Original article

From entrepreneurialism to utopias: heterotopic appropriation of Rio de Janeiro after mega-events

Do empreendedorismo às utopias: apropriação heterotópica do Rio de Janeiro pós megaeventos

Natasha BANTIM [I]

Abstract

This article analyzes the appropriation of Rio de Janeiro's Olympic space in the post-Olympic context in light of Lefebvre's (2002) production of space and division between isotopia, heterotopia, and utopia. The article approaches the context of "urban entrepreneurialism" in urban interventions in the city, in a process that seeks to attract capital through policies that have focused on a small social group, and, on the other hand, is marked by conflicts that have claimed, in a certain way, the right to the city. Different forms of appropriation of spaces and equipment related to mega-events in Rio de Janeiro were observed, especially by the local population in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the article proposes that these heterotopias can be transformed into alternative possibilities for a utopian project for the city.

Keywords: mega-events; heterotopias; production of urban space; right to the city; Rio de Janeiro.

Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar a apropriação do espaço olímpico carioca no contexto pós-olímpico segundo a produção do espaço de Lefebvre (2002) e sua divisão entre isotopias, heterotopias e utopias. Indica-se o contexto do "empreendedorismo urbano" nos processos de intervenção urbana na cidade, buscando-se atração do capital com políticas que privilegiaram um pequeno grupo social e, em contraponto, os conflitos que reivindicaram, de certa forma, o direito à cidade. Observaram-se diferentes formas de apropriação dos espaços e equipamentos relacionados aos megaeventos do Rio de Janeiro, especialmente por parte da população local no contexto de pandemia de Covid-19. Indica-se a possibilidade de que essas heterotopias possam se transformar em possibilidades alternativas de um projeto utópico para a cidade.

Palavras-chave: *megaeventos; heterotopias; produção do espaço urbano; direito à cidade; Rio de Janeiro.*

Introduction

Mega sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics, along with their associated urban projects, were framed as opportunities for host cities to reposition themselves within the global urban network (Bienenstein, Sanchez, & Mascarenhas, 2012). This repositioning was expected to take place through a strategic alliance between media, sports, and business, enhancing international visibility and attracting both capital and visitors through tourism-driven activities (Mascarenhas, 2014).

These interventions are part of a broader context marked by the proliferation of speculative and high-risk urban projects that, in their attempt to attract capital, subordinate essential infrastructure for social reproduction to market-oriented logics (Santos Junior & Novaes, 2016). Their consequences have been analyzed and discussed by various authors from multiple perspectives (Bonamichi, 2021; Castro & Novaes, 2015; Egler, 2017; Freire, 2013; Gaffney, 2014; Mascarenhas, 2016; Santos Junior, 2015a; Santos Junior & Novaes, 2016; Urriola, 2022; Vainer, 2011).

This study focuses on tourism-related projects and infrastructure in the city of Rio de Janeiro – designed to attract visitors and construct a positive image of the city – and their appropriation by another social group: the local population in the post-Olympic context.

The analysis proposed here is based on Lefebvre's (2002) theory of the production of space, which results from the activity of collective social agents operating through successive impulses, projecting and shaping spatial extensions. The actions of these social agents are often in opposition to one another; therefore, the interactions, strategies, successes, and failures of these multiple differences shape the characteristics of urban space.

This article argues that, in the post-Olympic context of Rio de Janeiro, different forms of urban space appropriation can be observed. According to Lefebvre's classification (2006), these appropriations can be categorized into spaces that align with existing logics and planned frameworks (isotopies), spaces that contrast with this logic (heterotopias), and spaces that represent what does not yet exist (utopias). This classification highlights the heterogeneity of these forms of appropriation and their potential as alternative possibilities for urban projects. These distinctions emerge from the interactions, strategies, successes, and failures of each collective social agent, which, operating through successive impulses (with actions often in opposition to one another), ultimately project and shape spatial extensions (Lefebvre, 2002).

To structure this analysis, this article is organized into four sections, in addition to this introduction. The first section examines the strategies adopted by public authorities for urban interventions in the context of mega-events, aimed at maintaining (isotopic) strategies for capital attraction. Next, the second section discusses the heterotopias observed in situ in these spaces in the post-Olympic context (for example, the appropriation of certain spaces by the local population). The third section explores the use of heterotopias as a foundation for constructing an alternative utopian project for the city, based on the ideals of the right to the city and the reclaiming of the commons.

Finally, the concluding remarks reflect on the construction of a utopian project based on the existing heterotopias within the city.

This analysis is conducted during an unusual period, in which the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic led to a drastic reduction in tourism flows due to health restrictions. The resulting decline in the use of transportation, facilities, and tourist attractions by visitors partially reconfigured how these spaces were used by the local population, often in ways different from those originally envisioned, thereby reinforcing local heterotopias.

This study, therefore, highlights alternative appropriations of tourist spaces that challenge capital-driven interests.

Isotopic practices: urban entrepreneurship and its contradictions

For Lefebvre (2002), isotopies denote spatial segments that can be compared, interpreted in plans, and aligned. They represent places aligned with the dominant spatial logic, standardized by state authority and market dynamics. These spaces, often shaped by state rationalism, tend to overlook pre-existing spatial structures, as well as the rights, interests, and burdens placed on local populations.

Lefebvre's critique of isotopic production is tied to increasing concerns that the anticipated heterogeneity of public spaces has been eroded by neoliberal forces driving spatial homogenization (Kahraman, Pak, & Scheerlinck, 2018).

In this context, urban intervention projects prioritize immediate economic objectives over improvements in territorial conditions (Santos Junior & Novaes, 2016). This approach aligns with the model recognized as "urban entrepreneurship" (Harvey, 1989), which involves a combination of state powers at different levels, various civil society organizations, and private sector interests. These coalitions lead to the restructuring of urban infrastructures, governance institutions, and regulatory frameworks to align with capital dynamics, ultimately facilitating capital attraction[1] (Harvey, 2005). However, these actions also contribute to the homogenization of urban spaces.

