



Theoretical-methodological assumptions and praxis of empirical investigation: Place, participant observation, tourism and sex workers in Havana

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ABSTRACT

The objective is to present the theoretical basis and describe the empirical practice of the research methodology on a social impact of tourism in the havanero place, the sex workers, criminalized as prostitutes/jineteras. The epistemology of Husserl's phenomenology and Kosik's dialectics give rise to a participant observation as a methodology of insertion in the social fabric as a "tourist"/researcher, in search of the meanings that are established in the "unauthorized" approaches of autochthonous people and the relationship between essence/totality of the phenomenon. The essential hypothesis or intuition: such a path in the sociological investigation of the social phenomenon tourism is legitimate as a theoretical-methodological choice. It enhances its continuous

development as a strategy of approximation and inquiry in any geopolitical and socioeconomic contexts. The relationship between the concept of place and participant observation as a consistent research method and technique is essential. In a historical and theoretical perspective, I trace the geopolitical, economic and social conjuncture in which Cuba opened itself as an international tourist destination, scenarios of empirical investigative praxis. Ethnographic data collected with phenomenological inspiration, especially on the meaning of the social actors who granted me in-depth interviews, are reported from their narratives. As the dialectical method continues when the phenomenological ends, I contextualized them historically and politically in search of inferring generalizations. I make the insertion of data of the current conjuncture, seeking to reinforce the need for the development of the methodology undertaken in Sociology of Tourism.

Keywords: Methodology, phenomenology, dialectics, sociology of tourism, place, participant observation, sex workers, Havana.

1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective is the theoretical basis and empirical praxis of the research methodology on a social impact of tourism in the havanero place, the sex workers, criminalized as prostitutes/jineteras. I developed them and used them to enable my field research (July/2004 and January/2005) on the social impacts of international tourism in Havana, Cuba; part of my object of comparative studies by approximate foundations, for doctoral purposes (GAMA, 2005).

I conceptualize tourism as a social phenomenon (GAMA, 2021a) that takes place with the travel of tourists to places, an expression of the modern capitalist industrial era that involves the provision of hospitality economic services, whose rationality impacts spatial, environmental, sociocultural, moral and (geo)political dimensions of ethnicities, peoples, countries, regions and host communities (GAMA, 2019a). This essay focuses on one of the effects, the practice of sex workers, criminally designated as prostitution, since, at the time, it was widely illegal and punished with imprisonment on the island.

This sociological meaning of tourism is adequate to enter into its essence and encompass the dimension of the totality in which it is inserted, with inspirations in the phenomenological perspectives of Husserl and dialectic of Kosik (GAMA, 2019b).

The development of a peculiar methodological proposal was imperative for dealing with the object of studies: to investigate and problematize prostitution in Havana, still in the repressive and vigilant context of the fidelist dictatorship.

Given the specificities of the Hawaiian social fabric and its *underground*, where it is revealed as a social fact, foundations are sought in these philosophical currents, but it gives rise to participant observation - a technique of ethnographic data collection that emerged with Anthropology - a methodological character, as a method (path) and instrumental technique of insertion in the field as a "tourist"/researcher, not formally authorized by the Cuban government, but with his tacit knowledge.

The essential hypothesis or intuition: such a path in the investigation of the social phenomenon tourism and its relationship with sex workers in Havana is legitimate as a theoretical-methodological choice. It enhances its continuous development as a strategy of approximation and research, in any political and socioeconomic contexts, safeguarding the ethical aspects of the investigative walk, such as the anonymity or fictitious denomination of the deponents, which was done (GAMA, 2020a).

The theoretical assumptions will be inserted in favor of a methodology for the sociological investigation of tourism. Next, I will explain the essential relationship of the concept of place with participant observation, as a consistent research method and technique.

In a dialectical perspective I will trace the conjuncture in which the political regime opened Cuba as an international tourist destination, the scene of the praxis of empirical research. I will bring ethnographic data from the research carried out with phenomenological inspiration on the meaning of the social actors who approached me and granted me in-depth interviews.

As the dialectical method continues when the phenomenological ends, because it is qualitative and is restricted to the meta-understandings of the interviewed actors (GAMA, 2022), I contextualized the narratives, in the sense of seeking to infer generalizations.

I will position myself on the practice and terminologies "sex workers"/"prostitutes", based on what I interpreted in Havana in the period of my investigations, inserting some data from the recent political conjuncture, seeking to reinforce methodological originality as an additional option of paths for the Sociology of Tourism.

2 FOR A METHODOLOGY OF SOCIAL RESEARCH IN TOURISM

It seeks to carry out a dialectical and phenomenological movement towards the essence and meaning of the social relations that are established with the development of tourism in identity places,

like Havana, Cuba. This epistemological and methodological approach is necessary to understand the dimensions of the phenomenon from the perspective of a researcher considered as a subject situated in the research.

The interpretations of reality are marked by the intersubjectivity that is established in the contact/confrontation of the observer and the social subjects under analysis.

This interaction is, above all, humanized, tourist and members of the host community relate, discover the other, otherness, culturally different beings in contact, in coexistence. It is a social experience that takes place in a certain place.

Researcher and tourist can often get confused in fieldwork. Would it be possible to separate the observer from his cultural, moral, personal, aesthetic and political context? Phenomenology presents a path for the equation of this question by seeking to understand the meanings produced by reality and in the way it is established, it manifests itself in the eyes of the social scientist, full of meanings.

This performs a scientific interpretation of the phenomenon but admits that its conclusions will be dated, the bias of the values of the subject researcher will be present in its analyses and interpretations.

The explicitness of these values, of the researcher's life-world and the context of his scientific production is situated, ethically and epistemologically, as starting points for the construction of a systematic look that presents itself as a possible interpretation of reality, but no less scientific than positivist approaches that claim to be hermetically "neutral" (GAMA, 2005).

The concern with this methodological approach is a constant in the course of the investigation. In phenomenology to research is "to have an interrogation and to walk around it, in all senses, always seeking all its dimensions" (FINI, 1994, p. 24). My fundamental question: how to understand sociologically the phenomenon of tourism, and in particular with sex workers in Havana?

To elevate tourism to a condition of object of investigation, it is necessary to problematize it, to measure the totality to be analyzed and to seek to understand its internal relations.

The nexus, meaning or essence between the sensitive empirical that permeates the researcher's gaze and the systemic and dialectical relations that are established in the social formations studied in a historical-critical perspective.

The coexistence of travelers and natives in common ecological and social spaces situates tourism as a privileged phenomenon for a look at the other, their cultural traits, the aesthetics of their dwellings, their way of life, thinking, acting and work.

The identity of the people is constructed *vis a vis* with the spatial and natural environment that it occupies, relates, transforms, extracts its survival, builds its culture, makes it its place. Being exotic in the eyes of the visitor attracts their curiosity and motivates social and economic relations in which

the natural and cultural daily life is sold at the sensitive, emotional level. The greater the impact of the region or place visited in the eyes of the tourist, the greater its value as an object of consumption, of the satisfaction of dreams, of the realization of the imagination.

More than an economic activity, tourism is the exercise of human intersubjectivity, at the social, cultural and existential level.

What one buys is not material, physical, but abstract, a unique experience on a subjective, personal level. For the tourism researcher who proposes to achieve the essence through the appearance of the phenomenon, there is a need for a methodological movement in order to suspend his pre-notions and make an effort to understand the thing itself, to incursion towards the thing itself, to the sociological meaning of tourism and its impacts.

The moment of initial reflection, supported by approaches to the dimension of complexity, has the sense of seeking to establish guidelines for the research work.

Undertaken at the beginning of the twenty-first century, to carry out this research, I understood that there would be only one way to satisfy the question: to interrogate the phenomenon itself.

Phenomenon is that which arises to consciousness and manifests itself to it as a result; that is, it will only exist if there is a subject in which it is situated, experiences it.

For the phenomenon to show itself, it is not enough to live it, because, in immersion, the amplitude of vision is restricted. Understanding requires transcending this perspective and peering into the different possibilities through the vision and feeling of the other. This act [...] is sought in the perspective of understanding the lived and transcending the empirically given. (MACHADO, 1994, p. 35)

Phenomenology, meaning enlightening discourse about what is shown by itself, as a praxis or form of action, operates through the trajectory that investigates the experience, in the sense of understanding it and not necessarily explaining it in the eyes of the other.

This trajectory aims to seek the essence or structure of the phenomenon that should be shown in the descriptions and/or discourses of the subjects, of their real world lived, with a great emphasis on the descriptive nature of the phenomenon researched.

