

# CONTESTED SPACES. MEANINGFUL PLACES. CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCES OF PLACE AND BELONGING IN SPAIN AND BRAZIL

MARIA J. C. KROM

PhD Student

Center for the Research in Anthropology (CRIA)  
Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas (FCSH)  
Universidade Nova de Lisboa  
Avenida da Berna 26-C, 1069-061 Lisboa, Portugal  
e-mail: marjoke.krom@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

This essay aims to contribute to current anthropological debate on space and place, analysing in two instances of festival performance how, on the one hand the politics of appropriation of space contributes to the configuration of power relations, and how on the other hand, participants in these festivals engage individually and collectively with physical space(s) to create places which they experience as meaningful in terms of identity and belonging.

KEYWORDS: festivals • performance • space • place • appropriation • belonging

## INTRODUCTION

Caught up in migratory fluxes to and fro, and inhabiting an increasingly globalised world, people continue to express and perform their attachment to place. As Taylor (2010: 2) has pointed out, global migration and modern means of transport and communication may have changed social relations profoundly, they also have made defining identity more difficult than ever and therefore also more important. One of the means by which people identify with others, create and express identity, is through a connection with place with the implied connotation of rootedness and of belonging. Even if the place in question exists only on a temporary basis, as in the case of the members of a dispersed community coming together to celebrate their common identity during a festival; or if the place is an imagined one, as in the case of descendants of emigrants performing folklore traditions from a land they know only from second-hand experience.

Stimulated by new approaches and applications in neighbouring disciplines such as human and cultural geography, sociology, and philosophy, as well as by claims of local identity and heritage by the peoples that form the subjects and objects of anthropological enquiry, the concepts of space and place have once more come to the forefront of anthropological debate on how people engage with space in order to create meaningful place.<sup>1</sup>

With this essay, I want to contribute to this debate by analysing particular instances in two particular cultural performances, the *Festa de Moros i Cristians* in Beneixama (Spain), and the *Festa do Divino* in Pirenópolis (Brazil), based on data collected during fieldwork and documentary research carried out in these two festivals.<sup>2</sup>

I will do so from a performance perspective on space and place which is informed by notions from performance theory, as set out by Schechner (2003; 2006), and draws on insights formulated by Massey (Callard 2004; Hubbard et al. 2004; Pink 2009), Ingold (Pink 2009), and Veschambre (2009).

#### PERFORMANCE AND PRACTICE. SPACE AND PLACE

Performance both stands apart from and coincides with everyday life practices.<sup>3</sup> Both are practices embedded in and contingent upon socio-cultural context; both are brought into being, and are dependent on the engagement of individuals/groups with their physical environment. In other words, both can be seen as em-placed and em-bodied events, forms of what Csordas (1999: 183) called “being-in-the-world”.

Both cultural performance and everyday practice, moreover, are always in the process of coming into being, happening in the ‘here and now’; and while the reality of performance stands apart from the reality of everyday practice – since performance is bounded in nature, following a script that dictates time frame, choice of space, and props used (Krom 2008), it also coincidentally moves through and intersects the same time-space as everyday practice. Performance and everyday practice, therefore, can be seen as “confronting, overlapping (and) interpenetrating realities” (Schechner 2003: 44) that relate to each other in a dynamic and fluid way.

Furthermore, performance practice and every day practice presuppose the purposeful movement of people through space to create content and attribute meaning to particular places.

Massey’s thinking on space and place – which in itself can be characterised as performative – opens up rich possibilities for a new approach of performance and everyday practice. Space, for Massey, is not a ‘thing’, an abstract physical entity, but a “constellation of processes”, which brings together the “previously unrelated” (Pink 2009: 31). Massey defines space as a “spatio-temporal event” made up by “a simultaneity of stories-so-far”, the nature of which she understands by definition to be plural and constructed. Massey sees specific places as “trajectories” that run within and through these plural, simultaneous spaces, amassing “collections of stories”, thus contributing to an “ongoing and ever-specific project of practices” to constitute a “sociability of space” (Pink 2009: 31). For Massey places are “porous networks of social relations” that “occur” within the wider topographies of space, at particular moments in time as part of particular constellations of power – and which she indicated as “power-geometries”, referring to the positioning of individuals in these same networks (Callard 2004: 221).