While such homogenizing processes can hinder the sustainability of notions of identity, citizenship, and belonging, the very movement of urban entrepreneurship and city marketing is rooted in the construction of an identity tied to the territory. This identity is often constructed through references to historically rooted cultural practices, collective narratives, and shared memories – elements with strong social and discursive significance – creating an inherent contradiction. (Harvey, 2005, 2012). Consequently, the globalization processes that drive spatial homogenization coexist with an ongoing reconstruction of heterogeneity (Canclini, 2005; Haesbaert, 2010; Santos, 2002). Distinctive local initiatives, which contradict the assumed uniformity required for the commodification of space, may foster political resistance and opposition to globalization and capital itself (Harvey, 2005).

The characteristics identified as "special" are leveraged in promotional city image policies as part of a strategy for marketing local symbols and representations, a practice known as city marketing. Sánchez (1999) argues that the significance of this strategy is closely linked to urban entrepreneurship, as the strengths and

weaknesses of places have become increasingly measurable. Consequently, business success now depends on the valuation of the intrinsic attributes of each location.

Moreover, projects related to tourism, leisure, urban enjoyment, and hedonism hold strong appeal for both citizens and the market. These initiatives are built upon a social consensus regarding quality of life, an idea that serves as a form of social cement, fostering a positive consensus around such projects. This, in turn, signals a city's capacity for action and level of confidence in attracting future investments from external markets (ibid.).

In this context, the widely promoted model for strategic planning actions is the urban transformation process of Barcelona for the 1992 Olympics, endorsed by various international agencies. The interventions carried out in the city became a reference, presented as a menu of strategies – termed "Urbanism à la carte" (Delgadillo, 2014, p. 90) – encompassing actions such as strategic planning, megaprojects, historical center revitalization, urban marketing campaigns, and more to address urban challenges across different contexts. Foreign consultants, international cooperation agencies, academics, public officials, think tanks, and financial institutions played a key role in disseminating these strategies in diverse cities and settings, including Puerto Madero (1990), Bogotá (2000), and Rio de Janeiro (ibid.).

However, beneath these so-called successful projects lie profound social and economic challenges. These range from spatial segregation within the same city – where a regenerated urban core is surrounded by growing poverty – to urban competition that impacts income distribution, increases urban fabric volatility, produces ephemeral benefits, and prioritizes image over the substantive resolution of socio-economic problems.

In Rio de Janeiro, the shift toward a political economy based on urban entrepreneurship began in the early 1990s, with initiatives such as the Rio 92 summit and the city's first strategic plan, "Rio Sempre Rio." Public-private partnerships served as the primary mechanism for this transition, embedded within a governance framework aimed at enhancing the city's "competitiveness" (Fernandes, 2019; Mascarenhas, 2014; Omena, 2015). Following the model of the "Rio Sempre Rio" plan, a Catalan consultancy was commissioned to support the city's first Olympic bid. During the administration of Mayor Eduardo Paes, despite the publication of a new Strategic Plan, "O Rio Mais Integrado e Competitivo (2009-2012)," the city opted to maintain its corporate governance model and to use mega-events as a strategy for urban marketing (Fernandes, 2019). Bessa and Álvares (2014) argues that mega-events represent the pinnacle of capital's virtual expansion and serve as instruments for transforming tourist landscapes, using spectacle to create and recreate urban structures and imagery to enhance the value of certain territorial zones. While these transformations are ephemeral and impose financial uncertainties on public budgets, they often prove socially detrimental to affected communities while generating substantial profits for speculative capital.

In Rio de Janeiro, part of the discourse used to build consensus around the purported benefits of these events was tied to a narrative emphasizing the city's prestigious past—one that had been lost over time, resulting in abandonment and disorder. This past, encapsulated in the tourism imagery of the "Marvelous City" and the municipality's historical prominence, was portrayed as something that could be revived through mega-events. These events, it was argued, would generate both physical legacies through public interventions and a so-called "legacy of self-esteem" for the citizens by reversing abandonment and reshaping the city's image (Magalhães, 2013). The dominant narrative suggested that media exposure and the urban transformations spurred by the Games would reposition the city, securing a stronger foothold in the global tourism market.

Effectively, from the 2000s onward, the city experienced a cycle of mega-events, including the Pan American Games (2007), the Military World Games (2011), the UN International Conference Rio+20 (2012), World Youth Day (2013), the FIFA Confederations Cup (2013), the FIFA World Cup (2014), and the Olympic and Paralympic Games (2016). Notably, throughout this process, local legislation was subordinated to international organizations in opaque processes that lacked popular legitimacy. Examples of this include the General World Cup Law, which suspended national territorial sovereignty and transferred regulatory authority over certain economic activities to FIFA and the IOC within designated areas (Gaffney, 2014), and the Olympic Act, which granted a set of privileges to the IOC, creating legal "exceptions" in a process characterized by legal violations, a lack of transparency in procurement and budgetary procedures, ultimately transforming Rio into a "state of exception" (Vainer, 2011).

Another defining feature was the large number of projects executed through public-private partnerships (PPPs), including the construction of the Olympic Park, the Athletes' Village, and the Golf Course, as well as renovations of the Marina da Glória and the "Sambódromo", the Light Rail Transit (VLT) system in the port area, the TransOlímpica Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, and interventions in the city's western zone and the Porto Maravilha redevelopment. These PPPs granted the administration of infrastructure and services to private companies for a fixed period, with state participation involving various forms of public resource transfers, such as tax exemptions, infrastructure development, asset transfers, or direct budgetary allocations. This resulted in an imbalanced partnership in which infrastructure was produced locally using public resources, while profits were largely appropriated by global corporations (Santos Junior & Novaes, 2016). Additionally, a key issue in this discussion is that many of these projects were developed in major urban spaces, which should have been treated as public and/or common spaces, requiring decision-making processes that considered their broader societal significance (ibid.).

