



The mega event city as neo-liberal laboratory: the case of Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract

As Brazil's economic and political structures have stabilized over the past quarter century, the country has assumed an increasingly important role in global affairs. The dominant trends towards neo-liberalism in the global political-economy are being reproduced within the context of a state structure that has traditionally occupied a central role in the national economy. While transitions to neo-liberalism at the national scale occur more slowly it is argued that it is within urban contexts that coalitions of political and economic interests can most quickly transform space and social relations. In this sense, sports mega-events function as mechanisms for the implementation of neo-liberal modes of governance within urban contexts. This paper will examine the processes through which mega-events in Rio de Janeiro are staging the city as an active laboratory for new models of neo-liberal governance that are accelerating the transformation of Brazilian society.

Keywords: Neo-liberalism. Urban laboratory. Rio de Janeiro. Brazil. Sports mega-events.

Introduction

The selling, production, and consumption of Sports Mega-Events (SME) cannot be separated from the geographic-political-historical-economic-social contexts in which they occur. In the cases of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil, the 1990s and 2000s were an era in which a double movement occurred: the consolidation of a federative democracy and the installation of a neo-liberal model of governance, defined as the adaption of public policies that favor private accumulation regimes over public redistribution, activating activate market mechanisms and ideologies over pre-existing state-based guarantees for the provision of basic services and human rights. In an era of accelerated globalization in which Brazil's geo-political position was in flux, mega-events and urban expositions of all kinds appeared to be an effective strategy of competitive city marketing for Brazilian cities. (NOVAIS, 2010). Predicated on the perceived successes of urban renewal projects in Barcelona and Manhattan,

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in the mid-1990s Rio de Janeiro's elite coalitions headed by mayor Cesar Maia began to search for mechanisms and urban governance models to re-insert the city into circuits of global capital. Driven by the dual imperatives to promote and re-structure cities, the pursuit of mega-events within the "competitive city management" model has evolved along with the adoption of neo-liberalizing practices of the Rio de Janeiro municipal government.

The competition to host global SMEs is global in a number of different senses. "Capturing a SME" is akin to a hunt undertaken by large, wealthy cities in search of a rare, itinerant species that carries a promise of increased economic and cultural capital. Competing cities tend to have already a well-developed global profile, possess economies large enough to fund the event, or are trying to extend or reformulate their "brand recognition" through increased media exposure. Boosters and politicians perceive SMEs as an opportunity to project a city to a global audience with the clearly stated end goal of attracting increasingly mobile forces of global capital: international tourists, multi-national corporations, media firms, conferences, and more events. The global nature of SMEs also ensures that they have profound geo-political implications. The contest to host the 2016 Olympics involved the presidents, prime-ministers, governors, and mayors of each of the finalist cities and their countries. The political stakes are as large as the egos involved. In the wake of Brazil's successful candidature to host the 2016 Olympics, Carlos Nuzman (president of Rio 2016), crowed, "I have the triumph of defeating two American presidents, first Bush then Obama."²

The localized euphoria surrounding the production (and consumption) of a SME is stimulated and amplified by the very forces that bring it into reality: politicians, corporations, national, and international sports federations, marketing firms, and media conglomerates. The dominant narratives of a SME are of celebrating shared cultural values ("globalization"), the construction of a better society through sport ("transformation"), the valorization of the local in the global marketplace ("brand recognition"), and the "unique opportunity" of a SME to bring about lasting changes to urban space and culture ("legacy"). These discursive frameworks are consistent with a neo-liberal political economy that "promotes individualism and entrepreneurialism engender[ing] debates about the norms of citizenship and the value of human life". (ONG, 2006, p. 9).

The political leadership of Rio de Janeiro began their quest to capture global sport mega-events in the mid 1990s with a bid for the 2004 Olympic Games. In an attempt to

² <http://columistas.ig.com.br/paulocleto/2009/10/03/o-sonho-e-a-suspeita/>. Nuzman refers here to the awarding of the 2007 Pan American Games to Rio de Janeiro over San Antonio, and the 2016 Olympics.

replicate the perceived successes of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics as a catalyst for urban, cultural, and economic transformation, the Brazilian Olympic Committee (COB) in conjunction with the market-orientated mayor Cesar Maia hired Catalan consultants to develop Rio's first "strategic urban plan", published in 1995. The 1995 Strategic Plan laid out a framework for urban governance that would make the city "competitive" by employing the strategies of city-marketing, the top-down implementation of large urban renewal projects, and the pursuit of a political economy based in urban entrepreneurship. As a component of this strategy, in 1996 Rio de Janeiro submitted a bid for the 2004 Olympics but did not make it past the aspirant stage, failing badly in the areas of security and transportation infrastructure. The Rio 2012 bid failed to make it past the aspirant stage for the same reasons. The big prize was clearly some years away. Following these failures, COB turned to the regional level and employed the experience of their Olympic applications to secure (in 2003) the right to host the 2007 Pan American Games (PAN).

