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**VIRTUAL MEGA-EVENT IMAGINARIES AND WORLDMAKING  
IMPERATIVES IN RIO 2016**

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*In: Mega-Event Mobilities: A critical analysis*

**Edited by Noel B. Salazar, Christiane Timmerman, Johan Wets, Luana**

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**Worldmaking in Rio 2016, on/offline**

Given the current emphasis on mega-projects as stepping-stones to urban regeneration via international capital investment – pivotal for any urban formation’s entering or upgrading in the global city rankings (Sassen, 2001) - the stakes with the Rio 2016 Olympic Games were high. Former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva promised during the successful bid (Phillips, 4 October 2009) that the First Olympics staged in South America would achieve Brazilian compliance with other organisations integral to the transnational economy (the World Trade Organization, the United Nations and the G20). A clock on the mega-event’s official website suggested such a happy teleological countdown for the city of Rio: the entry to an international polity only successful Olympic hosts achieve, in line with a set of international standards of well-being, integrity and cooperation. For more critical analysts, Rio 2016’s ‘end’ would be found in the ways Lula’s policy fit into post-1970s articulations of *abertura*. This post-dictatorship (1964-1985) project of ‘opening up’ to the world, would deliver Brazil decades later from the arms of Lula’s protégé and President, Dilma Rousseff (2011-present (2016)), to global networks of neoliberal governance. If *abertura* was implicated in increased movements across open borders that ‘involve elaborate forms of

secrecy' (Urry, 2014, p.8), its management in the mega-event's organisation by multiple conglomerates would turn into an urban beautification policy by means of capital circulation (transportation, tourism, cultural events).

Beautification policies were hardly new for Rio: examples include mayor Pereira Passos' (1902-1906) initiation of construction of the Aterro do Flamengo, but the management of such projects by global conglomerates is a new occurrence. Later I explain that this resembles the early twentieth-century introduction of Western conceptions of the 'garden city' (the luscious green suburbia into the urban centre), Flamengo's inspiration (Almandoz, 22 May 2003, par. 8). Latin American cities, such as Rio, would proceed to translate this British vision of urban regeneration into a 'dormitory garden suburb' of the seaside for the middle and working classes (Flamengo and Botafogo being examples – *ibid.*), thus defining space in environmental and social terms. But classed populations in Brazil are also ethnographically organised and this impacts on the country's cultural profile, with black populations usually residing in the city's periphery (favelas), so space is subsumed by racial inequality in neoliberal environments. Rio 2016's story is a story about the management of human capital in global political/legal, cultural and financial assemblages. Currently, the mega-event's human capital is managed by global capitalist networks in complex ways, with varied good and bad consequences. Rio's ethno-national diversity is used in the production of the city's unique brand and 'atmosphere' and consumed as something elusive and intangible 'taking form between people, objects and physical settings' (Löfgren, 2014, p.255). Unsurprisingly, in mega events the host city's brand can contribute to its sustainable futures if the organisers' ethics and aesthetics advance links to wider urban structures (Scott, 2010).

Nowhere are neoliberal principles of mobility (a hyper-competitive entrepreneurial ethos prioritising self-management in the market to achieve maximum customer satisfaction) better applied than in the cybersphere. Defying territorial boundaries and socio-political regulation to make, unmake and remake territorial and cultural worlds, the cybersphere provides the space for quick dissemination of the host's ideological aspirations. For this reason, the chapter concentrates on the principles of 'worldmaking' in the context of *smart mega-event development*, the Rio 2016 official website and its primary hyperlinks, hence digital networking. Selected in 2013 as best 'smart city' at the Smart City Expo World Congress, Rio outlined a project of regeneration covering both terrestrial and digital changes – what Rio's officials saw in the development of Rio Operations Centre, a city-wide surveillance system integrated with a transportation system to improve domestic and visitor mobility from the shantytowns (Fox News Latino, 22 November 2013). This philosophy also informed Brazil's organisation for the 2014 World Cup, articulating a combined necessity to survey dissent at home, inspect and control its multiple ethno-cultures, with the need to 'reach out' to other global financial and cultural centres (Sassen, 2001, 2006). Such 'worldmaking' interrogates the principles of military tourism (*militourism*) as a symbiosis between the gaze of the first world tourist and that of military surveillance (O' Dwyer, 2004). Militourism thrived in occupied zones of the world through the employment of a twin technology: the reproduction and dissemination of impeccable idyllic images of native culture for the tourist gaze and the fulfilment of touristic fantasies by violent means. Though part of a democratic country, Rio's state currently implements a programme of 'slum pacification' to ensure international visitors' security – both a contemporary necessity and an inclination towards diversity control closer to its authoritarian past. B

The reproduction of impeccable imagery morphs, is visually/discursively calibrated on the mega-event's website, which completes the city's design of governance. The design is based on what urban policy-makers identify as the city's principal assets in a game of competition, borrowing and collaboration with other cities within the Brazilian nation and beyond (Urry, 2008; Lederman, 2015). Rather than based on direct obliterations of its human populations, Rio's design is geared towards selective inclusivity and adaptation of the city's socio-cultural capital to produce a coherent narrative of belonging in global hierarchies of aesthetic value. Larsen and Urry (2008) speak of 'network capital', the value of globalised social networking, but there is also aesthetic capital in city agendas, especially where neoliberal pressures are enmeshed into blends of creative and environmental concerns to endorse sustainable policies. The need to harmonise the city's human capital from the slums (integral to Brazilian character) with artistic endeavours (integral to mega-event discourses on the 'creative city') and environmental conservation (integral to international policy co-ordinations concerning climate change and sustainability as well as the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) proposed mega-event legacies) is challenging. Fusing aesthetic and environmental appreciation with population management for the sake of improving the visitors' experience of the city promotes 'façadism', ornamental forms masking (dys)functional interiors, which please tourists but do not always address local needs (Maitland and Smith, 2008, pp.173-174). Façadism, an aesthetic norm matching suggestions that hosts produce a tourism bubble hiding the ugliness lingering under the surface, comprises the chapter's axiological interrogation of 'worldmaking'.