Regarding urban mobility, planning efforts primarily focused on the mobility of tourists and event consumers rather than the working population. This is reflected in the layout of new

transport infrastructure, such as Metro Line 4, the BRT corridors, and the VLT route, which prioritize previously described centralities (Mascarenhas, 2015; Rodrigues, 2015).

Regarding housing policies, the allocation of public investment to specific urban areas led to uneven spatial valorization. The global visibility achieved by host cities through mega-events played a significant role in the real estate boom, propelling Rio de Janeiro to have the highest property prices per square meter in Brasil (Castro et al., 2015). However, the most visible social impact of this process was the forced displacement of families to accommodate the construction of tourism-related infrastructure for mega-events. Notable examples include the evictions in Morro da Providência, Aldeia Maracanã, Vila Autódromo, and several other areas.

In Rio de Janeiro's favelas, particularly those located in the southern zone, displacements were justified under the Morar Carioca program, which aimed to urbanize all favelas in the city by 2020. In favelas deemed "unfeasible for urbanization," residents were to be relocated to housing complexes (Magalhães, 2013). Meanwhile, in "urbanized favelas," new business opportunities emerged through their transformation into tourist attractions and the expansion of the "favela tour" model, facilitated by the pacification policy and the installation of Police Pacification Units (UPPs), as seen in Morro Santa Marta (Freire-Medeiros, Vilarouca, & Menezes, 2016).

The establishment of UPPs was part of security policies but also had direct implications for housing. These units contributed to rising rental and property prices, effectively regulating the real estate market. Many families, unable to afford the increasing costs, were forced to seek housing in less expensive areas (Castro & Novaes, 2015). Beyond the UPPs, Santos Junior (2015a) highlights the implementation of a security regime characterized by strict public order control, repression of protests through police violence, the widespread use of less-lethal weapons (often deployed indiscriminately), and the privatization of security in elite spaces.

It is evident that the three main interventionist policies implemented by public authorities in the context of mega-events—mobility, housing, and security—are directly connected to tourism activities, shaping and being shaped by them within the city's key centralities (the South Zone, Barra da Tijuca, and the city center).[2] These interventions adhered to the principles of neoliberal strategic planning.

Heterotopic practices: conflicts, contrasts, and coexistence

Urban interventions in the context of mega-events were explicitly designed to construct an urban ideal framed to market the city globally, embedding symbols and spatial uses aligned with these interests. However, given the inherently dynamic nature of social practices in urban spaces, actual spatial uses do not always align with initial expectations.

The production of space is a continuous and evolving process. Even when interventions, projects, and plans are formulated by supralocal agencies based on preconceived spatial models, everyday interactions with these transformations may diverge from their intended purposes. Lefebvre (2002) refers to these divergent practices as heterotopias. While urban space remains inherently fluid, urban interventions are typically designed to serve specific social groups and reinforce predetermined spatial functions. Thus, isotopies and heterotopies exist in a relational dynamic: isotopies emerge from state rationalism, while heterotopies materialize through the actions of groups resisting dominant public forces.

Notably, despite heterotopias emerging through the tangible presence of non-hegemonic groups, these spaces tend to disappear once their physical appropriation ceases, or they are suppressed by dominant groups. This is because isotopic production aligns with neoliberal spatial homogenization practices, ultimately reducing the anticipated heterogeneity of urban spaces (Kahraman, Pak, & Scheerlinck, 2018).

Harvey (2014) contends that social movements generate heterotopias by spatializing struggles against hegemonic groups. However, in Lefebvre's (2002) theory, heterotopic practices do not necessarily emerge through direct conflict. For Lefebvre, differences may also manifest through contrast. Santos Junior (2015b) further explains that heterotopic spaces do not require a rupture with the existing order. They permeate the city not only through social movement practices and cultural manifestations but also through actions fostering alternative collective appropriations of urban space.

Recognizing these heterotopic practices within urban territories is therefore essential. In certain urban spaces shaped by the Olympic Games, non-hegemonic practices reveal a more complex and subjective reality at the micro-scale, extending beyond their symbolic representation in urban marketing strategies.

In the case of mega-events in Brazil, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, numerous spatial conflicts emerged as contestations against urban interventions. Additionally, various alternative practices arose in these spaces that diverged from their originally intended uses, particularly regarding their role as tourist attractions. This phenomenon became even more evident during the period analyzed, as the absence of tourists due to Covid-19-related health restrictions reshaped the ways in which these spaces were appropriated.

In this research context, facilities designed to attract international tourists were unlikely to serve their original purpose. Although Brazil's air borders were not officially closed, the global health crisis resulted in international tourism flows remaining well below pre-pandemic levels.

Many facilities were even temporarily closed at various points during the pandemic. Upon reopening, access – despite not being recommended by health agencies – was largely limited to local residents or domestic tourists. As a result, these spaces were utilized in ways that differed from the anticipated increase in international tourism. Despite international

health recommendations advocating isolation and social distancing, these spaces experienced renewed tourism and leisure demand upon reopening. However, their use was also reshaped—at least in part—by compliance with health regulations.

In this context, the ways these spaces were used may have evolved since 2020, and new practices may have emerged. While observing these practices remains relevant for research, additional limitations emerged, particularly affecting the feasibility of systematic field observations and in-depth, in-person engagements by the researcher, given the necessary precautions for health and safety.

Given these constraints on direct field observation and engagement with certain social actors, the initial phase of the research focused on analyzing other studies, journalistic articles, social media, and internet blogs that addressed the post-Olympic context with the aim of identifying heterotopic practices.

In July 2021, in situ observations were conducted, allowing the researcher to develop insights into the practices present in these spaces. However, these observations were sporadic rather than systematic, diverging from the initial research plan. Therefore, the findings presented here reflect these limitations and the methodological adjustments made throughout the research process. The findings are presented in subsections based on the location of observed practices.

