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The challenge of articulating human rights at an LGBT ‘mega-event’: A personal reflection on Sao Paulo Pride 2017

Abstract

This paper brings together Critical Event Studies (CES) and a reflexive/narrative autoethnographic approach in order to stimulate a debate around the commodification of public space, and the management of mega-events of dissent. This is achieved using the example of the researcher’s participation in the 2017 Sao Paulo Pride. Though there are no official figures, the 2017 parade is thought to have had nearly 4 million attendees, making it one of the largest LGBT demonstrations in the world. However, corporate interests in the event have commodified dissent in order to commercialise ‘otherness’, and the city has absorbed the demonstration into its cultural offer as a global brand. The confluence of these factors produces a pattern of place dressing and an erasure that depoliticise the event and undermines its capacity to effectively articulate human rights. Currently Brazil has some of the most liberal LGBT laws of any South American state, yet recently Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)/Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) human rights have been threatened by a rapid rise in hate crime as well as the emergence of an evangelical Christian right in state and regional assemblies. Within such a context the need to revive the roots of Pride as an articulation of otherness that demands recognition, and as a robust defence of human rights for the LGBT/SOGI community, is more pressing than ever.

Introduction

This paper draws together a reflexive/narrative autoethnographic approach (as suggested by Ellis, 2004 & Ellis et al., 2011) to focus on the personal in the political within a large-scale event of dissent. This is combined with a theoretical orientation derived from critical event studies (CES). The discussions aim to engage with a debate around the commodification of public space and the management of dissent through a personal account of, and reflection on, my participation in an LGBT mega-event: Sao Paulo Pride 2017.

The reasons for undertaking this reflection are two-fold: 1) to challenge myself by interrogating my own activist and serious leisure (Stebbins 2007) practice; 2) to provoke a critical conversation about the spaces and places of mega-events as platforms for LGBT/SOGI human rights activism. By presenting a reflection on my own flow through the event, and how the event flowed through me, I place myself in the position of vulnerable researcher (Winkler, 2017) as well as reflective practitioner engaged in a process of *reflection-in-action* (Schön, 1983). As Dietering et al (2016) argue, 'autoethnography ... pushes the researcher to connect their experience to something broader, to draw in theory, culture and social factors, to make deeper meaning' (p.26). It is the combination of this methodological approach with CES that allows for a construal of event as a contested space of disruption (Spracklen & Lamond 2016). As a reflection on how the event impacted my own practice, it has challenged me to ask different kinds of questions (Simpson & Archer, 2017) about how I engage with my activism, whilst being open to 'surprise, puzzlement or confusion in a situation (I encountered as) ...uncertain or unique' (Schön 1983, p. 68). Such an approach is qualitative, and is more in keeping with confronting the practice of LGBT/SOGI human rights campaigning from a personally reflexive position as an activist, rather than endeavouring to secure some perspective on a universal truth. In this way, I adopt a similar stylistic approach to that of Reger (2015) in her presentation of participant observation at a Slut Walk in 2011.

I begin with outlining one perspective on CES and proceed to address the current context around LGBT/SOGI human rights in Brazil. This leads into a description and reflection of my participation in Sao Paulo Pride 2017. I conclude by drawing on some central observations and discuss the commercialisation, commodification and routinisation of this place and space of dissent.

What is Critical Event Studies (CES)?

As an approach, CES has emerged over the last few years from a confluence of influences. There is, therefore, reasonable grounds for establishing the influences that are at work within any individual researcher's CES orientation and how they apply to a particular research topic. The diversity and polyphony of voices within CES is one of its strengths, because CES does not seek to establish a definitive or universal interpretation of an event, or to establish what the event is all about. If one recognizes

that all 'events' are contested, multiple, layered, and complex relations of other, for want of a better term, 'sub-events'¹, then an openness to an intrinsic polyphony to approaching the study of events is more honest than one that is mono-vocal.