The process of preparing Rio de Janeiro to host the PAN was fraught with difficulties. Originally projected to cost R\$330 million, the PAN eventually ran ten times over budget and resulted in multiple law suits brought by the Brazilian federal government against members of the organizing committee. By their own admission, the PAN organizing committee failed to deliver any legacy projects and left behind multiple "white elephant" structures that have either been privatized or have little or no use value for the population. Several neighborhoods experienced traumatic invasions by Military Police and on the eve of the PAN, as many as 40 people were killed by a police action in the Complexo do Alemão favela. Civil rights were suspended as human rights lawyers came under threat and intimidation. During the PAN, 17,000 extra police forces roamed the streets of Rio. The federal government spent more than R\$1.6 billion on security for the event. (OLIVEIRA, 2009; MASCARENHAS, 2007; GAFFNEY; MELO, 2010).

The hosting of the PAN was hugely problematic, but gave Rio's political and sporting elite valuable experience in organizing a SME and credibility in the eyes of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Shortly after the PAN, FIFA awarded the 2014 World Cup to Brazil.³ It was in late 2007 that the 2016 Olympic bid project began to coalesce.

The growing international political stature of Brazil and the rightward shift in governance tactics on the part of the Brazilian Worker's Party (PT), as well as the importance

³ The 2014 World Cup was essentially the awarding of a no-bid contract, as FIFA had temporarily instated a continental rotation system for the event, promising a South American host the World Cup after South Africa 2010. Brazil was the only candidate put forward by CONMEBOL, the South American football confederation.

of Rio de Janeiro in the collective imaginary of the nation, helped to build strong political alliance between the PT, the Rio de Janeiro State governor, Sergio Cabral, and Rio's mayor Eduardo Paes (who had worked under Cesar Maia since the mid 1990s) and who was Rio de Janeiro State's Secretary of Sport and Leisure during the PAN. These three combined with the Brazilian Olympic Committee (COB - headed by Arthur Nuzman since 1995) and the federal Ministry of Sport to produce a unified political front and to guarantee a limitless budget to bring the Olympics to Rio in 2016. This multi-scalar political consensus hugely favored Brazil's candidature. For the IOC, having the full weight of the Brazilian state behind the 2016 Olympics was likely a determining factor in the awarding of the 2016 Summer Olympics. President da Silva, one of Rio 2016's principal cheerleaders, signed a R\$29 billion financial guarantee that would underwrite the 2016 Olympics.

Two additional factors that likely contributed to the selection of Rio de Janeiro as 2016 Olympic host were the relatively high opportunities for an "Olympic legacy" when compared to the other candidates and the unparalleled opportunity to extract surplus value from the event. The IOC is a purely self-referential institution that promotes Olympic Values and global peace as the end goals of the Olympics, yet it is naive to think that the selection of Olympic sites can be separated from accumulation strategies predicated on an extractive business model. (SHAW, 2008; HORNE; WHANNEL, 2012). In the wake of the extravagant Beijing Olympics (which cost upwards of US\$40 billion and dislocated millions of people for real-estate development) and the onset of a global financial crisis in 2008, the organizers of the 2012 London Olympics were quick to limit public expectations and hurried to justify what suddenly appeared to be extravagant public spending on the Games. As the global economic crisis worsened in the lead up to the vote for the 2016 Olympics in October 2009, residents and politicians of Madrid and Chicago began to resist publically their city's candidatures, citing the need to spend increasingly scarce funds more pragmatically. This was not the case in Rio de Janeiro, where public resistance was scant and the "Brazilian boom" ensured fiscal profligacy. The Rio 2016 budget was greater than all of the other candidates combined and promised to generate urban and social legacies that would forever place the Olympic seal on the city.

In addition to (and perhaps because of) the guarantee of at least a R\$29 billion public investment in the Games in the midst of a economic crisis, the opportunities for private capital to multiply in Rio de Janeiro were greater than in other candidate cities. With three levels of government investing tens of billions in transportation infrastructure, subsidizing hotel

development, sporting facilities, security projects, “urban regeneration” and Olympic housing projects, there would be opportunities for civil engineering, security, tourism, and construction firms to profit.⁴ The growth of the Brazilian economy had already attracted significant foreign investment that the Olympic organizers promised to multiply. Additionally, Rio had not experienced the kind of real-estate bubbles that crippled the Spanish and USA economies in 2008. To the contrary, the Brazilian state was subsidizing housing projects through the Minha Casa, Minha Vida program and in Rio de Janeiro had embarked upon an aggressive new security strategy that was opening previously closed areas of the city for investment.

The state and federal elections of 2010 maintained the political alliances that had worked to bring the Olympics to Rio. At the municipal level, the mayor enjoyed almost complete control over the city council and has repeatedly used executive orders to carry out Olympics-related projects. The long-time President of the COB positioned himself as president of Rio 2016 and his close relationships with the political actors controlling the city and state governments and the federal Ministry of Sport facilitated and accelerated a staggering range of urban interventions ostensibly related to the hosting of the 2016 Olympics. While there has been significant political resistance emerging from social movements and opposition political parties, the hegemonic power structure that encompasses all levels of government and extends its financial, legal and political support to the Rio 2016 Organizing Committee has ensured that the coalition that brought the Games to Rio has been able to accomplish most of its short term goals.

