

# EUR Research Information Portal

## Film tourism in Brazil: Learning from local perspectives

**Published in:**

Media, place and tourism

**Publication status and date:**

Published: 04/04/2024

**DOI (link to publisher):**

[10.4324/9781003320586-19](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003320586-19)

**Document Version**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

**Document License/Available under:**

CC BY-NC-ND

**Citation for the published version (APA):**

Póvoa, D. (2024). Film tourism in Brazil: Learning from local perspectives. In S. Reijnders, E. Martens, D. Castro, D. Póvoa, A. Nanjangud, & R. Schiavone (Eds.), *Media, place and tourism: Worlds of Imagination* (1 ed., pp. 213-225). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003320586-19>

[Link to publication on the EUR Research Information Portal](#)

**Terms and Conditions of Use**

Except as permitted by the applicable copyright law, you may not reproduce or make this material available to any third party without the prior written permission from the copyright holder(s). Copyright law allows the following uses of this material without prior permission:

- you may download, save and print a copy of this material for your personal use only;
- you may share the EUR portal link to this material.

In case the material is published with an open access license (e.g. a Creative Commons (CC) license), other uses may be allowed. Please check the terms and conditions of the specific license.

**Take-down policy**

If you believe that this material infringes your copyright and/or any other intellectual property rights, you may request its removal by contacting us at the following email address: [openaccess.library@eur.nl](mailto:openaccess.library@eur.nl). Please provide us with all the relevant information, including the reasons why you believe any of your rights have been infringed. In case of a legitimate complaint, we will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website.

# 14 Film Tourism in Brazil

## Learning from Local Perspectives

*Débora Póvoa*

### Introduction

From 2016 to 2021, I was part of the European Research Council-funded *Worlds of Imagination* research project, which proposed a comparative analysis of film tourism in various geographies around the world. In my research, I investigated this phenomenon in Brazil, a context where film tourism manifests in spontaneous and unexpected ways, and often in vulnerable locations such as the country's *favelas*, countryside towns and small villages. Intrigued by the incipient and unplanned character of film tourism in Brazil – which contrasts the increasingly professionalized character of other film tourism industries around the globe (Thelen et al., 2020) – I wanted to understand how film tourism developed in these vulnerable locations, and how local communities experienced the sudden interest of filmmakers and tourists in their neighborhoods.

Considering that film tourism research has predominantly focused on success stories (Thelen et al., 2020) mostly occurring in areas of the Global North (Connell, 2012; Beeton, 2016), my goal was to offer novel insights into the challenges that impromptu expressions of film tourism might pose for local communities, particularly in a context in the Global South where film tourism remains underexplored both as an industry and as a research topic (Körössy et al., 2021). In this chapter, I discuss the main results of this project, and what they add to current academic debates on the dynamics between film tourism and local communities.<sup>1</sup>

### Film tourism and local communities

In the past couple of decades, film tourism has reportedly become an expanding and highly lucrative tourism niche worldwide (Beeton, 2016; Connell, 2012; Reijnders, 2021). In media, policy and academic circles, this phenomenon has received considerable attention for the potential benefits it could bring to local economies. Positive impacts can arguably already be felt with the arrival of filmmakers to a filming location, since film crews occupy hotel rooms and spend money on local shops just like “usual” tourists (Ward & O'Regan, 2009). Moreover, they also embed themselves in the everyday lives of these communities (Parmett, 2014), having both a tangible effect on the local economy and a symbolic one through interactions with

DOI: 10.4324/9781003320586-19

This chapter has been made available under a CC-BY-NC-ND license.

local people and cultures. If a film generates tourism, then the location experiences another wave of positive effects, from the creation of new tourism-oriented businesses and products, such as film-themed souvenirs and guidebooks (Busby & Klug, 2001), to the alteration of tourism infrastructure and rise in revenues and employment due to new tourist flows (Heitmann, 2010). Particularly in locations in the Global North, success stories of places that highly benefited from film tourism abound, often summarized in celebratory terms such as “Downton effect” (Liu & Pratt, 2019; Mansky, 2019) and “Braveheart effect” (Martin-Jones, 2014).