I) Barra da Tijuca and surroundings

In Barra da Tijuca and its surroundings, mobilizations were identified against the displacements of communities such as Restinga and Vila Harmonia due to the construction of the TransOeste corridor (Mendes & Legroux, 2016) and opposition to the construction of the Golf Course, which encompassed an environmental protection area (Naback & Guimarães, 2017). This region also witnessed the emblematic case of Vila Autódromo, where resistance to displacements has been recorded since the 1990s. In the Olympic context, this struggle culminated in the creation of a Popular Plan for the community in collaboration with public universities (Freire, 2013; Naback & Guimarães, 2017; Vainer et al., 2013).

Sánchez, Oliveira, and Monteiro (2016) argues that this territory managed to disrupt power structures and reconfigure territorial struggles. Despite the near-total destruction of the community months before the Olympics, it symbolizes possibilities for learning, emancipation, and the victory of 20 families against neoliberal interests. In this sense, the very act of resistance and the continued presence of these few families in the area can already be considered heterotopic practices. However, throughout the resistance against displacements, other significant actions emerged, such as the previously mentioned Popular Plan for Vila Autódromo

(ibid.), the documentary *Um Bairro Marcado para Viver*, which constructed counter-narratives to all arguments used to legitimize the community's eviction (Bogado, 2017), and the movement "Ocupa Vila Autódromo," which promoted a series of events throughout 2015 and 2016 in response to the violence affecting the area (ibid.). Additional initiatives included photography exhibitions by a resident (Carvalho, 2019) and the Museum of Displacements, featuring sculptures made from debris symbolizing residents and emblematic locations within the community, preserving their memory and denouncing the displacements (Alves, 2017).

Regarding the Olympic Park, an on-site visit revealed a relatively empty space where activities such as walking, running, cycling, family outings, and picnicking were observed. Scooters were available for rent, but there were also signs of neglect, such as accumulated trash bags, an unmaintained children's playground, and arenas appearing abandoned. Notably, some visitors were seen photographing a panel with the words "Cidade Olímpica," indicating that they were not regular users of the space. Additionally, part of the area was inaccessible due to the presence of infrastructure for the "Rock in Rio" event. This suggests that, despite being envisioned as a potential tourist attraction—especially given its role as a major Olympic venue—the Olympic Park appears underutilized. The area designated for public leisure requires maintenance and sees limited activity, failing to fulfill not only its intended function as a public space but also its anticipated role in capital-driven urban development.

II) Maracanã and surroundings

In the Maracanã area, mobilizations emerged in opposition to the displacement of the Metrô-Mangueira community (Bello & Queiroz, 2018), the expulsions of occupants from Aldeia Maracanã (Barreto & Lopes, 2013), and the planned uses of the Maracanã Complex. These included the long-term closure of Maracanã Stadium for renovations, the termination of social projects, the loss of training space at Estádio Célio de Barros, and the proposed demolition of Parque Júlio Delamare.

Following the 2013 eviction and state repossession of the building, Aldeia Maracanã has undergone a process of resignification and heritage reinscription (Leite, 2021, n.p.), now repurposed as an Indigenous University. However, the territory remains contested, serving as both a symbol of resistance and a heterotopic space.

Beyond Aldeia Maracanã, everyday practices in the Maracanã area contrast with the initial plans to privatize the space, making it one of the most significant examples of heterotopic practices among the Olympic territories. The site remains actively used for jogging, cycling, dog walking, and physical exercise, alongside activities such as shiatsu massage, skating lessons, dog training, and dance classes. These various activities contribute to a dynamic, vibrant, and publicly accessible space primarily occupied by the local population. Tourists were present but primarily gathered around stadium landmarks, particularly the statue of player Bellini. There was little direct interaction between tourists and locals, except through

the work of street vendors and photographers. These diverse practices coexist, as one does not preclude the other.

III) South Zone

Among the interventions carried out in the South Zone, the Marina da Glória area stands out, as it was also the subject of previous disputes and included expansion projects aimed at transforming the public space into a business district. Mobilization took place through the Federation of Residents' Associations of Rio de Janeiro, as well as the Aterro Vivo, Ocupa Marina movements, and the State Federation of Rowing (Guimarães, 2016; Mascarenhas and Borges, 2009). Furthermore, it is relevant to include the case of favelas used for tourism purposes, which generates significant discussions regarding the exploitation of poverty, the invasion of residents' privacy, and other impacts of this process (Cunha, 2019).

Not all communities in the South Zone engage in tourism, nor are all favelas with tourism activities confined to this region. Additionally, the concept of “favela tourism” is heterogeneous, and cannot be treated as a singular case, since different models of organization and community participation in the process exist (Freire-Medeiros, 2006). Some communities are attempting to implement a community-based tourism (CBT) model, a methodology aimed at improving the living conditions of communities through tourism activities (Mielke and Pegas, 2013). Examples of this include the Morrinho project in the Pereirão favela; the Tecendo Redes de Turismo Solidário project in Cantagalo; the “Rio Top Tour” project in the Santa Marta Favela; the Museum of the Favela in Pavão Pavãozinho; and CoopBabilônia in Morro da Babilônia (Fagerlande, 2018). Therefore, it is evident that the community's leadership in favela tourism has been actively sought by some groups through initiatives organized by local residents, focusing on the positive aspects of the place, the community's culture, in contrast to the safari-inspired model that exploits poverty for the profit of external agents.