Essence, *eidós*, refers to an object of a new type, comparing itself to the individual object that originated the first empirical intuition from which the essential intuition becomes possible. It would be the moment of synthesis in a dialectical perspective.

The discourses, referring to the experiences that the subjects experience in their life-world, are situated in their existence.

This means that there is only a psychological phenomenon as long as there is a subject in which it is situated.

There is only sociological investigation, as long as there is a subject of research, someone who constructs his object of investigation.

There is only tourism when a relationship of a traveling observer subject is established with the surrounding social and natural environment that welcomes him. For a Sociology of Tourism, nothing more appropriate than to consider the person of the subject as composed of "tourist" and researcher.

The methodological movement to distinguish and identify the convergence of one and the other at the time of the investigation is made taking as reference the world-life of the researcher, context of the ontological conception of reality that makes use.

The knowledge of reality, the way and the possibility of knowing reality depend, after all, on a conception of reality, explicit or implicit. The question, how can one perceive reality? it is always preceded by a more fundamental question: what is reality? (KOSIK, 1976, p. 33)

Thus "The thought process is not limited to transforming the chaotic whole of representations into the transparent whole of concepts, in the course of the process the whole itself is concomitantly delineated, determined and understood" (KOSIK, 1976, p. 30).

Reality must be "interpreted not by reducing it to something other than itself, but by explaining it on the basis of reality itself, through the development and illustration of its phases, of the moments of its movement" (KOSIK, 1976, p. 29).

In a way of researching phenomenological and dialectically, in the perspective of Husserl (1986) and Kosik, there are no facts or events as objective realities external to the subject who experiences them.

The dichotomy between the inner world *and* the external world are not admitted as realities in themselves, that is, the phenomenon to be researched cannot be treated as a physical object with its own existence.

To learn, here in the sense of understanding, in the total intention and not in what things are in their appearance or in their various forms of representation. It is to see the peculiar way the object exists.

[...]

By overcoming the dichotomy man x world, the researcher will be seeking reality while lived and the knowledge of this reality will only be achieved in the researcher's own existence. This brings us to the issue of subjectivity that is important in phenomenology, because it is what allows us to achieve objectivity. It is subjectivity that will allow for different degrees of objectivity. (FINI, 1994, p. 26)

Principles of a phenomenological and dialectical methodology met the need to seek an appropriate approach to a sociological perspective of tourism. Since tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon, as the motivations of the tourist and the concerns that guide the researcher are

multifaceted, I realized that I could develop an investigative approach based on the assumptions of dialectics and phenomenology referred to.

The possibility arose for the essence of the phenomenon to show itself, because if the phenomenon is all that is revealed, manifested, given to the subject who interrogates it, then it could offer itself to me as endowed with an essence, a meaning, in its relation to the dimension of totality in which it is inserted and understood.

The encounter between the researcher and the phenomenon to be researched follows a trajectory whose itinerary is to go "to the very thing" [...] and, in the task of making visible and explicit the constitution of the events of the life-world, the phenomenon is illuminated in the revelation of its essence.

[...]

Thus, a posture of placing oneself before the phenomenon is required so that it can show itself in itself, making it unacceptable to try to conform it to the explanatory theories of reality that conceive it with presuppositions of causality. (MACHADO, 1994, p. 37)

In the trajectory of the research with sex workers and tourism in Havana I tried to leave aside what I already knew about the phenomenon, performing an *époche* - reduction of any and all theory, belief, a *priori explanation*. Consists in the movement to put the analyzed phenomenon in suspension or evidence. For phenomenology it is everything that can be intuited, analyzed and appropriated by consciousness.

The field research in Havana, Cuba (first week of January 2005) did not make use of a guiding question and the units of meanings were identified in the different senses of the autochthonous approaches to the "tourist"-researcher.

The emphasis on participant observation and the contextualization of testimonies and approaches confers, in this case, a more dialectical than phenomenological character.

The research was preceded by an eighteen-day exploratory incursion in July 2004 into various regions of the island.

The principle of a prior investigation is important both for the delimitation of the object of studies, the elaboration of hypotheses (or initial intuitions), and for the methods and research strategies to be adopted later.

The descriptions obtained and carried out will describe the structure of the phenomenon – the experiences – without emphasizing this or that content, seeking the fundamental structure – the essences.

The research modality that provides this search is called a situated phenomenon in which the analysis of the descriptions is a structural analysis.

For the analysis of the situated phenomenon, therefore, of the one we place before our eyes, we abandon the common way of looking, establishing direct contact with the phenomenon experienced, through a careful reading of all the descriptions and records, when, then, the

researcher arrives at a sense of the whole, for the set of ontological and epistemological propositions. The ontological or epistemological propositions represent the conceptions about the phenomenon. (MACHADO, 1994, p. 40)

The phenomenon studied must be put into suspension, which means that one is not seeking more than what the interrogation made to it suggests, which can be understood as the beginning of the process of reduction, both phenomenological and dialectically.

In Husserl's sense, it is the movement of the human spirit that, through its acts of perceiving, intuiting and imagining, manages to transcend the multiplicity of the different aspects of the phenomenon looked at and to understand what is essential to it.

Seeing that the phenomenon is illuminated before him, the researcher recognizes himself linked to the subject researched by a dialectical relationship between his conceptual horizon and the subject's experience, in which, through intersubjectivity, he objectively establishes his results.

[...]

The essence or structure of the phenomenon is not the end of the analysis, but the means through which one can bring to light what they lived relations present of a general order or of idiosyncratic aspects. (MACHADO, 1994, p. 42)

Phenomenology uses nomothetic analysis to equate this last aspect.

The term nomothetic is derived from *nomos*, which means the use of laws, therefore, normativity or generality, assuming a character of principle or law. Nomothetic analysis in qualitative research indicates a movement of passage from the individual to the general level, that is, it moves from the individual psychological aspect to the general psychological aspect of the manifestation of the phenomenon. The general psychological structure is the result of the understanding of the convergences and divergences of the aspects that are shown [...]. This directionality for generality is obtained by the researcher by articulating the relationships of individual structures with each other.

[...]

The meanings arising from a description are not narrowly limited to the experience of the individual from whom they emerged, they do not belong to a single reality, but to that of several others, without this implying belonging to all subjects. Thus, one does not have universal but general propositions. The researcher then seeks to determine which aspects of the individual structures manifest a general truth, which can be taken as true statements and which cannot. Convergences come to characterize the general structure of the phenomenon. Divergences indicate individual perceptions resulting from ways of reacting through external agents. (MACHADO, 1994, p. 42)

After carefully reading the descriptions obtained and performed, I identified the convergences. The perceptions that the subjects have of their lived experience start to constitute the research data, or the units of meanings that make up the structuring elements of the phenomenon.

These units have meanings to the extent that the researcher is the assignor of meanings and when seeking to understand them performs a meta-understanding of the phenomenon, which constitutes an interpretation.

Next, I passed each unit of meaning to the sociological discourse. Finally, I sought the essence of the phenomenon, the revelation of its structure and the dimension of the totality it embraces, supporting us in the dialectic and going beyond the limits of phenomenology.

Just as there are phenomenologies and phenomenologies, there are dialectics and dialectics, and the principles of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology are not incompatible with those of Karel Kosik's dialectic.

The search for essence (HUSSERL, 1986), although starting from another paradigm and following other paths, has the same meaning as the search for the dimension of totality in which the phenomenon is inserted and understood (KOSIK, 1976).

This is my methodological thesis. I worked explicitly and formally with phenomenology in Ponta do Corumbau and, implicitly, with dialectics. In Havana inverti, the dialectical method was explicit and the phenomenological was implicit.

With the intensive use of the methodology of participant observation, I experienced, contextualized and interpreted the experienced, interacting and relating to the research subjects in the places that give them identity and on which the object of studies was built, without losing sight of the geopolitical issue in Cuba. Going, therefore, much deeper and wider than the merely positive appearance of the phenomenon placed in suspension allows, limitedly, to interpret. In short, both in Ponta do Corumbau and in Havana, dialectics, as the very movement of thought, allowed me to proceed when the limits of phenomenology, with regard to its impossibility of generalizing its results, became present (GAMA, 2005).

3 THE CONCEPT OF PLACE AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

I make use of the premise of the concept of place as being fundamental for the construction of objects of studies of empirical sociological research on the phenomenon of tourism.

