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the London 2012 Handover to Rio (2016)

RODANTHI TZANELLI

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# Embodied Art and Aesthetic Performativity in the London 2012 Handover to Rio (2016)

Rodanthi Tzanelli, University of Leeds, UK

**Abstract:** I discuss the staged performances in the London 2012 handover to Rio de Janeiro as marketable revisions of *Brazil's colonial history that lead to the artistic display of ideal types and ethnic characters for global audiences. Rio 2016's project was placed in the hands of privileged urban natives (artistic directors) but based upon the aesthetic of socio-cultural marginality (black 'racial types', samba dancers, capoeira and Candomblé performers, 'bad men'). Communicating metropolitan Brazil's attachment to European artistic narratives, the ceremony enmeshed all these types and styles into Rio's self-presentation as a tourist 'topos' that was born out of past global mobilities of humans, customs and labor.*

**Keywords:** Audio-visual Performativity, Enlightenment, Olympic Ceremonies

## Introduction

The article's focus on embodied performances staged for the forthcoming Olympiad in Rio de Janeiro (2016) in the context of London 2012 hides a greater problématique concerning the rise of conflicting or heterogeneous globalizations. More specifically, it is concerned with permutations of local socio-cultures in transnational spheres in which political bordering is constantly challenged by scapal movement (Appadurai, 1990; Appadurai, 1996). Others have favored instead the term "glocalization" (i.e. Robertson, 1992) or the ways the local survives in the global, even if this survival presupposes some sort of hybridization, as it is usually the case (on which see Nederveen Pieterse, 2006). Not only is Rio de Janeiro a regional cultural center and a 'global financial articulation' (Sassen, 2001; Sassen, 2002), it is also in this particular instance the artistic articulator of other regional cultures. My conception of articulation (as art-culture but also as mechanical connectivity) is not dismissing Herder's idea of a body politic in which various parts or *méli* (literally parts but also "members" as participants) communicate, but cautions against accepting this metaphor as anything other than a fabricated political reality (Tzanelli, 2013b: chs 1 & 6).

My discussion of socio-cultures places society and culture on a dialogical schema. As Herzfeld has explained, "the shift from a social to a cultural idiom . . . is largely the outcome of the emergence of European nationalism" (Herzfeld, 1992: 68). Whereas in postcolonial contexts, in which nationalism is an imported European trend, tourism retains the undeniable aspects of exploitation, the outcome of the cultural encounters that accompany it may extend beyond the economic rationale of the cultural industries. Tourist contacts can be about labor exploitation, bilateral communications, romance or all these things together, as the rich literature on tourist encounters has shown. More importantly however, the introduction of technological mobilities itself has changed travel practices and their artistic extensions. "The less literally face-to-face the society we inhabit, the more obviously cultural idioms become simulacra of social relations" (Herzfeld, 1997: 6; Herzfeld, 2005). This phenomenon is especially prominent during cultural encounters in artistic contexts. Cities that function today as artistic articulators are often themselves caught in a network of global aesthetic imperatives, and they have to fight for a worthy place in global politics through a display of local and national self-presentations that make sense to multicultural and multinational audiences. Such international networks can both act as a heavy toll and a liberating force for national and regional cultures: by analogy to International Travelling Exhibitions (ITEs) that facilitate transnational museum networking (Lai, 2004: 91), Olympic mega-events generate "libraries" of globally intelligible representations (Roche, 1996). Unlike

museum collections which are highly invested in symbolic meanings tied to place, such artistic representations of regional culture can more easily transform into “traveller objects” (Lury, 1997: 78) that retain some degree of authenticity tied to their original dwelling when they cross contexts and boundaries.

