

**Tourism and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth in Salvador,
Bahia: State, society and an ignored reality**

*Turismo e Exploração Sexual de Crianças e Adolescentes em Salvador,
Bahia: o Estado, a sociedade e a realidade ignorada*

*Turismo y Explotación Sexual de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes en Salvador,
Bahía: el Estado, la sociedad y la realidad ignorada*

Aniele da Silva Marques¹

José Antônio de Pinho²

Abstract

This paper is a result of a larger research project on sex tourism and sexual exploitation of children and youth in the city of Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, conducted between 2007 and 2009 and concluded in 2011, with updated data about the phenomenon at the site. Sex tourism is a phenomenon with complexities that range from its identification, conceptualization, description and understanding. Regardless of the social taboo, nowadays the discussion and the dissemination of information about sexual exploitation in tourism have grown in Brazil. Nonetheless, official data on sex tourism is still disturbingly absent. In order to understand sexual exploitation in the Brazilian context, this paper relates it to the recent history of Brazil, within the context of the state and society. The research revealed that people expect more effective governmental actions aimed at confronting the sexual exploitation of children and youth in tourism. However, many respondents have highlighted that today the issue is approached with more seriousness and commitment.

Keywords: Sex Tourism; Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth; State; Society.

Resumo

Este artigo é resultado de uma pesquisa mais ampla sobre o turismo sexual e a exploração sexual infanto-juvenil em Salvador, BA, realizada entre 2007 e 2009, e atualizada em 2013, acerca do fenômeno na localidade investigada. O turismo sexual se enquadra como um fenômeno que demonstra complexidades, que vão desde a sua identificação, conceituação, delimitação e compreensão. Ainda que se perceba a timidez com que o assunto ainda é tratado no âmbito da sociedade, nota-se também o crescimento dos debates e a difusão das

¹ Master in Administration (UFBA). Brazil. E-mail: anielemarquez@gmail.com.

² Associated Professor III of the Federal University of Bahia. Brazil. E-mail: jagp@ufba.br.



informações que permeiam o tema da exploração sexual comercial no turismo no Brasil. Para contextualizar a temática à realidade brasileira, optou-se por relacioná-la à história recente, através de um recorte, no âmbito do estado e da sociedade. Para tanto, considerou-se a percepção de pesquisadores e profissionais que se dedicam ao tema. A partir da pesquisa, foi possível concluir que, em relação ao estado, há expectativa de que existam ações mais efetivas para o enfrentamento do turismo e da exploração sexual de crianças e adolescentes, embora muitos entrevistados tenham evidenciado que o tema tem sido tratado com maior seriedade e envolvimento atualmente.

Palavras-chave: Turismo Sexual; Exploração Sexual de Crianças e Adolescentes; Estado; Sociedade.

Resumen

Este artículo es resultado de una investigación más amplia sobre el turismo sexual y la explotación sexual infanto-juvenil en Salvador, Bahía, realizada entre los años 2007 y 2009, actualizada en 2013, acerca del fenómeno en el lugar investigado. El turismo sexual se encuadra como un fenómeno que demuestra complejidades, que van desde su identificación, conceptualización, delimitación, hasta su comprensión. Aunque se perciba la timidez con la que el asunto es tratado en el ámbito de la sociedad, se nota también un crecimiento en los debates y la difusión de las informaciones que atraviesan el tema de la explotación sexual comercial en el turismo en Brasil. Para contextualizar la temática a la realidad brasilera, se optó por relacionarla a la historia reciente, a través de un recorte en el ámbito del Estado y de la sociedad. En este sentido, se consideró la percepción de investigadores y profesionales que se dedican al tema. A partir de la investigación, fue posible concluir que, en relación al Estado, hay expectativa de que existan acciones más efectivas para el enfrentamiento del turismo y de la explotación sexual de niños, niñas y adolescentes, aunque muchos entrevistados hayan evidenciado que el tema ha sido tratado con mayor seriedad y envolvimento actualmente.

Palabras clave: Turismo Sexual; Explotación Sexual de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes; Estado; Sociedad.

1. Introduction

Over the last decades, the need to systemize and plan tourism has been discussed in places where the activity leads to economical, social and cultural development, encompassing other areas of knowledge and creating new topics for debate and analyses of realities linked to the sector. In the middle of the 1970s, the thought that tourism was an activity meant to boost “Third World” economies (BARRETTO, 2003) prevailed and was defended by international

development organizations. However, since then, studies on tourism from other areas such as Anthropology, Sociology and Geography made certain themes to be seen as affected by tourism or capable of affecting it, such as alterity, valorization of local culture, environment, social inequalities, sexual exploitation, etc. The commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (CSECA) is a negative impact of tourism which will be examined in this paper.

The discussion of both phenomena simultaneously – tourism and sexual exploitation – starts by verifying that tourism is an activity based on travelling, i.e., people travel for religious, sport and cultural purposes, among others. Sexual encounters motivate many travellers as well, bringing up the discussion of what is “sexual tourism”. As this work is not aimed at discussing the existing denominations originated from the link between tourism and sex, but instead at children and adolescents, sexual exploitation seems to be the most suitable term for the phenomenon. According to the Statute of the Child and the Adolescent (ECA, 1990) and the classification of Sexual Exploitation as a subcategory of Sexual Violence (Reference Center for Studies and Actions in Favor of Children and Adolescents - CECRIA, 2002), a child is a person under 12 years old and an adolescent, under 18 years old, both with specific development conditions and special protection needs.

Tourism and the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescent (CSECA) are topics of interest for the government, with its public policies, and for the civil society, with actions from organizations and associations. In the case of tourism, the actions are aimed at its development in the country, and for the CSECA they focus mainly on prevention programs and on policies for social inclusion (which are directly or indirectly related to the issue) as a way of confronting the problem. As for the development of governmental programs to change the CSECA in the context of tourism, we single out the federal program “Sustainable Tourism and Childhood”, created in 2005 and coordinated by the Ministry of Tourism and the Special Secretariat of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic. The initiative is based mainly on mobilization campaigns and events that target especially those who work with tourism in the country. Regarding the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, the state of Bahia has two crime reporting hotlines: Disque 100 (national), established in 2004 as a tool for citizens to

report situations in which children are exposed to physical, psychological and sexual violence, and the Hotline of the Secretariat of Public Security of the State of Bahia (SSP-BA), which in addition to receiving crime reports through the Disque 100 hotline for cities in the state of Bahia, has a different hotline for crime reporting which receives information in general, including information about the CSECA.