Even though film tourism can be beneficial to film locations, some authors have questioned the significance of the phenomenon as an economic asset, claiming that very few films actually incite tourism (Croy, 2011) and, even so, film tourism numbers might not be substantial (Croy, 2010). Moreover, the sustainability of film tourism is uncertain since film tourism impacts might not be long-lasting (Beeton, 2016; Connell, 2005). Besides, film tourism might also have detrimental effects on local communities, with the presence of film tourists causing traffic congestions and overcrowding (Mordue, 2001; Tooke & Baker, 1996; Riley et al., 1998), loss of privacy (Bolan et al., 2007; Mordue, 2001), and strains on the local infrastructure (Bolan et al., 2007; Connell, 2005), for example. In the long run, more systemic effects can also be felt, related to the cost of land and housing (Kim et al., 2017), cultural commodification (Heitmann, 2010; Mordue, 2001; Riley et al., 1998), and environmental damage (Koh & Fakfare, 2020; Law et al., 2007).

In order to circumvent these issues, scholars have, time and again, urged for the need to include local communities in film tourism planning and execution (Beeton, 2016; Heitmann, 2010). In practice, however, rarely are residents of a film location involved in the development and management of film tourism (Heitmann, 2010) and their responses to new tourist influxes and opportunities end up being improvised (Thelen et al., 2020). Paradoxically, residents’ perspectives on the impacts of film tourism have been neglected in film tourism research (Kim et al., 2017; Thelen et al., 2020). Subscribed to the premise that the success of film tourism initiatives depends on them being constructed collaboratively with the communities involved, this chapter tackles these gaps by presenting the perspectives of multiple local stakeholders involved in three emerging film tourism ecologies in Brazil.

### **Mapping film tourism in Brazil**

The question that guided my research was: How do film tourism initiatives in vulnerable locations in Brazil develop over time, and how do members of the communities involved perceive, experience, and evaluate these initiatives? Following Connell’s (2012) broad definition of film tourism, I conceptualized *film tourism initiatives* as any audiovisual media-centered project that generates tourism to a place, regardless of this spillover effect into tourism being planned or not, or occurring before, during or after the completion of the project. I narrowed down these initiatives by focusing on *vulnerable locations* in Brazil, understanding vulnerability as “sensitivity in the well-being of ... communities in the face of ...

negative changes” that can be “ecological, economic, social and political” (Moser, 1998, p. 3).

Within these parameters, three different cases of film tourism in Brazil were analyzed. The first case study centered on the practice of telenovela tourism in the favelas Complexo do Alemão, in Rio de Janeiro, and Paraisópolis, in São Paulo, after their featuring in the Brazilian telenovelas *Salve Jorge* (2012–2013) and *I Love Paraisópolis* (2015), respectively. Here, I analyzed how local stakeholders involved in film and/or tourism practices, such as tour guides, location scouts, and community leaders, dealt with the use of their neighborhoods as filming locations and tourist attractions. In my second case study, I examined the project Roliúde Nordestina (which translates as “Northeastern Hollywood”), a governmental city branding initiative based on cinema and tourism in the small, economically disadvantaged, and drought-stricken town of Cabaceiras, in Northeast Brazil. My goal was to understand how residents and local policymakers evaluated the attempt of transforming Cabaceiras into a film tourism hub through this initiative. Finally, my third case study focused on the recent Alter do Chão Film Festival (FestAlter), a new film festival in the touristic and environmentally sensitive village of Alter do Chão, in the Brazilian Amazon. Although originally created as a collaborative project, the festival’s main organizers – a production company from Rio de Janeiro – ended up being accused of appropriation by sectors of the Alter do Chão community. In this case, I asked how people involved in the production of FestAlter 2019 perceived the changing power dynamics within its organization, and how they saw the implications of these power dynamics for the festival’s goals of community participation and empowerment.