Unless we accept that art and artistic performance emerge in a socio-political vacuum, we cannot avoid addressing the background in which they are born. At the same time, unless we wish to subject artistic analysis to some sort of realist political surgery, we cannot have recourse to endless debating of the socio-political contexts from which traveler objects escape in global milieus. There is a fine line to tread in such scholarly acrobatics, especially if the sole focus is an eight-minute segment (the handover ceremony to Rio 2016 Olympic organizers) of a much larger ceremonial whole (the closing ceremony of London 2012 Olympics). First, this article investigates whether in Rio’s case and in the context of the upcoming Olympics, we need to prioritize phenomena of conflict or realities of global synergy – always implying that such ‘synergies’ come at a price with which individual artists should not be charged. Ceremony and pageantry is staged against a background, and Brazil is a postcolonial example of socio-cultural organization and multicultural discourse, so one could easily invoke the post-structuralist metaphor of the “specter” (Derrida, 1998). But the metaphor of specter or phantom is overused by academics fond of Derrida’s post-Marxist analysis. In Rio’s case, there is a specter in so far as the city is a cultural melting pot in its own right, where class segregation and racial inequalities spatially define one’s place: in the tourist areas, the favelas and the inner city zones. But one must be careful when examining the gateways that disenfranchised cultures identify – a job not always done well by postcolonial theorists that focus on remote pasts and neglect domestic legacies.

Thus, Brazil can be easily discussed in the context of old colonizations that indisputably facilitated travel mobilities from the colonial center (Europe) to Brazilian peripheries for artistic, administrative and trade purposes. Indeed, tourism theory often focuses on these links between middle-class, white Western travel and the histories of slavery in the broader Atlantic region – especially with reference to Caribbean cultures (Pattullo, 1996; Sheller, 2000 & 2003). But even if one chooses to consider more recent changes in Western tourist profiles this is only one of the many options. Note for example that Rio’s phantom is also Brazil’s haunting by an authoritarian heritage. It could be argued that Brazilian developmental prerogatives work as an obstacle in the production of a coherent artistic self-narration. But this alleged weakness became the Olympic handover’s strongest point, because it allowed for the creation of a dialogical utopia on stage. In this utopia clashes of folk and subaltern with the high cultures inspired by the country’s European past were resolved for the global tourist gaze in ways that are impossible in realist contexts. Perhaps Spivak’s (1999) take on the power of “strategic essentialism”, or Bhabha’s (1994) consideration of the potency of “colonial mimicry” to both empower and disempower the performer are useful theoretical tools. But at the same time we must bear in mind that in Rio’s case we deal with at least two distinctive groups of artistic interlocutors: stage directors and native performers.

In the following I proffer some reflections on the ways Olympic ceremony and performance tie to political and economic contexts without nevertheless being completely and uncritically enmeshed in or subjected to them. The following section briefly considers Brazil’s political and economic background and provides glimpses into the ways it affects Brazilian artwork. The discussion is carried through to the third section, which focuses exclusively on the ways in which Brazilian Olympic art enacts utopian visions of humanity that eventually articulate culturally specific ideas and cosmologies. The fourth section is dedicated to an analysis of the 8-minute handover to Rio de Janeiro during London 2012 and implements the theoretical argument of the previous sections.

