech anymore, but in the own image, in other words, in the own face of the real (ARANTES, 2004). At this moment, we can inquire if the space is turned into an ideological vehicle or if the images in the space are the ideological ones. If the space is product and work in the Lefebvre’s perspective, how do we classify the imaging space of the market universe? Well, if the space is not an ideological vehicle, would there be images without the space, which is the most concrete dimension of the social reality? What is the relation between the fetish of the space-merchandise and the formation of a new brand image that best sells the places? And also: how could the imaging space of the market universe contribute for the unveiling of the fetishism forms of the merchandise world in the contemporaneity?

We try, then, to situate the place of the phantasmallegory space in the ideology placement, not understood anymore as a paradigm of the opacification. On the contrary, the historic movement imposes a task of “[...] thinking the ideology concept from the power relations which happens in the ground of the transparency position.” (SAFATLE, 2008, p.93).

The fact is that the present society consumes the cultural objects as if they were any other disposable consumption object, then the explanation of the entertainment success packaged for instantaneous consumption, as it seems to

² The image becomes the current form of the fetishism, see Fontenelle (2006).

indicate the merchandise of the rodeo fests. The space when becoming real-media, makes the place to become ideology in itself, what Safatle (2009) denominates reflexive ideology, concept imported from Peter Sloterdijk. And such power allows the space to alphabetize, manipulate and even subject the new social subjects converted into consumers, once that for Bauman (1999, p.87),

[...] the modern society has few necessities of mass industrial manpower and of recruited army; instead, it needs to engage its members by the consumer condition. The way that the current society molds its members is firstly and above all dictated by the duty of playing the role of consumer. The rule that our society puts to its members is the one of the capability and desire to play this role.

Thus, the space surrounded in signs of advertising brands “creates” a material ritual oriented for the centrality in the act of consuming, what points to a socio-spatial practice which has the consumption as a category of essential analysis, once not only is the economic fact to be explained in the contemporaneity, as well as is the one which directs new forms of social (dis) interaction and of subjectivity. And even, what can the socio-spatial practice be revealed from the dialectical analysis between the phantasmallegory spaces of the consumption universe and the present initiated society?

The subject-consumer, narcissist, hedonistic and individualist wants to be seen, because it is only possible to live in the spectacle society, by the construction of the own image. Certainly, Eric Fromm and Christopher Lasch have a lot to say about this narcissism converted into the minimal me. According to Birman (2007, p. 25), “[...] the subject lives permanently in a spectacular register, in which what matters to him is the grotesque aggrandizement of his own image. The other serves him only as an instrument for the self-image increment [...]”.

Thus, the consumer existent in this new consumption space, wears the momentary social costume, understood here as the *country paraphernalia*, or even

the *country identity kit*, once that for Bauman (2005) it means dressing and undressing identities, in other words, the identity is something to be changed constantly, it can never be rigid. So, it is exactly through the consumption that it is possible to present an “identity”.

However, if the subjects “know, but act as if they did not know” (ZIZEK, 1991), what makes them to take part of this pretending-game headed by the representation society? Who is this social subject who consumes the space of life as if it was any other merchandise?

Here we agree with the passivity of the subject pointed by Debord (1997) that he only contemplates, instead of living the moment. The passive behavior of the consumer-tourist-spectator is one more evidence of the culture non characterization as the central element of the rodeo fests, once that according to Morin, (2007, p. 70),

The new techniques create a kind of pure spectator that is, physically discarded from the spectacle, reducing into the passive state and voyeur. Everything is unfolded in front of his eyes, but he can not touch, bodily adhere to what he contemplates. However the spectator’s eye is everywhere [...]

The imaging reality corresponds to a cultural emptiness in these spaces, whose spectacle architecture is constitutes in the spatial condition for the consumption deepening. An analogy is done here between the rodeo fests lamination and the Beaubourg museum described by Baudrillard (1991, p.83),

Of course all the cultural contents of Beaubourg are anachronistic because for this architectural enclosure it could only have corresponded to the interior emptiness. The general impression is that everything here is in a deep coma that all it wanted is animation and it is not more than a reanimation and that it is good like this, because culture has died [...]

Thus the countrified culture is fractured, wicked, cut and pressed in its smallest simple elements. Well, such metamorphosis present in the rodeo fests space can only be understood at the light of the transformation existing in the society. Bauman (2008) denounces the passage from a society of producers, whose centrality was the work for the consumers' society, whose ethics is having more pleasure through the merchandise universe. We have to highlight that we are facing an anthropological mutation in the social subject – fact pointed by Arantes (2004), product of the impoverishment of the social experience due to the fragmentation of the values linked to family, religion and politics. In other words, we are before a subject “abandoned” by the values that until then constituted him and, of course, by the neoliberal state. What happens then is that the subject only starts to exist in the consumer condition, stuck to a disposable culture, headed by image, what does not mean idolatry in relation to it, once that for Fonteneille (2006, p.23),

[...] the current subject, who is not enchanted by the images that surround him, paradoxically, uses them to construct the images about himself and about the world, because he knows that, in the contemporary society to be in the image is to exist. Here we also apprehend that it was society which turned itself into media.