Urban aesthetics of this kind might promote attention to mere phenomena, leaving the political/ideological dimensions of places buried. The chapter combines an exploration of Rio 2016's official website with an investigation into the urban spheres the website 'maps'

in favour of mega-event touristification to unfold representational differences. I argue that Rio's development as a global player is predicated online on what tourism theory also identifies in the process of 'becoming a tourist' (Cohen, 1979): a move away from the nation's socio-cultural centre so that the host city breaks away from geopolitically rooted histories and current structural constraints. Here tourism theory meets globalisation studies, by articulating contemporary socio-cultural rearrangements triggered by neoliberalisation within nation states. At the economic and legal-political level (as per Sassen, 2006), cities (Rio) in federal states such as Brazil, wire into deterritorialised (digital), infrastructural and institutional-normative frames that do not fully belong to the nation state any more, but are part of cross-border 'assemblages' of territory, authority and rights. Cities such as Rio develop such 'centrifugal' articulations of belonging (in global political, economic and legal activities) while retaining viable and strategic notions of rooted belonging (in heritage and history). At the cultural level (as per Cohen, 1979), key ideal player in this essentially façadist drama is the collectivised figure of the romantic tourist, the aesthetically reflexive individual who traverses the world under the guise of different forms of creative (art)work undertaken in the mega-event's project. But as I explain later, the state's militourist logic also extends the centrifugal logic to the disadvantaged populations of the city, who now use mega-event markets as 'exit options' (Sassen, 2006, p. 423) – so the romantic tourist can communicate with Rio's disadvantaged populations in creative ways. Below I explain how this player corresponds to concrete policy-making based on envisioning urban futures (what I call 'imagineering'). In section three I discuss how my digital methodology and epistemology allow us to interrogate worldmaking as an ideology and section four provides a selective analysis of the website's content in combination with Rio's terrestrial realities of social creativity, dissonance and conflict.

### **Digital imagineering**

The principal work to highlight when thinking about ideal types of tourists is that of ‘worldmaking agency’: archetypes such as those of the romantic tourist are engineered by organisations/institutions. In Rio’s case, digital reconfigurations of terrestrial-urban tourist sites fuse with an ideal enlargement of creativity so as to fit regional, national and transnational variations of the mega-event’s ‘creative class’ (Florida, 2003) and less institutionally controlled, or even anti-institutional forms of creativity, into the same worldmaking (brand-making) category. The strategy bases Rio’s brand on technologically manipulated image-making to enmesh aspects of its histories of migration, slavery, slum-formation and racial oppression into a sustainable narrative seemingly less stratified and more inclusive. Such fusions of ‘high’ and ‘low’ creativity filter ideals of ethnic human nature, environmental beautification and landscape engineering into an activist type of ‘imagineering’, a fusion of imagining and engineering embraced by mega-event makers (Routledge, 1997; Rutheiser, 1996 in Salazar, this volume). We must consider imagineering also as a conservative venture inscribing national desires for recognition onto global political templates. Mega-events promote such cultural ‘framing’ (Hannam et.al, 2016), when their urban spaces are dominated by conflict. These clashes might also subject ‘high’ culture (that of art) to further splits between policy priorities and non-utilitarian creativity. What matters in terms of urban policy-making is if the mega-event’s website allows the city to produce positive futurist scenarios of development.

Given that the mega-event’s policy follows guidelines set by international policy organisations, such as the IOC or the United Nations (UN), Rio’s design of a urban imaginary is not entirely disconnected from its colonial past (Nederveen Pieterse and Parekh, 1995). There are developmental traps in such design, turning selective amnesias in

social inequality into lightning rods (strikes and protests have been raging in Rio in connection to mega-event development, especially with regards to alleged violations of labour rights - Korstanje et.al, 2014). This issue partly informs my assessment of pressures imposed on urban and international policy-makers. Instead, I examine how Rio 2016's digital worldmaking is characterised by an inescapable oscillation between 'Enlightenment' traditions of rational progress originating in Europe and new political paradigms stemming from global calls on risk (of terrorism, environmental degradation, riots and crime) that might pronounce what Rio seeks to avoid on the eve of the mega-event: the end of tourism (Hannam, 2008). For Brazil, tourism carries the axiologies of a particular mobility originating in Europe, so it carves the 'right' path to development (Gunder Frank, 1966). The recent 500th anniversary of Brazil, which coincided with its mega-event staging 'served to highlight how travel has played an important part in the country's heritage and conquests' (Santana 2000, p.424). In the context of mega-event staging, which is marked by such visitor mobilities (over a million in Brazil 2014 – Tzanelli, 2015, pp.7-8) it also showed how the tourism sector has acquired renewed significance in consolidating regional Brazilian economies' transition to democracy. Rio's ideal romantic tourist is a controversial figure of democratic openness with a hyper-neoliberal agenda, *abertura*-style – perfect for online advertising of Brazilian regional/urban inclusion into the global city registers.