In order to advance our understanding of film tourism impacts, Thelen et al. (2020) urged scholars to include “examples that describe the draw-backs and failures of film tourism” (p. 3). In choosing these three case studies, I answer this plea by analyzing instances where film tourism has developed in less-than-optimal conditions. Even though the selected projects should not be considered failures – such a crude assessment would dismiss the positive outcomes of film tourism to these communities as well as the hard work of stakeholders involved – they demonstrate the various challenges in the development of film tourism in vulnerable locations. Importantly, the three case studies prove how these challenges are connected to wider political and institutional frameworks, which points toward the need to look at film tourism within local and national structures of power and inequality. Moreover, the three cases offer a wide range of locations where film tourism occurs in Brazil, local specificities and contingencies that enable or disrupt the development of film tourism projects and different formats that film tourism might take in the country.

Most of the data for this research were collected in visits to these locations from 2017 to 2019, during which I employed participant observation and conducted semi-structured interviews with 61 stakeholders involved in these three film tourism ecologies. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews related to the Alter do Chão Film Festival were conducted online between December 2020 and

March 2021. In Complexo do Alemão and Paraisópolis, I interviewed ten (former) tour guides or tour company owners, three local entrepreneurs and six community leaders. In Cabaceiras, I interviewed six (former) government members from the Tourism and Culture divisions at local and state level, four tour guides, eight residents who worked as extras in film and TV productions, five residents working in the cultural/hospitality sectors and the creator of the Roliúde Nordestina project. In Alter do Chão I talked to 16 stakeholders involved, in different levels, in the production of FestAlter 2019: three core members of the festival organization, seven stakeholders that participated in the early stages of the festival planning and six festival workers hired either on a paid or voluntary basis during the festival days. Two respondents – one from Complexo do Alemão and one from Cabaceiras – asked to have their participation entirely anonymized.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim (by me or professional transcription services) and analyzed through inductive thematic analysis (Terry et al., 2017). In the remainder of this chapter, I will present the main findings of this project in a chronological structure: as these film tourism initiatives were perceived (when they were being created), experienced (as they were being executed) and evaluated (after they had taken place) by the interviewed stakeholders. It is important to note that the goal of this chapter is not to provide an in-depth discussion of each of the empirical cases; for this, please refer to Póvoa et al. (2019), Póvoa et al. (2021) and Póvoa (2023). Here, instead, I summarize the key insights derived from cross-case comparison and offer overarching arguments that advance our understanding of the dynamics of film tourism in vulnerable locations.

### **Film tourism planning: Potential for collaboration, development and sustainability**

The three film tourism initiatives analyzed in this research project had similar beginnings: all of them were developed because “outsiders” – chiefly film, TV or festival producers coming from the Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo middle and upper classes – took an interest in the location. Telenovela writers saw favelas as a trendy filming location; the success of the film *A Dog's Will* (2000), shot in Cabaceiras, drove more filmmakers to the city throughout the years, and a company from Rio de Janeiro initially visited Alter do Chão for a film project (later turned into a festival project). Once in these locations, these TV, film and festival producers would receive support from community members to navigate these territories, such as community associations and key community figures (Paraisópolis), local government officials (Cabaceiras) and university professors and local politicians (Alter do Chão). Collaboration between locals and “outsiders” took the form of more practical and informal help, for example, research during the pre-production of telenovelas and logistical help during location shootings, but also more meaningful and professional partnerships, for example, teaming up for the conceptualization of a film festival.

The fact that these film tourism initiatives were incited by incoming media professionals attests to the concentration of the audiovisual industry in Southeast

Brazil. Even though some of the researched locations do possess media workers, most of the times they do not have the means, reach or level of professionalization to compete on equal footing with producers from the country's main creative hubs. With this, the favelas, the arid northeastern landscapes and the Amazonian rainforest end up often serving solely as settings for the production of media content. In Paraisópolis and Alter do Chão, though, residents are trying to change this scenario. In the aftermath of the filming of *I Love Paraisópolis*, as well as of my own research period on location, two of the participants of this research started their own location production company in the community. In Alter do Chão, a new film festival was created by members of a local artistic and cultural collective in order to restore the ideals of inclusion and collaboration to which FestAlter failed to live up. These developments highlight the role of independent and local filmmakers and cultural producers in film tourism ecologies, pointing out their agency to foster more community-oriented and sustainable forms of media and event production.