The methodological aspects of the research are presented below, as well as the contextualization of the analyzed topic by linking it to recent historical characteristics of Brazil and to the involvement of the state and society, through the perspective of professionals and scholars working with the themes of sexual exploitation of child and youth and sexual tourism.

The configuration of the phenomenon varies according to the examined location, and the attempt to provide a full territorial coverage for it is a daunting task. Hence, this paper focuses on understanding the issue in the city of Salvador.

2. Research methodology

The research was fundamentally qualitative and characterized as an exploratory case study, with methods associated to the treatment of qualitative data, such as the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. The collection and the analysis of secondary data started with the survey of the information on crime reports from institutions such as the Special Secretariat of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic (SEDH), where we searched for numbers that represented the sexual tourism with children and adolescent recorded through the National Hotline of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (Disque 100 hotline), and the SSP-BA, where all crime reports from the State Hotline and Disque 100 hotline for the year 2007 were selected and analyzed. To better understand the categories and subcategories of the Violence against Children and Adolescents classification employed by the Disque 100 hotline, it is important to mention that Violence is the category in which sexual exploitation and sexual tourism are included. In this classification of the Disque 100 hotline of the SEDH for categorizing violence reports, “sexual tourism” is considered a form of “commercial sexual exploitation”.

Throughout the years, the number of anonymous reports (essential for the operation of the service, through the Disque 100 hotline) of situations of sexual violence (in general) against children and adolescents increased considerably. However, in cases of sexual tourism, the number is insignificant (only 60 for the entire country, as shown in Table 1 below), which is worrisome for Salvador as it is a touristic destination and state capital located on the Northeast coast of the country. Organizations that work with the issue affirm that there is a very strong and coordinated network of sexual exploitation in tourism, and that in spite of city campaigns aimed at confronting the problem, the number of crime reports is irrelevant when we compare it to information on the real dimension of the market of sexual tourism involving children and youth. As a result, we are apparently facing a paradox: if only official data are considered, the problem practically does not exist. On the other hand, according to governmental actions (through constant public campaigns) and the civil society, the problem exists and is very severe. The table below shows the data for the entire country, for the period of May 2003 (when the service was created) to February 8th 2009.

National Crime Reporting Hotline of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation against Children and Adolescents - 100		
Special Secretariat of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic		
Period from May 2003 to February 8 th 2009		
Type of Violence Recorded by the Crime Report	Records of Violence in the Crime Reports	
Information of Whereabouts of Missing Children and/or Adolescents	174	
Commercial Sexual Exploitation	<i>Exploitation by a Third Party in a Situation of Slavery</i>	95
	<i>Sexual Exploitation with Intermediaries</i>	8921
	<i>Sexual Exploitation without Intermediaries</i>	7423
	<i>Prostitution</i>	467
	<i>Sexual Tourism</i>	60
Negligence	45332	
Pornography	689	
Child and/or Adolescent Trafficking	301	
Physical and/or Psychological Violence	43150	
Sexual Abuse	22866	

Table 1 – Data from the *Disque 100* hotline – Brazil (2003 to February 2009)

Source: Special Secretariat of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic, 2009

As Table 1 shows, the item sexual tourism has the smallest index of recorded crime reports in quantitative terms, with an irrelevant number that does not match the level of discussion and knowledge of the issue. Within the presented typology, “Commercial Sexual Exploitation” is the fourth most frequent type of violence against children and adolescents in number of records, with 16,966 reports. However, in this total of recorded reports of “Commercial Sexual Exploitation”, only 60 are classified as “Sexual Tourism”, representing approximately 0.3%. “Child and Adolescent trafficking”, in its turn, is intrinsically related to sexual tourism and at times mistaken for the latter, even by professionals who work with childhood violence, and the number of reports of the category is also small in comparison with the others.

When classifying the reports of sexual exploitation by state, Ceará presented the highest number of sexual tourism cases (18 reports), with Bahia in the third place together with Pernambuco (6 reports each). Be that as it may, we repeat that the numbers are absolutely irrelevant when compared to what is known of the issue. Two possibilities can be expected or speculated: that the data was not collected properly, especially when there is a data classification and collection problem as mentioned above, or that the number of sexual tourism reports are not compatible with the dimension of the phenomenon, or even more likely, a combination of both. Focusing on the case of Salvador, the following information were obtained:

National Crime Reporting Hotline of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation against Children and Adolescents - 100										
Special Secretariat of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic										
Type of Sexual Exploitation Recorded by the Crime Report				Year						
State Victim	Municipality	Records of Violence in the Crime Reports		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 (Feb 8 th)
BA	Salvador	Commercial Sexual Exploitation	Exploitation by a Third Party - in a Situation of Slavery	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
			Sexual Exploitation with Intermediaries	2	1	15	76	109	75	3
			Sexual Exploitation without Intermediaries	0	0	15	2	94	176	16
			Prostitution	0	0	12	0	0	0	0
			Sexual Tourism	0	0	1	0	2	1	0

Table 2 – Disque 100 Hotline: Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Salvador (2003 to February 2009)

Source: SEDH, 2009

In the “Report of the Disque 100 Hotline” from 2010, the data indicate a total of 4,390 reports of sexual exploitation in Brazil, with the Northeast region presenting the highest number (1,806). Bahia was the state with the most reports (543) in the Northeast. By contacting the Crime Reporting Hotline of the Secretariat of Public Security, we obtained the information that, since the sexual tourism reports listed above were recorded in 2008, no more reports occurred for this type of sexual exploitation in Bahia, which brings more attention to the phenomenon and to how is developed than to data credibility.