For an analysis of space and place from a performative perspective, Ingold’s view of place forms an important complement to and nuancing of Massey’s thinking because of the emphasis he puts on the influence of movement, and thereby of human agency, in the production of place(s). He argues that places would not exist without “the comings and goings of human beings [...] to and from them, from and to places elsewhere” (Pink 2009: 32).

Veschambre (2009: 139), finally, also stresses the agency of human actors, both in the attribution of meaning to place, and in the control over the definition of place-identity as expressed in cultural performance. In this sense, he addresses how the “power-

geometries" indicated by Massey actually come into being, using the concept of "appropriation of space" by actors who are unequally situated in a given socio-political context.

The analysis that follows is divided in two parts: the first part focuses on the process of appropriation of space and the configuration of power relations in the festival in Pirenópolis, analysing how the same reflect in the contestation of, and control over actual key places, and over 'key places' or roles in the performance; the second part analyses how during the performance in Beneixama (Spain) participants engage individually and collectively with physical space(s) in the village to create places which they experience as meaningful in terms of identity and belonging.

#### CONTESTED SPACES: APPROPRIATION OF SPACE – CONFIGURATION OF POWER

Places are not inert containers. They are politicised, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions. (Rodman 2003: 205)

The town of Pirenópolis, situated in the heart of the state of Goiás (centre-west Brazil) was founded in 1727 by Portuguese colonisers, following the discovery of gold near the Rio das Almas (River of Souls). Following this discovery, the town became one of the richest in the state. The end of the gold rush, around 1800, brought on the decline of the town, causing the emigration of a substantial part of the population. When commercial routes were detoured the town declined even further. The 1960s marked the beginning of the town's slow revival, following the foundation of Brasília, the state's current capital, which brought on an intensive exploration of semi-precious stone. Since the 1980s, Pirenópolis has attracted a considerable number of alternative communities, which make a living of the production and selling of various kinds of handicrafts. Currently, boasting a population of around 20,000 souls,<sup>4</sup> the town's economy is based mainly on agricultural activities, cattle breeding, services, public administration and small industries. Apart from this, Pirenópolis is on its way to becoming a veritable tourist destination, partly due to the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape, partly because of its colourful colonial architecture in the historical centre, but mainly due to what has come to be known as one of the most typical popular festivals in Brazil: the *Festa do Divino* (Holy Ghost Festival).

The *Festa do Divino*, a celebration of Portuguese-Azorean origin, thanks its popularity among Brazilian visitors and tourists from all over the world mainly to a three day spectacle in the form of a mediaeval tournament, known as the *Cavalcadas*, in which horsemen representing Moors and Christians symbolically recreate the battle of Charlemagne against the Turks.

The main part of the *Festa do Divino* takes place in the centre of the town, starting forty days after Easter with a tribute of the *Folia do Divino Espírito Santo*, a group of festival participants, at the house of the *Imperador* (emperor). The *Imperador* and his family are among the most important figures in the festival. They preside over the organisation, and over all the official acts in the celebration. A new *Imperador* is chosen each year out of a group of candidates. The function of *Imperador* brings the whole family a great deal

of visibility and media attention, as well as social and political status. Their residence houses the altar with the symbols of the Holy Ghost: a solid silver crown with a golden dove on top representing the Holy Ghost, a sceptre, and a banner also embroidered with the figure of a dove. The room in which the altar is placed has to be accessible for people who want to pay their respect and pray to the Holy Ghost, not just during the festival but also during the whole year that the *Imperador* exercises his function. The *Imperador* and his family are also responsible for providing nourishment for the *foliões* (festival participants) and for anyone who comes to pay his or her respects during the festivities. Evidently, this makes the function of *Imperador* not only one of the most important, but also one of the most costly in the festival (Brandão 1974: 75); it also turns the *Imperador's* house into one of the key locations in the celebration.