During a visit to the Vidigal favela, one of the most sought-after by tourists, led by a local tour guide, several important aspects were observed. These included tourism as a source of income for some people in the community, the transformations in the territory over the years as narrated through the guide's perception, as well as the guide's account of the community's struggle against eviction attempts in the late 1970s, with milestones of this struggle recorded in street names. However, there was also the reproduction of elements common to those led by external companies: passing through areas of tension, visiting shacks, and encountering armed men. It is important to highlight that poverty is not the main form of tourism consumption in Vidigal, which draws visitors primarily for its parties, events, the Dois Irmãos trail, and the Vidigal beach (Kalaoum, 2019). Another location that could attract tourists is the Parque Sitiê, an area originally meant for leisure that turned into a landfill and was later transformed into a garden by the initiative of the residents. Despite earning the title of the first urban agroforestry park in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, it currently operates on voluntary contributions and with limited infrastructure, not featured in the community's tourism itineraries (Fontes et al., 2018).

According to the tour guide, tourism helps ensure that the area remains non-violent, as it would not be worthwhile to lose the revenue from the activity. Despite this argument, the majority of the economic gain from tourism appears to go to business owners, such as those of Bar da Laje, and to individuals who allow tourists to pass through their properties. The Dois Irmãos trail, one of the most visited points, is conducted by non-local companies and guides, meaning the revenue is not redirected to the community. Lastly, the apparent tranquility in the area masks the absence of public services and infrastructure. Therefore, tourism seems to romanticize the hard life of community residents without contributing to changes in the social reality of the area (on the contrary, its maintenance appears to serve the exotic setting for the upscale bars and hotels in the region). Additionally, smaller initiatives, such as small guesthouses, seem to have not survived the post-Olympic crisis, and any potential educational or awareness-raising process regarding the reality of the people living there does not seem to be the focus of those visiting the area, but rather the simulacrum of an exotic, peaceful place far removed from the reality of those who live there.

Another location that underwent changes due to the Olympic Games was the Lagoa Rowing Stadium, which was transformed into a private complex housing restaurants, cinemas, and bars. Although the area was quite busy for several years, a visit to the site revealed a minimal presence of visitors, few establishments in operation, and cinemas with no audience. At the same time, families were observed playing with children in the parking lot, young people admiring the lagoon from the pier, adults conversing on benches, and people walking around the area. However, similar to what happened with the Olympic Park, the expected movement in the leisure complex was notably absent.

IV) Port Area

The interventions in the Port Area took place within the context of the Porto Maravilha Project, which aimed to modify the urban infrastructure, transportation, and environment of the area according to new land uses, improve housing conditions, and create a new tourist hub through the restoration and creation of new historical and cultural sites. It is worth highlighting that, although it was not part of the original plan, a significant hidden heritage was discovered during the construction process, with early signs already indicating its existence: the Cais da Imperatriz and Cais do Valongo (Cavalcanti, 2016). In terms of housing, notable actions include the occupation of abandoned mansions in the region, such as the Quilombo das Guerreiras (Sánchez et al., 2016), and interventions at the Morro da Providência to resist a project that planned to relocate nearly half of the favela's residents. There was mobilization from residents and social movements in resistance collectives, including the Porto Community Forum (FCP), which, along with the actions of the state public defender’s office, succeeded in halting the works in 2012 (ibid.). A significant contradiction present in this area is that part of the land had a public origin, which could have been designated for social housing but was instead commodified (Santos Junior et al., 2020).

During a visit to Praça Mauá, practices such as contemplation, running, cycling, rollerblading, skateboarding, and fishing around the Museum of Tomorrow, the main attraction of the area, were observed. Additionally, dynamic activities such as capoeira, the use of the central monument in the square as a walkway, and others were also noted. Lima (2019) had previously recorded, in ethnographic research conducted in the area, practices such as dancing, diving, and fish watching, in addition to those already described. It was also noted that tourists tended not to spend much time on contemplative activities, instead quickly heading to museums and other attractions. Even during the pandemic observation, there was a considerable line to enter the museum, with little interaction observed between tourists and other people at the site.

It is important to highlight that the act of fishing behind the Museum, for example, although considered a heterotopic practice, as it is not isotopically planned for that location, does not represent a form of contestation or conflict; however, it has the potential to become one. Lima (2019) lists several subversions related to the fishing activity in the area, such as using the garden walkways as supports; using the machine houses as supports for fishing equipment; sitting on the anchors to contemplate the landscape or fish; dipping feet in the water mirrors of the Museum of Tomorrow; tying fishing rods to the access stairs of the pier; and using floor spotlights to illuminate fishing activities. The researcher notes that she was only able to observe brief moments of police reprimanding these actions, but she observed that this often occurred when there was no surveillance. This corroborates the fact that heterotopic practices, even those that do not stem from conflict or contestation, can, at any time, face reprimands and be prohibited in favor of the expected isotopic homogeneity.

Walking through other parts of the Olympic Boulevard, there was little movement at the Kobra murals, and a larger number of tourists were observed in front of AquaRio and the RioStar Ferris Wheel. At these locations, in addition to workers and street vendors, no locals were observed making use of the space around the attractions.

Lima (2019) also emphasizes the limited prominence given to African heritage in the area, leading her to conclude that Black culture was incorporated into the local image being marketed, but with a secondary role. Despite this, some tourism agencies have begun to focus on Afro-related themes, offering tours in the area known as "Little Africa." An example of this is the "Sou+ Carioca" agency, through which the tour was conducted (virtually) during the Covid-19 pandemic. This tour exemplifies a contradiction, as it can be interpreted as a company appropriating the Afro discourse for commercialization as a local historical tourism product. However, since it is a non-traditional tour conceived by a Black woman, it may not be the case and could instead be seen as a contestation of narratives and forms of appropriation of the area. In any event, despite the limited visibility granted by the public authorities to African heritage in the Port Area, initiatives like this help bring attention to these issues and, in some sense, these actions oppose hegemonic practices.

Another example of heterotopic practice is the presence of residents from the Mariana Crioula and Quilombo das Guerreiras occupations in the area. Sant'Anna and Ximenes (2018) explain that the occupation of urban

voids seeks to meet the demand for affordable housing, and the adoption of this strategy in the Port Area is linked to the large number of vacant properties, many of which are publicly owned. It is noteworthy that these occupations share the ideal of self-management, with active participation from residents in designing the architectural plans, direct involvement in construction, the aim of professional development, and the creation of professional cooperatives, all of which stand in opposition to the hegemonic model of housing production.