My approach to CES derives, at one level, from a shifting relationship between a philosophical conceptualisation of *event* that owes much to Slavoj Žižek (2014) and Alain Badiou (2013). My angle on what it means to be critical leans heavily on some of the work of Foucault (2002) and Habermas (2004), and the theories of socially constructed space influenced by Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (2000). This is accompanied with a political orientation that is indebted to the ideas of Hegemony from Gramsci (1971) as well as cultural political economy in the work of Jessop (2004). In *Event: Philosophy in Transit* (Žižek 2014) and more recent work, such as *Disparities* (2016), Žižek adopts a construal of *event* as rupture. In this he echoes an analogous position of Badiou (see, for example Badiou 2007 and 2003); but where Žižek sees rupture as the exposure of the Real, in the Lacanian sense of a confrontation with the inexpressible (Lacan 1968), Badiou suggests that the *event* can bring to light that which has lain hidden. As such carrying the potential for opening-up new possibilities (Ostwald, 2014). With that said, it cannot be assumed the *event* will be phenomenologically encountered in the same way by everyone.

For some, the rupture will be felt so intensely it goes beyond any possible articulation in language. For others, there will be no *event* at all, as the apparent 'rupture' will be so absorbed into the discursive routines of their lives as to become blindly followed rituals (or, as Bourdieu (1994) might phrase it – the active expression of their habitus), practiced and performed as frequent and unvarying patterns of interaction and communication. In this way, reproducing patterns of dominance, domination, and symbolic capital. It is not that events produce rupture, but that the phenomenological immanence of *event* is that of a rupture that can disclose. This raises some associated questions – primarily, what is ruptured and what is brought to light (disclosed)? Lamond (2016) argues that it is discourses of power and regimes of truth (Foucault, 2011) that are ruptured (see also, Spracklen & Lamond, 2016), thus revealing the hegemonic imaginaries of both temporal, spatial and socio-political relationships of

¹ Though, as a note of caution, one should not construe "sub-event" atomistically.

identity, and Othering the dominant within the cultural political economy (Jessop, 2004) in which the event occurs. In so doing, it can bring to light possibilities for change and produce a space where truth can be spoken to power, and power can be confronted (Lamond & Reid 2017).

It is for these reasons that *event* needs to be construed as multiple, layered and encountered phenomenologically; and that all *events* are, through multiplicity, essentially contested. Whilst criticality, within such a conceptualisation, emerges from an urge to address issues of oppression and domination, adding an explicitly emancipatory trajectory into event studies, this has been characterised as simply placing a veneer of critical theory over existing approaches in the field (Tribe, 2008). Such 'critical' approaches have been in evidence for some time in the fascinating and insightful work done by sociologists of leisure and events such as Maurice Roche (2000 and 2017), Chris Rojek (2013) and others (e.g. Stebbins, 2007). Where CES can go beyond this is through a recognition that research itself is an event, placing the researcher in a contested and often uncomfortable position, which sits in a potentially rich and challenging discursive space that cuts across the palimpsest of socially constructed space (Huysen, 200; Soja, 2000). It locates the researcher somewhere between the insider and the outsider (Mosse, 2006), the actor and the spectator (Hart, 2006). In this case, the academic and the activist.

From the perspective of mainstream event studies theory, Pride can be deceptively difficult to capture. This is due to the substantial difference between how Pride becomes articulated within the context in which it occurs. Unlike sports mega-events or World Expos, Pride is not coordinated through a globalized organisational superstructure. This does not mean that Pride events are completely unconnected. Organisers learn from each other as planners visit different Pride events within and between nations and across continents to observe iterations of Pride. As planned events, there is a strong family resemblance (Wittgenstein, 2004) that binds clusters of Prides together. These clusters frequently form parts of larger clusters. Consequently, Pride slips between several standard event types (Getz, 2011) with its regional variations ranging from local, through regional and hallmark to, as in the case of Sao Paulo Pride, something that has many of the trappings of a Mega-Event (Getz, 2008).

The combination of CES with a reflexive autoethnography opens up fresh possibilities for academic engagement with the event. As a methodology, it can facilitate questions around the performativity of dissent whilst articulating personal experience around the construction of spatial meaning, and within a terrain that remains a significant human rights issue. The levels of contestation, bridging personal manifestations of activism and between local victories and global battlegrounds, is something that standard models within event studies struggle to address.