The ten days that follow the arrival of the *foliões* at the house of the *Imperador* are filled with processions; novenas at the *Igreja Matriz* (the principal church of the town) followed by communal meals in the *barraquinhas*, the food stalls adjoining the church; with a folkloric presentation in the town's theatre; with interludes in the streets by masked figures on horseback; with fireworks at night and dawn parades at daybreak; and, of course, with the performance of the *Cavalladas*, for many the highlight of the festival.

In order to understand how the relationships of status and power in a particular social setting are configured, it is more helpful, suggests Veschambre (2009: 139), to think about identity in terms of processes of identification on the one hand, and of identity ascription, on the other. The notion of identity, he states, has become so widely accepted and taken for granted, that it tends to obscure who, in a particular situation, controls how identity is defined. In fact, he claims, the markers of identity that are taken for granted in a particular context, are more often than not controlled by, and an expression of the social power of the dominant groups in a community; a power that such groups use to impose their definition of what cultural traits count as identity markers in the process of linking a particular social group to a particular place. This process, moreover, is so pervasive that those traits favoured by groups in power end up as being seen as 'inborn' or 'natural' by other members of the community.

To avoid the essentialising trap of considering identity as a given, and to avoid using the concept of territory, which in many discourses on space is strongly linked to the naturalised notion of identity mentioned above, Veschambre (2009: 139) proposes the idea of "appropriation of space" when talking about identity in relation to place and power relations. The concept of spatial appropriation stresses the agency of human actors in the creation of notions of identity, and in the attribution of meaning. Obviously, individuals do not dispose of equal capacities, or possibilities, when it comes to appropriating space. Furthermore, the experience of actually being capable of appropriating space influences not only the way individuals see themselves, but also how they see others, which in turn again influences their felt or actual capacity for appropriation.

Looking at the physical spaces that play a role in the *Festa do Divino* – private spaces: the house of the *Imperador*, and those of the *Juizados* and *Reinados*;<sup>5</sup> public spaces, such as the church, the municipal theatre, the food stalls; institutional spaces, such as the Museu das Cavalladas and the Museu do Divino; iconic spaces, such as the *Cavallódromo*; and intermediate spaces, such as the streets and squares of the town – a correspondence can be established between the appropriation of these spaces and the socio-political



Photo 1. The opening parade in the Cavallódromo (Pirenópolis, Brasil).  
Photo by Maria J. C. Krom.

positioning of individuals and groups in the community, as well as a correspondence between processes of identification and of identity ascription and these same individuals and groups.

Space and place can be seen as contested properties in a threefold manner.

First of all, space and place are contested symbolically through the performance of the story that forms the leitmotif for the *Cavallhadas* (Christians vs Moors – civilised vs barbarians).

Secondly, the appropriation of space seems to correspond to the appropriation and attribution of roles in the performance by the members of the various classes respectively, which is suggestive of how power relations in the community are configured.<sup>6</sup>

Thirdly, space and place are contested not only between but also within each of these groups: who gets to play the best 'parts', and thus the most prominent and prestigious place in the performance, and is thus the most profiled in terms of political and social visibility.

A good example of how spatial configuration and power configuration can overlap and converge is the *Cavallódromo*, a huge concrete structure, resembling a bullfight arena, situated on the outskirts of Pirenópolis.

The *Cavallódromo* is the space where the mock battles between the Moors and Christians takes place, together with the performance of the *mascarados* undoubtedly the most extravagant and spectacular act in the *Festa do Divino*. Staged in the form of a scripted



Photo 2. Mascarados posing for snapshots in the streets of Pirenópolis (Brazil).  
Photo by Maria J. C. Krom.

medieval tournament, twelve men on horseback, dressed as the Christian knights of Charlemagne, compete with twelve equally elaborately dressed Moorish counterparts, also on horseback. On three consecutive days the 'knights' engage in orderly choreographed skirmishes that culminate in a final battle from which the Christians always emerge victoriously and as a result of which the Moors invariably end up defeated and converted to Christianity.