1 Shock and Awe –the tactics, techniques, and discourses of “war”.

As Hayes; Horne (2011) and Gaffney (2010) have suggested, the production of the mega-event city is akin to the imposition of neo-liberal economic and political regimes through what Klein (2008) calls “shock doctrines” – tactics employed by sovereign powers to erase and remake the world in the image of global capital. While investigating autocratic and rapacious regimes of accumulation, Klein (2008) outlines a process of dismantling and re-constructing sovereign states through force of arms and techniques of terror. When considered in this context, the conceptualization, selling, implementation, and realization of SMEs in Brazil are revealed as tactics and techniques that work to install a neo-liberal model of social and economic development in a particular kind of urban space.

⁴ By contrast, the second place candidate, Madrid, had more than 70% of Olympic infrastructure already in place.

If we take the USA's 2003 invasion of Iraq as the paradigmatic example of the doctrine of shock and awe⁵, we can identify several parallels between that "war" and the implementation of SMEs in Brazil. Firstly, the war was "sold" to national and international audiences by a public relations firm (The Rendon Group) in tight collaboration with public authorities. This is comparable to the production of the Rio 2016 Olympic Bid Book and global media campaign by McKinsey & Company, which worked with elected officials and the Brazilian Olympic Committee. The similarities in manufacturing consent for the different projects are striking in that both reveal some form of geo-political competition, offer distinct economic and social outcomes, and are carried off under the voluntary creation of a permanent state of emergency (AGAMBEN, 2005) manufactured by public authorities in conjunction with a public relations firm. The state of emergency created by the "winning" of a SME is a calculated choice and requires the creation of a state of exception that is conditioned by the time constraints of the SME contract. Contrary to the bombing campaigns of full-scale invasions, in the case of mega-events, it is the mediated euphoria of conquest that functions as the awe-inducing element that opens the way for the deployment of a series of shocks.

Secondly, the Iraq invasion was predicated upon the notion of an existential threat to the nation *vis a vis* manufactured evidence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). If this threat were not eliminated, according to the official rationale, the nation would be at risk. Similarly, notions of civic and national patriotism were and are continually in play in the preparation of the Olympic bid. The idea of "competitive cities" (SÁNCHEZ, 2003) has created a *permanent, existential risk* to the prosperity of cities in the minds of public officials. Mega-events have become *the* mechanism for inserting cities of the Global South into global circuits of capital accumulation – a failure to capture these events is equivalent to failing to eliminate the competitive threat posed by other cities. The public relations firms argue for the preservation of the nation/city using manufactured evidence, WMDs in the case of Iraq; the risk of losing short, medium and long term economic benefits to other cities in the case of the Olympic host.

Thirdly, the Iraq War was conceived, designed, and implemented with the cooperation and collaboration between the public and private sectors. USA Vice-President Cheney had recently served on the board of directors of one of the companies (Halliburton) that stood to benefit the most from war contracts and then-president G.W. Bush had long standing ties to

⁵ The opening operation of the 2003 invasion of Iraq was named "shock and awe". The action consisted of a three-day bombing campaign designed to terrorize the Iraqi population while eliminating strategic military targets.

the petroleum industry. Similarly, Rio's Mayor Eduardo Paes has very strong ties with real-estate and construction interests in the Barra da Tijuca neighborhood, site of 70% of Olympic investments. Former Rio State Governor Cabral was closely connected with Delta, one of Brazil's biggest civil construction firms. Former-president Lula has close personal connections with Odebrecht, another massive civil construction firm that has been a primary beneficiary of SME construction projects. As we shall see later, and as happened in the USA, these companies have been able to use their political connections to turn their accumulation strategies into law.

Fourthly, a parallel can be observed between the installation of a temporary, extra-legal government, or as Agamben (2005, p. 3) describes, "a threshold of indeterminacy between democracy and absolutism". In the case of Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) revoked the Iraqi constitution and imposed a series of laws that privileged foreign oil-exploration firms, dissolved the Iraqi army, banned the Baath political party, and brokered a new constitution. The state of emergency that the invasion generated justified this intervention. This *ex post facto* rationale has also been applied in Brazil, where the Autoridade Público Olímpico (APO - Public Olympic Authority) and the Empresa Municipal Olímpica (EMO) were both created by executive orders and wield extraordinary power over decision-making processes regarding urban infrastructure and use of public funds that might ordinarily flow through democratic channels. Agamben (2005) describes the state of confusion between acts of executive power and acts of legislative power as "one of the essential characteristics of the state of exception." This confusion extends to all levels of government in Brazil in relation to SMEs. In both cases, Iraq and Rio de Janeiro, the notion that new governance regimes and their attendant laws are necessary, inevitable, and *temporary* interventions belies the fact that the conditions that brought them into reality and the risks that they attend to are wholly manufactured.