V) Madureira and surroundings

In Madureira and its surroundings, there were protests against evictions for the implementation of the BRT Transcarioca, the TransOlímpica, and the Madureira Park, resulting in outcomes such as the preservation of the Cine Vaz Lobo building (Brito, 2016; Liguori and Gonzáles, 2018). Regarding Madureira Park, Brito (2016, p. 173) emphasizes its significance as “an urban intervention unparalleled in the history of the city’s suburbs.” However, the neighborhood is already experiencing discomfort related to the influx of visitors on local festivity and event days, as well as discussions about the gentrification of the traditional samba schools, Império Serrano and Portela.

Oliveira’s (2017) studies indicate that, although there is a discourse suggesting that Madureira Park is used by a diverse group of people, the majority of visitors are residents of the North Zone, except for those who frequent the skate park. Regarding this practice, Brito (2016) explains that after the Municipal Guard attempted to curb skateboarding stunts in a violent and widely publicized incident, there is no longer any regulation on these performances, except for the requirement to wear helmets. This episode illustrates that even when spaces are designated for a particular purpose, the interpretation of certain agents regarding the practices carried out there can inhibit expressions that, when performed, may generate movements of contestation and resistance.

During a visit to Madureira Park, its importance for the recreation of nearby residents became evident, due to the large number of facilities and attractions such as restaurants, children's playgrounds, quadricycles, exercise equipment for the elderly, ping-pong tables, sensory gardens, a skate park, sports courts, and the main attraction of the area, the "beach" (which is actually a water cascade). In addition to the facilities, it was possible to observe birthday celebrations, picnics, photo shoots, and practices prohibited by the rules, such as people riding bicycles, scooters, skateboards, rollerblades (outside the designated areas), and flying kites. Although it is important to highlight the significance of the park for recreation and quality of life, this does not erase or justify the injustices committed during its development.

The use of the artificial bathing area, the refusal to frequent the site symbolizing the neighborhood's evictions, and the pursuit of "ownership" of local facilities, such as the skatepark, are examples of social practices in which the local community opposes the uses and symbols defined by other dominant groups. No tourists were observed at the site, but it is believed that non-local visitors do frequent the area, or at least such visitors were targeted by the local government, as indicated by the informational signs in English.

In the neighborhood as a whole, Brito's (2016) thesis mentions the attempts and material and symbolic investments made by urban projects in the area, focusing on the valorization of certain sociocultural characteristics and institutions, in order to reinforce its commercial and transport centrality, as well as Black cultures. However, the author argues that while the samba schools Portela and Império Serrano, the Baile Charme, the Central Única das Favelas (Cufa), the jongo da Serrinha, the Mercadão, and Afro-Brazilian religions are valued, other characteristics and institutions are rendered invisible, such as "the funk music listened to and danced to by today's favela youth, the romantic or 'ostentatious' pagode in bars and the samba school Tradição, the LGBT centrality that has existed there for decades, and Protestant and Evangelical religious practices" (ibid., p. 325). This illustrates the valorization of that which can be more commercially marketable and highlighted in tourism as a unique, distinctive feature, to the detriment of other cultural practices that also have a strong presence in the area.

VI) Deodoro and surroundings

In Deodoro and its surroundings, there were different fronts of mobilization and resistance against the projects for the Camboatá racetrack, the TransOlímpica, and the condominium, which eventually became politically organized within the Olympic region. The Catholic Church played a key role in organizing the residents of Magalhães Bastos and Realengo (Davies, 2017). The Radical Park, the largest leisure legacy for the area, was inaugurated in December 2015 and has since been operating intermittently (Freire, 2017).

According to Davies (2020), the Realengo area in dispute had been unused for at least four decades, and since 2012, a group of residents organized in favor of creating a park on the site, based on a 2008 municipal law that designated the area for public activities. Despite mobilizing residents, environmental collective activists, and social and religious institutions, the attempts to negotiate with the military organization were unsuccessful. In 2015, the military proposed transferring the area to the private sector through the construction of a residential condominium by a bank connected to the Army, arguing that the 2016 Games would provide a good opportunity for land negotiations driven by the growing real estate speculation of that period. The condominium project was named "Realengo Verde," the same name as the park envisioned by the neighborhood residents. During a visit to the site, the only thing that could be observed was the sign announcing the development. It is evident, therefore, that this territory remains under dispute, with a clear struggle for public leisure space in opposition to a commercial project.

Regarding the Radical Park, it stands out for the size of its area, which is used for walking, running, and primarily for cycling and skateboarding activities. It features a sports court and exercise equipment that can be used free of charge. Equipment such as the BMX track, however, lacked maintenance, and the canoeing circuit's pool was closed (though it was informally used by a small group, despite signs warning of accident risks).

Although there are no totems linking the site to the Olympic Games, as seen in Madureira Park and the Olympic Park, the connection to the event is noted in the Athletes' Forest, which has seedlings planted by athletes from the participating delegations. While this landmark exists at the site, the symbol chosen for photo opportunities is a tennis sculpture in front of the sports court. Some people were observed taking photos there, and in conversation with one of the visitors, the researcher found that they were visiting the site for the first time. Despite being residents of the city, they felt like tourists and noted the lack of informational signage.

The importance of the park as a leisure option for the local population, as well as for physical health, is emphasized, a view supported by Davies (2017). Although most visitors appear to be residents from the surrounding area, there is also a presence of tourists, which is especially noticeable through the tennis sculpture, highlighting the significance of a free facility being utilized by a population in need of leisure spaces.