In the intervals of the tournament, groups of masked figures on horseback, called *mascarados*, come galloping into the arena to amuse the public. During the festival, the *mascarados* ride the streets of the town, fully dressed in their imaginative disguises. These figures supposedly have their origin in an older folk celebration and allegedly represent the anarchic element in the festival, scaring unwitting bystanders with their antics (Brandão 1974: 82). Their disorderly behaviour stands in sharp contrast to the precisely choreographed performance of the Christian and Moorish knights.

Since both knights and *mascarados* are disguised, it is hard to tell what their socio-economic background and status is. However, as one of my research participants, a former knight and onetime secret *mascarado* informed me, since being a knight implies having one or more horses and quite a bit of free time to practice the manoeuvres, the knights formerly were chosen from among the members of the elite families and still tend to come from the financially better situated households in the community, while the *mascarados* as a rule were young men from the poorer families, but nowadays any-

one can dress up and ride as a *mascarado*, even women, although this is still frowned upon by some members of the community.

Analysing the differentiation between knights and *mascarados* from the perspective of a politics of space, we might say that while the *mascarados* seem to rule in the status wise diffuse space of the streets, the knights dominate the high-status space of the *Cavallódromo*. However, the *mascarados* presence in the streets, where they willingly pose for tourist snapshots, struck me as anything but anarchic, and their performance in the *Cavallódromo* appears to be highly controlled by the master of ceremony, and is seamlessly integrated in the spectacle of the knights.

The *Cavallódromo* is also the arena for the display of political and economical clout, with its walls plastered with posters brandishing slogans about the feats of local and regional politicians, and about the financial contributions of local entrepreneurs. Some of the masked horsemen performing in the intervals even carry these slogans on the backs of their disguise. During the spectacle, the electronically transmitted loud voice of a commentator reports not only on what is taking place in the arena, but also, and in a vary insistent way, on the upstanding character of local and regional politicians, and on their concern for and commitment to the well-being of the local population.

Finally, space and place are also contested in a material sense. The spatial organisation of the *Cavallódromo* appears to mirror the socio-economic stratification of the community. Two VIP boxes, above the entrances to the arena, are reserved for the politicians, the sponsors of the *Cavallhadas*, and their guests. The two main spectator areas are divided into sunnier, and therefore less agreeable, and more shady areas. Some, probably more affluent families, dispose of boxes with sunshades, the less fortunate have to make do with benches without shade. Behind the boxes, a lively trade in food and beverages is going on, apparently provided by members of the poorer part of the population for whom the festival presents an opportunity to make some money.

The spatial organisation of the *Cavallódromo*, analysed through the lens of a politics of appropriation of space, can thus be seen as a contested site for the acquisition of political, social and economic capital, and, in this sense, can be likened to a battlefield, a place where hegemonic and subordinate groups “dramatize their experience of alterity and recognition” (Garcia-Canclini 1998: 279), and where “power, prestige and material objectives are disputed and competed over” (Raposo 2006: 88).

#### MEANINGFUL PLACES. EXPRESSIONS OF BELONGING AND IDENTITY

Places, like voices, are local and multiple. For each inhabitant, a place has a unique reality, one in which meaning is shared with other people and places. The links in these chains of experience are forged of culture and history.  
(Rodman 2003: 208)

Beneixama is a village of some 1,800 inhabitants<sup>7</sup> situated in the fertile valley of the Alt Vinalopó, in the province of Alicante. The village lies within the geographical boundaries of what is known as the Comunitat Valenciana, or, as the inhabitants prefer to say *el País Valencià*, stressing their onetime political independence from the rest of Spain. During the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Be-

neixama was more numerous in terms of inhabitants, thanks to a blooming agricultural production. From that time onward the population dropped in number due to the emigration of its inhabitants to nearby industrial centres in the Vinalopó, like Villena and Alcoi, or to cities further away like Barcelona and Valencia. Since then the number of inhabitants has varied in accordance to the rise and fall in numbers of immigrants of mostly Ecuadorian and Bulgarian origin. Beneixama itself boasted some industrial activity, like the home production of toys, mainly undertaken by women, and of curtain rails, but a large part of its economy continues to be based on the cultivation and export of its agricultural produce: fruit, wine and *aguardente*.