With the purpose of increasing data reliability, in July 11th 2013 another visit was made to the Police Department of the Secretariat of Public Security to collect updated information on the Crime Reporting Hotline. Once again, no new reports were found, which confirms what was stated above: or the data are grouped into categories that are too broad or there really are no reports, indicating how concealed the phenomenon is. Moreover, the data from the Crime Reporting Hotline are grouped into 19 Classes of Subjects subdivided into 179 Types of Crime, which shows the diversity of contraventions, with frequent interfaces and overlapping between different types of crimes. Nevertheless, what needs to be clearly stated is that there are no reports of the CSECA linked to sexual tourism, but it should also be made clear that the Class “Crimes Against Children and Adolescents” has the second highest number of reports (10.24% from 01/01/2006 to 07/11/2013) in a set within the Class “Narcotic Substances” (70.5% for the same period), indicating the importance of the issue involving children and adolescents. It is worth mentioning that in the Class “Crimes against Children and Adolescents” there is no Type linked to sexual tourism, as mentioned above.

As for the source of primary data, we carried out the collection of qualitative information through semi-structured interviews with professionals, researchers and representatives of institutions that work in the analysis and management of direct or indirect sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (CSECA) in the context of tourism. Moreover, we highlight that no organization in Salvador focus specifically in the involvement of children and adolescents in sexual tourism, and that the opinion of the professionals

which collaborated with the research do not necessarily represent the perspective of their organizations.

3. The historical trajectory of Brazil: sexual tourism and sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in a more structural context

Social phenomena do not happen in a vacuum, they exist within a historical process. As the examined issue occurs in the context of sexual tourism, we chose to reduce the theoretical approach to the most recent period of Brazilian history, when tourism becomes relevant. However, to understand sexual exploitation in the context of tourism it is necessary to search for more structural elements of our historical process. As a result, we seek traits more typical of the Brazilian reality to help us place and understand the sexual exploitation of children and youth in tourism, identifying them in the context of the government and the civil society.

To understand the trajectory of the Brazilian society, Sorj emphasizes patrimonialism, the situation in which it is not possible to distinguish what is public from what is private, singling out as particularities of the “modern Brazilian patrimonialism” its “association with extreme social inequality, impunity of the elites and the abandonment of the poorest sectors of the population” (SORJ, 2001, p. 13) and a repressive and juridical system that was mostly transformed into a “instrument of violence against poorer groups and of impunity for the richer” (SORJ, 2001, p. 15). In Brazil, we observe a low civic culture together with the weight of slavery, “permanence of immense gaps” in basic infrastructure services and “violence and lack of protection in poorer neighborhoods and educational inequality” (p. 21). By generalizing, “the system of citizenship, the set of rights shared equally by the members of a national community” is seen in the case of Brazil as a “particularly fragile and partial reality” (p. 25). Evidently, these characteristics are strongly linked to the theme discussed in this paper, together with a “low respect for the State”, where a “culture of lack of respect and commonly circumventing the law” (p.30) is developed, with the “custom of not taking laws seriously” (p.30). Another trait of this patrimonialist foundation is the small tendency toward “confrontation or open criticism,

since the person never knows when they will “need” the other in a system that operates based on favors and good will” (p.31). Moreover, the Brazilian culture combines “a dynamic of tolerance, syncretism and absorption of differences, without eliminating prejudice in practical terms” (p.32).

These reflections help us realize that the lower classes are marginalized, which is aggravated by racial issues. Masses are practically ignored by the State, and the poorer sectors, generally the black populations, abandoned by the State, are the groups that will feed sexual tourism. On the other hand, the impunity of the elites and not obeying the law are also dominant factors that stimulate and protect the transgressors involved with sexual tourism practices.

On the relationship between tourism and ethnicity, Erica Williams (2009) discusses in her thesis “Anxious pleasures: Race and sexual economies of transnational tourism in Salvador, Brazil” the existence of an “immediate” association between the image of a black woman from Bahia (and Brazil) and prostitution, in a stereotype that pervades the imagination of tourists. “Interviews with Afro-Brazilian women illustrate how stereotypes of black/mulata hypersexuality force them to contend with “foreign” assumptions that they are always already sexually available” (p. 39). Hence, the author reports that tourists (especially foreign) “presume” that black and mixed-race women (in general) are sexually available, and they end up seen as potential prostitutes in a scenario of sexual tourism intertwined with gender and race prejudice and social inequality.

In the redemocratization process of Latin American countries in the 1980s, including Brazil, the States are “blatantly incapable of promulgating effective regulations for social life in their territories and stratification systems” (O’DONNELL, 1993, p. 129). In the construction of these emerging democracies, “the effectiveness of a national order embodied in the law and in the authority of the state disappears as soon as we leave national urban centers” (p. 129) and “the functional and territorial evaporation of the public dimension of the state is visible” (p.129), displayed for example in “illegal intervention of the police in poorer neighborhoods”, “denying rights to women and many minorities” and “impunity of the drug commerce, and the large number of children abandoned in the streets”, expressing “the growing incapacity of the state to implement its own regulations” (p. 129). It is worth noting that, twenty years after this analysis, the situation worsened considerably.

In this paper, we consider that the issue of the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in the context of sexual tourism in visible areas of large urban centers, especially those in which tourism is an important activity, can be interpreted as a sign of this evaporation of the state. The regulations, laws and institutions are inadequate, inefficient and ineffective for facing these problems. The evaporation of the public dimension of the state is observed in “parts of the Northeast and all the Amazon” (p. 130), the poorer regions of the country, which includes Salvador, our object of study. Thus, a state incapable of imposing its legality leads to a democracy characterized by a “‘low intensity’ citizenship” (p. 130), expressed by the fact that “peasants, slum dwellers, indians, women, etc. do not usually receive fair treatment in courts nor obtain from government bodies the services to which they are entitled to, in addition to not being safe from police violence – and another long etc.” (p.134). In this long “etc.”, we may include the children and adolescents involved in the exploitation connected to sexual tourism, for they belong to this set of victims of low intensity citizenship formed by “the weaker and poorer” (p. 134). In other words, in these areas the state does not exist or is incapable of performing its attributions regarding the demands and rights of these groups, or even worse, the state is also responsible for wrongdoing against the victims, as we will discuss below.