VII) Heterotopias everywhere

From reading other authors who studied parts of the Olympic territory, such as Lima (2019), Leite (2021), and Oliveira (2017), as well as conducting specific observations in an attempt to get closer to the field, it was possible to identify some practices carried out by the local population in those territories that were not foreseen in the hegemonic Olympic project implemented in the city, and were not necessarily subordinated to it.

The dynamics observed around the Maracanã and Praça Mauá are the ones that best illustrate this situation, and some similarities can be noted between the two cases, such as the pre-existing presence of certain popular practices. These locations were not built specifically for the mega-events of the past few decades, though they underwent interventions, especially for the Olympic Games. It is also evident that different practices coexist and overlap in those territories, including tourist habits. The practices of the local population do not interfere with the existence of tourism activities, and vice versa. Some heterotopic actions observed do not openly or conflictually challenge the hegemonic logics of those spaces. Their very existence, however, supersedes the practices that were planned or expected. Other practices, such as the occupations in the Port Area and the Aldeia Maracanã, directly contest the interests of capital.

There is also the case of the Olympic Park and the leisure complex at the Lagoa Rowing Stadium, which were designed with tourist or, at least, elitist perspectives, aimed at real estate ventures and entertainment, but have not yet achieved these goals. Favela tourism itself appears to align with this dynamic, given the decline in accommodation establishments and the insights from a Vidigal tour guide, despite continued interest in favela visits (not strictly within the 'favela tour' model).

Finally, there are the cases of the Deodoro Radical Park and Madureira Park, facilities built more with the goal of meeting the demands of the territories they are located in and fulfilling the discourse of the Olympic social legacy, but which seem to have been appropriated by the surrounding population. In the case of Deodoro,

some maintenance needs of the Olympic facilities are evident. In Madureira, there is a relaxation of the strict rules. Although these places do not have as much tourist appeal (although they are visited by people not familiar with the area), there is a noticeable vibrant movement in them (especially in Madureira Park), and they respond to the needs of the surrounding, more underserved communities.

The results, in terms of heterotopias, although seemingly modest, show that even in the face of a large hegemonic project, there are different logics within the space that escape subordination to these interests, as Harvey (2014, p. 22) states:

> The concept of heterotopia defended by Lefebvre (radically different from Foucault's) outlines liminal social spaces of possibilities where "something different" is not only possible but fundamental for defining revolutionary trajectories. This "something different" does not necessarily result from a conscious project, but simply from what people do, feel, perceive, and ultimately articulate as they seek meanings for their daily lives. These practices create heterotopic spaces everywhere. We do not need to wait for the great revolution for these spaces to materialize. Lefebvre's theory of a revolutionary movement is precisely at the opposite pole: the spontaneous confluence in a moment of "eruption," when distinct heterotopic groups suddenly realize, even if for a brief moment, the possibilities of collective action to create something radically new.

Therefore, the small actions observed open up the possibility, utopically, to think about the reinvention of the city and society.

Utopias: the ideology of the right to the city and the claim of the commons

The early utopias generally took spatial form, related to the idea of the city and the urban, such as Ebenezer Howard's garden city, Le Corbusier's modernist city, and Frank Lloyd Wright's suburban city, all suggesting that it was necessary to change the city in order to change society.

However, Harvey (2014) points out that beyond the problems in the designs of these utopian urbanists' cities, there is a prior issue arising from the very conception of utopia. This is because it involves the projection of a physical space intended to stabilize and control social processes. Yet, in order to exert this control, the social project necessary to mobilize its own realization is frozen, and social projects are not effectively controlled by form. Furthermore, by defining a spatial form, an authoritarian project is imposed that, once materialized, necessarily precludes the possibility of another social project.

In a certain sense, this issue is addressed by another possibility of utopia, the utopia of process, which is not associated with social form and is outlined in a social project that is desired, aiming to structure and/or guide social relations, and does not express itself in geographic form (for example, being associated with values such as feminism, socialism, etc.). Even so, these process utopias need to be realized somewhere; therefore, they must negotiate with space. By doing so, they

undermine themselves because they ignored space in their original conception, as space is not a neutral element. Spatial forms imply a pattern of sociability that can only be modified through a new spatial form.

Therefore, Harvey (2014) advocates for the construction of a utopia that addresses these two modalities: a dialectical utopia capable of being realized and of negotiating both space and social processes.

The dialectical utopia also envisions the city to be built, but without the goal of stabilizing or freezing social processes. Change would be possible by negotiating with objective reality and transforming social processes in a progressive manner through tangible changes. It therefore requires confronting the authority that will impose itself to materialize other projects, with roots in present possibilities, yet aiming for a different geographical development.

To achieve this, the city should be a form of collective construction, producing a life in the "commons," according to Negri and Hardt (2005), which is characterized by collective use and goes beyond mercantile exchanges. It is not an attribute of a thing or a social process but is defined by a social relationship. For example: a square is a public good managed by the State, which may or may not be a common, depending on its use. When used, for instance, during a protest, it becomes a common.

Dardot and Laval (2016, 2017) reflect that the "commons" has become the principle of movements that resist the dynamics of capital and oppose the expansion of private appropriation into all spheres of life. Although this category was not mobilized by the struggles that took place at the beginning of this century, in a retrospective analysis of the characteristics of these struggles, they sought to challenge capitalist social relations based on private ownership of natural resources and the management of these public goods, not relying on the State for defense but seeking to promote more democratic forms of control over the commons, as seen in the "Water War" in Bolivia (Dardot and Laval, 2017).[3]

It is emphasized that the "commons" is not synonymous with the traditional notion of community or public but is based on communication between singularities and arises from collaborative social processes of production. For Dardot and Laval (2017), the commons is not to be confused with property shared by all people but should be thought of as coactivity rather than co-ownership, co-possession, or shared ownership. Thus, only the practical activity of people can make things common, just as only this practical activity could produce a new collective subject.