The highlight of the cultural year in Beneixama is the *Festa de Moros i Cristians*, held in honour of the village's patron saint, the Divine Aurora. A five-day nonstop sequence of everything from religious celebration (holy masses and processions) to staged mock battles, folklore performances, carnival parades, and night-time disco.

According to declarations made by several of my research participants, even in the early decades of the 20th century, and especially in the upper and middle class families of Beneixama, it was not uncommon for parents to send their children away to other places in order to get a 'proper' education. The parents themselves very often were connected through kinship ties to relatives that had already moved away, or had themselves married partners from other parts of the province or of Spain. Moreover, due to the relatively high level of migration of native inhabitants of Beneixama to places within the Comunitat Valenciana or even beyond, to cities such as Madrid, Barcelona or Pamplona, and due to the more recent arrival of immigrants from other countries such as Ecuador and Bulgaria, I think it is safe to say with a level of certainty that the fabric of the community in Beneixama nowadays is, and has been for quite some time, a porous one, with individuals constantly moving in and out.

In terms of spatial occupation this means that quite a number of houses in the village are inhabited only during the summer and other seasonal holidays, and at the beginning of September, when the festival of Moors and Christians takes place. The occupants of these houses are primarily descendants of people that have moved away, many of whom return on purpose during the festival to take part in the celebration, and who plan their holiday accordingly. This is the case with several of my research participants.

One of these, a woman in her late forties, bought the old family granary in the village centre and remodelled it into a holiday home. She lives in the North of Spain but always visits Beneixama during the festival, and both she and her daughter are active *festers* (participants). Her sons enjoy being in the village during the festival but do not care to dress up for it, or to partake in the parades; they prefer just to hang out with their friends.

Another research participant, a woman in her late fifties who lives near Valencia, spent a large part of her childhood in the village and still has many relatives living there. She comes from an extended family of *festers*: her father, uncles, both her brothers, her sister in law, and she herself used to 'come out' as Moors. Her mother, who was born in the city of Valencia and still lives there, never cared to actively partake in the parades or other acts, but she used to contribute to the decorating of the statue of the Divine Aurora during the festival. The husband of this research participant, who grew up in Valencia, was a member of the Moorish *comparsa* (company) for several years.



*Photo 3. A Christian esquadra parading in Beneixama (Spain).  
Photo by Maria J. C. Krom.*

Now, neither of them participates anymore in the parades, but their daughters, one a teenager and the other a young woman in her twenties, are both active *festers*. Their son likes to spend time in the village, in the house of his maternal grandmother, but does not care to be there at the time of the festival.

Their family house, near the square in front of the church, is like a hub of communal activity during the festival. Family, friends, and neighbours walk in and out, enjoy meals together, gathering to see the parades from one of the balconies, or simply sit together in the patio behind the house and talk a bit during one of the few lulls in the festival activities.

The house itself is like a living testimony to family bonds and family history, filled as it is with furniture and knick-knacks of bygone days. One of the rooms houses the old costumes that were once worn by the grandparents, handed down to their children, and then passed on to the grandchildren.

Objects and costumes now still in use by family members that participate in the festival, are often tied to stories of past experiences lived by parents or other relatives that used these items before them. The handling of these objects evokes the memory of these experiences in relation to place, told and retold time and again.

The festival impacts on the community as a whole with a sensory onslaught which is virtually impossible to escape, sweeping its members along in a relentless five-day suc-



Photo 4. The main hall of the Moors' *maset* set for a joint meal (Beneixama, Spain).  
Photo by Maria J. C. Krom.

cession of processions, parades, and ceremonial acts, accompanied by the continuous ringing of church bells, the booming noise of harquebusiers being fired, and the sound of Moorish marches or Christian *paso dobles* played by one of the many bands.