Context of LGBT/SOGI Human Rights in Brazil

Within the context of South America, Brazil has a long history of supporting LGBT/SOGI human rights. However, progressive legislation has been impeded by federal state membership, with each of the member-states having its own government with legislative responsibility. In 1989, Sergipe and Mato Grosso were the first states in Brazil to declare that all forms of discrimination, on the grounds of sexual orientation, were illegal (Vianna & Carrara, 2010). Six years later, Congresswoman Marta Suplicy proposed a federal Bill in support of same-sex relationships. The Bill recommended that such relationships should be recognised through the legislative legitimisation of civil same-sex partnerships. In 2003, Brazil was the first member of the UN to propose a resolution to the Commission on Human Rights for the recognition of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) as a basic human right (Baisley, 2016). At the time only 26 other member states supported the resolution, which was finally passed in 2011.

On the 14th May 2013, the National Council of Brazil voted overwhelmingly to legalise same-sex marriage. It was the second country in South America to do so (Encarnacion, 2014). The ruling compelled all civil registrars to perform same-sex marriages and to convert existing civil partnerships to marriages, if both parties to the partnership consented (Mountain, 2014). To date, Brazil remains one of only four wholly South American nations where same-sex marriage has been legalised. The others are Argentina, Colombia and Uruguay. It is noteworthy that most of this

legislative change was brought about through support by the Workers Party (PT) either whilst in government or in coalition with the PSDB² (Encarnacion, 2011).

Acts of mass protest and political activism are in the roots of what originally constituted Pride. On the 28th June 1969, police raided the Stonewall Inn, a well-known 'gay bar' on Christopher Street, Greenwich Village, New York. The resulting 'disturbances', better known as the 'Stonewall Riots', led to several marches for LGBT rights, and demonstrations of solidarity, around the US (Carter, 2004). On the 2nd November 1969 Craig Rodwell, and others of the Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations (ERCHO), passed a resolution for a commemoration '...annually on the last Saturday in June in New York City to (mark) the 1969 spontaneous demonstrations on Christopher Street and this demonstration be called the Christopher Street Liberation Day' (Kohler, 2015). The popularization of the term 'Pride' to refer to similar and sympathetic demonstrations, often associated with a more extended period that incorporates a wider programme of events, is credited to Brenda Howard. Pride, and the attached 'parade', as a week-long celebration, seems to have marked the beginning of an evolution. In many neo-liberal democracies, Pride has moved from its roots in political activism to one that frames it more as a celebration of otherness.

Sao Paulo Pride began as a small-scale demonstration, involving around 2,000 people, seeking greater legal and political recognition for the LGBT community in Brazil. It has grown to become one of the largest events of its kind in the world. The website of *Logo TV* describing Sao Paulo Pride as the '...space for LGBT South Americans to gather and celebrate together' (Gohl, 2017; online). Unlike Pride in other more established democracies, the event has become a manifestation for a global region rather than that of a single city. However, despite the millions that undertook the procession along the Avenida Paulista on the 18th June 2017, there is a lack of wider acceptance of the LGBT community in Brazil. The country is witnessing a rise in power of the religious Right (Leahy, 2016; Watts, 2016), which appears to be exploiting the country's current political turmoil to challenge the LGBT/SOGI community's hard-

² PSDB is the acronym by which the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira) is known.

won human rights. As Encarnacion (2011) highlights there is ‘...an emerging religious right (in Brazil) anchored in a thriving evangelical-fundamentalist movement espouses a virulent anti-gay agenda’ (p. 116). The growth of an evangelical group in congress has already led to a growing censorship around LGBT/SOGI education. Mountain (2014) points to members of congress blocking the distribution of Ministry funded anti-homophobic materials to schools and then ‘...in 2013, a cartoon style book on sexual health and anti-homophobia measures for schools was also cancelled ... on the grounds that it would “incite people to become homosexuals.”’ (p.14-15)

Associated with this, in recent years Brazil has been beset with political scandal. Politicians, mainly, though not exclusively, on the political left, have become embroiled in allegations of corruption and bribery. The relationships between certain high ranking political figures and the partially state-owned oil multinational Petrobras have been under particularly intense scrutiny (Leite, 2016). Two recent presidents of Brazil, Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, have felt the impact of such allegations of corruption. Dilma Rousseff was forced to resign her post. Her successor, Michel Temer is also under investigation by Operação Lava Jato (Operation Car Wash). The resulting distrust of the political establishment has keyed into the growth of a vocal right-wing populism (Torre & Martín, 2016), bolstered by an Evangelical Christian Right that promotes and sustains a heterosexist position at grass roots and parliamentary levels (Encarnacion, 2011; Ogland and Verona, 2014).