Containing the spatial dimension, but going beyond this, that is, incorporating in its meaning the cultural identity and the web of everyday life, the "soul of the place", constitutes itself as the differential that will give rise to the displacement of tourists and the interaction with the natives.

The social facts that since Durkheim are situated as the object of studies of Sociology itself as a social science (GAMA, 2020b).

It was this meaning of the concept of place, a contribution of Anthropology – and not exactly of Geography – that made my doctoral thesis possible. It allowed to work in field research with comparative studies of cases based on approximate fundamentals, having, on the one hand, a small fishing village with 800 caboclo-pataxó residents in Ponta do Corumbau (GAMA, 2021b), extreme south of Bahia, Brazil, and, on the other, the capital of Cuba, Havana, with millions of Caribbeans.

As I had already carried out the field research in Brazil (January/2003-February/2004), and especially after my exploratory incursion into Cuba (July/2004), I realized that I was facing a challenge (GAMA, 2020c). Given the specificities of culture and the socio-political and economic system, including geopolitical and ideological issues, my venture on the island would only be likely to succeed if I developed a specific methodology of investigative praxis that the object of studies, the social impacts of tourism in tourist places, via a perspective compared by approximate foundations, require and require.

"Define the place as the *extent* of the happening [...] solidarity and which is characterized by two types of constitution: one is the territorial configuration itself, the other is the norm, the organization [...]"¹ (SAINTS, 1997, p. 36). The spatial structure is as important as the duration of the cultural phenomenon that gives identity to the place. People and places in the process of globalization tend to convert or make space unique.

The distinction between place and region becomes less relevant than before, when working on a hierarchical and geometric conception of geographical space. Therefore, the region can be considered as a place, provided that the rule of unity and contiguity of historical happening is verified. And places – look at the examples of big cities – can also be regions. Both the region and the place are subspaces subordinating to the same general laws of evolution, where empirized time enters as a condition of *possibility* and the geographical entity as a condition of *opportunity*. Each practical temporalization corresponds to a practical spatialization, which disrespects previous solidarities and limits and creates new ones.² (SAINTS, 2014, p. 159)

These spaces of globalization can be called as technical-scientific-informational means and present loads of different intensities, because "The places [...] they are defined by their technical density, by their informational density, by their communicational density, whose function characterizes and distinguishes them. These qualities interpenetrate, but are not confused" (SANTOS, 2014, p. 160).

The human referential is emphasized in the definition of the place regarding the role of the senses, in which the vision is the dominant one by the amount of information it allows distinguish, but is influenced by each culture (RAPOPORT, 1978).

One has the place as the banal and elementary weave of space, where it is possible to detect functions that are not identical throughout; thus, the geographical analysis should contribute to the decryption of places (FRÉMONT, 1980).

The experience of the place depends on vision and touch, but its value depends on the intimacy of a human relationship (TUAN, 1983).

¹ Author italics

² Author italics

The place as an arrangement that produces the singular, but it is estimated that in no way can one understand or work it without consideration of the extent of its systems. The place has a personality, but it is not a subject. Starting from the concepts of identity, daily life and tourism, we seek:

[...] complement the idea of place as a spatial differentiation that brings together a set of characteristics, based on physical geography and its fauna; in their institutions; in its economic, social and cultural life (with emphasis on the built landscape). It is a total phenomenon, not reducible to a single property, under penalty of losing its character. A region can have many places and even coincide with one of them. I consider that place is to space, just as periodization is to time. (YÁZIGI, 2001, p. 49)

In a constant process of maintenance and change, how can a place transform itself without losing its identity? It is considered that each place has the ability to receive different components, within certain limits, because if it assimilated a single vector of transformation, it would be lost. Equally the place can be interpreted in other ways, from different angles, perspectives and interests (NORBERG-SCHULTZ, 1980).

An anthropological perspective of the relationship between tourism and local identity is highlighted:

In postmodern thought, identity is seen as something mobile, always under construction, which is being shaped with the other and in the permanent rereading of the circulating universe. The contact between tourists and residents, between the culture of the tourist and the culture of the resident, triggers a process full of contradictions, tensions and questions, but that, synchronously or diachronically, causes the strengthening of the identity and culture of individuals and the receiving society and, often, the strengthening of the tourist himself who, in otherness, rediscovers himself. (BANDUCCI; BARRETO, 2001, p. 19)

Sociologically,

Legitimizing places, trying to rescue residual social groups *as they were*, ignoring their transformations, would be frontally reactionary. In this highly urbanized world, populated by well-positioned tourists, keeping them as they were or as some still are means the very aestheticization of misery. [...] It is not by rescuing them as bucolic beings that their lives will be promoted in this third millennium. The problem is not bucolism, but that of social injustice and unresolved misery.³ (YÁZIGI, 2001, p. 286)

A sociology of tourism should result in benefits for the hosts. By staying abreast of what causes, and reflecting on it, residents, policymakers and entrepreneurs can seek alternatives for a harmonious development that allows the place to achieve what is considered as a paradigm of sustainability.

To bring together the political or geopolitical dimension present in the clashes for the conquest or defense of space in the face of external interests or aggressions, on which the community/society builds its cultural identity. Develop the economic dimension in the sense that tourism is profitable also

³ Actor italics.

and above all for the receiving population. Emphasize the social dimension so that the coexistence between visitors and visitors is based on respect for otherness. Preserve the environmental dimension so that the support capacity of the ecosystem in which its rationality is realized is verified.

How then to understand the possibility of maintaining the identity of place in a postmodern global societal environment? What can be gleaned from globalization is that a supposed cosmopolitan culture could not relate to any historical reality; it would not meet living needs or any process of identity formation (FEATHERSTONE, 1994).

On the contrary, global postmodernity is indicative of new levels of diversity, because "If there is a global culture, it would be better to conceive of it not as a common culture, but as a field in which differences, power struggles and disputes over cultural prestige are exercised" (FEATHERSTONE, 1995, p. 31).

The social and historical phenomenon of tourism is the stage of opposition and juxtaposition of the global over the local, of an expressive rationality of (post-)modernity on communal cultural identities. This relationship of forces characterizes the social impacts of tourism as a vector of growth and/or economic development, but also of disintegration of the traditional social relations of the place.

[...] place is, in its essence, human production, since it is reproduced in the relationship between space and society, which means creation, establishment of an identity between community and place, an identity that occurs through forms of appropriation for life. The place is the product of human relations, between man and nature, woven by social relations that are realized in the plane of the lived, which guarantees the construction of a network of meanings and senses that are woven by the history and civilizing culture producing the identity. Then man recognizes himself because he lives there. The subject belongs to the place as it belongs to him, because the production of the place is inextricably linked to the production of life. In the place emerges life, since it is there that the unity of social life takes place. Each subject is situated in a concrete and real space where one recognizes or loses, enjoys or modifies, since the place has uses and meanings in itself. It has the dimension of life, so the act of production of the place reveals the subject. (CARLOS, 1996, pp. 28-29)

The structure of a place cannot be eternal, since it is historical. Its identity is always in the process of construction, in a dialectical tension of maintenance and change.

The dynamics of the interrelations of the dimensions of the place and the degree of involvement and dependence of this with the larger societal context that surrounds it, make phenomenology and dialectic movements of thought pertinent to the understanding of its essence in the face of tourism and, at the same time, of the dimension of the totality in which this social phenomenon is inserted.

The first incursion into Cuba allowed us to redirect the focus of research on the island, at which time the understanding of the theoretical and methodological importance of the concept of place was imposed.

I opted for the analysis of the impacts of tourism only in Havana which, by establishing a very close and direct relationship with the socio-political system of the country, demanded a differentiated

method, based on dialectics, although phenomenological foundations have been preserved in the research process. Exploratory research allowed me to elaborate my initial hypothesis or intuition.

The main impacts of tourism would reside in the level of values, in the stimulus to moral transgressions on the part of natives to tourists.

These are revealed at the moment of the approaches of "Cubans who do not work", such as prostitutes, sellers of diverted cigars, beggars, adolescents, among others. But also, of "Cubans who work and who ask", such as the insistence of tips by tourism workers, informal and illegal tour guides, offers of unauthorized housing, etc.

And on the part of workers who, still in the exercise of their labor activity – newsmen, street sweepers, etc. – also question tourists, asking for dollars.

The motivation of these attitudes would be to achieve a power of consumption of superfluous goods, and would indicate a crisis of values in the host social fabric provoked by the international phenomenon on the island.