The Brazilian polyarchy from the redemocratization phase in the 1990s is restricted to “the small institutional stain surrounded by the gigantic culture of dissimulation, diffuse violence and family and individual isolation” (SANTOS, 1993, p. 80). In this phase, the country fulfilled many polyarchic requisites, such as carrying out free elections, competitive parties and candidates taking office, but the country has not been capable of implementing a fairer society due to the presence of “a multiform social Hobbesianism” (p. 89). The phenomenon is expressed through the “considerable magnitude of the refusal to political, partisan and associative institutions” (p. 94). The denial of the conflict marks a society constituted by the presence of a significant urbanized mass which “faces all types of needs, atomized”, indifferent to polyarchic institutions (unions, political parties, associations) and “victim to multiple examples of public and private violence” (p. 98). This behavior expresses an “absolute disbelief in the *efficacy* of the State”, where denying the conflict becomes “the most efficient

strategy to minimally preserve the dignity one has, using one's own means)" (p. 98). In other words, the citizen avoids turning to the state since they don't believe in it.

Between 1983-88, only 33% of the people who admitted being involved in conflicts "trusted the solution of their last conflict to justice" (p. 100). As the issue of security became more severe over the last two decades, we can assume that even today the basic functions required for an "effective polyarchy, i.e., providing security, protection, predictability and administration of justice, do not reach a considerable extension of the Brazilian social universe" (p. 100). The explanations for not turning to justice indicate, among other reasons, a disbelief in the effectiveness of justice and the police to solve existing conflicts. Thus, even though the Brazilian state is based on "a large amount of regulations, precepts, orders and instructions", such as the Statute of the Child and the Adolescent (ECA), for instance, we verify that "large population groups do not even worry about knowing of or using" this entire framework, ending up in social Hobbesianism.

The disbelief in the effectiveness of justice is also observed by the lack of trust of individuals in Brazilian institutions aimed at protecting the citizen, such as the protection network of children and adolescents. In an interview, Leite (2007)³ recalls something she witnessed in the organization where she works, "a Swiss student who came here to study and was mistreated by her boyfriend". The interviewee reports that the student "immediately called the Reference Center, the Home for Women in situation of violence, and took refuge in it", and in an argument of comparison, she said: "which is something that a young middle-class woman from Brazil would never do, owing to the lack of trust in institutions, lack of effective public policies and lack of perception of women citizenship."

Still on the topic of trusting institutions, in the case of crime reports of sexual exploitation against children and adolescents, Gadelha (2009)⁴ states that it is discouraging "to notice that the reports are increasing geometrically" but that direct actions aimed at caring for the victims do not always follow the same rhythm, which almost always leads to a generalized belief that "reporting is useless".

³ LEITE, J. Entrevista. Centro Humanitário de Apoio à Mulher. Salvador, 2007.

⁴ GADELHA, G. Entrevista. Partners of Americas. Salvador, 2009.

4. A closer look at the phenomenon

Now it is worth discussing two studies that, in spite of not mentioning the topic directly, are strongly related to it, providing us material for our study on the phenomenon of sexual tourism. A research conducted in the slum of Rocinha, in Rio de Janeiro, in 1983 (MEDEIROS, 1986) with children and adolescents revealed that these children and their families were going through hardships (hunger, unstable job conditions and low income, precarious housing conditions, etc.). The tragic script is very well known: broken homes in which the father left the family for good and the mother found a new partner who comes into conflict with the children; families in which the mother becomes the main provider with the contribution of the children; environments characterized by intense physical violence; and especially children leaving school because of inadequacy and/or need to help with the home budget. Children are forced to complete the home budget, but there is a distinction: “the work of girls is mainly at home” (p. 58), helping with household chores, taking care and feeding younger siblings, while “boys are in charge of more strenuous tasks” (p. 58) in the street. Regarding our theme in this research, the issue of the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is practically imperceptible. Thus, the author realizes that “it is harder to find girls around the square” and located only two girls, of 9 and 14 years old, which “according to the boys, keep trying to seduce the men from there” (p. 63), and as a result it is possible to infer that “they are more involved with theft and prostitution than with work”(p. 63). However, in the case of families with a high number of girls (where consequently the number of boys is not that high) or in critical situations of survival, “they are liberated for street activities”. Nevertheless, the author also mentions “families which pressure the girl to stay at home due to their necessary work and to the concern with how easy it is for them to be captured by networks of prostitution exploitation” (p. 63), the only reference to the issue of sexual exploitation, mentioned directly as prostitution.

From that case, the following considerations can be made. Firstly, the families, presumably the mothers (the most present ones and/or providers), still resist to liberating their daughters for street work, due to the risk of prostitution. Secondly, it is appropriate to discuss the word “easy” used by Medeiros. Owing to the existing precariousness, it would be very easy to capture these girls for prostitution. Lastly, the fact that girls were not more exposed to

prostitution in the slum of Rocinha, located in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro and close to an area with circulation of foreign tourists, catches our attention. The reported experience shows how much worse the situation became over the last decades, since the research dates from thirty years ago. While back then there seemed to be a concern with the sexual exploitation of girls, nowadays the girls are often encouraged to become prostitutes as a way to bring money home.

We need to consider the report of Dantas (2009)⁵, representative of the Crime Reporting Hotline of the Secretariat of Public Security of Bahia, in order to understand the entrance of children and adolescents in the sexual exploitation universe: “We receive many reports about mothers who use their daughters in child prostitution [...] as something common.” And the person highlights the need to intervene: “Because it is not enough [...] to report to the police, the police will get there and prove it, arrest the mother, (but) what about the child? She will keep doing it, she is already on that path, how will she survive? Selling her body.” The interviewee makes it clear that these situations are common in her experience receiving reports, and that many times the girls are expelled from home for being sexually abused by their stepfather, and “when the mother finds out the husband is abusing her daughter, she blames the daughter and sends her away.” According to the interviewee, these mothers feel threatened by the daughters and many times rely on the stepfathers for providing for the home.