Brazil remains a predominantly Catholic nation, but in recent history it has displayed a form of Catholicism with distinct connections to the political left in the country. When the journalist Vladimir Herzog died in 1975, whilst being tortured by members of the military dictatorship, it was the Archbishop of Sao Paulo that defied the military junta and organised a service for him (Gill, 1998). Despite suspected collusion in the early years of military rule, the Catholic church emerged as a defender of human rights and stood in solidarity with the resistance to the dictatorship (Hewitt, 1990; Roberts, 2015). Strickler (2017) and Green (2013) argue that it was the parties of the left that were to lead on governmental reforms that promoted Brazil’s legislative support of LGBT/SOGI human rights. The recent rise of an evangelical Christian Right has fed on this growing distrust of the established parties of the Left, with some quarters calling for a return to military rule (Fortes 2016). Franca (2017) and Rapoza (2017) suggesting that the

separation of church and state, enshrined in the country's constitution, is under threat by an increasing number of politicians that stand on a platform that opposes LGBT/SOGI human rights advances made by the Left since the end of military rule. There is a very real risk that the elections of 2018 will return a government, and a President, that will be less inclined to be supportive of the LGBT/SOGI community.

Participating in Sao Paulo Pride 2017

Over the years I have attended several Pride events, mostly, though not exclusively, in the UK. I have carried banners, blown whistles, danced in the street and walked with other members of the LGBT community in sunshine, rain showers and much worse. None of this prepared me for Sao Paulo's 'Pride Parade'. Since my teens, which are quite some time ago, I have, to varying extents, been involved in some form of campaigning around LGBT issues. Despite this, I still struggle with articulating my sexuality to others. In part, this is due to a personal distrust of traditional stereotypes and misconceptions assigned to bisexuality, but there is also the tension I feel within myself – I am a person with a complex and fluid sexual orientation and I am in a loving heterosexual relationship.

On June 18th 2017, I became one of over 3 million people that participated in Sao Paulo Pride, along the Avenida Paulista. In 2006, the parade was credited by *Guinness World Records* as being the world's largest, with an estimated 4 million participating in the event's tenth anniversary (Folha de S.Paulo, 2007). However, given the transient nature of participation associated with such an event, official figures have not been given since. Despite that, organisers claim that the 2006 figure has been exceeded significantly in subsequent years.

<<Insert Figure 1>>

[Figure 1: Sao Paulo Pride parade 2017³]

I arrived at Avenida Paulista around 11:00 a.m.. Although a little behind schedule, I arrived in time to see the parade set up. The street was busy, but not full, floats were being prepared, buildings were being thematised, and street furniture decorated.

³ All photographs are my own, and taken on the day of the 2017 Sao Paulo Pride parade.

People sauntered along the road, looking for good places to stand, or to link up with others with whom they would be parading.

Avenida Paulista is a long, wide, straight road, and forms the heart of the financial district of Sao Paulo. It is home to the head offices of many national and international corporations, alongside numerous high-end shops and shopping malls. The road stretches for around 3km, with a small park at either end (Praça Marechal Cardeiro de Farias to the North West and the Praça Oswaldo Cruz to the South East). Partly because of its economic significance, the Avenida is the main location for protest and dissent in the city.

Since its construction in 1968, the Museu de Arte de Sao Paulo (MASP) has been the principle meeting point for those who wish to demonstrate. As I walked by the Museu, I saw a large number of groups registering at a series of small gazebo-like structures in the open space beneath its first floor. From there I doubled back to a near-by corner, calling in at *Starbucks* to buy a themed Rainbow Frappuccino. The cold drink was welcome, and small groups of people, destined for the parade, were also enjoying them. A number of people were glammed up in amazing outfits, dazzling face paint, or rainbow unicorn head-gear. On leaving I headed back towards the Brigadeiro Metro where there were numerous floats with groups of people getting them ready.