## Globalization, Politics and Art in Brazil

Therborn (1995) and Nederveen Pieterse (2009) provide useful starting points here with their argument that variations in modern societies are the product of different paths “in and through modernity” or “multiple modernities”. The country’s much-debated political transition from a 25-year military dictatorship (1964-1989) to a neoliberal democracy impacted on regional policies – and by turn these policies affected artistic self-presentations. In a federalized Brazil uneven transitions to democracy harbored a fragmented governance model in which administrative maladjustment and the overall ill-defined functional boundaries between branches of the state became sources of infinite conflict, prompting bureaucrats to strengthen their ties with external “allies” and “clients”. As a result, regional policies favored disorganized capitalism, allowing for continuities between (liberal) ideological discourse and crypto-authoritarian practice, as well as a “deficit in citizenship” (Nervo Cordato, 2006). At the same time the onset of industrialization and increased urbanization transposed in big cities old citizenship struggles originating in the age of slavery (Krishna and Nederveen Pieterse, 2009). The strong tradition of Brazilian social movements was inextricably associated with the designated cradle of *Brasilidade* (Brazilianess) in the Northeast – a region considered both ‘underdeveloped’ and multi-cultural within the nation-state. The same activist tradition was also however connected to Rio’s emerging favelas and the samba art styles. The region’s historic connection to the Church fostered a philanthropic ethic that placed emphasis on the protection of vulnerable groups, sustainable development of international networks, human rights and the environment (Barreira, 2011, p. 153) and was geared towards ideological alliances between Christianity and activist Marxism (Garrison, 1996, p. 250). But the imported Cartesian cogito of European Christianity did not sit well with the native unity of mind and body that defined especially Afro-Brazilian ontologies. Because “being in the world” connects to knowledge pathways (epistemologies), from the outset Brazilian self-presentations split between a (racialized) urgency to “polish” and “whitewash” civil surfaces and the need to acknowledge the country’s ethno-cultural polyvocality and cultural-ontological unity in its own right (Tzanelli, 2013a: ch. 4).

In the Olympic context all these aspects of Brazilian heritage overlapped with a new imported idea of legacy. In line with strategic oscillations between ethno-racial and civic understandings of citizenship, “legacy” and “heritage” guide identity battles in the new digital-technological era. Heritage refers to intergenerational transmission of custom. Legacy refers to legal pacts formalized in Rio’s case in an international Olympic contract (Tzanelli, 2013a & 2013b). Olympic legacies turn into national heritage after the Olympic Games: constructed public venues and festival activities that were part of formalized deals between the host city’s Organizing Committee and corporate sponsors and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) enter memory domains as the host country’s very own history and contribution to the world. But what happens in the time and spaces in-between? And how does any country accommodate such events into its own memory domains as heritage? In Rio’s case the co-existence of a distant colonial event (slavery, European subjection) with a more recent national trauma (dictatorship) might be partaking in the production of the country’s new contested hybridities and travelling cultural commodities. These pasts and their adjacent customs clash with these new travelling hybridities that are not always rooted in historical traumas – or, when they are, such traumas are ameliorated to some extent for the “tourist gaze” (Urry and Larsen, 2011). For these reasons I suggest that such coexisting trends are largely based upon conceptions of “suffering”: in Brazil’s case, slavery, dictatorial oppression, neoliberal geographical divides, and the new athletic ethic of laudable effort. Suffering is not in this context tied to unconditional recognition of Brazilian cultural otherness or ethno-racial difference but is a strategy that counters European philosophical conceptions of alterity. It will become evident below why this is so important for the present analysis.