Another study about Rio de Janeiro as well discusses a more recent experience from the end of the 1990s, the Viva Rio Program, which was developed aimed at violence control and at providing new forms of learning and jobs for young people (SORJ, 2001). While the work of Medeiros studies the beginning of the 1980s, a time that may be considered *idyllic* if we analyze the current reality, the analysis of Sorj considers the changes that occurred. The research identifies that “the main indicator of trouble with integration is education” (p. 96), since “25% of young people between 15 and 25 years old did not finish middle school, which limits their entrance in the job market and makes it easier to attract them to drug trafficking” (p. 96). Since the 1980s, “drug trafficking grows and becomes the main power institution in the slums, and community leaderships shrink before

⁵ DANTAS, D. Secretaria de Segurança Pública. Disque Denúncia. Entrevista. Salvador, 2009.

it...” (SORJ, 2003, p. 96). The work mentions the theme of this paper only sporadically and implicitly. The formation of two identities is seen in the slums, “crystallized a long time ago: “workers” and “criminals”” (p. 99). The latter are in charge of maintaining the “order, which includes occasionally helping a resident that needs money, mediating conflicts and punishing thieves (generally with a shot in their hand or foot) and child rapists (generally with death penalty, usually together with torture)” (p. 99). As it can be observed, the sentence applied by the “local justice” is tough and harsh. The sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, however, is not mentioned in the set of actions of the criminals, which could be explained by the fact that it happens out of the slum, out of the jurisdiction of control and domination of traffic criminals.

Both studies, one more recent and the other from longer ago, fail to mention sexual tourism. According to the current report of Medeiros (2013)⁶, this can be explained by the fact that in the slum of Rocinha during the 1980s the children that were around 10 years old were considered too young (nowadays, children with this age are already involved with the CSECA). In the second case, that analyzes slums of Rio in the end of the 20th century and first years of the current century, the phenomenon of sexual tourism is also not mentioned since the work focus on the issue of drugs. The fact that sexual tourism was not discussed indicates that the phenomenon is invisible, concealed.

Although the mentioned realities are in different contexts, similarities are seen in other regions of the country. In an interview conducted in Salvador, Koshima (2007)⁷, a psychologist of the Center for the Defense of Children and Adolescents of the state of Bahia (CEDECA-BA) warns that: “a violent family articulation also pushes the child or adolescent toward a situation of sexual exploitation, by leaving them fragile or vulnerable”. The interviewee refers mainly to situations of sexual abuse occurred during childhood and adolescence. Both reports confirm the situation of a broken home, and we may infer that these children and adolescents dream of leaving their families in search of a less violent life outside of their homes, which they end up doing, destroying the initially incontestable idea that the child and the adolescent are complete victims, incapable of responding to the actions of adults. The

⁶ MEDEIROS, L. Entrevista. Salvador, 2013.

⁷ KOSHIMA, K. Entrevista. CEDECA-BA. Salvador, 2007.

atrocities of the violence and of the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is incontestable, but they end up being pushed to the streets and create their own systems of survival, showing resilience. In addition, many of them become part of social support programs for a while and of less effective governmental actions, but their lives end up not changing for other reasons. The Winrock Institute⁸ carried out a research⁹ in Salvador in 2008 that indicated that approximately 72% of interviewees had participated in a social project (the nature of the projects was not discussed), therefore we can infer that these organizations are capable of reaching children and adolescents. Moreover, it is hard to remove them from the universe of sexual exploitation since most of them participate in social projects for a while but end up going back to their previous lives.

⁸ Non-governmental organization from the United States.

⁹ “Tráfico de crianças e adolescentes para fins de exploração sexual no estado da Bahia” (Child and adolescent trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes in the state of Bahia). 13 teenagers from Salvador, with age ranging between 12 and 18 years old, were interviewed. They are part of the sexual exploitation universe and at some moment of their lives were victims of child trafficking for sexual purposes.

5. Tourism, Sexual Tourism and the Role of the Civil Society in Interpreting and Facing the Problem

Studies on tourism started to expand in Brazil only in the 1960s. Banducci Júnior and Barreto (2001, p. 24) remind us that “in spite of its magnitude and importance in the world market, it was only recently that tourism became a theme of social sciences”. Nowadays, there are expectations regarding the role of tourism as an “agent of international comprehension” (BANDUCCI JÚNIOR; BARRETO, 2001, p. 24), in addition of being a possible economic alternative capable of “helping overcome the condition of poverty and the dependence of underdeveloped countries on central economies” (p. 24). In this sense, the expectation that “Third World” countries could partially replace the base of their economic activities – usually the primary sector – for the service sector was centered especially on tourism. It is important to notice that, during that time, in addition to tourism being considered a development alternative, the negative sociocultural effects of the activity were not explored.

This paper considers sexual tourism one of the negative effects of tourism, a consequence of its development, in a disorganized, unsustainable and transitory system that definitely shares the logic of the mercantilism of ideas, places and people in the most diverse places. In Salvador, not much is known of sexual tourism and its real implications, whether qualitative or quantitative. A previous research (Pinho *et al*, 2008) lists elements such as poverty, violence, structural fragility of families, sexuality and ethnicity, in addition to a continuous and growing consumption – a characteristic of today’s society – and the social inequalities inherent to the contemporary capitalist system as some of the possible main reasons for the existence and the considerable growth of sexual tourism and the involvement of children and adolescents in the networks that encourage it. However, the insufficiency of strategies developed by policies and organizations from the “network for protection and management” demonstrate that some interpretations and fundamentals still need to be revealed.

Among the main organizations that work with this issue in Salvador, the Center for the Defense of Children and Adolescent (CEDECA-BA) is a non-profit organization that takes care of children and adolescents that are victims of situations of violence, providing

juridical, psychological and social attention. The Humanitarian Center of Support for Women (CHAME), in its turn, focuses its works of preventing sexual tourism and human trafficking on women and adolescents in situation of social vulnerability or that seek international emigration, warning about the risks related to it. Lastly, the Specialized Reference Center of Social Assistance (CREAS/Sentinela) is the first program of the federal government created to provide psychosocial help for children and adolescents that were victims of sexual violence, including commercial sexual exploitation.

