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How Can a Crab Promote Tourism in Northeastern Brazil?

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Title: How Can a Crab Promote Tourism in Northeastern Brazil?

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Session Type: Presentation

The present proposal deals with the contemporary trend to create a heritage label based on human-animal interactions to attract tourists. This process will be demonstrated in this analysis of a case where the non-human animals are used to promote tourism. The presentation will discuss the relationship between local heritage, crab, and tourism activity in northeastern Brazil. The research is based on ethnographic fieldwork done over 13 months from 2011 to 2014.

The uça (*Ucides cordatus cordatus*) crab fishing in the Parnaíba River Delta perfectly illustrates the overlap between the different dimensions of heritagization in touristic markets. In northeastern Brazil, the role of the crab and crab fisherman has changed owing to the increasing touristic market. In the past, there has been a certain prejudice towards the figure of the crab fisherman. Presently this prejudice is currently being reassessed, given the increased revenue that the crab brings in and its important role in the touristic image of the region. In the last decade, the Parnaíba River Delta Crab Festival has played an important role in local heritage tourism promotion, attracting many tourists since its first appearance in 2006.

This phenomenon leads us to reflect on the relationship between the local heritage, non-human-animals, and their appropriation and interaction with the tourism industry. The collective image of the crab has been redefined as a locally commoditised heritage. In parallel, the crab and the crab fishermen have gone from having subsistence roles in local consumption to being emblems of heritage identity. The tourism phenomenon has facilitated this conversion, revaluing the practice of this activity and mitigating the prejudice experienced by crab and crab fishermen in the past.

Finally, the presentation will focus on the commodification of non-human animals as an example of the contemporary tendency to heritagize identity emblems to attract tourists.