The fact is that the condition that the rodeo fest space offers in the contemporaneity is of the subjecting of social subjects from the centrality that the consumption “seems” to gain in the present society. The consequence is that the space-merchandise when revealing the space consumption, determines the form as the subjects must construct an experience, now, similar to the market values, what means that the space forms consumers, what initiates the consumption culture, that for Baudrillard (1995, p.109),

[...] regulates the consumer behavior in each one of its acts, in its general behavior, that organizes itself as a series of various answers and stimulus, tastes, preferences, necessities, decisions- for objects and also for relations, the consumer finds itself perpetually asked, interrogated and intimated to answer.

In general, social life was completely entangled by economy, what the theoretical of the Frankfurt School will denominate as culture total fetishism, what makes it an industrialized culture. Now if the way of producing of the capitalism- from the laws of value appreciation- if on one hand it reached the social relation, on the other hand, captured the space of life which started to be produced allowing consumption amplifying processes, involving the consumer until his psychiatric instances. According to Bauman (2008, p.76),

The members of the consumer society are consumption merchandises themselves, and it is the quality of being a consumption merchandise that turns them into authentic members of this society. Becoming and continuing being marketable merchandise is the most powerful reason of worrying of the consumer, even that in *general latent and almost never conscious*. [our highlight].

The problem presented in this article, then, is guided by the necessity of discoursing about the fetishism present in the consumption society, now extended to the social space. For Ricardo Antunes, apud Padilha (2006, p. 15), “[...] the unfetishisation of the consumption society turns, along with the unfetishisation of the way of producing things, a central and decisive enterprise.

One of the ways to be coursed in this investigation is considering the dimension that the merchandise world fetishism has for the psychiatric aspects. Fontenelle (2006, p. 328) states that the fetishist illusion remains because even the subject knowing, such illusion in unconscious. Or, even, for Silveira (1989, p.74), “[...] the subjection to the fetishism involves us in a deeper way, is even part of our own psychic structure”; and also (SILVEIRA, 1989, p.75) “[...] the merchandise

fetishism is irreducible to the conscious forms, as it situates as an internalization, in such deep level, that, unquestionably, can not be another but the unconsciously.”.

So a subjectivity molded similar to the market interest, results in a behavior of the men in relation to the most diverse spaces of life, and the rodeo fests space is another example of the process that we want to explain here. Then, what matters to us is not the own subjectivity, but minimally understanding it to obtain new theoretical contributions that illuminate the social praxis that has been happening in these spaces, on other words, to explain how the consumption society is appropriating of the rodeo fests.

The diving into the empirical reality of these spaces during our Master’s degree dissertation³ enabled doing some pointing about the consumer profile of the newest merchandize, and now event “the rodeo fest”. It appears from the data analysis that there is an elitism of the public, if it is considered the Brazilian socio-economical reality, once that 57% has a family income superior to 5 minimum wages, being that 63% of the respondents affirmed that they go to other spaces of the same gender. The great totality (about 88%) didn’t belong to the place where the event was being held, and around 40% of the people lived in the same administrative region.

Considering the commerce and consumption theme, for 67% of the public the trade fair was considered good or excellent, being the franchises in general (mainly those related to the food sector) the most attractive commerce for 49% of the interviewed public. We have to add the appearance of franchises that comes in the flow of the cultural fest marketing almost always building their brand images from the American imaginary, and these represents 33% of the consumer preference. The power of the franchises means the death of the small merchant

³ MADEIRA FILHO, M.L. Rodeo Fest: space-merchandise, cultural industry and consumption. Rio Claro: Unesp, 2011, 193 f.

in these places and ratifies that the brand image is really the real object of the current processes of capital valorization.

In relation to the price of the commercialized products in the rodeo fest 40% classified it as expensive and 39% as very expensive, what corroborates for the thesis of an elite consumption in these places.

Aiming to understand the formation of an imaginary directed to the consumption, we asked which merchandize better symbolizes the fest, and we had the result that for 41.5% of the public it is country boots. Belts and buckles 24.5% and hats with 21% were the other preferred merchandises. We conclude that such vestment did not belong to the country people of the old cattle farms in the interior of Brazil, differently, it is product of the hollywoodian industry which exported the image of the wild man of the old West, once this sells a lot more.

About the most important elements to be considered in a rodeo fest, 62% of the public stated being the shows of the cultural industry the centrality, other 22% considered the trade fair and only 13% the rodeos.

Finally, the consumption of the space was found even more when 74% of the goers stated that the prices of the fests have been raising in the last years. In other words, the entrance in these places turned into phantasmallegory represents the larger parte of the expenses, what undertakes, inclusive, the shopping in the trade fair according with some merchants.

What this article aimed was to state that the big question is that if the space is the most concrete dimension of the social existence, it is turned into the fundamental place for a fetish illusion to be installed, and the illusion is not a question of ideological ignorance, but it is real (ZIZEK, 1991). So, it is up to us to make some appointments about how the space turned playful, phantasmallegory and ideological contributed in the formation of the subjectivity modeled by the market, in other words, in the practice experiences it is allowed to the consumer to be what he currently is. The concept of space fetish can bring some points,

revealing the consumption of the space and bringing the space-merchandise for the understanding of the contemporary forms of fetishism in the market world.

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