Reductive axiological splits between high and low culture, urban vagabonds and romantic tourists, communicate with notions of mega-imaginaries. Mega-event imaginaries are de facto travelling imaginaries (Taylor, 2004). Tourism theory's focus on the ability of images to travel and their contribution to the 'tourismification' of the everyday (Salazar, 2009, p.49) suggests that imagineering reproduces the old Western epistemological desideratum of gazing (Urry and Larsen, 2011). Tourism imaginaries operate as neoliberal social



imaginaries, socio-economic conceptualisations of entrepreneurship, self-reliance and sturdy individualism, as well as equations of consumer satisfaction with human freedom to glorify personal wealth, volunteerism as solution to social problems and state agency as inefficient or corrupt, if contradicting unfettered market mobilities (Evans and Sewell, 2014, pp.37-38). Rio's ethnic traditions are strongly influenced by histories of embodied action and performance rooted in the dark histories of urban migration that define favela cultures. It is telling that Rio 2016 glamourizes these rootings: its website resorts by default to visual design, ensuring that the mega-event's physical sites are nothing more than destinations prepared to be looked at – a way of catching local cultures into a 'stream of globalizing flows' (Crang and Franklin, 2001, p.10). The emphasis on touring the country's domains as impeccable spectacles appeals to a European tradition of consuming not just places as manifestations of nationalised human nature but the right type of citizenships dictated by the pinnacle of Western modernity: the nation-state (Urry, 1995).

Neoliberal realities call for novel conceptualisations of the ways mobilities have become the governance of global markets (Bærenholdt, 2013). By this I mean that multiple movements of business, trade, humans and products/technologies are no longer means to an end (profit-making) but form the very logic of global governance (movement as power). The insertion of regional and local cultural idioms and needs into a post-colonial national ecumene took place in Brazil too late for true integrative processes to consolidate a central vision of belonging. The country's federal structures promote contradictory models of action, prioritising regional or urban policy-making and impacting on imaginaries of belonging and mobility. References to *carioca* style matter: as double denomination of natives of Rio de Janeiro's city and state, *carioca* emerged as a pejorative for the residents of poor neighbourhoods but evolved into a mark of regional pride for the city and the state.

As accented Portuguese and as embodied style (a modification of samba, an interaction style), *carioca* is now disseminated via the second largest TV network in the world, Rede Globo, so it is a sign of global cultural mobility. The promotion of a *carioca* brand evolving within an environmentally sound urban environment that complies with the United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO, 2005) three-dimensional sustainability priorities (environmental, economic and social) supposedly brings together the local and the global in a creative and sustainable vision. The vision is supported by fusions of internal with global/tourist imaginaries – after all, it was not difference that created tourism but the localities' prospect of securing a place in the new national cultures that beckoned them (Franklin, 2004, p.298). Where time constraints limit the agents' ability to change reality in particular geographical contexts, the deterritorialised Internet –because it may refer back to particular places-signs (MacCannell, 1989; Lash and Urry, 1994) – globally disseminates visions of alternative futures. Every mega-event forms its own knowledge economy and creates long-lasting legacies in digital, textual and performative forms – what Roche (1996) has termed 'mega-event libraries'. In this respect, brands are by-products of imaginary formations, blending native self-understanding and tourism fantasies that constantly recreate place and people (Salazar, 2009, p.869).

### **Methodology and epistemology**

Epistemologically, this chapter explores Rio's palindromic movement from reality to utopia and imagination. This enables situated agents (city-administration and international business, the IOC and the Rio Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (ROCOG)) to articulate the 'nation' as a player in global networks. Hence, it is essential for multi-sited research to acknowledge how online we deal with overlapping and interconnecting articulations between the local, national and the global (Cousin, 2008, p.194). Websites

refer to territories and homeland imaginaries, turning places into ‘mobile effects’ (Merriman, 2004, p.146); although mega- events are organised by host cities, their effects also extend to calibrations of narratives of national character. Rather than thinking of Rio 2016’s digital worldmaking as a straight response to the power of mechanical technology to impose passive dependency of the periphery to national and transnational centres of governance, I register moves towards and away from authoritarian and democratic opportunities as momentums within the prospective mega-event. As a professional venture involving knowledge of urban sites, their artistic display and plausible technological ordering, the Rio 2016 website<sup>1</sup> is treated as a conduit of multiple issue networks: it shows us how credibility is managed online and suggests who is credible to whom, in what articulations and under what circumstances (Dean, 2007, p.533). Notably, the website’s ownership is shared between the IOC, the ROCOG and Pyeong Chong 2018, keeping responsibility within Olympic organisers, and it is globally accessible.

I take ‘worldmaking’ as both an epistemological and methodological starting-point. Epistemologically, the concept refers to creative, collaborative and imaginative practices of apprehending and communicating socio-cultural realities in tourist settings (Hollinshead, 2009; Ateljevic et.al. 2009). Worldmaking’s use in critical tourism studies and media research (Caton, 2013) makes it an appropriate tool for studying online configurations of place and culture. Methodologically, worldmaking is a matter of interpretation. Online representations of Rio present us with a typical hermeneutic ‘breach in intersubjectivity’, in that they project situations not immediately interpretable but inviting synthetic input by the investigator. The input is already implicated in the politics of truth-making as worldmaking,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rio2016.com/en/sponsors/ge>

so it is appropriate to map my cybernetic paths. The developing English Wikipedia entry on Rio 2016<sup>2</sup> proved useful in collating press materials on the mega-event in the same way televised news provide half-worked pictures of events (Tzanelli, 2015). I use Wikipedia and the retrieved press articles and blogs (a blend of English and Brazilian) as points of intersection and disjunction between the sub-scenes and imaginaries of the 2016 event. These allow me to identify how discourses are further interpreted by various actors (D'Andrea, 2006, pp.114–15): global media communities (journalists, leaders and workers in film and digital tourist industries) and state agents (Salazar, 2012, p.866). Given that the website is the product of an internationally distributed and globally networked mega-industry, we can only consider its narratives as part of a glocal 'circuit of culture' (Robertson, 1992; Ateljevic, 2000). However 'immersive' (focused on a single website), any digital ethnography must appreciate the interpenetration of cultural identities, the agency and autonomy of the represented beyond digital structuring, and the fact that we can only speak of 'imaginaries' and imagineering in tourism as part of an enlarged mobilities agenda (Hannam et.al., 2006; Büscher and Urry, 2009).