It is important to note that, despite the wish to develop local audiovisual industries, the arrival of external media producers is seen as positive due to their capacity to draw attention to the filmed location and create (at least, temporary) jobs or contribute their expertise to existing cultural projects in the region. The projects that southeastern media professionals bring are seen as opportunities for local empowerment and visibility. This indicates how, for vulnerable populations in Brazil, audiovisual projects might bring hope and new socioeconomic possibilities. In the cases of telenovela tourism and the Roliúde Nordestina project, interviewees also claimed that they were proud that their communities were sought after by media producers and tourists, and that these productions, although not without flaws, increased their self-esteem.

The case studies also demonstrated how, at this initial stage of film tourism projects, two values are of fundamental importance for community members: collaboration and sustainability. To varying degrees, the three sets of interviewees expressed their wish for (more) collaboration with these external crews – what respondents in Alter do Chão called “collective methodology” (Póvoa, 2023, p. 205). Participants also repeatedly mentioned how they would like for these initiatives to occur in a sustained manner through the long-term commitment of filmmakers and festival organizers with their communities.

Existing research on the dynamics of film tourism in local communities tends to focus on what happens in a filming location *after* a film or TV series becomes popular – how visitation numbers increase (Riley et al., 1998; Tooke & Baker, 1996), how existing businesses deal with, or seize on, the sudden attention (Connell, 2005) or how residents perceive these effects (Kim et al., 2017; Mordue, 2001). What these studies often fail to address, however, is how film tourism comes into being and, most importantly, what targeted communities want and expect from film tourism projects in the first place. The findings presented above address these gaps by detailing the origins of film tourism initiatives and unveiling two concrete wishes reported by interviewed community members. As the following section will show, however, film tourism projects often fail to fulfill these expectations.

**Film tourism execution: Hierarchies, tensions and neglected goals**

Although new film tourism initiatives might initially be seen in an optimistic light, their execution often disappoints and sometimes might even cause conflicts among local stakeholders. In all three case studies of this research project, most interviewees claimed that the execution of these initiatives remained below expectation particularly due to two recurring reasons: the power inequalities created within their production and management, and the failure to accomplish initial goals that these projects set out to pursue.

Film tourism entails various power relationships (Reijnders, 2021), and the three case studies demonstrated how hierarchies tend to materialize in the development and management of film tourism initiatives. The case of telenovela tourism illustrated how only a select group of members of the Paraisópolis community were involved in, and benefited from, the (pre-) production of the telenovela *I Love Paraisópolis*. These residents directly collaborated with the TV crew and had more say in how the telenovela would represent that favela. At the same time, residents not directly involved complained about the lack of community participation, with only a few extras hired and a few scenes filmed on location. This indicates that film and TV crews, in collaborating with community members, might create hierarchies of participation by including and benefiting only specific stakeholders. The case of FestAlter foregrounded similar dynamics. Even though this film festival was supposed to be a community-oriented project, initial partners felt increasingly excluded from the core organization and saw only a few people from the community have an opportunity to voice their opinions. Roliúde Nordestina, in turn, showed how tensions and power inequalities in film tourism also encompass the political realm. While some residents of Cabaceiras blamed the local government for the underwhelming achievements of the project Roliúde Nordestina, this same local government faced various obstacles to further invest in the initiative – including the dependence on higher government levels to obtain support and resources. This indicates the various degrees of power (and powerlessness) involved in film tourism: from residents feeling neglected by local governments, to local governments trying to navigate wider structures of political power within a city, region or country.

Partly because of the power hierarchies and imbalances present in the production of these projects, certain goals that the telenovelas, the project Roliúde Nordestina and FestAlter claimed to strive for were not totally achieved, and this became another reason for interviewees to express discontent with the execution of these initiatives. In the case of the telenovelas, misrepresentation of the favelas in these productions, despite the research conducted by the TV crews in these neighborhoods, was a widespread criticism. As for Roliúde Nordestina and FestAlter, various initiatives within these umbrella projects never fully materialized, such as the promotion of practice-oriented audiovisual workshops for the populations of Cabaceiras and Alter do Chão.