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The city, therefore, would be a dimension of the commons, whose current global processes appropriate it as a source of value. For this reason, Harvey (2014) argues that anti-capitalist struggles should be centered on the city, rather than the factory, as it functions as a space for action and political revolt. It is the central element in responding to the crises surrounding capital accumulation, being, in itself, a producer of more value. Thus, Harvey advocates for a reconceptualization of the working class that includes workers who are producing value through the production of urbanization.

Indeed, various social struggles in the metropolitan areas have sought to reshape the city and establish a democratic administration of the urban process, invoking the ideology of the right to the city (Harvey, 2012). This ideology, initially formulated by Lefebvre (2001) as the right to transform and renew urban life through the action and social support of the working class, is defended by Harvey (2012, p. 74) as the right to change "ourselves through the change of the city" through the exercise of collective power capable of shaping the urbanization process. It is invoked both as an operational slogan and a political ideal for democratization, the reclaiming of control, and the construction of urban processes. This would include, therefore, from minimum guarantees for subsistence, basic freedoms, and access to urban facilities, to participation in planning and management of space, with collaboration in the discussion and management of collective matters, aiming for the reinvention of cities from a perspective different from that of capital.

Santos Junior (2015b) describes two ways in which this right is expressed: as a demand and as a claim. As a demand, it could be translated into the diversity of agendas of urban social movements that emerge in different countries – heterogeneous movements, with different institutional agendas but, at their core, addressing decommodification and the expansion of access to urban land, housing, and public services, that is, to the fundamental aspects of the social reproduction of the city. As a collective demand for a new urban project, the right to the city is linked to the creation of an alternative life, from the perspective of social justice and the right to claim another place. It is emphasized that the right to the city is not an individual right but a collective one. It is not merely the right to what exists in the city or the dignified reproduction of what is there, but rather the right to what does not exist, to recreate the city by subordinating it to the people, not to capital.

Because it involves a logic of appropriating space in a manner different from the prevailing hegemonic one, that of the commodification of spaces, heterotopias are articulated with the ideology of the right to the city and the possibility of an urban revolution. The right to the city in its fullness would involve the articulation of different heterotopic groups around a utopian project and collective action (ibid.).

Final remarks

In *The Urban Revolution*, Lefebvre (2002) explains that a given space is the result of a history that must be conceived as the activity of collective social agents, operating through successive impulses, projecting and shaping extensions of space that are analogous (isotopies), contrasting (heterotopias), or non-

existent, possible (utopias). Based on these concepts, the space of Rio de Janeiro was analyzed in the context of the mega-events.

The urban project of renewal and restructuring in the city of Rio de Janeiro, in the context of the mega-events, is characterized by the adoption of urban entrepreneurship and the commercialization of the city's symbols and images. This movement, despite being hegemonic, presents a major contradiction, as, while the desire to attract capital leads cities to adopt an entrepreneurial posture in a process of commodification, the success and valorization of these symbols also depend on the enhancement of the content of each place, its identity, and claims of singularities, which always have a strong social and discursive element at play. This can engage other groups who envision the city in a more egalitarian way (Harvey, 2005).

All urban spaces related to the mega-events recorded conflicts regarding the interventions and generally claimed the right to the city and the construction of a reality based on other logics, not those of submission to capital. Just as conflicts were identified, heterotopias were also observed.

Some heterotopic practices do not manifestly or conflictual challenge the hegemonic logics of those places. Their existence, in itself, overrides the practices that are planned or desired. Other actions directly challenge the interests of capital. With the coexistence of different practices, it can be said that the spaces are heterogeneous, and most of the heterotopic practices are not a result of conflicts. However, given these different forms of appropriation, there is potential tension in the use of these territories and, therefore, a potential conflict between these agents.

Despite the dominance of hegemonic projects, urban space remains shaped by diverse logics that resist subordination, allowing for the envisioning of utopian alternatives for the city. In his work 17 Contradictions and the End of Capitalism, Harvey (2016, p. 19) observes that "the contradiction between reality and the appearance generated is by far the most general and widespread contradiction," due to the difficulty, for example, of imagining that the model of city with which we are accustomed is a project, a choice, and could exist in a different form.

In this sense, the utopian project for a new city is linked to the ideology of the right to the city through struggles around the needs of social reproduction, projected not in an abstract way, but built from what the city currently presents, the heterotopic practices underway, and their potential to transform into alternative possibilities.

[I] https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7554-1459
Fundação de Apoio à Escola Técnica, curso técnico de Turismo. Rio de Janeiro, RJ/Brasil.
natashabantim@gmail.com

Notes

(1) The challenge that arises in the subsequent stage is the potential displacement of capital to another, more attractive location, driven by the imperative to accelerate capital turnover. This dynamic alters temporal horizons of development, leading to cyclical patterns of construction and destruction of urban spaces and infrastructure. This process also stimulates the search for new urban spaces and the commodification of previously semi-dedcommodified areas and services, characterizing a process of accumulation by dispossession, as theorized by Harvey (2005).

(2) Potential exceptions to this centrality-focused approach include the construction of Parque Madureira and Parque Radical, which, along with the popular Olympic flame, reinforced narratives of social inclusion for the city's lower-income populations within the event. These facilities were designed primarily for local residents rather than tourists.

(3) For Harvey (2014), however, the management of the commons would not imply the abandonment of state forms of public management, but rather the combination and strengthening of both state and non-state forms. The author advocates for the maintenance of hierarchies in the management process, which, in his view, is not equivalent to authoritarianism. Harvey explains that the nature of problems at different scales is not the same, and it is not possible to transpose experiences from the micro scale to the global scale. He argues that the autonomist model does not address inequalities, making it necessary to have a supralocal authority with mechanisms for the redistribution of resources for these ends. Furthermore, Harvey contends that it would be possible to subordinate decisions to universal values, even admitting forms of enclosure (for example, to preserve a forest). Thus, the author argues that hierarchical forms can be combined with horizontal forms.

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