It is like a scripted "environmental performance" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 59), with acts staged at key locations that correspond to more private or more public parts in the celebration: the church and the square in front of it; the chapel of the patron saint and its adjoining square, next to the town hall; the wooden castle erected on the town square; but above all, the company headquarters, the *masets*, where the *comparsas* gather.

The *maset* is another key location in the festival that is emblematic for the collective part of the celebration; here the *festers* meet friends and companions of the same *esquadra* to eat, hang out, and where they prepare for the parades and other acts.

The *comparsa* can be seen as a system of "integrative socialibility" (Veschambre 2009: 142), in the context of which a major part of the social life of its members takes place, and in which the *esquadras* in particular play an important role.

The *esquadras* are smaller subgroups within the structure of the *comparsas* that are often organised on the basis of friendship or age.

Usually, young people start out as participants in the *comparsa* to which their parents belong, which they start to do at a very young age, often as babies or toddlers. As they

get older, they choose either to continue in the same *comparsa* as their parents or to join another *comparsa* of their choice, which they normally do to hook up with a *esquadra* to which their friends or classmates belong.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of the sociability system formed by the *comparsas* for the construction and maintenance of social cohesion of the community is expressed in the central role that its headquarters, the *maset*, plays in the lives of its members. Clearly recognisable from the outside by the display of the symbols of its identity – flags, colours, shield – the *maset* figures as a kind of second home for its members. The *maset* is a key location which allows the *comparsa* to unite generations and genders in a multiplicity of collective activities throughout the year – joint meals, fundraising campaigns, or other social activities – thereby creating bonds of friendship that sometimes last for life, inspiring strong feelings of loyalty, and a deeply felt sense of belonging in its members.

The system of integrative socialibility of the *comparsa* also allows for the absorption of temporary residents, and of newcomers in the village. It provides the first with the possibility of experiencing belonging, and of identification with their cultural roots and those of their family and friends, and it offers the second the possibility of establishing roots in the village by participating in what is felt to be an important aspect of local heritage.

## CONCLUSION

The concepts of space and place can lead to valuable insights when applied to the analysis of performative practices, not only with regard to politically motivated processes of heritage creation, but also with regard to processes of meaning creation at personal and community level.

In the two festivals that I have analysed above, practices related to the acquisition and maintenance of social and political power are exercised alongside, and sometimes converge with, personal and collective practices implicated in the experience of belonging and the expression of identity. Both types of practice pass through the engagement with and appropriation of space.

Space, in the context of these performances, refers not just to the physical setting, but rather, and more importantly so, points to a “socially constructed, spatialised experience” (Rodman 2003: 206).

The festival can be understood as a temporally bounded lived space, or, in Massey’s terms as a “spatio-temporal event” (Pink 2009: 31) crisscrossed by trajectories passing through it, and gathering them as if they were “collections of stories”. As she so aptly stated: “To travel between places is to move between collections of trajectories and to reinsert yourself in the ones to which you relate” (ibid.).

As said at the beginning, these trajectories are brought into being by means of the purposeful movement of the bodies of participants, and by the way this purposeful movement through and engagement with space attributes meaning to what thus become key locations in this same event-space. The festival as a temporal and spatial interface, superimposed on the equally temporal space of the town/village, links exterior and interior, macro and micro worlds, collective and individual, others and self.