In all locations, though, respondents acknowledged that film tourism initiatives do bring benefits. In line with Ward and O'Regan's (2009) argument, filmmakers

and festival producers are themselves tourists, who liven up local economies by staying at hotels, eating at restaurants and hiring locals for different jobs within the production of a film, TV show or event. In doing so, these people symbolically and physically interact with these communities (Parmentt, 2014) and engage in *film tourism production*, constructing these locations as film tourism sites for future tourists to visit. For example, the filming and screening of two telenovelas inspired a new sentiment toward otherwise stigmatized neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, turning them, at least temporarily, into tourist attractions and a reason for residents to be proud. In Cabaceiras and Alter do Chão, these transformations were also physically tangible, with Roliúde Nordestina creating cinema-related symbols in town and FestAlter transforming the Alter do Chão main square into a festival space. Analyzing the production of film tourism, thus, allows for an understanding of the phenomenon as a longitudinal process whose impacts are felt by communities in various stages – from the arrival of media workers on location to the influx of tourists motivated by the film, TV show or film event in question. Despite their potential to be sustained across time, however, these impacts are often only temporary, as many interviewees regretted.

### **Film tourism aftermath: The telenovela effect**

In my analysis of telenovela tourism in the favelas, I found out that community members considered the benefits brought by the telenovelas, namely an increased local self-esteem and more business opportunities and tourism flows, largely temporary. In light of these findings, I coined the term *telenovela effect* (Póvoa et al., 2019) to express the potentially ephemeral character of the impacts that telenovelas (and other media forms) might have on their filming locations. In this first case study, the *telenovela effect* was conceptualized within a more traditional understanding of film tourism, being restricted to the effects of media productions, for example, films, TV series and music videos, on places. However, the subsequent case studies of this research demonstrated that interviewees in Cabaceiras and Alter do Chão also experienced similar dynamics with the project Roliúde Nordestina and the film festival FestAlter. Therefore, I propose to expand the term *telenovela effect* to also encompass the transiency of the impacts that film tourism initiatives more generally might have on their targeted communities.

With this broader definition, I argue that the *telenovela effect* was perceived in all film tourism initiatives analyzed in this project. In all three cases, the *telenovela effect* proved detrimental to community members, who often felt depleted, neglected or exploited by film tourism initiatives. In this sense, the notion of the *telenovela effect* stands in striking contrast with popular terms such as the “Downton effect” or the “Braveheart effect”. While the latter are commonly used by journalists and policymakers to celebrate the benefits that film productions bring to locations, the *telenovela effect* draws attention to the flip side of film tourism – it reveals possibly disappointing and even negative outcomes of film tourism as perceived by members of the affected communities. The *telenovela effect*, thus, not only encourages a more critical approach to the study of film tourism effects



on locations but also gives prominence to the voices, opinions and concerns of the ones most affected by this phenomenon since the concept itself is born out of the experiences of local stakeholders with film tourism.

It is important to note that, in the context of this research, the *telenovela effect* was observed even in film tourism initiatives that attempted to generate long-term gains and develop a more productive relationship with the involved communities. This suggests that, although a much-encouraged approach in film tourism research, the goal of including communities in film tourism planning and execution might not be easily accomplished, nor guarantee a project's sustainability. As the case studies illustrated, a series of factors might enable or hamper the development of these initiatives – and it is to a closer inspection of these factors that we now turn.

### **Lessons from the Brazilian experience**

The three case studies analyzed in this research project revealed five factors that might influence the sustainability of film tourism initiatives: (1) the production logic and goals of the project, (2) the infrastructural, geographical and socio-economic characteristics of the location, (3) the political configurations in place to support (or not) the project, (4) the state of the audiovisual industry at country level and (5) the project's internal organization, especially regarding tensions and power dynamics between involved stakeholders. These factors will be further explained below, translated into five lessons that we can learn from the Brazilian experience with film tourism.

