

Postcolonial representations

European images of Brazil in touristic brochures

Lélian Silveira ^{a b}Maria Manuel Baptista ^a^a Department of Languages and Cultures, CLLC, University of Aveiro^b University of Minho / CAPES Brazil

Abstract

Brazil, over the centuries, has been represented by the West world throughout a set of narratives, that have shaped the relation between Brazil and other European countries. Based on tourist brochures collected in tour operators based in Portugal, Spain, France and Germany, we've found out that Brazil is represented by three main clusters: natural/rural, urban/cultural and social/human (figure 1). Moreover, each of these clusters provides a set of references that display the characterization of different Brazilian regions. Considering the importance of studies on Brazil's image as well as the relevance of the theme of the representation of the "other", established by tourism, this research project aims to investigate the representation of Brazil focusing on the textual and imagistic content of the tourism promotion brochures distributed in the seasons 2012/2013 and 2014/2015.

Tourism should be considered not only as a type of business or industry, but as a powerful cultural scene, shaped by representations of places, people, nations and cultures (Aitchison, 2001). Therefore, tourism also needs to be analysed from a cultural and socio-anthropological point of view, since it presents a socio-cultural exchange, a modern ritualistic experience, a differentiated consumption practice and an instrument of political-ideological power. Throughout tourist phenomenon there is a "play of mirrors" between "we" and the "others", sometimes operating as a "concave mirror that magnifies us, which becomes convex when it minors the other" (Pereiro, 2005, p.10).

Brazil, over the centuries, has been the object of a set of narratives used in the representation of the country. These representations have a great impact in the relationships between Brazil and other countries.

In sum, as presented in figure 2, the brochures we've analysed (26 from 5 European countries) offer the visitor the possibility of discovering and enjoying "paradises untouched" by the civilisation, marked by the diversity and richness of natural attractions. Much of the material heritage offered to tourists is linked to the European presence, reinforcing important aspects of the colonisation of the country. In addition, while Europe is represented as having exerted a great influence on the country's architecture, arts, and "civilising refinement", "racial miscegenation" was responsible for the profusion of an exoticism that the current cultural manifestations reveal.

Considering the relevance of the representation of the "other" established by touristic narratives and the importance of carrying out studies over the outside (and inside) image of Brazil, this research has already found a strong stereotypical representation of Brazil in the promotional brochures analysed: beautiful sexy women, football, samba, and a paradisiac nature, as presented in figures 3 and 4. Moreover, the different representations produced by the European brochures under research reveal more about their own history and self-representation than a fair representation of Brazilian culture itself.