The participation of children and adolescents in sexual tourism is not an independent and isolated fact; it is connected to other contexts. On this topic, Erica Williams (2009) highlights that actions carried out by Brazilian campaigns aimed at managing sexual tourism and focused on the exploitation of children and adolescents have neglected a crucial point: “children and adolescents are at risk to being victims of sexual exploitation at the hands of members of their own families or local communities rather than foreign tourists.” (p. 205). The affirmation singles out the fact that sexual exploitation does not start directly with tourism, but within the community or even at home. The protection rights of children and adolescents are generally disrespected before contact with national or foreign tourists. The sexual violence to which children and adolescents are exposed occurs before the exploitation in the context of tourism (which does not justify it nor decreases the responsibility of individuals from the tourism sector that encourage the networks linked to sexual tourism with children and adolescents). The fact that the children/adolescents that end up being exploited sexually by tourists generally have a history of sexual violence within the family, abuse, negligence and broken homes, as mentioned above, was mentioned constantly in the conducted interviews. According to Williams (2009), this argument should be relevant in the consolidation of campaigns regarding the sexual exploitation of children and youth in tourism.

In the opinion of the interviewees on the involvement and mobilization of institutions that work with the theme, one of the elements they frequently consider is the openness of public institution for dealing with the issue. However, they also reveal different types of flaws, such as unprepared police officers and the fact that enforcing the national rights of children and

adolescents is not a priority. Thus, for Arruda (2009)¹⁰, “the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is linked to the denial of the rights that the state itself (should) guarantee for this population, for the society”, indicating that the commercial sexual exploitation is seen as a result of governmental inertia regarding basic rights and citizenship. Moreover, the aforementioned “denial of rights” reinforces the idea that the CSECA is not a problem, but a consequence, a symptom related to basic structural issues that determine the development of a society. While Brazil is emerging economically in the world, its social dramas are still strong. According to the classification of the HDI in 2011, Brazil is on the 84th position, behind other South American countries such as Peru, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina.

In the 1970s, according to Bem (2006), the Brazilian government invested significantly in tourism, especially in the hotel sector, and some capitals of the Northeast such as Salvador, Natal, Recife and Fortaleza started becoming “spaces for pleasure and consumption” (p. 26), an image that still prevails also due to their climate and coastal location, both contributing to the characterization of these cities as suitable places for leisure tourism. In addition, the history of tourism in Brazil reveals the responsibility of the government in the construction of the touristic image of Brazil, especially internationally.

The creation of the Brazilian Institute of Tourism (Embratur) in 1966 was aimed at deleting the international image of a country linked to military dictatorship, since the exiled and the international press talked about the “political and ideological persecution of the population, disrespect of human rights”. In this sense, the author criticizes Embratur’s policy, stating that “all efforts were aimed at the idea of transferring part of the international tourism flux to “Brazil, the great power”, betting in a publicity that explored the erotic sensuality of the Brazilian woman as a merchandise that was available to the tourist”.

Concerning the use of the sensual image of the Brazilian woman, over the last decades Embratur changed its approach regarding the touristic attributes of Brazil, trying to create internationally an image of a tourism focused on culture, the environment, folklore, regional differences, ever since sexual tourism and the sexual exploitation of children and youth started being discussed. However, the fact that the term “sexual tourism” is

¹⁰ ARRUDA, J. Entrevista. CEDECA-BA. Salvador, 2009.

not accepted indicates that the institutions related to the development of tourism hesitate in admitting their own responsibility regarding the occurrence of sexual tourism in the country, and the most common discourse of the representatives of these institutions is that sexual exploitation happens regardless of tourism. The position of the tourism network (considering public and private organizations) regarding its relationship with the sexual market is extremely relevant for the understanding of the phenomenon, because even when it is considered a part of the universe of sexual exploitation, tourism uses the networks related to the activity, while the wide interpretation of the CSECA is not linked to any specific sector and occurs in different contexts. A research conducted by Fontes (2012) through the Industrial Social Service (SESI) established a relationship between the flux of foreign tourists in Bahia and in São Paulo and the number of reports of sexual exploitation for the same period (2008-2012). The study shows that “there is an association between the flux of foreign tourists and the variation in the number of reports of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in both states”¹¹, with “the level of association being more significant in Bahia, where the obtained coefficient of association suggests a variation of one report of sexual exploitation in Bahia for each variation of 371 foreign tourists in the state.” For the state of São Paulo, “this same association is obtained for each variation of 2,567 foreign tourists”.

The invisibility of the phenomenon is highlighted by Dantas (2009)¹² in a very appropriate manner, revealing inertia or omission of the government. The interview reminds us that when the Crime Reporting Hotline of the Secretariat of Public Security of Bahia started operating and the press discussed news related to sexual tourism in the state, “some police officers said: “that doesn’t exist, it’s nonsense, that doesn’t exist!” Convincing the authority that it was true, and how it happened [...] it is not easy!”.

As for the relationship between tourism and exploration, Espinheira (1998) warns that, in the contemporary society, sexual exploitation became a “component of tourism” (p. 9), as it involves children and adolescents that at an early age are inserted into a context of sexualization or even sexual initiation through the abuse committed against them. In spite of the

¹¹ Research conducted by the SESI (Industry Social Service) entitled Tourism and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents: a Study of its Determining Factors.

¹² DANTAS, D. Secretaria de Segurança Pública. Disque Denúncia. Entrevista. Salvador, 2009.

interference of other people in the sexual formation of these individuals, whether through precocious sexualization that occurs in the context of a short-term oriented society, overconsumption and hedonism, or through suffering sexual violence during childhood or adolescence, the importance of preventing sex tourism needs to be pointed out. On the topic of the involvement of many individuals of the tourism network in sexual exploitation networks, Espinheira (2008)¹³ reminds us that the person that used to be identified as a pimp was substituted by the intermediary role played by other agents such as “cab drivers, waiters, hotel doormen, restaurant owners, bar and nightclub owners, tour guides and tour operators” and by “an entire wide network of what is called the “receptive body” of tourism in the location”. The new role of the intermediary, which is now played by many actors from the universe of tourism, reveals how close the touristic activity is to the universe of prostitution and sexual exploitation. The author also highlights other signs of the imbricated relationships present in tourism and prostitution nowadays (p. 8): “Ships anchored in Baía de Todos os Santos (All Saints’ Bay) are loaded with women and other products such as drugs, all controlled by agents that coordinate and transport women from the land to the ships and come get them at the established hour, making their business with the prostitutes.” And the author complements: “The same happens in land, with travellers/tourists that seek companionship, and all this communication network can start at the taxi they pick up at the airport or even at the bus station (p.8).