Because mega-events enter circuits of cultural interaction in global markets, their websites enclose selections of commercial and non-commercial hyperlinks (Bingley et.al, 2010, p.284). I opted to expand on press reporting from Olympic (Rio 2016, the IOC) and international media agencies (Fox News), more favourable to the event's staging. I coupled such items with critical international commentary, especially but not exclusively from American and British media (BBC, Guardian, Veja Esporte, Associated Press, Daily Mail) that stand for some of Rio 2016's significant others ('the West'), with other (Japan) figuring

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<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016\\_Summer\\_Olympics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Summer_Olympics)

in reporting on environmental management. I also use the websites and blogs of two activist organisations: Amnesty International and US non-profit organization and Rio de Janeiro-based project by Catalytic Communities, RioOnWatch, which aims to bring visibility to favela communities in the lead-up to the Olympics. In terms of marketing connections, I expand on the mega-event's most advertised website 'Visit Rio' examine the production of tourism imaginaries palatable to a 'refined' international and domestic tourist clientele. It is paramount to remember how design partakes in silences – electronically mediated urban environments might produce zones of privilege and exclusion, or, alternatively, encourage sustainable connections between peripheries and multi-centres, through audio-visual mobilities (Dredge and Jamal, 2013, p.561).

### **The digital network and Rio 2016's imagineering**

Rio's game-makers have to address an imperialist nostalgia haunting South American developmentalism. Tourism mobilities in the city function as panacea, as they resolve a contradiction inherent in the tourist desire for comfort and modernisation that does not erode nostalgic dips into the destination's irrevocably altered exoticism (Bissell, 2005). The website resorts to recreations of ethnic style through short clips on Rio's life,<sup>3</sup> by calling upon the repositories of (post)modern arts such as digital video-making, film-making and photography to retrieve a sanitised *carioca* authenticity. Proof of such stylistic harmonising is provided by a video clip in the section dedicated to the Olympic Torch (Rio 2016, 'Olympic Torch/Interact'). Instead of delving into the ritual's timeless significance, it portrays a number of 'common characters' talking about mundane tasks, joking about bribing to enter the Torch relay in a typical *jeitinho* style (the practical skill of getting what

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.rio2016.com/tochaolimpica/en>

one wants with little effort and at the expense of others), or mocking politicians. The video presents intimate aspects of *carioca/Brasildade*, which could sustain embarrassing (but marketable) tourist significations (Herzfeld, 2005).

The shift from creative human capital to Rio's 'network' or 'cosmopolitan' capital provides the city with the resources, knowledge, and abilities that facilitate cultural mobility for its emotional, financial and practical benefit in the international cultural trade (Larsen and Urry, 2008, p.93; Salazar, 2009, p.874). The front page of the website geographically enroots such branding, suggesting how with 'Copacabana Beach, Christ the Redeemer, Sugarloaf Mountain... [it becomes] easy to understand why Rio is known as *Cidade Maravilhosa* – the Marvellous City' (Rio 2016/City attractions, 2016). The term connects to the cinematic parable of *The City of God* (dir. Fernando Meirelles, 2003), a story about favela violence, youth dreams and aspirations. As Diken and Laustsen (2007, pp.59-62) note with regards to the *City of God*, a realist photological narrative of the favela suggests symbolic metamorphoses of human nature: the sensory sun (a constant metaphor in the film), becomes interiorized in the evening of its journey (setting as moral decay). But expositions of slum realities of decay are replaced with a luminous cinematic slum gaze online.

The hermeneutic implication of 'marvelousness' showcases Rio's ability to replace environmental-moral darkness with the lucidity of a mega-spectacle (Debord, 1995; Zukin, 2011). Examined alongside the mega-event's Olympic logo, it allegorises the New World's imaginary *volte-face* from technological mechanisation to an ecological consciousness, challenged by the Anthropocene (Urry, 2011, p.39, pp.155-159). Designed by Brazil's Tatil Design (a communication company that uses design and branding as essential tools, and a record of delivering projects in filmmaking) so as to interrogate London 2012's statement

on progressive modernisation, its ‘sculptural’ form ‘for a sculptural city’ injects the idea of pure flowing joy in three conjoined dancing figures. It makes a worldmaking statement simultaneously for the city of Rio and the Olympic movement that embraces ideas of bodily movement, happiness as well-being, collectivity and ‘dreaming’ (Nudd, 14 August 2012). The emphasis on Brazilian nature’s sculptural materiality denotes that embodied character partakes in the city’s affordances, the possible choices available in the social field we inhabit to express our personal talents (Urry, 2007, p.51). The visual design showcases Rio’s foremost embodied artistry (dance), which is both hybridised and connected to its low-pop cultures of migration (the favelas as samba hubs). Brazilian character acts as a glocal version of a constellation of Olympic values (as outlined by former IOC President, Jacques Rogge) resituated within a particular built environment (Jensen, 2014), which is defined by combinations of natural (sea, hills, exotic flora and fauna) and technological flows (architecture).