Another hypothesis or intuition, which emerged on our first day in Havana, still in the exploratory incursion, indicated the existence of a political-ideological dimension present in the rationality of tourism in Cuba: the construction of *a sui generis* system of social separation between natives and tourists, shaped as a state policy (GAMA, 2020c).

Making intensive use of participant observation as a research method and technique appropriate to the context of the place Havana, sought to understand the meaning, intensity and regularity of approaches to the "tourist" – researcher.

The participant observer collects data through their participation in the daily life of the group or organization they study. He observes the people he is studying to see the situations they normally encounter and how they behave in front of them. He engages in conversations with some or all of the participants in this situation and discovers the interpretations they have about the events he has observed. (BECKER, 1993, p. 47)

Our challenge in the use of this methodology in Havana, which prioritized the proximity to the "tourist"–researcher, refers to the credibility of the informants.

Much evidence consists of statements made by members of the study group about some event that has occurred or is in process. [...] First, the researcher can use the statement as evidence *about the event*, if he is careful to evaluate it through the criteria that a historian uses when examining a personal document. Does the informant have reason to lie or hide a part of what he considers to be the truth? [...] Second, even when a statement so examined proves seriously defective as a thorough account of an event, it can still offer useful evidence for another kind of conclusion.⁴ (BECKER, 1993, pp. 52-53)

⁴ Author's italics.

Even though it is a question related to problems of inference and proof in participant observation, by accepting the sociological proposition that the statements and descriptions that an individual makes about an event are produced from a perspective that concerns his position in the group or social segment, the observer can interpret such narratives as indicative of the subject's look and meaning on the point in question.

That is, going beyond pseudo-concreteness and seeking the relationship between essence and dialectical totality (GAMA, 2020d) that narratives are inserted.

In addition to participant observation in the second foray into Some informal and in-depth interviews were conducted. These with varied durations, depending on the contextual situation, spontaneity and the credibility that I attributed to the deponents, always taken in caution and suspicion by the researcher.

These records of autochthonous people who establish an "unauthorized" contact with tourists, form the basis of the ethnographic material from which the analysis would take place.

This, however, seeks to establish a dialogue with the government's discourse and with the guidelines of the State's public tourism policy.

Dialectically (GAMA, 2021c), the identification and analysis of the historical and geopolitical block that led to the resurgence of international tourism on the island is contextualized, making use of specific bibliography and documentary material for interpretations of my intuitions and testing of hypotheses.

4 HISTORIES OF PLACE, TOURISM AND EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATIVE PRAXIS

At Sunday afternoon, January 2, 2005, in Havana, I was in the *lobby* of the Hotel Deauville, back in Cuba, for the final field research.

The hotel is simple, but in the heart of Malecón havanero. Along with other hotels, this was nationalized on October 24, 1960 by the Cuban revolutionary government, when all capitalist enterprises on the island, mostly American, were confiscated: "Se cerro de ese modo uno de los capítulos del rescate para el patrimonio nacional de bienes exexplotados por interessaeses foráneos" (GARRIDO, 1993, p. 127).

The development of tourism in Havana has a close correspondence with the economic and social political history of the country. "El cuadro prior to 1959 en cuanto al turismo foráneo resultaba indignamente, Cuba was presented as an international zone of vice and social seals, as if it had been treated of the Sodom of the XX siglo" (GARRIDO, 1993, p. 57).

The existing tourism "industry" did not develop its activities on the basis of natural, historical, architectural, sporting, cultural or health attractions, but rather showed visitors the negative aspects of

a society dominated by corruption and the desire for profit. Gambling and the large sex market were the factors that made Cuba image as a large casino and brothel in the United States:

The tahures that exploited Tropicana even put on shows aboard the planes as part of a program that culminated in the casino of that cabaret. The moral degradation reached tourist category and the most perverted tastes found full satisfaction. From pornographic spectacles to exhibitionism of abnormalities were offered to visitors as strong attractions. (GARRIDO, 1993, p. 58).

Drugs, gambling and prostitution resulted in the most exploited combination of tourist motivations presented to the American clientele. The short distance from Cuba to the U.S. determined that the tourist flow came mostly from this country:

In 1957, the highest figure of foreign tourism was reached: 272,265 visitors, of which 85% were Americans attracted in their great majority, by the denigrating publicity offered by Havana, as a center of games and prostitution of the Caribbean. In this way, Cuba occupied the first place as a recipient of the Caribbean area, which contracted with the insignificant number of national tourists, crushed by a reality of poverty characterized by: unemployment, racial discrimination, unhealthiness and underdevelopment in general, which suffered most of the population. (CHÁVES, 2003, p. 224)

When I landed at Jose Marti Airport⁵ in Havana, I realized that there had been a resurgence of the Ministry of the Interior regarding the entry of tourists into the country.

Clearance was stricter, slower, with officials demanding to see the return ticket to allow in foreigners. When it was my turn, the customs officer, from inside a booth and sitting in front of a computer terminal, after analyzing and entering data from my passport, asked: second time in Cuba? Vacation? I confirmed with a monosyllable and was released.

The concern for internal security was not unreasonable. In the course of 1997 - in June and September - hotels in the capital Havanera suffered bombings, one of them causing the death of an Italian tourist.

The goal was to dismantle the sector that had been raising resources for the country. The author, a Salvadoran recruited by a network linked to the Cuban-American National Foundation (FNCA (a far-right organization based in Miami) had also entered the country as a tourist (FURIATI, 2001, p. 401).

On the way from the airport to the city I noticed once again what had made an impact on me in Cuba since the previous trip: they didn't exist *outdoors* or commercial signs of the global brands of market players.

TryIt was from a distinct, different, to some extent enigmatic country. This symbolic dimension should be emphasized. It is not the case, precisely and sociologically, to enlist Cuba and its

⁵ Hero of Cuba's war of independence.

geopolitical, economic and social logic in the mass grave of capitalist, dependent and peripheral countries.

On January 1, 2005, Cuba celebrated the 46th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution in a large civic-military celebration at Havana's Malecón. The *billboards* existed, but instead of global consumer products, brands of multinationals, they ostensibly witnessed the affirmation of the identity of revolutionary Cuba in slogans that exalted socialism, fraternity, peace and, above all, the self-esteem of its people for the independence of the Cuban nation.

On May 14, 2004, Havana made international headlines. More than a million citizens, marching through the Malecón to the U.S. Interests Office, repudiated the latest measures of the U.S. government.

These include ratifying the ban on U.S. tourists to the island, limiting foreign exchange remittances from Cubans and visiting their families in Cuba.

On June 14 of the same year, a State Department report accused the Cuban government of participating in international human trafficking and promoting sex tourism on the island. Seven days later, at a demonstration of 200,000 people gathered in the Anti-imperialist Tribune Jose Martí, Fidel Castro Ruz, Commander in Chief and President of the Council of State and Ministers of Cuba, responded directly to George W. Bush:

Mr. Bush:

[...] Including Cuba on a list of countries that practice illegal human trafficking is cynical. Something even more infamous and disgusting [...] is to claim that Cuba promotes sex tourism, even with children. [...] You should experience shame for trying to economically suffocate the people who, blockaded and subjected to more than four decades of economic war, armed aggression and terrorist actions [...]. You are trying to strangle the economy and threaten war against the country that has already been able to reach the figure of 20,000 doctors currently serving in 64 Third World countries. [...] By prohibiting Americans from traveling to Cuba with brutal threats of repression, you violate a constitutional principle and a right of which the citizens of your country have always been proud. It also shows political fear. [...] The worst thing about your crazy and clumsy policy against Cuba is you and your group of close advisers have impudently declared your intention to impose by force what they describe as a political transition in Cuba [...]. You should know that your march against Cuba will not be easy. Our people will resist your economic measures, whatever they may be. Forty-five years of heroic struggle against the blockade and the economic war, threats, aggressions, assassination plans for its leaders, sabotage and terrorism, did not weaken but strengthened the Revolution. [...] The collapse of the European socialist camp and of the USSR itself, which deprived us of market, fuel, food and raw materials, in the face of a blockade reinforced with the Torricelli, Helms-Burton Acts and other measures, did not break the Cuban people, and what seemed impossible happened: we resisted! [...] Today we are not a handful of men determined to win or die. We are millions of men and women who have enough weapons [...]. I can assure you that you would never win that war. Here you will not find a divided people, opposing ethnicities or deep religious differences [...]; You will find a people solidly united by a culture, a feeling of solidarity and a social and human work that has no precedent in history. You are not going to be filled with glory with military action against Cuba. Our people will never renounce their independence, nor will they ever renounce their political, social and economic ideals (CASTRO, 2004).

