

## MEGA SPORTS EVENTS AND URBAN TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY: A CRITICAL VIEW OF RECENT URBAN INTERVENTIONS IN RIO DE JANEIRO CITY<sup>1</sup>

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In memory of Gilmar Mascarenhas<sup>3</sup>

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**Abstract:** This article presents some of the main findings of the research project carried out by a group of Brazilians and Norwegian researchers during 2017, focusing on the so-called "legacies" of the sporting mega-events recently held in Rio de Janeiro city Brazil. The primary objective is to overview the gap between discourse and reality provided by different social and political actors concerning the sporting mega-events in Rio de Janeiro, focusing on urban transportation and mobility. The main point is to evaluate the extent to which the public investments linked to urban mobility due to the mega sports events in Rio de Janeiro city have effectively improved the quality of life of the city dwellers. Thus, the Bus Rapid Transportation system, BRTs, and the new subway line that connects Barra da Tijuca neighborhood, the heart of the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games, to the rest of the city were the primary means of urban transportation analyzed. Methodologically speaking, the main findings here are based on interviews with different social and political actors and articles, essays, and reports broadcast in the hegemonic and alternative media.

**Keywords:** Mega sports events; Legacies; Olympics; Mobility; Urban transportation; Rio de Janeiro.

### MEGAEVENTOS ESPORTIVOS, TRANSPORTE E MOBILIDADE URBANA: UMA VISÃO CRÍTICA DAS RECENTES INTERVENÇÕES URBANAS NA CIDADE DO RIO DE JANEIRO

Em memória de Gilmar Mascarenhas<sup>4</sup>

**Resumo:** Este artigo apresenta algumas das principais conclusões do projeto de pesquisa realizado por um grupo de pesquisadores brasileiros e noruegueses durante o ano de 2017, com foco nos chamados "legados" dos megaeventos esportivos realizados recentemente na cidade do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. O objetivo principal é traçar um panorama da lacuna entre o discurso e a realidade proporcionada por diferentes atores sociais e políticos sobre os megaeventos esportivos no Rio de Janeiro, com foco no transporte urbano e na mobilidade. Busca-se avaliar em que medida os investimentos públicos vinculados à mobilidade urbana devido aos megaeventos esportivos na cidade do Rio de Janeiro melhoraram efetivamente a qualidade de vida dos moradores da cidade. Assim, o sistema *Bus Rapid Transportation*, BRTs e a nova linha de metrô que liga o bairro da Barra da Tijuca, coração dos Jogos Olímpicos Rio 2016, ao restante da cidade foram os principais meios de transporte urbano analisados. Metodologicamente falando, os principais achados aqui se baseiam em entrevistas com diferentes atores sociais e políticos e artigos, ensaios e reportagens veiculadas na mídia hegemônica e alternativa.

**Palavras-chave:** Megaeventos esportivos; Legados; Olimpíadas; Mobilidade; Transporte urbano; Rio de Janeiro.

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3 In memory of Gilmar Mascarenhas, a clever Geographer and Former Professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, who left us too soon. His legacy and friendship are still among us!

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## MEGA EVENTOS DEPORTIVOS Y TRANSPORTE Y MOVILIDAD URBANA: UNA MIRADA CRÍTICA A LAS INTERVENCIONES URBANAS RECIENTES EN LA CIUDAD DE RÍO DE JANEIRO

En memoria de Gilmar Mascarenhas<sup>5</sup>

**Resumen:** Este artículo presenta algunas de las principales conclusiones del proyecto de investigación realizado por un grupo de investigadores brasileños y noruegos durante el año 2017, centrándose en el llamado "legado" de los grandes eventos deportivos realizados recientemente en la ciudad de Río de Janeiro, Brasil. El objetivo principal es dibujar un panorama de la brecha entre el discurso y la realidad proporcionada por diferentes actores sociales y políticos sobre los grandes eventos deportivos en Río de Janeiro, con enfoque en el transporte urbano y la movilidad. Busca evaluar en qué medida las inversiones públicas vinculadas a la movilidad urbana debido a los grandes eventos deportivos en la ciudad de Río de Janeiro han mejorado efectivamente la calidad de vida de los habitantes de la ciudad. Así, el sistema de Transporte Rápido de Autobuses, los BRT y la nueva línea de metro que conecta el barrio de Barra da Tijuca, corazón de los Juegos Olímpicos de Río 2016, con el resto de la ciudad fueron los principales medios de transporte urbano analizados. Metodológicamente hablando, los principales análisis aquí se basan en entrevistas con diferentes actores sociales y políticos además de artículos, ensayos y reportajes publicados en los medios hegemónicos y alternativos.