Some argued that the logo was plagiarised from the Brazilian 2004 Salvador Carnival logo (Erthal and Pinheiro, 3 January 2011). Thus, the rationale of logos circulating within global economic networks is enmeshed into the cultural politics of Brazilian regionalism, which are structured around civilizational divides – Rio’s *cariocas* compete with Sao Paulo’s *Paulistas* and the Brazilian South’s *gauchos*.<sup>4</sup> Today, such competitions over who possesses ‘civilised character’ are translated into who can transform it into the most marketable tourism token: regardless of its accuracy, such competition exemplifies the novel tourist spirit of capitalism. The mega-event’s imagineering must transform ethnic imaginaries (the

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<sup>4</sup> *Cariocas* are from the city of Rio, whereas *Paulistas* from the state of São Paulo and *Paulistanos* from the city of São Paulo,

favela dancing body as an archetypal ideal of Brazilian culture) into ‘creative’ lifestyle via media communications (McRobbie, 2006) – otherwise, they cannot stand as logos. Again, the power of European ways of seeing as aesthetically apprehending (Cosgrove and Jackson, 1987) partakes in the production of cultural geographies, allowing prospective tourists to treat the 2016 website as an audio-visual machine of meaning-making (Edensor, 2005). Rio 2016’s logo speaks an artistic language of pictorial hybridity reminiscent of the European *belles artes* as much as it encloses traces of cultural fragmentation within a yet unaccomplished national integration masked as structural nostalgia (Herzfeld, 2005).

The Olympic website’s introductory page is designed as an imaginary gateway to Rio’s tourist sites. Characteristics of local cultures are embedded in the visual-discursive narratives provided by scenic photographs and shots of Olympic athletes. The hyperlinked pages partake in ‘gamification’ resembling other mobile marketing strategies from the Brazilian Tourist Board (EMBRATUR), such as ‘Brazil Quest’ – an entertainment game intended to ‘educate’ prospective (digital-to-terrestrial) during the 2014 FIFA World Cup (Corrêa and Kitano, 2015). Though practically connected to business models of sustainable development and tourist motivation (Xu et.al., 2015), in terms of worldmaking, the toolbar depends on eliciting memories of places, thus ‘dragging’, reshuffling and ‘indexing’ terrestrial sites from across the city (Rojek, 1997). The website is framed on conceptions of transparency and sustainability, which are outlined in a plan (2014-2017) of responsible selection of suppliers and safe disposal of materials used in the mega-event’s staging. This organisational vision is not disconnected from tourism planning, but embedded in it. Under ‘Rio de Janeiro’ we are prompted to visit various sites hosting events to admire their attractions. Thus the site interprets sustainability both as support of sustainable behaviours and material reuse, but also as incitement of a desire to visit actual places at no



environmental cost (Saarinen, 2014). The statement on sustainability follows the UNWTO's (2005) three-dimensional definition of sustainability as a process meeting 'the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992).

Through photos of the Barra beach, websurfers are invited by César Cielo, Brazilian Olympic swimming champion, to enjoy kitesurfing and windsurfing in a scenic location with a calm atmosphere. Images of children playing volleyball in the sea, a distant shot of kites above the ocean and an aerial shot of the coast next to the cityscape complete the narrative. But this airbrushed resuscitation of idyllic beaches stands at the heart of a controversy over environmental pollution the ROCOG had to address. An analysis of water quality in 2015 revealed high levels of viruses and bacteria from human sewage in Olympic and Paralympic venues (Guanabara Bay), alarming international experts and competitors, and prompting officials to clarify which areas fall under the city's responsibility (Brookes and Barchfield, 30 July 2015). Evidence of human infections contradicted promises by Rio officials during the Olympic bidding to 'regenerate Rio's magnificent waterways through a \$4 billion government expansion of basic sanitation infrastructure' (ibid.). Both Gov. Luiz Fernando Pezao and Mayor Eduardo Paes of Rio admitted that Olympic promises won't be met in time for the Games, thus reiterating the neoliberal mantra of state inefficiency. The Zika virus' spread in South America also entered debates of mega-event management. Responsible for the well-being of athletes and spectators during the Games, the municipal authorities provided evidence of coordination with the World Health Organisation (WHO) by launching preventative measures in infestation areas (Rio 2016 News, 2 February 2016). As mega-event venues, including the Olympic Park, were built on neighbouring favela districts, the pressure of international

policy coordination encourages accusations of environmental racism: the favelas are a virus on Rio's cultural polity (Blanton, 2011). Such backstage controversies address how environmental uncertainties are manufactured, engineered in media sites (Beck, 2009).

A leap to Deodoro district, where a museum of aviation, engineering and Brazilian history is based, side-steps the issues of pollution in favour of technology. Safeguarding the heart of aviation pioneer Santos Dumont and 128 airplanes and replicas, the site is also an imaginary of *Brasilidade* as place. At the bottom of the page different arrows represent different directions in the digital journey, with a visit to the Gilberto Gil Centre in the Realengo district as a notable stop. One of the area's cultural hubs, the Centre is advertised for its various activities such as ballet, *capoeira* (Afro-Brazilian art-boxing), art workshops, professional courses, shows, painting exhibitions and plays – all produced by local people or invited well-known artists. An arrow leads to the *Sambódromo*, the stage for Rio Carnival's samba school parades<sup>5</sup>. In Rio's digital brandscape ideas of embodied ethnic performance are imagineered as quintessential aspects of the city's atmosphere (Löfgren, 2014). The staging of such embodied artsapes is connected to recommendations to visit the Lapa district, famous for its bohemian nightlife, bars and restaurants, live music venues and *bloco* (samba groups) parties during the Carnival – so, 'it gives visitors the feeling of being among the real cariocas'.<sup>6</sup> The journey follows on to *Cinelândia*, a popular Hollywood-like hotspot in the 1930s, when cinemas, theatres and restaurants were built as important additions to Rio's cultural ambiance, and where today the Municipal Theatre, the National Museum of Fine Arts and the National Library attract visitors all year round. The link between locality