In the hotel lobby I recorded my observations in the field notebook. The impact of the initial "reprint" on Cuba, and Havana in particular, is positive for me, personally and subjectively. It was interesting to be in a Latin American place where the market – and its ideology of consumption – was not ubiquitous: on television, as on the streets, there were no commercial advertisements or illuminated shop windows. But at the same time, the geopolitical context, as indicated in the excerpts of Fidel Castro's speech, was that of a besieged country, in a state of pre-war, an unusual context for a Brazilian researcher.

From there came to me the theoretical importance of the concept of place for a Sociology of Tourism. Incredibly, threats of foreign war aside, this Hawaiian and Cuban place brought me the memory of the Bahian, Pataxó and Brazilian place. The "exoticism", the different being, the aesthetics of the archaic, simple, simple, traditional, a "quiet place" - as I have heard a lot here and there - are identity aspects that bring together a perception about the soul of apparently so disparate places: the capital of Cuba, Havana, and the fishing village of Ponta do Corumbau, "lost" by the corners, coastal extremes of Bahia, Brazil.

Havana had a population of about 2,200,000 inhabitants (1996) in an area of 720 km², which infers a high population density (3,035 inhabitants/km²). In addition to being the largest city in the country, it is its main political, administrative, scientific and cultural center, with an economy based on the non-sugar industry, services, trade, and tourism. For a historian of the city, the history of the place "sows an archivo attestation of films of action, in which it combines the real y lo maravilloso" (SPENGLER, 1997, p. 17).

Founded in 1519, San Cristóbal de La Habana was the last of the seven villages established during the conquest of the island, which began in 1510 (the "discovery" by Christopher Columbus occurred on his first voyage in 1492). In the same year of its foundation was discovered "el paso del nordeste" between Florida and the Bahamas, which gives access to the Atlantic latitudes where blow the northwest winds that would propel the stern the Hispanic sailboats for the faster return to Spain. Havana is a few hours away from such an important route and the town began to concentrate the large fleets that carried on board the wealth of the vast Spanish empire of the New World.

Being the starting point of these large convoys of ships brought to the town a kind of unusual "tourism" with the thousands of sailors and passengers of these galleons, who waited for months for the moment of departure. The story goes that not a few Havana maidens were induced to wear conventual habits before the avalanche of adventurers who made time in the inns and taverns of the port. (SPENGLER, 1997, p. 18)

The privateers always remained attracted by the wealth that landed in the place and its strategic geographical position. The most spectacular assault and looting of the city were the work of the Frenchman Jacques de Sores in 1555, and others followed until numerous fortifications were erected,

which today make up the historical and tourist heritage of Havana. Prosperity could be seen in centuries, by sugarcane, tobacco, and cattle raising, but the Colony's monopolistic trade with Spain, over the years, proved incongruous in a world where liberal ideas were in vogue.

In consequence England attacked and took Havana in 1762, and, in the few months of its rule, established an advantageous and irreversible trade that linked the island to other markets. The expansion of these commercial practices was the seed that promoted the gradual separation of interests between peninsulars and creoles. The emergence of an intelligentsia with its own critical thinking in the early nineteenth century, and the emancipation of Ibero-American nations, contributed to forge Cuban nationality and separatism from Spain

The wars for independence broke out in the eastern portion of Cuba in 1868 and Havana, the seat of the Spanish colonial government and amid the splendor of its new neoclassical palaces and the Enlightenment that arrived from Europe, was also an active leaven of a bloody struggle that would last about three decades. Fruit of this intense struggle for independence is José Martí - hero⁶ of the Cuban nation, who managed to found the Party that would unite veteran and new patriots in the war of 1895, whose sequence would take the Colony practically to the limits of defeat. Then comes the first military intervention of the United States, which neutralizes and prevents the triumph of the Cuban Liberation Army:

His battleship-cruiser Maine explodes in Havana Bay and Spain is blamed for its authorship, which propitiates the Spanish-Cuban-American War, by which the Americans seize Cuba and other Spanish possessions. The US military interveners organize in the capital a neocolonial government in their image and convenience and leave open and legalized the way for further political interference and by arms, while powerful companies of that country acquire at derisory prices large extensions of the best lands of the Island and remunerative mining concessions and public services. Tyrannical governments and designated "finger" by this interventionist diplomacy follow one another, whose episodes mostly take place in Havana, where a feeling of rebellion and anti-imperialism is also visible. (SPENGLER, 1997, p. 18)

It is noticed that the date of May 20, 1902, inauguration of the first president, Tomás Estrada Palma - chosen and imposed by the United States government - is not considered as the date of Cuba's independence. This would have been merely formal, apparent, given the context of the time. In fact, in 1906, by virtue of the U.S. right of intervention, imposed as an annex to the first Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, the so-called Platt Amendment, troops of that country carried out a second military intervention.

In its fundamental text, the Constitution of 1901 formally gave Cuba a bourgeois-democratic republic, respectful of private property and the main postulates of the great French Revolution of 1789, and with a legal status superior to that which it had had until that moment; but, as Governor Wood himself recognized, "Cuba has been left with little or no independence with the Platt Amendment, and the only thing indicated now is to seek annexation." This last

⁶ He died in battle for Cuba's independence.

purpose they would never achieve; but the truth is that the island ceased to be a colony of Spain to become a semi-colony of the United States. (NAVARRO, 2000, p. 82)

The story for a de facto independence is resumed when a group of poorly armed revolutionaries, commanded by the young Fidel Castro, attacks one of the fortresses of horror and repression of the last of the neocolonial tyrannies (the Assault on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba on July 26, 1953). An extensive insurrectionary process, of several phases and that would lead to the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on January 1^o, 1959, begins when the last dictator, puppet of the casino mafia and the economic interests of the U.S. government, Batista, flees the island like the old pirates, looting the public coffers.

Fidel Castro enters Havana on January 8 of that year at the head of his guerrilla hosts, amid acclaim and popular jubilation, and the whole country converts to an anti-imperialist project, of reformist court. In 1961, on the eve of the Bay of Pigs invasion, conducted by armed mercenaries and prepared by the Central Intelligence Officer (CIA), the communist character of the Cuban Revolution was declared. The 1967 Constitution reaffirms Cuba's commitment to the "doctrine" of Marxism-Leninism, the repudiation of private property and the almost complete nationalization of the means of production.

For Che Guevara's former deputy minister in the Ministry of Industries, with the Revolution Cuba ceased to be a neo-colony:

There were important liberating measures with respect to political dependence with the United States. Tough measures, however, indispensable, such as agrarian reform and, subsequently, the intervention and nationalization of U.S. companies and, later, of everything else in the private sector. As part of the reaction to these measures, the United States decreed the blockade, which broke all economic and commercial relations with Cuba, including trade with U.S. subsidiaries based outside the United States. (SAENZ, 2004, pp. 55-56)

Considering that the U.S. was the main market for the island, one can imagine the countless difficulties the Revolution faced thereafter:

The traditional supply of raw materials, equipment and spare parts was practically interrupted from the first moments of the revolutionary triumph. If we consider the dependence on the United States, this created a situation of almost complete suffocation for the Cuban economy, which lacked practically everything. Many factories had to stop their activities, others began to operate below their capacity or to produce with poor quality. Serious quality problems have occurred throughout the industrial sector due to the lack of suitable raw materials for the entire industry. (SAENZ, 2004, p. 56)

On 05/02/1992, shortly after the end of the USSR, the draft Torricelli Law was presented, which would be approved by the US Congress nine months later:

Further tightening the blockade that the U.S. had imposed on Cuba in 1962, the new law mandated, among other measures, the reduction of any U.S. economic aid to countries that

imported sugar from Cuba; prohibited any commercial relationship with Cuba by companies with U.S. capital [...] that extended to its subsidiaries, no matter in which country they were established; officially instituted a "black list" of companies from capitalist countries that maintained relations with Cuba, which would be subject to restrictions on trade with the US; imposed even greater limits on remittances of dollars to Cuba by members of the community of Cubans residing in Miami; and [...] determined that ships that docked in Cuban ports would be prohibited for six months from entering U.S. territorial waters. (MOORS, 2001, p. 26)

In 1996 came the Helms-Burton Law which, in addition to the authorization to support dissident groups on the island and the increase of resources for Radio and TV Martí (generators of anti-Castro programs), urged the impediment of Cuba's entry into international organizations, the granting of loans by multilateral funding institutes and visas to persons or representatives of firms that had established themselves there.