Along the Avenida Paulista many groups began to form. There were several drag acts and 'pretty boy dancers' (Coven, 2006) from the city's LGBT clubs and bars; a few people from the trans community in torn fishnets, corsets and thongs having a highly provocative dance-off, before a cheering crowd. I passed by people wearing rainbow flags, leis, body-paint, jackets, bikini tops, bandanas, face paint, and much more. I had accessorised with rainbow braces and bow-tie. By the time I got back to the Museu much of the initial parade set-up had been put in place; though the open area beneath the MASP building was still busy, the queues were much smaller. Along the road people were giving out *Burger King* Crowns with a rainbow motif, and dozens of people were gathering round several vans, hidden by *PepsiCo* boxes, collecting large rainbow themed bags of *Doritos*.

<<Insert Figure 2>>

[Figure 2: Boxes of Rainbow themed Doritos prior to distribution to the parade crowd.]

The chips inside were one of four colours, and the bag's front bore a seven-colour-banded rainbow. Men and women in white T-Shirts emblazoned with the tag: *There's nothing BOLDER than being yourself*, proceeded to distribute the *Doritos* to anyone with a free hand.

I met up with Esther outside *Bobs Hamburger Restaurant*. She is a friend and colleague, from UNIFESP (the Federal University of Sao Paulo), who is interested in the study of protest and social movements. Together we proceeded further up the Avenida, to the point where it divides and some of the carriageways begin to sink beneath street level. This was where the front of the parade was located.

I felt drawn to the enormous rainbow flag being held aloft by the crowd beneath it. I joined them and paraded like this for a little way, chanting: "*Nenhuma religião é lei!*" (No religion is law), and occasionally "*Juntos para um estado laico.*" (Together for a lay [secular] state.) Since its inception, every year, Sao Paulo Pride has had a theme, this year it was: *Regardless of our beliefs, no religion is law! Together for a secular state!* The theme was presented in a very low-key fashion. There were a few signs above the driver's cabin on several floats and some street advertising panels that would normally carry corporate material displayed the banner, but it was very understated. Several people I asked claimed to be unaware of the theme.

By the time I left the group under the flag the crowd had intensified enormously. We struggled to push our way to the sides and along the Avenida. We had not moved far; the sheer number of people is hard to imagine and we were trying to move counter to the flow of the crowd. Once the floats had moved along, everyone on the street moved to fill the space they had vacated. The crowd progressed slowly and was very tightly packed together, to a point that felt, at times, scary and dangerous. We waited until the parade passed by. Then we stood on the corner of the Avenida and Rua Pamplona and watched, fascinated, as the city's clean-up operation began.

<<Insert Figure 3>>

[Figure 3: Post-parade clean-up]

First there were row upon row of people, all in the same uniform, walking. Some gathering up the street decoration and parade signage while others collected larger litter items with long arm litter-pickers. This was followed by lines of others, working with brushes, followed by mechanical road sweepers. There were further rows of litter-pickers, further lines of brushers and sweepers. Finally came crews with hoses and a convoy of slow moving motorised water tanks, together with more heavy-duty road sweepers. Within 20 minutes of the crowd dispersing the street was completely cleared. The clean up did not appear to be an *ad hoc* operation, but one that followed a strict, regimented and familiar plan, working with a precision that suggested experience and rehearsal. The Avenida Paulista has a long history as a space for protest and events of dissent. The process through which a demonstration in such a space is arranged with the authorities has been somewhat informalised. The arrangements for road closures, the police, and the clean up is all handled by the regional government and, it would seem, delivered as efficiently as any well managed, staged theatrical production.

To participate in the Sao Paulo Pride parade was an amazing experience and one that will undoubtedly remain with me. However, it is also one that I found challenging in terms of how I displayed and articulated my own LGBT/SOGI human rights activism. The systematic commodified inscription of Pride along the Avenida, and how its erasure was undertaken in such a routine manner, provoked me to reflect on such mega-events of dissent and my participation in them. It raised concerns centring on the connection between such large-scale manifestations of otherness and the discourse of SOGI human rights activism that formed its origination. I became troubled by how the colonisation of Pride discourse had limited the sense I had of how my own LGBT/human rights activism could be expressed within such a place, space and time.