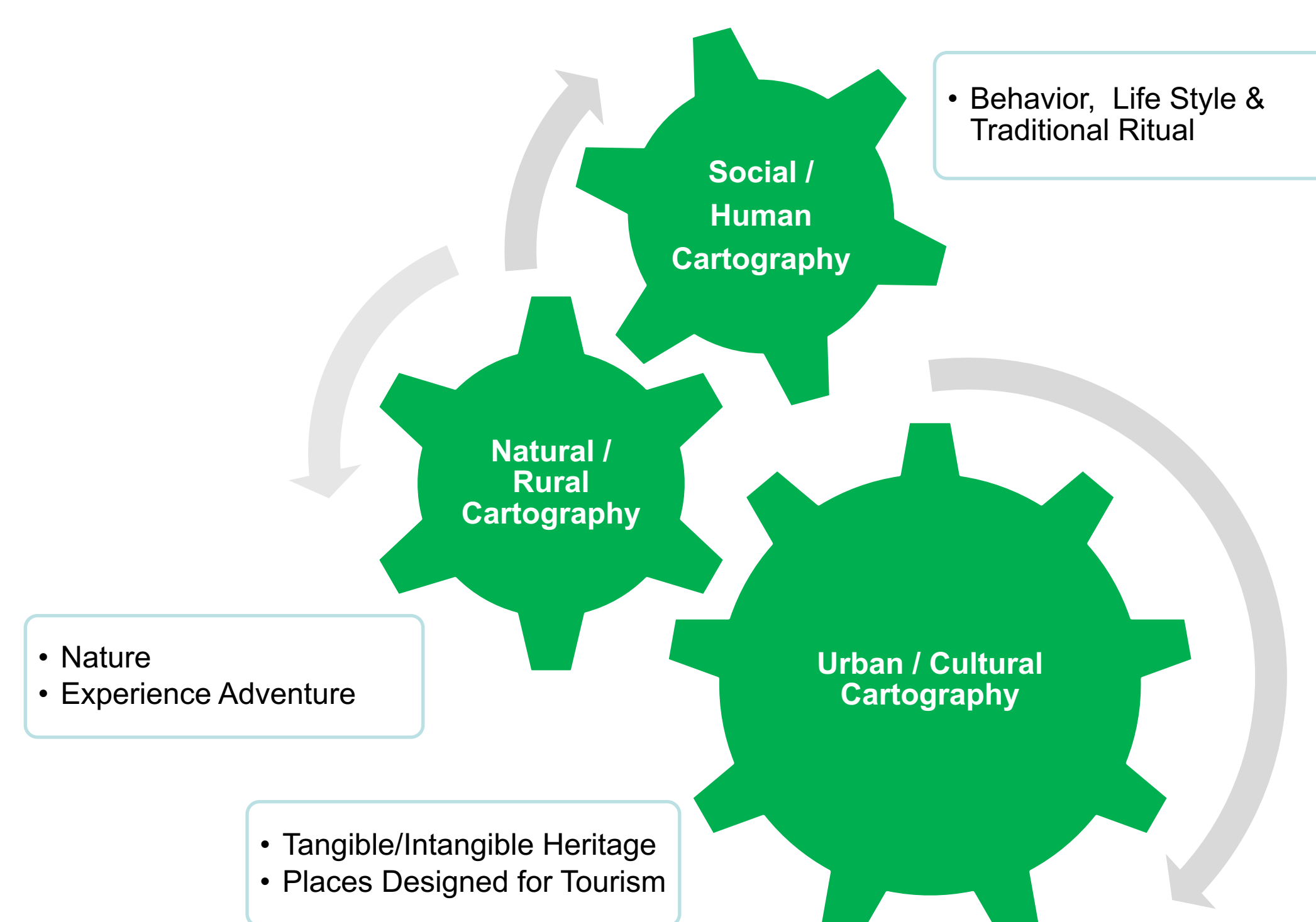


Fig 1/ Cartography of the clusters that represent Brazil in European brochures

Methodology

Literature review, content analysis (Bardin, 2011).

Results: Conceptual model

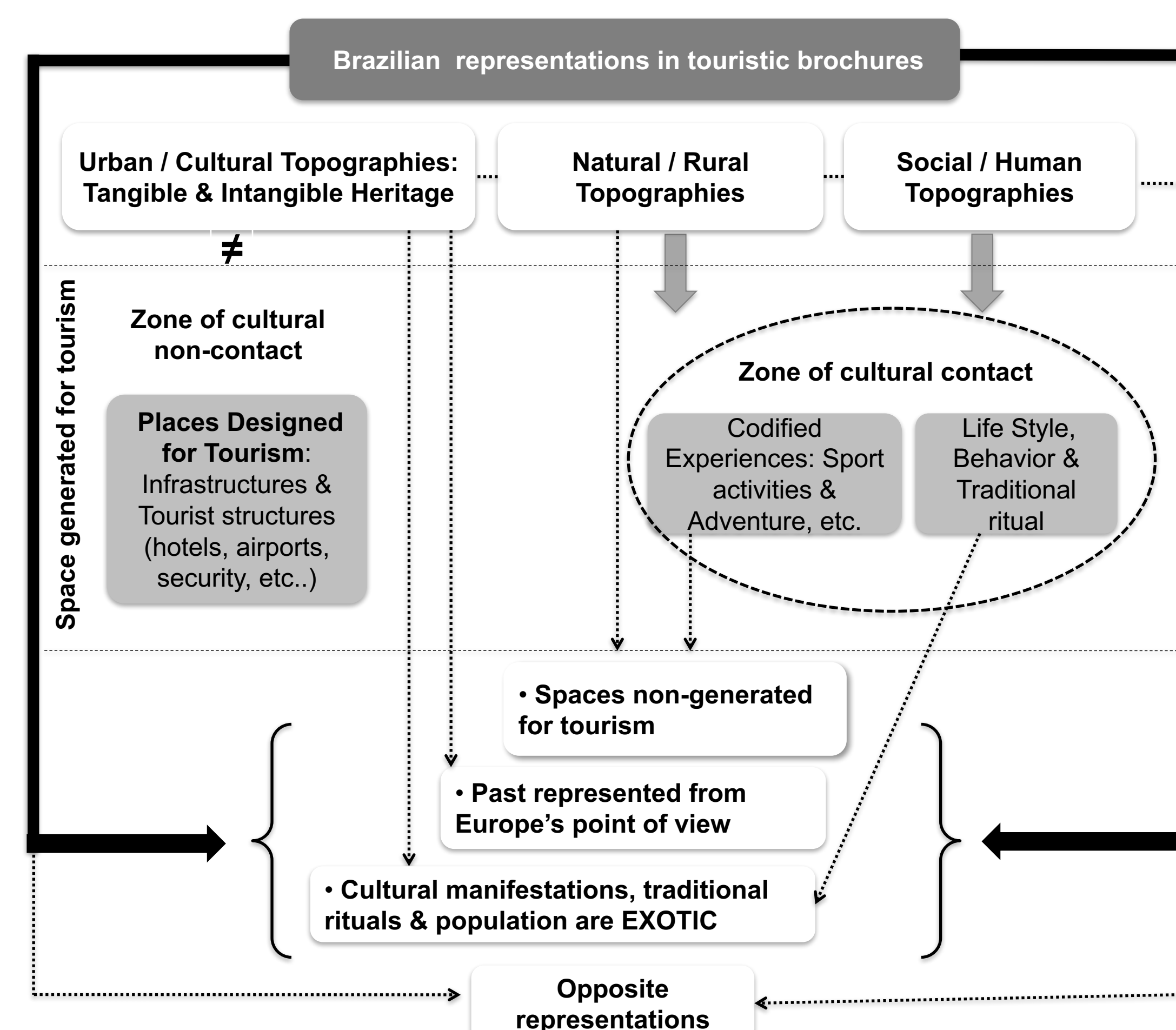


Fig 2 / Geographies and representations of Brazil in tourist brochures



Fig 3 / Ruppert Travel Operator, 2014



Fig 4 / Voyageurs Du Monde, 2014

Conclusion

It is important to emphasize that the dominant 'erotised' and "exoticised" discourse has implications not only for tourism and culture, but it has also negative social, political and economic effects, since the image of a destination is closely related to the attraction of resources and investments. Therefore, researching the representation of Brazil throughout the tourist brochures becomes useful, since it allows to point out stereotypes and symbolic power relations between different European countries and Brazil. The aim of this research is to highlight this prevailing stereotypes that shows a persistent colonial representation, even in the present post colonial times, and contribute to de-colonise biased persistent images of Brazil.

References

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