Contact between tourists and locals is made easier by countless agents in different locations, in relationships that seem to satisfy the desires of both sides. Many young people “from both sexes that expect to enjoy the pleasures of parties, music concerts, food of nice restaurants, beer and other drinks, the sensation of drugs, in the hotspots of the city, the contact with outsiders, preferentially foreigners”, but also “executives, commercial representatives and other types of travellers which are willing to have a remunerated relationship, which is easily accomplished and becomes a good business for this high number of intermediary agents.” (p.8)

The contemporary perspective for these relationships in which the youths mentioned by the author value having fun, alcohol, etc. contribute to the trivialization not only of sexuality, but also of the activity of intermediating between tourist and locals, where the consumption

¹³ ESPINHEIRA, G. Entrevista. Universidade Federal da Bahia. Salvador, 2008.

of sex is combined with the consumption of drugs and alcohol, and sexual tourism ends up becoming a component of consumption, enabled by the contact with locals, intermediary agents and visitors.

In the context of exploitation, the behavior of police officers is also essential for the effectiveness of governmental actions. Koshima (2007)¹⁴ reveals that “if you consider (sexual) exploitation as a sex market[...], there is an entire police force which is corrupt and connives in it, making impunity certain for all the involved people, to whom nothing happens”. This reality may be linked to not knowing the exact proportions of sexual tourism, and at the same time it makes us realize that, if the scenario is not explored, and if there are many institutions directly or indirectly involved with the phenomenon (state, public and private organizations, the tourism network), we need to presume that the sexual tourism network, formed by many individuals that enable sexual contacts, may be even wider and include those that theoretically are part of the protection network of children and adolescents, such as the police officers mentioned by the interviewee. It is important to point out that this consideration does not include all police officers neither all members of the protection network, but a few that work “for both sides”. In this sense, similarly to how the prevention network is not capable of measuring its effectiveness, impunity is essential for sexual exploitation and tourism to keep happening, in a governmental positioning that encompasses the most strategic levels of action and the operational competence of the dynamics of the phenomenon. It is not possible to bring visibility to a phenomenon which is concealed even by those which should report it and punish it.

The mobilization of what is called the protection network against violence is an indication that public and private institutions work with the purpose of trying to remedy some gaps that prevent the reduction of sexual exploitation from evolving. The mobilization against the phenomenon, which comes both from non-governmental organizations related to the issue and sectors of the government, collides with systemic and structural factors that are hard to overcome on the short term. Thus, “for the public power to seriously fight the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents”, in the opinion of Oliveira (2007)¹⁵, “the

¹⁴ KOSHIMA, K. Entrevista. CEDECA-BA. Salvador, 2007.

¹⁵ OLIVEIRA, W. Entrevista. CEDECA-BA. Salvador, 2007.

state needs to fight structural and systemic violence – which is promoted by the state itself -, implement the Statute of the Child and the Adolescent and fight the unequal gender relationships which were historically constructed.” Once again, we verify that the solution for the problem goes beyond the problem itself, involving structural answers that so far have not been achieved.

For Vaz (2009)¹⁶, “the political discourse of the government is to face the issue, even of well-intentioned politicians, I believe. However, state bureaucracy is an obstacle for everything in the implementation public policies.” In his opinion, “the only public policy that has been causing some impact is Bolsa Família”. For Vaz (2009), as it can be observed, the issue is more structural than isolated, since the Bolsa Família is a program of income transfer that benefits families in situation of extreme poverty and therefore is not a program directed specifically at children and adolescent victims of sexual violence. For most interviewees, the country has dealt with the sexual violence against children and youth and correlated themes through campaigns such as the Sustainable Tourism and Childhood Program and the creation of crime report systems such as the Disque 100 hotline, but these actions are definitely insufficient for sizing the phenomenon and dealing with its issues.

The perception that the topic is not a priority of governmental actions is complemented by Koshima (2007)¹⁷: “I don’t see it happening, what I see is the secretariat for human rights working alone, trying to coordinate the entire problem, which isn’t a problem just of human rights”, mentioning that is also related to “health, education, sports, security as an entire group, but it does not work effectively”. The opinion of Koshima (2007) indicates that the problem needs a wider approach since it involves different areas. The thought of Gadelha (2009)¹⁸ complements the aforementioned point of view, and according to her what sexually exploited children and adolescents need from the government is “psychosocial and juridical care, family and community reinsertion, socio-productive reinsertion, etc.”. In addition, “if an evaluation is carried out regarding what is in fact being offered by the government, soon we will verify that we need plenty

¹⁶ VAZ, M. WCF- Brasil. Entrevista. Salvador, 2009.

¹⁷ KOSHIMA, K. Entrevista. CEDECA-BA. Salvador, 2007

¹⁸ GADELHA, G. Entrevista. Partners of Americas. Salvador, 2009.

of progress to restore these violated rights according to the dispositions of the ECA¹⁹ . Gadelha also reminds us that, in addition to providing for the issue of the “lack of many of these programs/services”, it is necessary to “promote a restructuration of the systems for recording and notifying reports x cases, so they can work more coordinately, as an essential condition for obtaining the real dimension of the number of exploited children and adolescents in Brazil”, not only through sexual tourism, but also “in different modalities.” (GADELHA, 2009).

For Gadelha(2009), “actions that include work in this area with companies from the tourism sector seem incipient considering the dimension and severity of the issue.” The interviewee lists some actions, which in her opinion need to be singled out for positive reasons, such as the Sustainable Tourism and Childhood Program, in addition to “some training actions implemented by the University of Brasília, such as the development of the “Code of Conduct of Tourism Against Sexual Exploitation”.