Finally, the installation of temporary regimes of governance through tactics of shock and awe has as an end goal the re-formulation of social, spatial, political, and economic relations in the neo-liberal mode⁶. Following Klein (2008), once the shock has worn off, individuals and communities are either too traumatized to respond, have become anesthetized

⁶ The neo-liberal mode of governance to be a suite of techniques and tactics that aim to isolate the individual in relation to market forces, reduce the role of the state in the provision of basic social services, and that "public authorities will only intervene in the economic order in the form of the law". (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 18). There is no universalizing description of neo-liberalism but its essential tenets as a political philosophy are that the "market is better than the state at distributing public resources" and that there should be a return to an individualism that is 'competitive', 'possessive', and constructed in terms of the doctrine of 'consumer sovereignty'. (ONG, 2006, p. 11).

and passive, or have woken up under a new suite of laws that they are powerless to fight against as normal channels of governance have been eliminated. Those who actively resist the new regime are characterized as *insurgents* and are subject to prosecution under special suites of laws. Once the political and economic interventions have been fully executed, the temporary regime disappears. In the case of the CPA, the re-structuring of Iraq's economy was effected in 14 months, after which the CPA ceased to exist. Brazil's APO is scheduled to expire in 2018, or sooner, depending on the will of the Conselho Público Olímpico, a three-person tribunal formerly headed by Henrique Mirelles, a former president of Bank Boston and Brazil's Central Bank and then by a general of the Brazilian army. The techniques, tactics, and processes of "exception" were also being applied in the twelve cities that hosted the 2014 FIFA World Cup. (SANTOS JÚNIOR; GAFFNEY; RIBEIRO, 2014). In the case of Rio de Janeiro, the situation is particularly worrisome as the multiple layers of temporary governance are overlapping and have poorly defined directives.

While the analogy between invading a sovereign nation and the arrival of a SME may initially seem far-fetched, there are so many parallels that the thread is worth following. In the case of Rio de Janeiro, the awe generated by the manufacturing and production of the Olympic spectacle have served as a significant distraction while a series of shocks are applied throughout the city. These shocks are presented as a justification for the delivery of the Olympic project, or as we will explore next, a discursive urbanism founded upon a neo-liberal model of social and economic development.

2 Olympic Imaginary

The production of geographic imaginaries has long influenced the way that individuals envision possible futures. The extensive literature on the use of maps and images to influence human perception of the world has yet to take the production of the Olympics as a subject, but it is clear that the theoretical models and analyses undertaken by Harley (1989), Cosgrove (COSGROVE; DANIELS, 1989) and Duncan (2005) can also be applied to the way that Olympic candidate cities⁷ represent urban space and culture. Understanding these representations is important because they reflect the desires of local elites to re-shape the city, speak to the perceived and actual demands of international sports federations and drive urban planning agendas in host cities.

⁷ There are three stages of candidature along the way to becoming an Olympic Host: postulant (within the country), aspirant (global), candidate (final round).

During the hotly contested, global competition to capture SMEs, candidate cities and nations present highly specific representations of urban space and culture to international sports federations and to local populations. SME bids are, by their very nature, discursively driven representations of a utopian urban future. Once the contracts are signed and the projects begin, discourses of development, transformation, security, and sport take physical form on the landscape as the Olympic city⁸ grows. The Olympic host-city contract is the driving force behind the innumerable transformations that “prepare” a host. Investigations into the processes through which the existing spaces of the city will be bent to the demands of a SME reveal innumerable latent and potential conflicts that are elided in the event promoters’ representations of the city.

The interrelated processes of representing and reshaping urban space in an Olympic City begin many years before the event itself with a tactical projection of urban images and spatial tropes to the International Olympic Committee. These same processes “sell” an Olympic project to investors and residents. The spatial imaginaries, or geographies of representation (BAILLY, 1993), of the candidate city are contained within the Olympic Bid Book (OBB), which is typically produced by a global public relations firm in conjunction with the national Olympic committee of the prospective host. These images and text of the OBB draw from and place demands on urban space, its residents, and its visitors. I refer to the complex of images produced and projected in the Olympic candidature process as the Olympic Imaginary.

An Olympic Imaginary (OI) is extensive in that it includes thousands of urban, political, financial, and social interventions that extend across the Olympic City: venues, transportation lines, athletes’ and officials’ housing, hotels, tourist sites, financing packages that stimulate construction, new legislation, communications networks, airports, sport and social programs, and security apparatuses. The urban and social interventions emphasize compactness and exclusivity, limiting travel time between venues for spectators, athletes, officials, and media while guaranteeing zones of exclusion and spaces of exception for VIPs or the so-called “Olympic Family” while providing “enduring legacies” for citizens. The financial and political interventions guarantee commercial rights, financial exemptions, and independent governance structures that will deliver the event.