## Aesthetic Truths and Olympic Utopias

I stated before that the paper's focus is not politics as such, only the ways spectral plots of heritage produce Rio's unique artistic brand. In fact I proffer that art can simultaneously reflect and revise the structured views we are acculturated to embrace as natural givens, but also the competences we acquire in the socio-cultural environment that generates these worldviews (Goldman, 1964 and 1980; Mannheim, 1968). The ways in which human experience is socially ordered and framed, invites an understanding of the dynamics of social relations and processes of social ordering (Herzfeld, 2008). Brazil is multicultural enough to produce a plural cultural model, and fragmented enough to generate diverse forms of art. Rio's own ambivalent status (as a regional social and financial articulation, and a post-colonial phantasmagoria far away from Northern American and European cultural industries) is reflected in the ways its artistic sentiments promote policies of "reaching out" to national peripheries and marginal discourses so as to fuse and traffic them abroad as new "World Cultures" (Nagib, 2011). The process of reaching out to repositories of ethnic memory is recognized as a global manifestation of post-colonial artistic movements with a mission to transmute earlier proletarian and folkloric modes of socialist realism into forms of what became part of magical realism in Latin America. But the handover's cultural mosaic is not immediately available to global audiences, and Rio's artistic directors and performers had to find effective ways to communicate its complexity. As a result, Rio's handover spectacle rested on the aestheticized consumption of Brazilian exoticism, keeping at bay colonial phantoms just enough to capitalize on slave mobility's "absent presence" (Herzfeld, 2002). De Sousa Santos (Barreira, 2011: 154; de Souza Santos, 1999) speaks in this cultural context of a "sociology of absences", the ability of institutional frameworks to erase or amplify disenfranchised voices that escape through cracks of officialdom into global spheres. The terms "absent presence" and "sociology of absences" do not point to the discourse of slavery per se, but revert instead to traces that travelers redeem as tourist tokens (Thompson, 2012: 42). Lest I am accused of historical regression, I note that these traces are in fact "signs" constantly supplemented with new meanings that are more palatable to today's world travelers and tourists. It is much easier for global visitors to comprehend new cultural assemblages produced by industrial and authoritarian pasts or textbook slavery "dark tours" than to confront the harsh realities from which these assemblages emerged. As is the case with sanitized tourist visits to places once touched by death and abject(ed) lifestyles such as those of slavery and industrial working-classness (Dann and Seaton, 2001), artwork needs to beautify social 'dirt' so as to sell it as palatable commodity. This is the fate of artistic endeavor (successful or not): to operate in lieu with institutions so as to survive, it often has to speak the truth in ways that cut through the flesh without inducing any pain.

Here we may recall Nederveen Pieterse's (2006a) distinction between cultural and structural hybridization to examine how the aforementioned assemblages follow strategic classifications in global structural discourse. Directors of the handover to Rio 2016, Cao Hamburger and Daniela Thomas, captured this structured outlook when they claimed: "the spectacle's clichés don't misrepresent us, but we want to show other ways in which we mix. We are very far from Europe and North America. [...] We get this information and we reinvent. [...] This is our spirit; this is how we produce culture" (Gibson and Kingsley, 10 August 2012). On the one hand, the directors' discourse of hybridity of the handover's spectacle suggests that Brazil crafts its own artistic and aesthetic pathways on the basis of a global dialogue. This statement is about hidden global synergies rather than conflict – but synergies based on the principle of recognition of cultural particularities. On the other hand, their statement supports a monological version of "The Truth" about Rio's culture by elevating hybridity as mixing to an all-embracing good value. We may discern in this maneuver the heritage of European Enlightenment that coupled scientific truth with progress and aligned all human communities with a global value hierarchy, but this merits separate analysis. Instead, one may examine more immediate concerns, as hidden behind this abstraction is a well-established disjunction between multiculturalism as ideal and silenced multicultural

political realities (Parekh, 2000). The fact that the handover's performances were framed by a collection of representations of North-eastern Brazilian genres also flags the old question of recognition of marginal cultures in a federalized state as constitutive of such global mobilities (Born and Hesmondhalgh, 2000: 26). This hides a conflict, but an internal one, within Brazil's socio-cultures. We are back to the question of who articulates representations and under what conditions.

But my intervention does not aim to attack the Olympic directors. Rather, it highlights global complexities no individual artist can resolve. On a global stage, in mega-events contexts, artistic creativity may both contest and reinstate structured worldviews (Mannheim, 2003). Here, reflexivity and self-searching can only go so far, or be cut short by marketing and other global expectations (Inglis, 2005). We must bear in mind that this is the Olympic mega-event par excellence, a scene on which artists and directors are called to produce globally translatable aspects of native culture. This is bound to create another conflict between any personal radical beliefs and the conformist imperatives of the Olympic spectacle. Most Olympic ceremonies transform quite controversial cultural narratives into consumption spectacles for the global tourist gaze. I treat Rio 2016 aesthetics as judgment over what is beautiful and worthy as validated by our senses (here we cannot avoid echoes of European Enlightenment traditions that bequeathed us empiricism and positivism). The physical and cognitive dimensions of Olympic ceremonies collaborate to produce judgments about the socio-cultural world we inhabit. Aesthetics is about culture and its politics, a staged self-narration to the world that turns everything into a mobile spectacle (Spivak, 2012: 390). In Rio's case, the handover's visual dimensions were complemented by a strong auditory, musical narrative, specific to Brazilian globalization pathways. The visual aspects focused on colorful costumes and black-white performers often in settings of everyday labor(ing). The aural dimensions included (1) Rio's and Brazil's blend of musical traditions, including samba, and (2) new hybrid tunes and poperatic singing (a blend of opera and pop music). The kinesthetic aspects included (1) samba dance, representations of Rio's Carnival and the Candomblé rituals, but also (2) Rio's embedding into global leisure cultures such as football. As a unity, these syn(a)esthetic performances presented an encounter of Brazilian traditions with Western modernities.