Reflection: The Commodification and Erasure of Dissent

In reflecting on my experience of Sao Paulo Pride, as an element of my serious leisure (Spracklen, 2009) practices in LGBT/SOGI activism, I bring together two associated aspects of the event; the commercial colonisation (through commodification) of space, and the literal and symbolic cleansing of the accoutrement of dissent through the

routinized management of the Avenida. First, I consider how the corporate commodification of otherness, through the place of branding and the branding of place, subverted an engagement in activism, in any substantive form. Second, the routinization of the management of the spaces of dissent, through its literal and symbolic cleansing, is discussed in terms of how it reinforces this commodification. It is the confluence of these aspects, which effectively ignored the larger concerns surrounding the current situation of LGBT/SOGI human rights in Brazil, that transformed this instance of an event of dissent into a form of casual or project-based leisure (Stebbins 2003).

On the day, my attention was first drawn to the dominance of brands associated with the event; this is not unique to Sao Paulo, it is a trope common to Pride events in many emerging and developed democracies. However, the rapidity with which the Avenida was dressed for the occasion took me aback. The corporate colonisation of the space by *PepsiCo*, its partners, and others was striking. Between the time of my arrival and the beginning of the procession (3 hours), the Avenida was transformed into a seemingly LGBT paradise. Large, high-sided, trucks with banners, pumped hard-core bass beats; topped with drag queens, 'pretty boy dancers', and other 'glammed up' members of the city's bar/club staff promoted LGBT, or self-declared 'LGBT friendly'. One did not need to look far before one encountered a branded part of the parade.

Community groups, unions, student bodies, and a group that looked like they were part of an anti-globalised capitalism Black Bloc group, in a mix of day wear, party dress, and black ski masks (A sort of pink black bloc), were there. This latter group was one of the few that carried a relatively large political banner that declared "We are NOT pink money".

<<Insert Figure 4>>

[Figure 4: Banner carried by the 'Pink Black Bloc'.]

Additionally, there were a few individuals waving flags and banners, but most parading participants were dressed to party, or accessorised with some Pride- themed, branded, merchandising. Only a few individuals and small groups carried anything that overtly addressed an LGBT/SOGI human rights issue. However, their presence in the

parade was marginal. Branding and the artefacts of branding dominated the Avenida, either directly or indirectly. The inscription of space was thorough and utter. If I had not seen this transformation take place so suddenly, it might have felt like a genuine outpouring of support. Instead the impression was one of superficiality and tokenism. The disruptive discourse of the 'other' was colonised to become an extension of a brand. Symptomatic of this, as the parade progressed, some members of the 'pink black bloc' group could be seen wearing the Rainbow *Burger King* crowns and lifting their ski masks to indulge in eating the multi-coloured *Doritos*, that *PepsiCo* had distributed. This is most certainly not a criticism of the bloc's commitment to anti-globalised capitalism, or of those individual members of the group. I also indulged in these 'freebies'. It is, however, an observation on how the articulation of a political position, in a space that has been so extensively colonised by commercial imaginaries, becomes consumed by that colonisation. This is to an extent that expressions of dissent struggle to survive. Interactions become circumscribed by the pervasive discourse of the commodified time and space of the event.

Whilst the spectacle of the parade suggested a place of brands, concomitant materialities associated with the branding of place were also apparent. These seek to connect an imaginary of Sao Paulo, as a tourist destination, with the LGBT/SOGI community. A recent report by Sao Paulo Turismo promoted the "GBLT Parade and Gay Week" as one of the city's "Main Cultural Events" (spturis.com, ND). This further echoes the commercial commodification of othering. The inscription of activism as part of the city's cultural offerings orientates it in a way that diverges from Pride's articulation as an event of dissent. This state appropriation of difference is through a monetised colonisation of it. The LGBT/SOGI community is construed as little more than a source of 'Rainbow Real'. It is a move towards the community's capacity to consume and a move away from any demand Pride may have to protect hard won freedoms, and human rights. Within a dominant cultural political economy of neo-liberalism, commercial bodies naturally reinforce this imaginary of place, thereby naturalising it. Authorities sustain the framing of Sao Paulo as a destination for LGBT leisure visitors. One recent campaign targeting the LGBT community highlighted the significance of such DINK (Dual Income, No Kids) couples as a key market for destinations in Brazil (ABTLGBT, 2017). Such regional and national branding of Pride events is an overt attempt to draw upon the symbolic and cultural capital and the

mobilities of the visiting community as an economic driver. Whilst this is commonplace with Pride events in other, more established, democracies, the contrast between this narrative of place and LGBT/SOGI rights is politically contested. Homophobia by members of the Evangelical Christian Right in Brazil's parliament at state (and regional) level, and the recognition that the country is one of the LGBT murder capitals of the world (Corrales, 2015), contrast starkly with the country's tourist authorities desire to promote LGBT lifestyle.