Interviewees consider the touristic image of Brazil relevant. Hence, Gadelha (2009)²⁰ informs that it is “imperative to recognize the change of concept in the creation of advertising/promotion for tourism in Brazil”. The interviewee is referring to the change Embratur made in the promotion of the touristic image of Brazil internationally, which started presenting environmental and cultural characteristics of the country as an attempt of escaping the stereotype associated with women and easy sex. The sociologist reveals that, in spite of this transformation being positive and needed, it is not enough: “there is a clear change in the approach, which is helpful, but it does not solve the problem of the desired equation between the tourism that is only worried with producing wealth and income and the other type of tourism that obtains profits sustainably, respecting children and adolescents.” (GADELHA, 2009)

From the reports obtained, it is possible to see that mobilized individuals and institutions are involved with topics related to children and adolescents in general and with more specific issues concerning them. However, these actions are still completely insufficient for

¹⁹ Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente

²⁰ GADELHA, G. Entrevista. Partners of Americas. Salvador, 2009.

managing these issues, and it is necessary to coordinate the involved sectors in order to face the problem.

6. Final considerations

Even though many aspects of sexual tourism and commerce are handled in Brazil very timidly, over the last years the theme has been become a global topic owing to wide international discussions on the harmful impacts the CSECA has on societies. Many governmental and non-governmental organizations define and financially support researches and projects that contribute to enhance our comprehension of this reality and sponsor possible alternatives for minimizing or eradicating the exploitation of child labor in the sex market.

For the development of public policies that lead to more effective actions, it is necessary to admit the severity of the problem and to change the perspective of society and the government regarding the issue. If this reality still needs to be sized, or if the numbers recorded through reports do not correspond to the perception and verification of professionals and researchers specialized in the theme, we need to enhance our comprehension of the reality of sexual exploitation and sexual tourism that involves children and adolescents. If the issue is linked to internal practices of the Brazilian society, starting with domestic violence, towards which society and the government do not show that many efforts, what can we say about actions that involve sexual tourism, that bring wealth to the country in spite of involving children and adolescents? This perception seems to be linked to the lack of crime reports, indicating that the issue does not bother anyone. If it does not bother anyone, why report it?

While lodging establishments, the Ministry of Tourism and the entire tourism network celebrate when the flux of national and international tourists increases in the country, we know very little about the behavior of these tourists and controlling their actions is not a significant concern. Moreover, as long as adults (e.g.) stay in hotels or inns with children without having to present documents that prove their responsibility or any family

ties, there will be gaps in the types of control over tourism networks, organizations and people that are part of it.

The constant reports of representatives of institutions and of specialists about children and adolescents entering the reality of sexual tourism and sexual exploitation for a matter of survival reinforces another consequence of the existence of ignored structural dilemmas, such as poverty and violence. And if sexual tourism and sexual exploitation are part of a larger context of violence and poverty (among other aspects), how can we manage such complex issues with only the implementation of public policies and programs aimed at mobilizing the tourism network and society that happen once a year, with voluntary participation, as in the case of the Sustainable Tourism and Childhood program, and with yearly seminars and encounters motivated by the date of May 18th, the National Day to Combat Sexual Abuse? We do not want to deprive these events of merit, as they are responsible for the continuity of the discussions on these themes, but clearly they are not enough for a larger mobilization of society and the government that enables these problems to be effectively confronted. In a deeper analysis of the national reality, the empirical verification indicated a convergence with the constructed theoretical framework, indicating that the problem is structural and can only be explained by examining the historical construction of Brazil, where some problems seem to be inexistent for society and the government, even though “empty” efforts are made by both of them. The effective existence of the issue as well as the mobilization and the few real results aimed at its confrontation indicate the stage of civilization of Brazil.

References

BANDUCCI JR, A . BARRETO, M. (orgs) *Turismo e identidade local: uma visão antropológica*. Campinas, SP: Papyrus, 2001.

BEM, A. S. *A dialética do Turismo Sexual*. Campinas, SP: Papyrus, 2006.

CENTRO DE REFERÊNCIA, ESTUDOS E AÇÕES SOBRE CRIANÇAS E ADOLESCENTES. *A Exploração Sexual Comercial de Meninos, Meninas e Adolescentes na América Latina e Caribe*. Relatório Final. Brasil, 2002.

ESPINHEIRA, G. *Exploração sexual: estigma e simulação*. Salvador: Centro de Defesa da Criança e do Adolescente Yves de Roussan, 1998.

LEAL, Maria Lúcia Pinto. *Tráfico de crianças e adolescentes para fins de exploração sexual comercial: uma abordagem crítica sobre o fenômeno* Disponível em www.andi.org.br. Acesso em 19 de abril de 2011.

O'DONNELL, G. *Sobre o Estado, a Democratização e Alguns Problemas Conceituais*. Novos Estudos. CEBRAP. N.º 36. Julho de 1993.

PINHO, J. ;MARQUEZ, A.; COELHO, I.; SANTANA, M. *Exploração sexual de crianças e adolescentes em Salvador: limites e possibilidades do CEDECA-BA*. In: TENÓRIO, F. BARBOSA, L. O setor turístico versus a exploração sexual na infância e na adolescência. Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 2008.

RELATORIO DO ÍNDICE DE DESENVOLVIMENTO HUMANO (IDH). *Programa das Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento* (2010). Disponível em www.pnud.org.br. Acesso em 20 de abril de 2013.

SANTOS, W. G. *Fronteiras do Estado mínimo – Indagações sobre o híbrido institucional brasileiro*. In: Razões da Desordem. Rio de Janeiro. Rocco. 1993.

SECRETARIA ESPECIAL DE DIREITOS HUMANOS DA PRESIDÊNCIA DA REPÚBLICA.
Relatório do Disque Denúncia Nacional – 100. Brasília, 2009 - 2010.

WILLIAMS, Erica L. *Anxious pleasures: race and sexual economies of transnational tourism in Salvador, Brazil*. Tese de Doutorado. Califórnia, EUA: Stanford University, 2009.

Received on: 08/30/2013

Approved on: 04/01/2014