#### 1 *Different initiatives (might) enable different outcomes.*

This research has shown that the production logic of a film tourism initiative, as well as the goals that it sets out to achieve, highly determines the possibilities it offers for local development and empowerment. In the case of telenovela tourism in Complexo do Alemão and Paraisópolis, the cost-effective production of the telenovelas, the timeslots when they aired and their limited screening period restricted possibilities of collaboration with favela residents, the types of favela representations that could be shown and the interest of viewers in the favelas, respectively. Telenovelas are also commercially driven productions whose makers do not necessarily commit to contributing to the filming locations (at least not in the case of the two telenovelas studied in this research). Roliúde Nordeste and FestAlter, however, were very distinct projects compared to telenovelas. Both had clear goals of stimulating regional development through the creation of an audiovisual hub in these locations, which could only be achieved with a consistent engagement with the targeted communities over time. Nevertheless, these initiatives did not escape the same temporariness of the telenovelas. These findings indicate that media workers and policymakers should clearly communicate their plans and goals to the targeted communities in order to establish transparency from the outset of a film tourism initiative. Understanding the characteristics and purposes of film tourism projects is crucial for communities to know what to expect from them, to be able to negotiate

with their makers from a well-informed position and to hold them accountable in case the project fails to live up to its promises.

2 *Film tourism initiatives should take the local context into account.*

The sustainability or unsustainability of film tourism initiatives is also determined by various infrastructural, geographical and socioeconomic characteristics of the locations where they emerge. In the favelas, for example, infrastructural vulnerabilities related to sanitation and street paving, as well as the closure of a main tourist attraction in Complexo do Alemão, were considered to curb the advance of telenovela tourism in these neighborhoods. In Cabaceiras, infrastructural and geographical hindrances, such as the difficult access to some tourist spots, a substandard telecommunication system and the city's distance from the airport, limited the extent to which film tourism could be developed. Moreover, the town's depressed economy did not allow local authorities to offer much more than logistical support to incoming audiovisual productions – let alone to invest in other film tourism initiatives envisioned in the original Roliúde Nordestina project. Lastly, the difficulties in internet access in Alter do Chão made the second edition of FestAlter – held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic – become the last straw in an already deeply strained relationship between organizers and community, with the former seemingly disregarding the local reality when executing this project. These three empirical cases, thus, indicate that producers of film tourism initiatives must take the local context into account in order for these projects to be embraced by local communities, echoing previous research on the topic (e.g., Beeton, 2016; Heitmann, 2010; Kim et al., 2017).

3 *Film tourism initiatives are always political.*

The influence of local political configurations and priorities in the development and sustainability of film tourism initiatives was also found in the three case studies of this research project, albeit to varying degrees. In the favelas, an absolute lack of governmental intervention and investment (in line with the historical governmental neglect that favelas have experienced) was observed. In Complexo do Alemão, telenovela tours were created and conducted by private local entrepreneurs, while in Paraisópolis the local Resident's Union took the forefront in negotiations with telenovela crews and led telenovela tourism initiatives of their own. Later, government security interventions ended up impeding the continuation of these activities, with violent conflicts between policemen and local gangs pushing tourists and investors away and creating an unsafe environment for local tour guides to work, in particular in Complexo do Alemão. In Cabaceiras and Alter do Chão, more significant articulations between private and public partners were observed, with municipalities and local politicians being involved in the conception or, at least, in the execution of film tourism initiatives. In both cases, however, other issues disrupted the continuation of these efforts, such as the need to prioritize other areas for public spending in Cabaceiras and the demobilization of organized collectives in the Amazonian region due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, these cases

highlight the political dimension of film tourism: how filmmakers, film festival organizers and tour operators are involved in multiple articulations with local political actors and institutions, and how film tourism initiatives often depend on different political levels and mechanisms (e.g. funding allocation) to be sustained. Importantly, these cases showed that even though a more significant articulation with political actors and institutions might imply longevity for these film tourism projects, that is not always the case. Roliúde Nordestina and FestAlter are examples of how various other factors interfere with public–private partnerships fostered in such projects.