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<sup>5</sup> <http://mobile.rio2016.com/en/rio-de-janeiro/city-attractions>

<sup>6</sup> <http://mobile.rio2016.com/en/rio-de-janeiro/city-attractions>

and nation is also an aspect of imagineering in globalising contexts – a way to insert ethno-national character into glocal cultural industrial governance by fashioning the city’s ‘experience economy’ (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Unsurprisingly, the multi-page concludes with the historic Maracanã Stadium that inscribes Brazil into the global history of football, a leisure activity that today connects to subcultural-fan tourism, and to Copacabana beach, an iconic site that does the same for Rio’s international beach tourism. In fact, the promotion of art and leisure are filtered through conceptions of touristic schooling (*scholé* – Dann and Parrinello, 2009) in ways extending those of localised sport cultures. Pressurised to follow the European vision of the founder of the modern Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin, the Rio 2016 Culture Programme, ‘Celebra’, streamlines the diversity of Brazilian culture into a vaguely planned ideal of artistic interventions to occupy streets, parks, squares and beaches, inspiring projects that ‘lend a human touch to urban spaces in the Olympic and Paralympic Games host city’.<sup>7</sup> Celebra’s start page proposes projects covering literature, popular art, music, performing arts, visual arts and music to match Rio’s brand-making principles. Significantly, it takes as a measure of success the Barcelona 1992 and Beijing 2008 urban regeneration - both provoking international criticism for impacting on human rights (Kennett and de Moragas, 2006, pp.185-186; Tzanelli, 2010, p.219, pp.222-223).

Rio 2016’s major hyperlink at the bottom of the Olympic Games page leads to ‘Visit Rio’<sup>8</sup>, another website providing virtual tasters of city tours, including advice on accommodation, sights to visit and places to eat (Visit Rio, 2016). Not only is culture mobilised on several of

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rio2016.com/culture/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://visit.rio/en/home-2/>

this site's webpages as a value central to regeneration, the visual material accompanying those suggests an implicit overlap between Rio's digital tourism imaginaries and the physical expansion of the city's symbolic economies (Zukin, 1995). Complete with suggestions to experience both 'refined' and street music and dance cultures, the hyperlink connects Rio's contemporary hybridity to post-colonial artstyles: fusions of 'rock and roll atmosphere with the feel of a pub'<sup>9</sup> in hotels fashioning a *carioca* version of São Paulo bars, but with London's stylistic accents communicating both regional competition and admiration for a European global city. Such invitations sit alongside other, to enjoy varieties of commoditised material, embodied and intangible heritage, including architectural connections to samba culture, Brazilian Pop Music (MPB) and *feijoadas* (black bean) dishes.<sup>10</sup> Other traditional accents include the São Cristóvão Fair, which takes place in the Luiz Gonzaga Center of Northeastern Traditions.<sup>11</sup> Tourist imaginaries develop by co-opting informal creative economies such as those of the festival, the open market and the fair to redesign official cultural policy agendas (Olsen, 2012; Richards, 2014). The cultures of bourgeois bohemianism are filtered through night clubs, antique galleries and underground music scenes to turn stylistic contrasts between tradition and post-modernity into a tourist asset. Thus, tourist business addresses the caveat between Brazilian regionalism, syncretic cultural cosmopolitanism and global consumption trends in eclectic ways: entertainment venues concentrate a variety of tourist trends, including the fast pop cultures of samba, *choro* and *gafieira* (a ballroom version of samba) and the once slower cultures of food tourism (*cittaslow* – Fullagar et.al., 2012).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> [http://visit.rio/en/que\\_fazer/baretto-londra-2/](http://visit.rio/en/que_fazer/baretto-londra-2/)

<sup>10</sup> <http://visit.rio/en/cacique-de-ramos-2/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://visit.rio/en/centro-luiz-gonzaga-de-tradicoes-nordestinas-2/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://visit.rio.en/mangue-seco-cachacaria-2/>

If food and dance stand as nature managed into culture, sightseeing and engineering are more obvious worldmaking practices connecting Rio to other global centres of governance. Alongside information on sports activities such as diving, cultural tourist pursuits (museum and gallery visits) and lifestyle shopping, stand recommendations to visit virgin coasts of the West Zone and culturally engineered landscapes. The Burle Marx Site is one of these spectacular urban utopias: constructed by architect Roberto Burle Marx in his residence in the city's West Zone and landscaped with beautiful gardens including important collections of tropical and subtropical plants, it is an example of imagineering informed by the principles of military tourism as the twin tourist scrutiny and technological manipulation of exoticism (O' Dwyer, 2004). Such imagineering reproduces the tourist gaze of the collector and classifier of difference in the tropics – notably, the same district houses a museum, preserving 3,125 pieces, including rare art and craft objects. Other recommended attractions are also explicitly based on a regime of experiencing sanitised landscape 'from afar' (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006). For example, the historically engineered (1912) trip from and to the Pão de Açúcar or Sugarloaf Mountain via cable car allows visitors to immerse themselves in the Botafogo cove, Copacabana edge and the entrance of Guanabara bay.<sup>13</sup> Together with the famous Christ the Redeemer (Heitor da Silva Costa, 1926-1931), the 'most famous scripture Art Déco of the world' and 'one of the Seven Wonders of the World made by formal voting in 2007 by the Swiss Institution New 7 Wonders Foundation',<sup>14</sup> it connects to the city with engineering to promote Rio's ethnic identity, purified of its problems (Edensor, 2004).