Though complex, we can also assert that an OI is typically simplistic, using broad strokes to paint a highly selective, fragmented image of urban space that resonates with the

⁸ For the sake of simplicity I will refer to the mega-event city as an “Olympic city”

spatial and social demands of the IOC as perceived by the candidate city. An OI employs discursive structures that are connected to the larger ideological narratives of the IOC. Those narratives are contained within the IOC charter, but also utilize a neo-liberalizing, market-driven discourse that attends to the social, political, and spatial exigencies of capital interests. Thus, Olympic Imaginaries utilize shorthand mechanisms (semiotic codes, spatial tropes) to relay discursively laden ideas that are inextricably connected to narratives of development, modernity, progress, and politically neutered discourses of sport. In the next section, we will examine a few of these mechanisms in the context of the Rio 2016 bid.

3 Olympic Discourse Analysis

One of the mechanisms for unpacking the narratives of an Olympic Imaginary is through a critical textual and visual discourse analysis of the bidding documents. The underlying assumption of a critical discourse analysis is that gross word counts will reflect priorities and targets, revealing trends, and biases. As reflected in the following analysis of the Rio 2016 Bid Book, the priorities of the event organizers are to provide infrastructure development and economic opportunities for global clients in a highly securitized environment. These practices and goals are justified through the vague notion of “legacy” and the hollow signifier of “sustainability”. The comparatively low usage of terms like *citizen* and *education*, as well as the almost complete absence of references to *participation* confirm the well-documented trends in the production of SMEs. (BROUDEHOUX, 2007; BENNETT, 2011; PILLAY; BASS; TOMLINSON, 2009).

The following is an analysis of the English language Rio 2016 Olympic Bid Books. The words were searched on the pdf documents and word counts recorded. Some root words such as *sustain* were counted only when deployed in the context of *sustainability*. The exercise was repeated to ensure accuracy of the count. The underlying assumption of the exercise is that word frequency will indicate discursive directionality.

Rio 2016 Olympic Bid Book Discourse Analysis (English)

Word	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Total
Citizen	2	1	8	11
Transformation	20	7	11	38
Education	27	11	5	43
Social	33	13	17	63
Culture	52	14	8	74
Sustain(ability)	84	21	16	121
Legacy	52	52	25	129
Infrastructure	54	30	57	141
Development	62	57	26	145
Client	43	27	84	154
Environment(al)	134	34	29	197
Security	30	14	186	230

A comparative discourse of Olympic City Bid Books would be a fascinating exercise and would likely reveal the shifting discursive frames of the IOC over time as well as the ways in which those frames are perceived and attended to by candidate cities. While readers may draw their own conclusions from the discourse analysis above, there are clear indications that the 2016 Olympics privilege clients over citizens and security over education. While this is not surprising, it may be reflective of larger trends in the Brazilian political and economic system.

The textual discursive structure deployed in the Rio 2016 OBB was reinforced through a global media campaign to sell the Olympic Project to international audiences. This campaign took the form of video presentations as well as celebrity and political appearances in events staged around the world. In the Rio 2016 candidature process we can identify a distinct evolution of the Olympic videos. Earlier videos (2007⁹, 2008¹⁰) were relatively simple, technical representations of the “Olympic potential” of Rio de Janeiro. They showed the bare bones of the Olympic City: transportation infrastructure, sport installations, hotels, and security. As the video projects evolved, they became more elaborately produced, digitized, and fragmented. The final video (2009¹¹) shows almost no Olympic spaces as such, but plays on emotions and the “natural disposition” of Rio de Janeiro to host the Olympic Games. The images, music, and sound are overwhelmingly emotional, generating strong affectation in even the most calloused observer.

⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRRJ9x1t9pI>

¹⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUiSjSqhpFA>

¹¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z00jjc-WtZI&feature=related>

The final (and winning) Rio 2016 video presents a highly fragmented and selected urban imaginary. The motifs of music, leisure, water, mountains, bright colors, and collective emotion predominate. The movements of sport occur within a context of a soft, naturalized urbanism that plays host to the rhythms of samba, producing a sense of harmony between the cultural, urban, and physical worlds. This strategy shows the potential for televised spectacle in the city while demonstrating that Rio de Janeiro already possesses the requisite cultural characteristics that will attract international tourists while providing a safe, clean environment for the Games. Logically, no Olympic promotional video would show the dark underbelly of urban life, yet the images selected for the video encompass a staggeringly limited area of the city, playing on the iconography of landscape and culture with every scene.

The choreography of geography and culture shown in the Rio 2016 video follows a limited and repetitive sequence. Following the action frame by frame we are presented with the following physical and cultural landscapes (with points indicated on the Map 1):



Map 1: Localization of video sequence shown in Rio 2016 Olympic Video (2009).

