

TOURISM AND REFUNCTIONALIZATION

A Study on Narcotour in Medellín (Colombia)

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In Colombia, mainly in the city of Medellín, travel agencies and tour guides promote a tourist route called narcotour which includes a visit to the properties and grave of Pablo Escobar, a famous Colombian drug trafficker who died in the 90s. As this is a controversial tour that makes reference to such a complex figure in the history and memory of the Colombian people and to a period of high violence in Colombia, the present research aimed to investigate if and how the realization of narcotour comes inducing a process of re-functionalization of the objects inserted in the tour making them suitable for tourist consumption. The methodology was based on bibliographic research and structured observation of objects in loco. The results show that tourism was not an important vector for the re-functionalization of all objects appropriated by the tour, despite giving them a new value and a new meaning, it was not able to officially choose these spaces as cultural and historical heritage of the city of Medellín. The official tourism policy of the city and the country against the tourist valuation of Pablo Escobar's memory promotes a series of actions in an attempt to make invisible or even to destroy the attractions of narcotour in an attempt to erase a period in the history of the which the country is not proud of. In this way, the study on narcotour reveals profound socio-spatial contradictions in the production of Medellín's urban space.

KEY WORDS: *tourism, re-functionalization, narcotour, Medellín.*