From the glass that separates *the hotel lobby* from the sidewalk I noticed two Cuban men who, as they passed, and with a jocular air, made signs with their hands as if asking me to offer them a drink. I simply smiled, denying it, and they responded by smiling and moving on. I interpreted the fact as if I were in Brazil. Below the paraphernalia of the government's discourse, the people trace their paths, take their options, seek to make both their destiny and their daily lives. Why not try queuing up a beer from a tourist? I took it as an idiosyncratic trait, indicative of the soul of a Caribbean socialism – it even resembled a "way" of being of the Brazilian. Behind the standards, a conduct of the trivial, every day, in which a socialist, rigid and state morality is granted some strategies – I would reflect in this initial moment of the research – not exactly of survival, but of the search for frugal, personal, immediate pleasure.

Mas is He was tense, fearful and anxious about the feasibility of conducting interviews with the use of a tape recorder that he had with the natives. Especially those who had a direct, informal/illegal relationship with tourists.

Cuba does not It was and is not a liberal democracy, it was a fidelist dictatorship. I conjectured that if I used a recording medium as a data collection tool, I would run the risk of being misinterpreted, rejected, estranged, and – in the extreme – being "reported", arrested and deported.

These attitudes of those we could approach as a researcher, even identifying ourselves as such, could occur, to the extent that: 1) it was "gringo" in a communist country, until very recently closed to the Western capitalist world; 2) a foreigner, from outside, in a large Caribbean city whose culture is very little studied, appearing to be enigmatic, where independent researchers do not exist in the eyes of the population and the regime; 3) and, finally, to what extent would the fidelist and ubiquitous discourse of the government find capillarity, base, support of the urban mass that could be very strange – and very much – of the motivations and possible political-ideological interests of a researcher not financed by the Brazilian State and not formally authorized by the Cuban?

I wondered: is this not an unfounded perception of the character of the political regime? Wouldn't the warmth and hospitality of the receiving community, which I felt in my previous exploratory foray, facilitate the researcher-researcher contact?

I decided, in principle, but reluctantly, to make use of the recorder technique as data collection. More than a detailed record of interviews, it is documentary evidence of the research and the material could be a source for other investigations and methods, such as semiotic analysis, language, discourse, content, etc.

However, in one of the first contacts with a deponent havanera, I was surprised by the political content of the narrative, the character of denunciation and the radical contestation of the regime.

As the interviewee asked little about me – only the name and where I was from, and not even the profession and professional and academic activity that I was actually exercising at that time, that of researcher, I decided to seek in the stereotype of tourist who carried in the eyes of the population a means to collect the information and data that he needed in the field research.

I wouldn't make use of the tape recorder, so as not to expose the social actors and myself. But, starting from the ontological difference between an idealistic and a historical, contextualized ethics, to omit is not to lie and, after all, in the search to delineate the impacts of tourism on the social fabric havanero, nothing more consistent with such a perspective than to make use, as a method of investigation of participant observation with field registration, but, obviously, omitting and/or changing the names of the deponents, given to the context of the investigative conjuncture, to preserve the sources of the research and the researcher himself.

5 OBSERVING AND PARTICIPATING: JINETERAS, THE "TOURIST" AND CUBA

On my first night of my second and final foray into Havana, I went out on the street to walk in the Malecon. I was soon approached by prostitutes, the jineteras.

Jineterism is the local meaning of prostitution linked to the expansion of tourism. The illegal sex workers were so named, popularly, for associating themselves with the practice of the commercialized sexual act with the desire and the possibility of acquiring jeans (FURIATI, 2001, p. 391). The basic motivation of the jineteras would therefore be to have access to consumer goods of high symbolic value.

This meaning supported my hypothesis or initial intuition of doctoral research that the main effects of tourism in Havana would occur on the level of values.

The moral transgressions perceived in the indigenous approaches to tourists, as well as in the insistent requests for tips and "a dollar", would have the sense of acquiring "superfluous" goods that would distinguish them.

But, through evidence, data and testimonies in my investigation, I refuted, in the end, this provisional response to my object of study, and concluded that it was a search for satisfaction of basic needs, survival, in an internal environment of generalized scarcity, aggravated by external imperialist geopolitics.

From the wall of the Malecón I observed an old mansion, like a tenement, where, it seemed to me, a certain number of women and men made the place an observation point for approaches to tourists.

Next door, a very busy small coffee shop. I decided to go there. It could be a prime location for a foray into Havana's *underground*. I sat down and waited for the waiter. Several sex workers, some young – but not teenagers, women made – started staring at me.

Medalia, 31 years old, very friendly and unembarrassed, approached me, drinking a Cristal beer (quoted in dollars, aimed at tourists). He pulled up the conversation and the chair and sat down at my desk. I was quite receptive. She was very cheerful; she talked a lot.

She got serious, however, when she said she wasn't a "bitch" but a "self-employed tour guide." He worked informally, illegally, because if he worked with state authorization, he would have to pay high fees to the government.

In the course of our long conversation, I tried to identify the real character of Medalia's professional activity.

I concluded that I specialized in mediating the contact of tourists with *chicas*, a guide of sex tourism in Havana.

He approached them, sought to gain their trust and sympathy, began to pick them up in their hotels for tours to the city's sights, indicated them restaurants and palates (homemade restaurants), gave them tips on how to act in Cuba and, above all, sought to make sexual desires viable.

According to her, *the chicas* who prostituted themselves would be between 16 and 18 years old and charged from 40 to 60 dollars. There was a need for an agency to promote contacts, because the police would be suspicious of any couple consisting of a Cuban woman and a tourist. So that the young women did not expose themselves, mature women assumed the role of intermediaries.

Medalia made it clear that she had a good traffic in the underworld: she recognized everyone, she knew everything that was actually happening, because she belonged to that environment, a segment of the social fabric of Havanero.

As for the veracity of the alleged age range of the *chicas* she managed, I would conclude that it would be a "propaganda" resource to stimulate the interest of tourists in the practice. In my wanderings, observations, contacts, conversations and approaches, I would not find evidence of child prostitution, although I had another testimony to that effect. This fact would occur not in the Center or in the tourist spots, but in the vicinity, but I had no way to validate this information.

She studied only four years and didn't want to justify why she stopped. She had a 13-year-old daughter to raise and feed, as her husband, in 1994, became a "ferryman": he fled to Miami on a makeshift ferry and never contacted family on the island again.

He said that Cubans have a very precarious situation of existence, because the rationed quota of food that the State guaranteed access – at subsidized prices in Cuban pesos – to all working families through the *libretto* would be insufficient to last a month: "only one chicken every 15 days and you don't see real meat." His voice shifted as he spoke of it, expressing indignation and at the same time despair.

The greatest crisis in the history of the Cuban Revolution broke out on 12/21/91, overseas. Leaders of eleven of the fifteen Soviet republics had decided to follow the declarations of independence of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus: The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was extinct. The impacts on Cuba were immediate:

[...] overnight the Gross Domestic Product [...] fell from 23 billion to 11 billion dollars, foreign trade collapsed to 25% of the previous volume, two-thirds of state-owned enterprises proved to be in deficit [...]. With the end of "real socialism", the oil sold by Moscow at prices lower than those of the international market and the sugar bought by the Soviets at prices higher than that practiced by the square went down the drain. The country's annual consumption would fall from 13 to 3 million tons of oil. Without Soviet supplies, there was no fuel to move the trucks and cutters, responsible for harvesting 85 percent of Cuban sugarcane, the country's main source of revenue. The harvest fell from 8 to 6 million tons in the first year after the end of the USSR, to reach its lowest historical level in 1995, when the country produced just over 3 million tons. (MOORS, 2001, p. 23)

The first measure was to reduce a harsh rationing of electricity, which left the population 16 hours a day without power. In the hotels the apartments on the lower floors were eagerly disputed by the guests.

Garbage collection on the outskirts of Havana began to be driven by animal traction. Anyone who arrived in Cuba at the height of the crisis, in the early 1990s, had the impression that they were in a ghost country.

There wasn't a single vehicle circulating on the streets: taxis, buses, private cars, official cars – nothing. It was the beginning of the "special period," that of a peacetime war economy, further aggravated by the periodic cyclones that ravage the country.