The circumscribed geography of the video reinforces a touristic and voyeuristic imaginary of “Rio de Janeiro.” This spatial imaginary strategically employs the natural beauty (human and physical, not architectural) and “naturalized” cultures (sport, samba, beach,

football) of Rio de Janeiro to sell the city's candidature. Ironically, the video does not show the Barra da Tijuca region of the city that will receive the majority of Olympic events.

There is a second video component of the games that is more technically oriented towards Olympic installations, showing the infrastructural details of the OC¹². This longer video sequence utilizes simulated flights over the city that obfuscate contemporary urban realities. For instance, in the fly-over of the projected Olympic concentration in Barra da Tijuca, the favela communities that currently occupy this space (and have so for 40 years in the case of Vila Autódromo) are cleaned from the map. The years' long struggle for housing rights for many of Rio's communities in Olympic regions do not figure in the projection of the OI, though they are an integral part of the daily life of Rio de Janeiro – and will be an important and controversial element in the production of the Olympic City, especially in relation to security and housing policy. The simulacra of urban reality presented by the Rio 2016 videos presages the work of sterilizing and securitizing urban space that will be carried out by bulldozers, legal actions, and police forces.

Returning to the Rio 2016 OBB and the cartographic projection of the OI, we can identify a mis-representation of urban centrality and a false sense of connectivity. The Olympic City is notably distinct from the real city in that it focuses on the south-western suburb of Barra da Tijuca where the majority of the Olympic projects will take physical form. The Olympic City is disconnected from its metropolitan context, and is represented as an interlocking network of four Olympic zones connected by homogeneous transit networks. The encircling of Olympic zones gives the impression that vast areas of the city will be given over to Olympic production, when in reality the areas that will undergo direct physical transformation in preparation for the Olympics are quite limited when considering the city as a metropolitan area.

If we take, for example, the area delimited by the Maracanã circle, it appears to occupy a 13km diameter, when the Maracanã region of the games is comprised of two stadiums that together encompass less than a 3km diameter¹³. This spatial exaggeration makes it appear as if the Olympic clusters are closer to each other than they actually are, giving the transportation plan a feel of coherence, compactness and fluidity that does not concord with dysfunctional reality of Rio de Janeiro's public transportation system.

¹²<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5X5IuB2Y8g>

¹³Naturally, the stadiums have urban impacts that extend beyond their physical structures. The extension of the Olympic areas to include places like the Ilha do Fundão or the Alta do Boa Vista (Maracanã cluster) is disingenuous at best.



Map 2: The Rio 2016 Olympic Map. Mis-representation of fluidity, connectivity, and centrality.

To compound the erroneous notion of the city presented in the Olympic Map, the metropolitan area as a whole is not considered. When overlaid onto the metropolitan region, the “Olympic City” covers the wealthiest areas that are relatively well served by public transportation, environmental, and recreational amenities. There is no pretense of extending the “transportation legacy” (for example) to include the millions of people living in dozens of cities that surround the Rio de Janeiro city limits and the Bay of Guanabara. This Olympic vision might “include all sports in the same city” but will ensure that those who live outside of the Olympic City will have radically uneven access to those sports, both during and after the Games.

The Olympic Imaginary is important to understand because it represents, in the case of Rio de Janeiro, a radical transformation of urban space and social relations. After the selection process has ended, the signing of a contract between a Bid Committee and the IOC sets into motion the transformation of the imaginary into physical reality. During this next stage, the Olympic Imaginary continues to be produced and reproduced, changing with the interventions that will produce the Olympic City.

4 The Olympic City as neo-liberal laboratory

It is important to note that neo-liberalism is more than just a political and/or economic philosophy. It should, according to Ong (2006, p. 12), also be considered a “set of technologies of governance: the establishment of political exemptions that permit sovereign practices and subjectifying techniques that deviate from the established norm”. These technologies should be studied as techniques of surveillance and control which “are both mobile and calculative” and can be “decontextualized from their original sources and recontextualized in constellations of mutually constitutive and contingent relationships”. (ONG, 2006, p. 13). It is also important to note that neo-liberalism in Brazil has specific and contradictory characteristics and that trends at the national level are not necessarily reproduced at the metropolitan level and vice versa.

One of the current threads of analysis that is dominating the academic debate regarding SMEs in Brazil is the installation of states of exception. The condition of exception can be understood as a departure from the rule of law or a, “political liminality, an extraordinary decision to depart from a generalized political normativity, to intervene in the logic of ruling and being ruled”. (ONG, 2006, p. 5). However, the state of exception does not account for a shift in neo-liberal tactics that have “created new forms of inclusion, setting apart some citizen-subjects, and creating new spaces that enjoy extraordinary political benefits and economic gain”. (ONG, 2006, p. 5). This double movement, that of creating states and cities of exception as well as granting exceptions to the conditions of neo-liberalism, is crystallizing around SME production in Rio de Janeiro in three interrelated ways: legal interventions, urban restructuring, and militarization.