The case study of the festival in Beneixama, on the one hand, indicates that this kind of performance can present its participants with an opportunity to experience identity

and express belonging, not only those living in the village on a more permanent basis, but also, and in particular, those that pass a great part of their lives outside of it. The (former) family house and the *maset* – the one a private place, the other collective in nature – provide the necessary key spatial settings for this experience. The festival also appears to provide a space for the integration of new community members.<sup>9</sup>

The analysis of the festival in Pirenópolis, on the other hand, can be seen as illustrative of the workings of Massey's "power-geometries", which come into being through a politics of appropriation of space, as defined by Veschambre (2009). The power-geometry that becomes visible points, in this case, to an unequal positioning of individuals and groups within the socio-political configuration of the community; a positioning that seems to coincide not only with class but also, at least in some respects, with ethnic background.<sup>10</sup>

For the sake of argument I have contrasted the two cases in a somewhat reductionist fashion, highlighting the politics of space in one festival and the politics of belonging in the other, though of course this does not do justice to either one of them. In Beneixama the politics of space is also present, although maybe differing in degree from Pirenópolis, with an element of competition between the various *comparsas* and between their members for the most prominent places and roles in the festival; and in Pirenópolis the experience and expression of belonging are just as present as in Beneixama, as witnessed for instance in the deep devotion of the *foliões* and the *Imperador* to the Holy Ghost, or in the comradeship between the knights or between the *mascarados*.

What I would like to stress is that the analysis of these festivals from a perspective of appropriation of space and the making of place – far from reinforcing a nostalgic image of place, or of static, abstract and mere physical space as a neutral backdrop to the action – suggests an interactive relation between performative practice and space and place, one dependent on and oriented by human agency, and constantly in the process of being re-configured and re-constructed. As noted by Hubbard et al. (2004: 7), "places are real-and-imagined assemblages" the meaning of which "is fought over in the realms of cultural politics, being fundamental in the making (and remaking) of identity and difference."

## NOTES

1 See Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga (2003) for a detailed account of these approaches.

2 The fieldwork was carried out over the period of several months in the years 2008 and 2009, consisting of participant observation of the festivals in their totality, extensive visual documentation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews with key research participants, and documentary research of local, regional and national sources.

3 I define practice as the performance of reflexive experience, which stresses both the inter-relatedness of human actors, and the relational nature of practice. We don't perform only for ourselves, we also perform for/with or against others. Nor do we perform in a void; we perform in (a) space that, through our reflexive practice, we transform into meaningful place(s). I take the embodied and emplaced nature of human agency therefore as my point of departure in an attempt to analyse how human actors engage with space in order to make place in the course of their involvement in the temporally circumscribed practice of the festival.

4 Data: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, Brasil 2006.

5 The *Juizados* and *Reinados* are formed by two couples from the lower classes of the community, as a rule low income white or coloured people, who perform the same acts and rituals as the *Imperador*, but on different days of the festival and with less ostentation

6 The preliminary analysis of spaces and roles appropriated during the festival suggests that the leading roles (such as those of *Imperador*, and knights) and key spaces (such as the *Imperador's* residence, and the *Cavalhódromo*) are controlled by elite members of the community, and that only the lesser roles and spaces are attainable for (attributed to) lower class white, and coloured members of the community. This seems to be the case for the roles of the *Juizados* and *Reinados* respectively, whose personas and acts in the festival mimic those of the high status *Imperador*.

7 Data: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, Espanha 2007.

8 Several of my research participants indicated that the *comparsa* system functions as a mechanism of social control, and those problems sometimes arise when husband and wife belong to different *comparsas*, or when sweethearts that belong to the same *esquadra* break up, since membership of the *esquadra* often overlaps with bonds of friendship.

9 I say “appear” because I must make a caveat here, since this seems to be the case for people who for some reason already have a link to the community, or manage to insert themselves into its ‘collection of trajectories’. Based on information provided for me by several research participants, the same does not seem to hold true for people who are considered as, or are seen to constitute themselves as, ‘outsiders’, such as seems to be the case with the Ecuadorian and Bulgarian immigrant groups living on the outskirts of the village. Since, so far, they have not been part of my group of research participants, and I have not (yet) interviewed them, I cannot speak for their experience. It is possible that if I were to do so, I might find a space-power configuration comparable to the one present in Pirenópolis.

10 I have not addressed differences in positioning based on gender, which are most definitely present in the festival in Pirenópolis, and probably are so in Beneixama as well, and which would need clarification to present a full picture of the relation between performance, space and power.

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