4 *Film tourism is part and parcel of local audiovisual networks.*

The longevity of film tourism initiatives is also influenced by the position of the locality in question within the wider organization of the audiovisual industries at the country level. This research revealed how, in a scenario where these industries are geographically concentrated like Brazil, it becomes difficult to develop local audiovisual hubs and decenter audiovisual production. Particularly in locations where financial resources are scarce and other areas of development need attention, like Cabaceiras, building an audiovisual industry almost from scratch is an arduous task for local governments. The case of Alter do Chão indicates similar challenges. The creators of FestAlter had the intention to establish networks of cooperation with film professionals in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, which attests to the inequalities in terms of audiovisual investment, resources and infrastructure between the southeast of the country and other regions. In the case of Complexo do Alemão and Paraisópolis, even though these favelas are situated in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, they are outside the established audiovisual hubs in these cities. These interregional and intraregional inequalities in the configuration of the audiovisual industry inhibit the long-term stability of film tourism initiatives in vulnerable locations in Brazil. Film tourism stakeholders need to understand the characteristics of existing audiovisual hubs in their cities, regions and countries in order to propose productive initiatives for local communities. Ideally, this understanding will also enable policymakers and citizens to think of better strategies to develop film tourism, such as consistently applying for governmental grants, looking for sponsors in the private sector and pressuring governments to decentralize cultural investments.

5 *Film tourism is, ultimately, done by people.*

Last but not least, the case of FestAlter revealed the power dynamics between the people involved in the management of film tourism initiatives, and how these affect their long-term sustainability. FestAlter illustrated that even projects that have clear goals of community participation and empowerment might still be susceptible to the prevalence of private interests and the concentration of production power. In this particular film festival, such centralization created animosities between organizers, local partners and the Alter do Chão community, and led to rupture and dissent, which prevented the festival to move forward in the same original collaborative spirit. This empirical case, thus, suggests that conflicting visions for a film tourism initiative's mission, goals

and managerial style might pose a threat to its success and sustainability – in the case of FestAlter, even more so than other contextual circumstances. Film tourism stakeholders, thus, should aim to foster transparent and collaborative work cultures and relationships. For researchers, analyzing the organizational structure and dynamics of film tourism is a relevant avenue for future investigation, as it might provide new insights into how different organizational cultures might sustain (or not) film tourism initiatives over time.

### **Moving forward**

The research that I conducted in the context of the *Worlds of Imagination* project moved the academic attention away from locations in the Global North and presented cases of film tourism developed in less-than-optimal circumstances, the results of which differ from film tourism success stories often reported in academic, news and policy circles. Although the findings presented herein are not generalizable to other areas of the Global South, as different localities will present other challenges and opportunities for the development of film tourism, they do create awareness about certain dynamics that might also be encountered in other vulnerable locations around the globe.

The most important of these dynamics is the temporariness of film tourism impacts on locations and communities, encapsulated by the original notion of the *telenovela effect*. This term counters the celebratory narrative around film tourism often summarized in descriptors such as the “Downton effect” or the “Braveheart effect,” unveiling the pitfalls of betting on these industries as a means of socio-economic development. Future research on film tourism, thus, should also be aware of the *telenovela effect* in other locations and take more contextual approaches to the study of this phenomenon. As for film tourism stakeholders such as audiovisual and event producers, tourism operators and policymakers, the experiences that the participants of this research had with film tourism initiatives offer evidence that, without an understanding of local cultures, histories and challenges, such initiatives fail to be sustained in the long run. In engaging with local communities, these stakeholders must make an effort to understand their needs, wishes and strengths, instead of imposing strategies that might not work within their particular circumstances, or promising results that will not be delivered. Although involving communities in decision-making processes is still no guarantee of success, it is a first step toward more sustainable forms of film tourism.

### **Note**

1 This chapter is largely based on the introduction and conclusion of my doctoral dissertation, titled “Film Tourism in Brazil: Local Perspectives on Media, Power and Place” (2023).

### **References**

Beeton, S. (2016). *Film-induced tourism* (2nd ed.). Channel View Publications.