The Revolution was faced with impasses that profoundly affected the daily lives of the people. Castro asked and reminded Cubans in his speeches:

What if we have to choose [...] between fuel for the buses and preparing the land and cutting the cane or mobilizing 300,000 people for the harvest, but having to provide camps, clothing, shoes, work tools and food? [...] Those who have become accustomed to having the maximum, do not understand when they begin to lack. The chicken that did not reach the market ends up overshadowing the medicine that can save life or relieve pain; or the liter of milk guaranteed for each child who is educated. (FURIATI, 2001, p. 358)

The picture led to the escape of those who were willing to cross a sea of sharks to Florida. The illegal exodus of balseiros "suicides" began in 1991, with 2,203 fugitives; in 1992, 2,557; in 1993, 3,656, until adding about 33,000 in 1994, when a Cuban and American migration agreement mitigated the phenomenon (FURIATI, 2001, p. 372).

This is the conjuncture of the political decision to boost foreign tourism on the island. I asked Medalia what the tourists meant to the people, to which she replied, emphatically, as something "very positive". It is through them that you get used clothes and shoes, as well as dollars, as personal donations. A dollar, which Cubans insistently ask tourists for, means a lot to locals because it balances the domestic budget. In fact, the minimum wage in Cuba was 120 Cuban pesos, about \$5, and the highest pay — for police and military officers — was 600 pesos (\$24).

In 1994 the Ministry of Tourism was created and the activity becomes a priority. In 1990, 340,000 foreigners made use of the 12,900 existing dwellings, contributing 243 million dollars. In 2002 there were already 1,683,000 tourists who entered US\$ 2 billion and the hotel plant more than tripled, reaching 41 thousand rooms (CHÁVES, 2003).

In [...] fifteen years, with high growth rates maintained, tourism has become the first national industry, as far as attracting foreign currency is concerned, displacing traditional sectors. In 2001, despite the global crisis arising from the terrorist attacks in New York, 1 million 775 thousand tourists arrived in the country and there were 10 million 270 thousand overnight stays, which managed to maintain, and even slightly exceed, the level of the previous year. (MEDINA; SANTAMARINA, 2004, p. 18)

Castro affirmed that Cuba works for tourism of "Peace, Health and Security", and "the hospitality and fraternal spirit of its population, the interest aroused by the Revolution, its achievements in various fields and the paths undertaken in its social development, are and will be increasingly attributes of great attraction" (CASTRO, 2003, p. 1).

The country's main tourist hub, Havana received at the time about 900,000 foreigners a year, half of the tourists who landed in Cuba. In 2003 the capital of the country had 12,000 dwellings, 9,500 of them intended for international tourism.

The tourism delegate of Havana, when commenting on the benefits that Hawaiians receive with the development of the activities of the tourism "industry", cites the 33,000 direct jobs it generates and the stimulus to other national sectors that is nourished for their inputs by about 70%.

In parallel, he pointed out that the improvement of the image and conditions of many areas of the city is evident. These have been favored with the renovations and new constructions that have been made for the activity "y que sin dudas embellecen el entorno y las condiciones de vida de la población" (ALLEN, 2003, p. 5).

About 74 percent of the tourists arriving in Cuba were Canadians, Germans, Italians, Spaniards, French and English, in that order. From January to September 2004, 1,559,185 tourists visited the country, an increase of 13.1% compared to 2003. One of the main issuing markets that helped in this aspect was Canada, with a growth of 29% of travelers to the island (RODRIGUEZ, 2004, p. 3).

Sáinz, citing data from the World Tourism Organization - UNWTO that of the then 700 million annual international tourists worldwide, 20% motivate their trips by the search for sex - and 3% lean towards children, criticizes the United States and defends the image of Canadian tourists:

However, nations such as the United States, with the first place in the consumption of child pornography on the Internet and with recognized tour operators that promote sex tourism, is dedicated to accusing Cuba as a destination of pleasure. [...] Washington's unjust and false accusations against Cuba link Canada as an issuer of this type of tourists, which was officially denied by Canadian authorities. (SAÍNZ, 2004, p. 3)

I concluded with a challenge: "The criers of so many infamies would find it opportune to walk through the streets of the largest of the Antilles, link with their people and visit the hotel, social and cultural facilities to verify that our island is committed to a tourism of peace, health and hospitality" (SAÍNZ, 2004, p. 3).

As he continued the search, a police car - with the words "Criminalística" - approached and stopped in front of the cafeteria. A sense of apprehension washed over the room. An investigator got out of the car wielding a camera. Several young women, surreptitiously, sought refuge by entering the house next door. The more mature women stayed, like Medália, and the regulars, like me, were all the targets of a single photograph of the façade of the establishment. Routine investigation of a crime or overt state surveillance measure?

She didn't answer the question. His countenance, once cheerful and pleasant, became charged, tense, nervous. He expressed indignation at the state's morality of considering any Cuban or Cuban in the company of tourists to be suspected of prostitution or illegal activities. According to her, foreigners were not encouraged to leave the limits of their hotels and tour packages and meddle with the people who receive them.

I asked if I had ever had problems with the police, but did not answer, in a personal way, testified in general terms, in a tone of anger, as the police car drove away. He told me that in Cuba there was no freedom, that people disappeared, many were imprisoned for 15 or 20 years. I asked if Cubans supported Fidel Castro and she replied peremptorily that "no!" but "people did not protest because they would be afraid, they were watched." He refers to the hero of the Cuban Revolution not by name, but makes gestures with his hands to designate him as "the one with the beard," the "sole owner of the whole island."

He would have personal and secret accounts in Switzerland, with an incalculable fortune. Showing outrage, she lowered her tone of voice to "denounce" that Havana hotel employees were involved in a network of beneficiaries of prostitution, whose boss would be the "beard" himself. Receptionists and doormen would be told to charge tourists a \$30 "fee" each time one of them tried to bring a jinetera to their quarters. The rules of the hotels forbade the reception of visitors in the rooms, which would be done surreptitiously, corruptly and illegally.

I was overcome with great astonishment at these whispered statements. On the part of the regime's most adamant critics abroad, accusations without evidence, slanders of Fidel Castro, occurred at the level of the bourgeois press. I did not expect to come across such an assertion at the popular level in Cuba. How to explain Medalia's narrative? In the course of the participant observation, crossing testimonies and data, he would come to the conclusion that his motivation would be of a political and personal order, peculiar, due to his life story as the ex-wife of a ferryman who fled the Cuban regime and the intense repression of the State to the practice of sex marketed to tourists.

In the exploratory investigation in Cuba, in July 2004, I asked Camilo, the taxi driver who had driven me through the interior of the country, about the issue of sex workers, and his answer was that "given to the action of the government" the "jineterismo", which showed signs of increase accompanying the intensification of the international tourist flow to the island, would have downloaded. I asked my buds how the phenomenon could slow down in a context of continued increase in tourist arrivals. Zeném, an informant who would meet and conduct a long in-depth interview on this second trip to the country, would understand my doubt and clarify what I had already intuited.

In the worst phase of the special period, in 1990, when food rationing became more acute, coinciding with the arrival of the first hordes of foreign tourists to the island, women from all over Cuba migrated to Havana and Varadero for the practice considered the crime of prostitution.

The State's response would have been, shortly after such migrations, the mass imprisonment of them and their confinement in a special penitentiary, transformed for this purpose, on the outskirts of Havana.

The episode, in 1996, was partially recorded by Cláudia Furiati: "More than seven thousand 'jineteras', arriving from cities in the interior, were expelled from Varadero" (FURIATI, 2001, p. 393). That is why prostitution "had decreased," as Camilo had pointed out to me.

I would ponder to Zeném that the practice of jineteras is always difficult to be proven by the difficulty of the police in carrying out the flagrant, that is, the moment of delivery of the tourist's money to the woman and her relationship with the commodified sexual act.

How could the Cuban police have succeeded in their operation? Zeném stated that the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution - CDR organized by streets, blocks and/or

neighborhoods throughout Cuba, less than indicative of a popular power or auxiliary militias for the defense of the country, would be organizations constituted, hegemonically, by affiliates and militants of the single leading party, the Cuban Communist Party - PCC, for the exercise of internal political control.

The moment members of these organizations realized that *a chica* from the neighborhood lived alone or in the company of only women, who did not work and, at the same time, revealed a significant improvement in the way she dressed and in the increase of her possessions, she would be watched, then photographed, until the material evidence and deviant behavior replaced the place of proof in the case, the flagrant of the act.

She would then be arrested, convicted, and subjected to "re-education" for 30 days; If the attitude were reiterated, the penalties could reach years in prison.