My deployment of the term "syn(a)esthesia" (heretofore *synaesthesia*) problematizes the discourse of competing, colluding and haunted modernities and globalizations. I do this from an artistic and aesthetic stance. *Synaesthesia* is the replacement of one sense (aesthesia) with another in medical terms. But I am not a scientific positivist. As an interpretative artistic action, my *synaesthesia* captures the mind-body complex of Brazilian performativity in the handover spectacle (Tzanelli, 2013a: ch. 4). My "performative *synaesthetics*" refers to a productive re-ordering of narrative, rather than neural pathways through combinations (syn) of image, movement, touch, smell and sound. The handover's performative *synaesthetics* stood for Rio's cultural allegory, a transposition of a specific cultural narrative into a global spectacular market for Olympic visitors and tourists. This allegory was aligned with the IOC's more generic values and ethical principles. In this instance we have a synergy between the artistic narratives of the postcolonial host, Rio, with that of an international institution, the IOC.

Between these two narratives or "imperatives" (Tzanelli, 2010), Rio's artistic directors and performers tried to transcend their postcolonial heritage and show some new artistic and tourist innovations in their country. To showcase postcolonial Brazil's self-understanding as a unique culture that does not just reproduce European colonial principles, they spoke and performed Brazilian "joy" and "passion". These two key words defined the handover's title, "Embrace". Both joy and passion are employed across various cultures and they propagate a model of the "tourist or artistic ceremonial body" as both a physical and an imaginary site. But it is the emotional aspects of this artistic path to cathexis (Connell, 1995) that civilizes destructive human attitudes such as resentment and rage that demarcate the handover as part of a global civilizing process through artistic engagement and syn(a)esthetic mobility of local character and custom (Wenning, 2009; Tzanelli, 2011: ch. 5). Here artistic utopianism issues a divorce from political realism that would



focus on cultural encounters ‘on location’ between hosts and guests – usually in Brazil’s (and Rio’s) case, in tourist contexts. The increasing (perceived) “inferiority” of the non-reciprocating guest “reaches its extreme in the selfish and insensitive tourist, who finds that ‘the natives are friendly’ but fails to understand that this friendliness masks an enduring contempt” (Herzfeld, 1992: 61). In utopian spaces this contempt is replaced with friendliness based on an attempt to reach out and understand the other-guest. Let us not forget that artistic mobility as travel on stage is cathexis, a form of exorcism driving away colonial ghosts and nightmares. Thus, “embracing” global Olympic audiences – the equivalent of the tourist guest that is invited to commune in Brazilian culture – retains a necessary ambivalence present in most intercultural contacts.