- Bolan, P., Crossan, M., & O'Connor, N. (2007). Film and television induced tourism in Ireland: a comparative impact study of Ryans' Daughter and Ballykissangel. In *Proceedings of the 5th DeHaan tourism management conference 'Culture, tourism and the media'* (pp. 227–252). Nottingham University Business School.
- Busby, G., & Klug, J. (2001). Movie-induced tourism: The challenge of measurement and other issues. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 7(4), 316–332. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135676670100700403>
- Connell, J. (2005). Toddlers, tourism and Tobermory: Destination marketing issues and TV-induced tourism. *Tourism Management*, 26(5), 763–776. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.04.010>
- Connell, J. (2012). Film tourism – Evolution, progress and prospects. *Tourism Management*, 33(5), 1007–1029. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.02.008>
- Croy, W. G. (2010). Planning for film tourism: Active destination image management. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning and Development*, 7(1), 21–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790530903522598>
- Croy, W. G. (2011). Film tourism: Sustained economic contributions to destinations. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 3(2), 159–164. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17554211111123014>
- Heitmann, S. (2010). Film tourism planning and development – Questioning the role of stakeholders and sustainability. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, 7(1), 31–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790530903522606>
- Kim, S., Kim, S., & Oh, M. (2017). Film tourism town and its local community. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 18(3), 334–360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15256480.2016.1276005>
- Koh, E., & Fakfare, P. (2020). Overcoming “over-tourism”: The closure of Maya Bay. *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, 6(2), 279–296. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-02-2019-0023>
- Körössy, N., Paes, R. G. S., & Cordeiro, I. J. D. (2021). Estado da arte sobre turismo e cinema no Brasil: uma revisão integrativa da literatura. *PODIUM Sport, Leisure and Tourism Review*, 10(1), 109–140. <https://doi.org/10.5585/podium.v10i1.17212>
- Law, L., Bunnell, T., & Ong, C. E. (2007). The Beach, the gaze and film tourism. *Tourist Studies*, 7(2), 141–164. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797607083499>
- Liu, X., & Pratt, S. (2019). The Downton Abbey effect in film-induced tourism: An empirical examination of TV drama-induced tourism motivation at heritage attractions. *Tourism Analysis*, 24(4), 497–515. <https://doi.org/10.3727/108354219X15652651367505>
- Mansky, J. (2019, 27 September). The “Downton effect” on the English country house tour. *JSTOR Daily*. <https://daily.jstor.org/the-downton-effect-on-the-english-country-house-tour/>
- Martin-Jones, D. (2014). Film tourism as heritage tourism: Scotland, diaspora and *The Da Vinci Code* (2006). *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 12(2), 156–177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2014.880301>
- Mordue, T. (2001). Performing and directing resident/tourist cultures in Heartbeat country. *Tourist Studies*, 1(3), 233–252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146879760100100302>
- Moser, C. O. (1998). The asset vulnerability framework: Reassessing urban poverty reduction strategies. *World Development*, 26(1), 1–19. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(97\)10015-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(97)10015-8)
- Parmett, H. M. (2014). Media as a spatial practice: *Treme* and the production of the media neighbourhood. *Continuum*, 28(3), 286–299. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2014.900878>

- Póvoa, D. (2023). “The festival is ours”: Power dynamics of community participation in the Alter do Chão Film Festival. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 26(2), 200–215. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13678779231154288>
- Póvoa, D., Reijnders, S., & Martens, E. (2019). The telenovela effect: Challenges of location filming and telenovela tourism in the Brazilian favelas. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 52(6), 1536–1556. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.12861>
- Póvoa, D., Reijnders, S., & Martens, E. (2021). A Brazilian Hollywood in the making? Film, tourism and creative city discourse in the hinterland of Paraíba. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 24(5), 691–706. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13678779211011635>
- Reijnders, S. (2021). Imaginative heritage: Towards a holistic perspective on media, tourism, and governance. In N. van Es, S. Reijnders, L. Bolderman & A. Waysdorf (Eds.), *Locating imagination in popular culture* (pp. 19–33). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003045359>
- Riley, R., Baker, D., & Van Doren, C. S. (1998). Movie induced tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(4), 919–935. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(98\)00045-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(98)00045-0)
- Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. In C. Willig & W. Stainton-Rogers (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 17–37). Sage.
- Thelen, T., Kim, S., & Scherer, E. (2020). Film tourism impacts: A multi-stakeholder longitudinal approach. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 45(3), 291–306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2020.1718338>
- Tooke, N., & Baker, M. (1996). Seeing is believing: The effect of film on visitor numbers to screened locations. *Tourism Management*, 17(2), 87–94. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177\(95\)00111-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(95)00111-5)
- Ward, S., & O’Regan, T. (2009). The film producer as the long-stay business tourist: Rethinking film and tourism from a Gold Coast perspective. *Tourism Geographies*, 11(2), 214–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616680902827175>