5 Legal interventions

The restructuring of laws under emergency conditions that result from the tactics of shock and awe also allows for the implementation of special rules that grant certain people extra-ordinary rights while limiting those of the majority. Some of the defining conditions of neo-liberalism are the fragmentation of urban space and the establishment of differential rights that pertain to those spaces. (VALDEZ, 2011). The construction of spaces of exception extends to free trade areas, special investment zones or event related goods that are not subject to taxation, and the implementation, for example, of temporary and exclusive transportation lanes for VIPs. The exemptions given to individuals allow for the passage across frontiers through the relaxation of visa requirements, the right to bear arms in foreign

territory given to the security services of heads of state, exclusive marketing rights given over to “official partners”, or the hyper-credentialing of individuals that allows access to a series of spaces within the city (stadiums, VIP areas, press areas, back stage, express lanes, etc.) The process of passing of laws of exception that benefit FIFA And the IOC by all three levels of government has been highly visible in the Brazilian media. This has generated significant public debate about issues of national sovereignty while exposing the laws to public view allowing a fuller investigation of the logics, tactics, and strategies behind them. The legislative process for the Brazilian SMEs is in constant formation but there are a series of ratified laws such as the *Lei Geral da Copa* that provide insight into the general process of SME installation. In what follows, I offer several examples of these laws though the full suite deserves more attention than can be given here¹⁴.

Three days after the announcement the 2016 Olympic host, the city government presented a law to re-zone a huge swath of low-density residential territory near the future Olympic site. Known as PEU Vargens, this law was clearly waiting in the wings to be submitted to the city council in the wake of the Olympic shock. The re-zoning is intended to stimulate real-estate speculation by opening new area for settlement and allowing for the construction of high-rise condominium complexes in a region characterized by one and two story houses that lined a series of canals. Ingenuously referred to as the *Venezia Carioca* (Rio’s Venice), the intentions of the city government were clear: use the Olympic moment to push through a law that was prepared in anticipation of a moment of maximum distraction. After some delay and debate in the city council, PEU Vargens passed by a wide margin in November of 2009.

On the macro-planning level, the City Council approved a new Master Plan for the City of Rio de Janeiro in 2011. The 2011 master plan attends to all of the demands of the SMEs in terms of transportation and stadium infrastructures, while allowing significant financial incentives for hotel construction in areas of the city not previously zoned for hotels. The legal parameters for building in Rio de Janeiro have now become completely orientated to the production of SMEs. As mayor Eduardo Paes notes in a Rio 2016 promotional video, “The city plan of Rio is the Olympic plan and vice versa”. This worrying phrase has been consecrated in municipal law. The 2011 Master Plan was followed in 2012 by repackaged Strategic Plan post-2016, that calls for Rio de Janeiro to be a “more competitive and

¹⁴ For a more complete analysis of the laws of exception and the relationships between the formation of event coalitions see GUSMÃO DE OLIVEIRA, Nelma. *O Poder dos Jogos e os Jogos do Poder: Interesses em Campo na Produção da Cidade para o Espectáculo Esportivo*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 2015.

integrated” city¹⁵. The fusion of marketing and urban planning has risen to the level of art in the form of coffee-table books.

The suite of SME laws¹⁶ passed by the Brazilian congress (Lei da Copa 2012, Lei Olímpica 2009 – passed two days *before* Rio was awarded the Games) conforms to Ong’s reflections regarding neo-liberalism as exception and exceptions to neo-liberalism. For instance, Chapter VI, Article 39 of the Lei Geral da Copa states that, “the three levels of government will, in collaboration with all competent authorities assure that, during the length of the competition any official event location, especially the stadiums, will be available for the exclusive use of FIFA.” This article raises significant questions about suspension of territorial sovereignty, the re-inscription of geographic space, and the actualization of a “form of movable entitlement without formal citizenship” that Ong (2006, p. 16) identifies as defining a neo-liberal bio-politics. FIFA demands that a radius of two kilometers from any stadium as well as any principal access routes be considered “exclusive areas”. This signifies that in addition to making the stadium and its environs into FIFA free-trade zones, all metro and train stations that lead to World Cup stadia will be subject to FIFA’s rules regarding marketing, commerce, and distribution.

To complicate further, FIFA demands that host nations and cities be responsible for venue security costs, but that the agents that control those spaces not be affiliated with the state (Lei Geral da Copa, Capítulo V, Art.40). That is, the state must pay for as many as 4,000 private security guards per host city. In the case of Brazil, this will be nearly 50,000 private security guards that will control urban space. To compound the relationship between SMEs and the installation of temporary and autocratic regimes of neo-liberal accumulation, section IV article 16 of the Law of the Cup increases the Brazilian criminal penalty for piracy from zero to three months of prison to a *minimum* of three months to one year. For the Olympics, new laws regarding terrorism are being introduced and anti-terrorism military installations are under construction in Rio de Janeiro. In regard to the Olympics, the spaces and rules of exception for the so-called Olympic Family are too many to enumerate. The various levels of credentialing are mind-boggling and the establishment of temporary “exclusive lanes” for transportation, “private beaches” for athletes, and restrictions on use of public spaces are indicative of larger processes of isolation, privatization, and exemption.