The rapidity with which the street was dressed and undressed for the parade, with venues undergoing a process of expedited conversion into 'LGBT Friendly' spaces, the highly choreographed distribution of the corporate sponsors merchandising, and the swift clean up following the tail of the procession, all suggest the Parade was less a form of disruption and more a matter of leisure transformed into routine. Demonstration as the procession of a mass bodily occupation of space (Della Porta, 2004) and, as is the case of the LGBT community, as an embodied declaration of reclaiming heteronormatively colonised space, seems to have been side-stepped. The routinization of the event served to undermine its political message. It becomes an example of the managed chaos of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 2009 [1941]) where disorder is tolerated only because it can be contained and easily erased. The striations of the space (to borrow from Deleuze, 2015), set out by an ontology contesting its more common heteronormative manifestation, articulated through a display of protest, being quickly smoothed over, to return the space to its prior arrangement of containment. The exposure of those discourses of otherness articulated by the event speedily removed from the space, facilitating its return to those forms of commercially-orientated, managed, restraint that it had formerly presented.

Avenida Paulista is, a space with a heritage of dissent. It is also a managed space for the articulation of protest. The 3km stretch of road functions heterotopically (Foucault, 1986) through routines set in place by the city authorities - inscribed, erased and re-inscribed with speed and efficacy. As participants, we are subdued by the imaginaries of place set by the place of branding and the branding of place. Our interactions become articulated in a way that maintains and reproduces the narrative of marketised

celebration as a surrogate for active dissent. Our personal manifestations of otherness become subsumed into the routines of our colonised participation.

Conclusion

Given the current political and religious context in Brazil, and the potential threat it poses to human rights and freedoms of the LGBT/SOGI community, it seems imperative that Pride in Brazil re-engages with its political past. This is needed to re-assert Pride's roots in political protest, contestation and fights for freedoms and liberations. It is important that Pride address the challenges of articulating human rights that come from the dominant imaginary of space and place that are associated with highly marketised and corporately colonised event. In such contexts, the manifestation of Pride has become a commercially commodified, and thereby nullified, event of dissent. At present, the disruptions that might mark Sao Paulo Pride as a domain within which the actuality of the hate crime and violence is confronted by the imaginary of rights are missing. The disruptions are mollified by Pride's entanglement with the commodification of othering through the process of commercial dressing and routinized cleansing. Significantly, from an autoethnographic perspective, the commodified containment of the event of dissent went beyond the dressing and management of the place and space. It also framed the individual participant's capacity to articulate their activism around LGBT/SOGI human rights and mostly prevented them from easily demonstrating a position of dissenting 'otherness'.

By drawing together reflexive/narrative autoethnographic approach and a theoretical orientation that derives from CES, it has meant that I have confronted myself as well as the 'event' in understanding the challenges faced in the articulation of human rights at a mega-event of dissent. To campaign on LGBT/SOGI issues is never simply about securing legislative change. It must be about changing social attitude: hearts and minds. Whilst some of that is a laudable trajectory within the celebratory part of Pride, my experience and reflection of Sao Paulo Pride has led to the realisation that there is an urgent need for LGBT/SOGI human rights activists to engage with the colonisation and routinisation of protest and dissent. It is important that we are mindful of the factors colonising places and spaces of dissent, and seek to confront the re-articulation of the politics of human rights as one that is overtly or covertly in line with neo-liberalist econo-centricism. This is especially important in contexts where hate

crime is on the rise and a populist Evangelical Christian Right are close to revoking, or significantly reducing, hard won freedoms. A central task must be to challenge the routines that have reoriented discourses of dissent. There is a need to reclaim place and space as one that is contested. It is important that Pride events engage with the patterns and practices that treat public places and spaces as commercial opportunity to commodify protest through routine. These emerging processes require new forms of Gay Pride disruption.

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