On the surface, the handover to Rio countered established European aesthetic principles of goodness and perfection with a discourse of “cosmetic cosmopolitanism” (Nederveen Pieterse, 2006b) based on tourist image and sound, not on social inequality and conflict. But underneath this surface, some aspects of the ceremony also paid tribute to an undying sentiment related to unbalanced distributions of cultural recognition that natives learned to “tame” into marketable forms of sadness. I return to this point below as it guides my analytical consideration of Brazilian normativity. For the moment, it is worth stressing once more that this cosmetic narrative can be easily but wrongly confused with Western European understandings of superficiality (e.g. Delanty, 2006). Instead I claim that Brazilian Olympic performances present us with two overlapping deep cosmopolitan statements: the first statement issues an internal dialogue on racial inequalities, social difference and geographical marginality; the second can be read as an aesthetic and political collusion with hegemonic worldviews. The first statement contradicts the second, as Brazil’s modernity pathways contradict those of colonial and postcolonial Europe’s. Such complexity that mediates both collision and collusion is not unique but the cornerstone of a comparative sociology of arts and tourism within and without the European space.

## **The Handover Ceremony to Rio 2016**

In this section I outline how this ambivalence was played out in the eight-minute handover: the ceremony commenced when the stage was bathed in Brazil’s national colors and Renato Sorriso entered the arena in a street cleaner’s uniform to dance samba. Sorriso was a real street cleaner from the Rio Sambadrome who became cult hero when he was filmed dancing while he swept the streets. He is interrupted by sailor Robert Scheidt, who asks him to stop his performance but is eventually drawn into the rhythm. Scheidt is one of Brazil’s most successful Olympian athletes with many medals from five Olympic Games. Thus, in the introductory scene we already have the collusion of two narratives: the first is based on Brazil’s new tourist image that emerged from black labor migrations in favelas such as those of Rio. The second is based on the Olympiad’s athletic image that emerged from global competitions. If we add to this that Sorriso’s samba performance is not matched on stage by the “clumsy” Scheidt’s then we end up with two colliding worldviews – one on European athletic performativity as a rationalized creative repetition of one’s embodied subjectivity (see Butler, 1993; Butler, 2007), and another on affective embodied performance aiming to unite mind, body and emotional soul into a form of self-narration. The message is that Brazilian performative synaesthesia is full of affective joy and embodied passion, whereas Olympic European imports are full of self-control and a propensity to learn rather than perform from the heart. Behind this one might discern a clash between two different understandings of labor: one that harmonizes mind, heart and body, and another that subjects body and heart to mind. Scheidt is nothing other than the Cartesian cogito that sprang from the European Enlightenment, whereas ‘despite’ his social background, Sorriso can enact a sort of “fast mobility” we associate with tourist and artistic performance. One might note that not only is Sorriso literally a worker that achieved social recognition through his dancing skills, he is also a cinematic articulation of Sepucaí, the annual meeting place for samba schools where he was originally discovered.

Another notable instance of collusion-as-collision is the aural performance by Marisa Monte. Though classically trained in opera, Monte grew up surrounded by the sounds of samba and combined diverse influences in her music. After maturing professionally in Europe she transformed into a hybrid of MPB diva and pop rock performer without repudiating her traditional samba and folk musical origins. Her introduction as Yemanjá, a sort of goddess of the religion called Candomblé, acts as an invitation to global tourists to engage with Brazil's dark heritage and magic. We call this thanatourism, a sort of tourism that invites visits to domains haunted by histories of slavery, oppression and abject working class cultures. Candomblé is a kind of mesh of African religions and beliefs slaves brought to Brazil when it was still a colony. As Yemanjá, Monte sang *Bachiana No. 5* from the *Bachianas Brasileiras*. These suites are examples of European and New World musical hybridities, fusions native folk-popular music with Johann Sebastian Bach, and an attempt to adapt a number of Baroque harmonic and contrapuntal procedures to Brazilian music (Béhague, 1994). This is another harmonization with European modes of audition and cognition through mathematically coordinated musical models. Note that these suites, and especially the one Monte sang in the handover, were conceived from Brazil's Northeastern parts. Especially since Vargas' regime, these parts served as both the origins of Brazilian nationhood and as exotic domains advertised to global tourists. It is the elevation of the Brazilian Northeast into a domain of national purity that also triggered a domestic civilizing process of the region for the tourist visitors. This where the ideal of *branqueamento*, "the belief that miscegenation would gradually and inexorably 'whiten' and therefore 'upgrade' the Brazilian population" (Skidmore, 1990) was first implemented. The Northeastern regions inspired and hosted carnival performances which were kept under strict supervision by the regime. As an import from Portugal, the Carnival is part of Brazilian legacies of authoritative defiance. A ceremony in its own right, carnivals promoted fusions of musical procession and *entrudos* or violent and aggressive pranks authorities would soon outlaw (Lee, 2012: 253).