¹⁵ <http://www0.rio.rj.gov.br/planoestrategico/>

¹⁶ See <http://www.transparenciaolimpica.com.br/legislacao.html> for a full list of Olympic laws and http://www.portaltransparencia.gov.br/copa2014/_include/legislacao/ for a list of laws pertaining to the 2014 World Cup

Conclusion

This paper has outlined a general trajectory for the realization of SMEs in Rio de Janeiro and Brazil. The effects and processes by and through which these events unfold are too complex for any one person to understand fully, much less relate in a brief paper. It should be evident that SMEs do not and cannot happen without specific political interventions that contravene existing laws, creating cities and states of exception that re-structure legal, spatial and social relationships with the goal of accelerating capital accumulation in the neo-liberal mold. These interventions are autocratic, instilling a state of emergency that is justified by the war-like approach of the institutions and people that imagine and produce them.

The Rio 2016 project employed tactics of shock and awe to stage the city as a laboratory for various forms of neo-liberal bio-politics. To underscore this point, since 2009 the municipal government has run a program called *Choque de Ordem* (shock of order). This “zero-tolerance” program targets minor infractions in the Zona Sul of Rio de Janeiro: irregular parking, street vending, non-permitted construction, minor drug offenses, sleeping on the street, public urination. The goal is to “shock” people into full compliance with the law in a city that has historically been very lax about enforcement. This can be considered a long-term re-education process that is intended to “clean” the city for presentation to international audiences. For larger urban operations, the military forces that invade and occupy slums have the word CHOQUE (shock) emblazoned on their vehicles and uniforms.

The Olympic Imaginary, as I have described it, attends to the specific and invented demands of the event while projecting a utopian vision of the urban future. The OI is predicated on the discursive frameworks of capital accumulation and neo-liberal governance propagated by international sports federations and their corporate partners. The international agreements that set these events into motion are the antithesis of democratic, long-term city planning. The overdue restructuring of the SME model needs to begin here.

The extra-legal institutions that have been a central component of Olympic governance since Sidney 2000 have immense powers and huge budgets, making decisions that will impact the lives of millions of people for decades. Rio 2016’s governance model was inspired by London’s Olympic Delivery Authority, but in characteristic Brazilian fashion, adds two bureaucratic layers where one would do. How these parallel governments function has yet to be fully understood by researchers¹⁷. This is an indication of the shroud of secrecy

¹⁷ For example, Provisional Measure 488/2010 created the Brazilian Sport Legacy Company Ltd. (Empresa Brasileira de Legado Esportivo S.A.) or BRASIL 2016, a private company created by the federal government to

that covers these institutions and should serve as an alert to Brazilian civil society and potential future hosts.

The bio-politics of mega-event hosting demands spaces of exception in which credentialed individuals can move freely within a universalizing regime of exclusionary neo-liberalism. The division between included and excluded therefore pertains to people as much as it does to the spaces they inhabit (or not). This duality embeds the, “territoriality of citizenship...in the territoriality of global capitalism” (ONG, 2006, p. 7) dislocating the *guarantee of rights* by and from the state to the *provision of rights* by and for the market.

The restructuring of space and social relations in Brazil is not happening *because of* mega-events but *in service to* the shifting processes of capital accumulation in which they are embedded. The spatio-temporal periodicity of SMEs makes them particularly apt mechanisms for evaluating the most recent manifestations of the larger trends in global, national, and metropolitan political economies. Brazil’s SME cycle can be understood as a catalyst for the more complete implementation of the techniques and tactics of neo-liberalism that are following global political and economic tendencies. The cities where SMEs occur have become laboratories for the spatialization of these dynamics.

The 2016 Olympics are providing an opportunity to deploy a suite of extra-legal measures used to transform space and society. However, this opportunity was actively sought out by an event coalition that is comprised of the most powerful people and institutions in Brazil. The solidity of democratic institutions and legal frameworks determine the scope and type of social change that will occur, yet in nearly all contexts the “state of emergency” generated by a SME allows for the creation of parallel and independent governmental frameworks. SMEs always generate negative externalities and always transfer public wealth to private hands. In the Global South, the impact is particularly onerous because the fragility of housing tenure rights in the large informal market is complicated by urban administrations that implement wide ranging projects that will attend to the short-term demands of the SME. There are thousands of stories of forced removal, intimidation, threats, social discord, displacement and “resettlement” to be told, making clear that throughout Brazil the mega-event cycle is restructuring space and social relations to create zones of accumulation that presage a, “return to a primitive form of individualism based in the doctrine of consumer sovereignty”. (ONG, 2006, p. 11). This is the end-game of neo-liberalism. SMEs are

oversee the Olympic budget. In September 2011, BRASIL 2016 was decommissioned after more than R\$100,000 had been spent on putting it together. There has been no formal explanation for the elimination of this entity.

accelerating this process by using host cities as laboratories and populations as experimental subjects.

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