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<sup>13</sup> [http://visit.rio/en/que\\_fazer/sugar-loaf/](http://visit.rio/en/que_fazer/sugar-loaf/)

<sup>14</sup> [http://visit.rio/en/que\\_fazer/christ-the-redeemer/](http://visit.rio/en/que_fazer/christ-the-redeemer/)

Similar physical engineering is encountered elsewhere in the website. There is reference to the 'Museum of Tomorrow' (*Museu do Amanhã*), a futurist construction inspired by the bromeliads in Rio's Botanical Gardens. Designed by Spanish neofuturist architect Santiago Calatrava, who has created iconic buildings around the world, including a Montjuic telecommunications tower for the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona and the Athens 2004 Olympic Stadium, the building is devoted to exploring the possibilities of a sustainable future through interactive artefacts that bring science, art, technology and culture together. The giant construction resembles a spaceship and its main area is divided into five sectors designed to address the project's main preoccupation with human progress (Rio 2016 News, 18 December 2015). Officially inaugurated in 2015 by President Rousseff, Rio governor Pezão and mayor Paes, it institutionally endorses Rio's attempt to follow the arrow of time as well as its direction upwards (progress) and towards a *telos* (the West). Its logic of sustainable planning answers to anthropocenic challenges, as I explain below.

Calatrava's vision is located next to Rio's main cruise terminal, so it is physically linked to tourism mobilities, but its connection to the 'Marvellous Port', a waterfront building surrounding gardens and pools, is a statement of a greener future. Intended as a pedagogical tool, the development features photovoltaic panels on its steel roof, which tilt to follow the sun's course across the sky, so the building changes 'like a flower or a plant' (Murdock, 4 October 2010). The project's developer, the Fundação Roberto Marinho, reputed for making abstract concepts concrete practice, has been involved in other educational projects of an interactive (audio-visual) nature, better connected to native Brazilian philosophies of embodied well-being (Tzanelli, 2015). The project has inspired other architects to design interactive sustainable projects, including the Swiss RAFAA Solar

City Tower, aiming to represent ‘an inner attitude, a symbol of society facing the future’ (Murdock, 4 October 2010). Thus, the Museum of Tomorrow is built on the urgency to manage environmental risks by technological means – its infrastructure uses natural elements, such as sea and rain water, to generate electricity. Its inner structure leading visitors from a ground-floor plaza upwards and then *volte-face* through a nave-like gallery to exhibits, represents an absent womb as human rebirth within, but not at the centre of a hybrid natural-machinic ecosystem. In this respect, it does not necessarily avoid the deficit in democracy characterising post-industrial risk societies, as it liberates humans from the doubt of a future catastrophe only hypothetically (Argyrou, 2005, pp.84-85).

Imagineers such as Calatrava are not mere romantic tourists of a bygone Enlightenment before they enter Rio 2016’s website – his work does not return the city to a rural Eden (Favell, 2015, p.145), but builds an alternate techno-natural world. At the same time, this vision of cultures of aliveness is geared towards the generation of creative tourism. This complies with official policies and urgencies pertaining to physical and digitised worldmaking (ibid., p.151) via practices of exposure, concealment and willingness to address issues of democratic deficit in the urban ecologies of tourism– the very strategy Getúlio Vargas’ (1930-1945) dictatorship had upgraded to a programme of urban cleansing, surveillance and touristification (Shaw, 1999; Tzanelli, 2013, p.112). Much like the Medway Dockyard in Chatham (part of London 2012’s East city regeneration), the Museum of Tomorrow was built in one of the city’s poorest and most crime-ridden areas to successfully transform it into a gentrified business area (Watts, 17 December 2015). The area’s cyber-stratification adds an extra patina to enable the projected visitors’ websurfing through a collection of aesthetically pleasing shots of nature (Ellison and Burrows, 2007). The release of aerial photos by the city’s government showing how the Rio Olympic

Games are changing the city (Rio 2016 News, 13 January 2016), returns us to worldmaking considerations regarding touristification. Despite its radical environmental statement, the website reintroduces a split between the right type of Rio's human and nature via an aerial gaze that comprehends the urban panorama as a technologically manipulated 'globe' (a detached cartographer's vision) rather than a 'sphere' (lived experience), as Calatrava's project promises (Scott, 1998, p.134; Ingold, 2000, p.218). So the building's online presence introduces remoteness, but visiting it is open to the public.

A political ecology hidden behind Rio 2016's spectacularisation raises suspicion of environmental racism. References to security – a pressing issue in the last few years, given the social unrest plaguing the city's impoverished zones – is displaced in the news columns, where we learn that visitor passports will be scrutinised to ensure everyone's security. The inclusion of slum cultures into a programme of sustainability is not disconnected from concerns regarding security – the outside (foreign terrorists) and the inside (favela residents) can do the same cosmetic damage. Both 'risk' categories fit into a pre-emptive programme that combats the 'end of tourism' other host cities faced in previous Olympiads, marred by different forms of unrest. For both, police training took place abroad on 'the best practices at large international events', including the Boston and Berlin marathons, the IAAF World Athletics Championships in Beijing, the Baku 2015 European Games, the Tour de France and the UN General Assembly (Rio 2016 News, 14 January 2016); and there was talk that such police trainees will work under the auspices of an integrated Anti-Terrorism Centre.