Figure 1: The Rio 2016 procession, complete with Brazilian hybrid music, samba dancing and the Carnival

Source: Andrew Osborne, Flickr

But these unpleasanties never figure in the handover's segment as such. Instead, we have depictions of the Carnival, Rio's and other samba styles and some famous tourist areas of Rio. The ancient African religion of Candomblé and the enactment of capoeira dance-cum ritual fight appear as exotic specimen on stage, but the insider's eye knows better and immediately associates them to the heritage of slavery when global viewers see in them just another voodoo-like Haitian spectacle. It is of course all there in the background, but only for the knowing viewers and listeners to grasp. One might argue that the directors managed through strategic silences to produce a narrative of competing synaesthesias: one classical European and mind-orientated, and another (pseudo-traditional) Brazilian and body/soul inspired. The anti-Cartesian emphasis on joy and passion is aligned better with Brazilian self-presentation and the external tourist gaze, and can allow the Brazilian directors and performers to protest peacefully against Cartesian imperatives. Between these conflicting narratives we get new Brazilian musical innovations. For example, Monte later sang, alongside Brazilian pop and cinematic artists BNegão and Seu Jorge, the bossa nova song 'Aquele Abraço' ('We Say Hello'). Monte is in many respects the Brazilian equivalent of Western popera movement, a blend of "low order" craft with "high European" art on which *Brasilidade* (Brazilianness) is based as a rooted self-narration yet a "travelling culture" (Clifford, 1992) from Brazil's urban socioscaples (Albrow, 1997).

A Brazilian musician, singer, songwriter and actor, Seu Jorge was raised in a favela north of Rio. Jorge is considered by many as an artist that renewed Brazilian pop samba. He presents as major influences in his work various samba schools, but also American soul singer Stevie Wonder. In *City of God* (2002) Jorge played a good-looking "ladies' man" mourning his lost family that is killed by a sociopath out of spite – a perfect allegorization in this instance of the internal Brazilian battle for self-civilization. Seu Jorge adopted the role of the "handsome, melancholy drifter with a mysterious past" in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004) where he played the member of an oceanography crew who improvises Portuguese David Bowie covers (Garsd, 21 July 2010). Such personas introduced global audiences to Jorge's music, making accessible to them a reified "Brazilian character" shrouded in musical sadness. It is this sadness that translates Brazil's self-perceived suffering into a global commodity steeped in synaesthetic contradiction: how can musicians, singers and dancers perform this sentiment with smiles and in uplifting rhythms? Here cathexis works as compass, introducing us to the politics of artistic strategy.

Sorriso and the sambistas on the one hand, and Alexandra Ambrósio and Marisa Monte on the other, articulate Brazil's polylocalities in racial-as-cultural terms. Ambrósio's insertion in the segment is more significant than one might think at first: first of all, she is Brazil's top model with an international career and hence instantly recognizable. Placing her in the procession as a centerpiece reiterates the cosmetic cosmopolitan aspects of the handover. Art has always suffered from accusations that it "traffics" national authenticity abroad, and Ambrósio's career in lingerie, fashion and perfumery (she worked for Victoria's Secret Angels and modeled for brands such as Next, Armani Exchange, Christian Dior, and Ralph Lauren) sends out an ambivalent (sexualized) message concerning the function of ceremonial displays of culture, now sanctioned by the IOC. Ambrósio's grandstanding as a dancer is seconded by the procession's black dancers and singers, demonstrating a new Brazilian "poetics of womanhood" in line with anti-Cartesian *Brasilidade*. At the same time the contrast between white (Ambrósio, Marisa Monte as an operatic singer who is dressed in white) and black (Sorriso, the samba dancers, the Brazilian "tribes" and most singers) reiterates Hollywood's enduring chiaroscuro technique as a sort of aestheticized boundary definition. Replacing the twin discourse of invisibility of color (akin to assimilationism) and good exceptionalism (ethnic difference) with an "embodied musical vocabulary" (Denzin, 2002: 6, 8, 21) is in this scene complemented with a hegemonic sort of (white but exotic) femininity within Brazil.