In sum, prostitution in Cuba was considered a political quest, a response to the socialist morality of the state, in addition to denying the country as a destination for international sex tourism. In the didactic material of the training course of tourism workers of the National School of Tourism, in the item referring to the "Work of the Party", read it: "VI.4.

The political-ideological confrontation of the problem of *jineteras*, due to its complexity and social connotation, requires special attention and prophylaxis, both in the tourism field and in its environment and throughout society" (CUBA, [between 1995 and 2004], p. 18).

Medalia noted my ever-growing interest in the conversation in her testimony. He asked, "Now that we're friends," if I can afford him a beer and a sandwich, because he's hungry. I consented: a relationship of empathy was established. The interview continues.

I told her that two aspects were surprising me about the relationship of natives and tourists in Cuba: 1) the intensity of the approaches of countless Cubans asking for "a dollar", in a socialist country in which, in theory, the basic needs of the population would be guaranteed by the State, which, in her narrative, she had already given me indications of clarification; 2) the general absence of begging children, a common fact in Brazil, I commented.

She reasoned, with emphasis, that this social fact does not occur in the tourist spots of the capital given the ostensible presence of the police. But it would only take an incursion into peripheral and marginal places, non-tourist social spaces, for us to be targets of requests for dollars by hungry children. However, I had no way of confirming or refuting this claim.

Asked about crime rates in Havana, especially against tourists, Medalia revealed that these are low, given the ostensible policing – which, in fact, had already caught my attention on the previous trip, whether in the capital, in the interior of the country or in Varadero – and the severe prison sentences. However, according to her, such misconduct erupted strongly a few days ago, in the vicinity

of where we were, in the period from Christmas to New Year, for an objective and meaningful reason. Because they had nothing to eat of, several individuals would have taken to the streets committing thefts and robberies against tourists to ensure dinners on the most symbolic annual nights, in acts of desperation. However, I had no way to confirm or refute this testimony.

The waiter brought the food she requested, which was not the sandwich agreed with me, but a full meal: rice, chips and a good piece of breaded chicken. From the twinkle in her eyes and the impetus—restrained but perceived—with which she threw herself into the meal, I could see that she was, indeed, hungry. However, he ate only all the rice and chips and only a small piece of the chicken. The rest of the meat was packed in a plastic bag — which once contained Cuban coins and pesos — and told me, "I'm going to take it to my 13-year-old daughter who's at home, alone."

We continued to look at the surroundings, especially the house next door, where women and men peeked out into the street. Medalia tried to follow my observation, and when I realized that I noticed one or another *chica* more closely, I invariably said her name and asked me if I would like to meet her, which I denied, claiming fatigue of the trip.

She had been drinking, eaten, it had been about 10 p.m., and she began to show signs of impatience with my passivity. After all, he was there to "work," to take money home. A friend of hers, Livia, 29 years old, brunette, approached and was immediately invited by her to sit down, immediately offering her a beer when she called the attendant. They talked to each other as if I were not there, speaking very fast and making use of slang, conforming as an indecipherable dialect for a foreigner.

Expressing haste, Medalia herself asked for the bill (\$22) and, in saying goodbye, went straight to the point. "Since we're friends," she arranged a special promotion for me: Livia could stay with me, in a nearby room, for "only" \$30. I thanked him, tried to show satisfaction, but reiterated the fatigue to "leave it for tomorrow". I said goodbye to both of them, not before having to promise that I would meet them the next night, refusing Medalia's proposal to pick me up at the hotel early.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

One morning on this return to Cuba I had a cup of coffee (\$1) in *the lobby* and observed a young redhead, hotel employee. I noticed that I wasn't the only one of the male guests to stare at him. The same thing happened in the various hotels on the island I was in earlier. Once Cubans perceive lascivious motivations, they demarcate such a trait in the stigma of being a male tourist, alone or in a group of these.

Overcoming this barrier requires, in addition to mutual empathy, propitious and inviting moments, most of the time not permissible or available.

On the other hand, the stereotype of the tourist is compounded by the fact that he "has money", being in a clearly asymmetrical social and economic position, superior to that of the natives. Hence the market of potential sex workers to offer their services and meet this demand, that is, those who seek sexual pleasure at the expense of the money they carry, without major conflicts with sentimental, existential, ethical, moral, cultural and/or religious principles and values.

Currently, in Cuba, the commercialized sexual practice itself is not a crime, but that of pimps and jineteras, yes. It is considered, morally and ideologically, that the jinetera is a criminal prostitute because it takes advantage of tourists, and those who are caught in sexual acts with them would be prevented, in theory, from getting visas to the country for a few years.

Behind the social masks, stigmas and stereotypes constructed morally, the women who make their body a commodity of consumption, pleasure and financial income, are similar, people of flesh, bone and soul. With feelings and anxieties, histories of material deprivations, family disintegration, moral rebellion and/or affirmation of one's self in defiance of the norms, codes and standards of conduct accepted socially, politically, ideologically and sexually.

Indicative of human degradation or survival strategy, existence, and/or only sex workers, who have, almost everywhere in the world, but essentially in tourist destinations, an assured demand for a practice that involves the dimension of carnal pleasure, for themselves (?) and/or their clientele?

In Cuba they were or are criminal, because recently, with the exponential growth of tourism, they have become "tolerated", as, in a certain way, in Brazil.

In England, etc., they are institutionalized and organized into trade unions. I conducted my field research in two raids, but the increase in the sexual practice marketed by sex workers via their bodies, called, in fact, prostitutes, is one of the social impacts of tourism in Havana, and the increase of this is just one of them.

This aspect has been highlighted by the opponents of the Revolution. International journalists provocatively once asked Fidel Castro "why do university women in Cuba prostitute themselves?", to which the old commander replied: "it is not the Cuban university women who prostitute themselves, but the prostitutes in Cuba are the ones who are university students..."

How to equate such a question?

Life expectancy in Cuba was 79.39 years (2014), with a literacy rate of 99.8% of the population and a Human Development Index (HDI) considered high (0.777 in 2017).

The island had the highest health coverage in the entire Caribbean and infant mortality was lower than in some central capitalist countries such as the US. In 2006, Cuba was the only nation in the world that received the definition, from the environmental NGO of international respectability, WWF, of sustainable development.

When Raúl Castro and then-U.S. President Obama announced the beginning of a cautious political rapprochement (2014), Cuba became one of the most sought-after tourist destinations in the world. According to the World Bank (2018) tourism corresponds to 2.6% of the national GDP, but this index reaches about 10% considering the indirect effects. In 2019, this "industry" brought to Cuba 5 million tourists and \$3 billion.

With the privatization of airports, 10 million foreigners should be reached per year. Entrepreneurship has grown. In 2020, there were 589,000 Cubans with their own business (13% of the workforce), up from 157,000 in 2010.

With about 87% of the vote, the new Constitution was approved in a referendum held on 24/02/2020. It ratifies the "irrevocable" character of socialism as a social system on the island, but intensifies its economy to the market, private property and foreign investment, under state control.

At the same time, Cuba is experiencing one of the worst stages of its chronic economic crisis, aggravated by the fall in tourism revenue in the pandemic and the currency reform conducted by the regime. The so-called "tarea ordenamiento", the plan to unify its three (!) currencies: Cuban peso, *convertible peso* (GAMA, 2020c) and US dollar.

The measure has become an inflationary trigger, and there are many products that are only sold in dollars. Buying them is difficult: the idea was that the American currency would be bought for 24 Cuban pesos, but inflation causes the price to exceed 100 pesos.

The unfavorable scenario was one of the themes of the protests of July 11, 2021 on the island, acts of unusual volume that generated widespread repression and international repercussions. Although the economic crisis was one of the main motivators, the political factor is inseparable. There is a civil rights crisis with the resurgence of fidelist repression. It was estimated that there were more than a thousand political prisoners after the demonstrations.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has hurt not only tourism, but also the income of citizens who orbit the sector, such as those who rent rooms in their homes to tourists and taxi drivers. The historic exodus on the island could accelerate population shrinkage as well as drive away the workforce.

I conclude that my essential hypothesis or intuition of the present essay has been confirmed. The epistemological assumptions and the path undertaken through a participant observation inserted in the social fabric of Havanero, in the sociological investigation of tourism and its relationship with sex workers in the place, are legitimate as theoretical-methodological choices.

The venture was successful and was recognized academically as a contribution to the methodology of science, and its development is necessary, given the evolution of the historical blocks.

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