The digital displacement of unrest is a strategy in line with domestic and foreign policy objectives but now co-regulated with international partners (Sassen, 2006, Ch. 5). A series



of incidents, including the death of a police officer in a favela in 2009, prompted the government to send Pacifying Police Units (PPUs) into the slums to stamp out gangsters and consolidate state control (Daily Mail Reporter, 16 June 2013). International campaign group Amnesty International (AI) reported that 8,466 deaths resulting from police intervention in favelas between 2004 and 2015 in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Whereas police unions say that 114 police officers were killed in altercations in 2014, AI's report indicates that 79% of victims in such altercations in 2010-13 were black and 75% of victims aged between 15 and 29 (BBC News, 3 August 2015). This trigger-happy attitude sits on the conflict between the mega-event's façadist priorities, lack of police supervision and experience that even local NGOs acknowledge, and the social immobility of angry black youth in shantytowns (Watts, 1 December 2015). In 2009, the IOC expressed confidence in the city's capacity to deliver a safe Games (Around the Rings, 21 October 2009), but as security remained under the national, regional and city authorities, the incidents raised questions about the global governance of risk in indirect ways. IOC members said the violence in Rio recalled memories of the 7/7 London bombings a day after the British capital was awarded the 2012 Olympics in 2005 (*Associated Press*, 20 October 2009). With deregulated, family-led favela entrepreneurship on the rise in anticipation of tourist influx for the Games, which EMBRATUR predicts to reach 380,000 foreign visitors, issues of safety, cleanliness and customer satisfaction moved up the city's priorities (Bowater, 30 July 2015).

The increase of land values in line with favela pacification and Rio's growing international profile as Olympics host, drive up living costs in favela districts, slowly pushing *favelados* (favela dweller) communities into peripheral areas of federal and municipal housing (Jacobi, 2014) or to independent tour operators fashioning such slums as touristic adventures

(Freire Medeiros, 2014). The Popular Committee for the World Cup and the Olympics, which has been behind recent protests against the football tournament, claims about 170,000 people are being removed from their homes (Jenkins, 30 April 2014). The fact that the majority of favelas are not discussed as ‘civic assets’ on Rio 2016’s website, to borrow from the vocabulary of Favela-Bairro’s upgrading program (Favela-to-Neighborhood, 1988-2008), betrays the urgency to erase blemishes from the city’s cosmetic surface (Jacobs, 1992, p.375). Just as Favela-Bairro was born out of a mix of international and national pressure, so the Olympic vision of Mayor Paes in July 2010 connected the relevant municipal program to the social legacy of the 2016 Olympics. The promise that all the favelas in Rio would be upgraded by 2020 with an R\$8 billion budget and a partnership with the Brazilian Institute of Architects (RioOnWatch, 2016) is an example of imagineering failing to engage communities in municipal decision-making. The ‘favela question’ provides a neat example of the ways specialised assemblages of business, authority and legal organisation produce a new type of inequality coexisting with older forms of spatio-social (now also digital-representational) differentiation within countries, in cities, and across countries (Sassen, 2006), in global business flows and especially the cultural sphere. As evictions and mass police incursions into one favela after another, driving the gang leaders, out repeat a familiar mega-event scenario (Jenkins, 30 April 2014; Wilson, 1996: 608-609; Gellert and Lynch, 2003), Rio 2016’s website produces alternate urban ‘appearances’ of affluence, respectability and mobility.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter sought to examine how ‘the rule of the other’ (Europe as creator of Olympic heritage and tourism), managed by complex combinations of the so-called ‘Olympic caravans’ of international professional experts (Cashman and Harris, 2012) and the host

city's authorities (Sassen, 2006), morphs digital narratives of Rio 2016 and reveals the mega-event's worldmaking imperatives. The mega-event's 'policy mobilities industry' (Salazar and Timms, this volume) may comprise a transnational assemblage of human actors (artists, athletes), policy agents (ROCOG, IOC) and technologies (TV channels, official websites), but the mega-event's principles can appeal to old traditions of sport and development originating in the event's European heritage and values (of order, well-being and civility). To energise international movements, mega-events such as Rio 2016 must ensure domestic peace – how else can the city prove its ability to host these mobilities? I have argued that the pressure to manage domestic and external risks (slum violence, terrorism), address environmental degradation and creative urbanisation come together in the mega-event's digital discourses under the label of sustainability. Blends of artistic creativity, sustainable management of natural resources and technological engineering promote 'soft' means of violence on socio-cultural realities online (Nye, 2004), as is often the case with mega-event policies (Maguire, 2011). The ambiguous and self-contradictory role of Rio 2016's digital imagineering communicates with physical (urban) transformations in a variety of ways and involves *imagining* alternative futures beyond given socio-cultural facts and *engineering* these scenarios as problematisations of socio-cultural realities that outlived their function.

One may question who determines the survival or obliteration of such realities – the 'script' of urban worldmaking. Terrestrially/materially (hence economically), this is managed by business spread across the globe and the host city. Culturally/representationally (hence discursively), the content of the mega-event's website is organised around the archetype of the 'romantic tourist', an involved imagineer, activist and world traveller, able to enhance the host city's global profile. This felicitous professional update of the old Grand Tourist,

as an artistic-cum-bureaucratic explorer of the exotic connects to the beginnings of tourism in the consolidation of tourist spots by artists, scholars, scientists and intellectuals at first, for international elites, before being taken up by popular narratives and can help identify the impact of new players as they progressively enter the tourist scene in countries of the Global South, such as Brazil (Gravari-Barbas and Graburn 2012, p.4). But the ‘objects’ of consumption, the favelados, also affect this ‘script’ through their multiple insertion into their pages as brands, local activists in dialogue with other activist initiatives or merely as tourist hosts and artists . Rio 2016’s digital archetypes of imagineer and imagineering fashion ‘agency’ through multiple, (dis)empowering dialogues with imaginary worldmaking ‘authors’ (Europe, West) of what according to a group of global players currently managing the ‘Olympic Game’, Rio needs most to enter a game of global competition: to increase its ‘ranking’ on the list of global cities - not only in terms of tourism, but more generally in terms of global connectedness, global business and overall prestige.

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