The synaesthetics of blackness and whiteness reappear in the introduction of Brazil's renowned football player, Pelé. Pelé, who concludes the handover, appears on stage disguised as Rio's traditional *Malandro do Morro*, literally the 'boy-man of bad mores'. Matching the Western

cinematic characters of the conman, the Malandro is the lovable rogue that maintains a lifestyle of idleness, fast living and petty crime ((Shaw and Dennison, 2004). Also matching other Latin American renditions of con crime in tourist settings, Pelé as Malandro connects the handover's narratives of joy and passion to Brazilian anti-Cartesianism. Just as the Cuban jineteros that take especially female tourists "for a ride", malandragem proposes the deployment by hosts of physical assets to gain control over tourists guests (Fernandez, 1999; Berg, 2004; Simoni, 2008). Various scholars highlighted the complexity of such modes of action that tie morality to national, racial and gendered discourses but also to romantic travel (Sánchez Taylor, 2000; Tzanelli, 2007; Fernandez, 2010). But one should not miss how Pelé and Ambrósio form in the end the perfect symmetry in this anti-sexist statement, warning the tourist and mega-event viewer to re-examine the significance of stereotyping. Such representations confirm how exchanges of people and labor for money "and the idolatry of things thus purchased emerges as a point where core African-American values diverge from European ones" (Garner, 2007: 14). Though originating in non-privileged segments of Brazilian society, Pelé achieved fame first thanks to his physical talent as footballer and later as a cultural entrepreneur. Working with filmmakers, documentary producers and even computer game industries, but also as a music composer himself, he is the perfect example of Brazilian performative synaesthesia. It is not coincidental that the handover's conclusion couples Sorriso with Pelé against a background of the singers. Pelé and Sorriso are the embodied analogues of Brazilian musical performance and they answer to European strategies of assimilation as ways of confronting difference.

## Conclusion

My analytical overture to the latest Olympic handover (Rio 2016) allows scholars to consider the ways artistic glocalization and hybridization bridge different sociological and humanist concerns over the ways cultures are produced and constantly articulated in international domains. The Olympic mega-event acts as one such moment of articulation assigned to members of artistic communities that belong both to the national community and to transnational communities of interest. I argued that London 2012's handover event (as événement) links to world structures and Brazil's self-understanding as a distinctive (multi) cultural assemblage born out of interlinked domestic and international developments (slavery, dictatorship, industrialization, tourist mobilities). The artwork of Olympic directors and performers negotiates tensions emerging from such interlinked structures, constantly generating ambivalent messages in an audio-visual and embodied fashion. The handover's performances reflect simultaneously collusion and collision between largely European and Brazil's and Rio's colonial heritage on the one hand, and more recent types of heritage on the other, so as to communicate globally intelligible forms of Brazilian socio-culture. The emphasis on form as content complies with native understandings of surface as depth or meaning – not as mere formalism but as locally situated cosmopolitan agency. Bypassing, but not ignoring the Cartesian divide between mind and body and introducing emotion as motion in the most profound sense (e.g. its importance in tourist contact and ensued intercultural encounters), Rio's Olympic artwork seems to gesture towards a social-come-artistic 'movement' ethics supplementing the mega-event with a cultural economy, so to speak.

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Dr. Rodanthi Tzanelli:** Associate Professor, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, Leeds, Yorkshire, UK.

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