**Palabras clave:** Grandes eventos deportivos; Legados; Juegos Olímpicos; Movilidad; Transporte urbano; Río de Janeiro.



### Introduction

Few would dispute that sports mega-events have become a crucial issue nowadays. Furthermore, they have become an essential element of the contemporary urban agenda, involving city administrators and urban planners. Moreover, as a subject linked to urban renovation and economic development, scholars worldwide are dealing with it, trying to understand and reveal some of its ontological aspects. Thus, sports mega-events and large-scale urban projects carried on with them have been studied under different approaches. The academic debate has then reaffirmed or challenged the understanding of these initiatives' effects on urban space, showing the importance of such matters. This article presents some of the main findings of the research project carried out in 2017, focusing on the so-called "legacies" of the sporting mega-events recently held in Rio de Janeiro city, Brazil. The main objective is to evaluate to what extent the new transport and urban mobility infrastructure linked to the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the Rio 2016 Olympics has improved the whole metropolitan circulation system and, therefore, the city dwellers' quality of life. Sports mega-events have been disputed by cities worldwide in their search to achieve the so-called urban development. This view is being stated and broadcasted in different countries, including peripheral capitalism such as Brazil. In this context, Rio de Janeiro city has reached the select group of cities that have hosted these kinds of mega-events, as it hosted the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. Since the announcement that Rio de Janeiro would host these events, large-scale urban projects were implemented, linked to sporting facilities, connected urban transportation and mobility, and urban renewal, among other initiatives. As a result, the remodeling of the Maracanã arena, the building of the Olympic Village, the Bus Rapid Transportation system, BRTs, among others, have considerably affected Rio de Janeiro's spatial and social fabric.

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<sup>5</sup> En memoria de Gilmar Mascarenhas, inteligente geógrafo y ex profesor de la Universidad del Estado de Río de Janeiro, que nos dejó demasiado pronto. ¡Su legado y amistad siguen entre nosotros!

## Notes on methodology

It seems that mega sports events have been a vital issue nowadays. According to their supporters, it is spread throughout the world as a critical element in the new urban agenda that could promote progress and development. In these terms, they have been adopted and disputed by many cities of different countries, mainly those known as developing ones. Together, they have inaugurated a group of innovations and changes in urban administration and management, especially during their implementation process.

A brief bibliographical review is presented in what follows, considering that a more detailed one is shown in another article.<sup>6</sup>

Oliveira et al. (2020) pointed out that since the eighties, analysis of large-scale and mega-events has been discussed among urban planners and politics and has gained ground in academic debates in central and peripheral countries.

Thus, some discourses have emphasized the role of mega-events as something that could bring the so-called "legacies" through the attraction of new investments with private resources to the cities that host them. However, in Brazil, and more importantly, in Rio de Janeiro, the research finding has shown an overwhelming different result. Thus, it is more appropriate to state many more impacts than legacies.

The critical analysis has strongly emphasized the problems related to the term "legacy," stating that these initiatives have strongly impacted the social and spatial fabric and consolidated new and problematic decision-making during the implementation process. Furthermore, instead of development and private investments, mega-events have brought impacts (social, spatial, and economic) as they have demanded higher governmental resources, mainly to already developed regions. Besides that, they deepen the social and spatial inequalities even more, not to mention considerable and problematic intervention practices and decision-making processes.

Thus, the complexity and the different views about large-scale urban projects and mega-events are written in a considerable bibliographical production, mainly linked to the former.

Among them, some reaffirm (Asher, 2001), and others question the validity of such initiatives, such as Moulaert, Rodriguez, and Swyngedouw (2003), in Europe, and Harvey (1986), Fainstein (1991, 2001), from the US. Concerning the late Brazilian bibliography<sup>7</sup> that emphasizes the critical view, Nobre (2000) and Vainer et al. (2006) are two of the most important references. The last one has highlighted the tendency towards what he calls "city of exception," based upon the remarks of Stavrides (2016) and Agamben (2004). These authors have indicated a new "urban governance regime" linked to 'forms of illegality' that are justified to implement fast track procedures and not comply with the legal guidelines during the implementation process of the facilities required by other actors such as ICO and FIFA. (Oliveira et al. 2020)

Then, closing these methodological notes, some empirical procedures that guided the research, whose results are presented in this article.

The main empirical procedure was open interviews with different social and political actors involved in the implementation of the Rio 2014 FIFA World Cup.

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<sup>6</sup> See Oliveira, F. Leal de; Vainer, Carlos B.; Mascarenhas, G.; Bienenstein, G. and Braathen, E. Mega-events, legacies, and impacts: notes on 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/SX7VQ8ZJQPCJE28P2JJC/full?target=10.1080/19463138.2019.1650748>> (Access: Jul 06<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> See also Sánchez et. al. (2016); Novais and Oliveira (2013); Bienenstein G, and Nin F, Santos R. (2016).

To have a broad and critical view about the implementation process of the mega-events in Rio, the researchers posited to the interviewed the following open questions:

- (i) What has changed in the local administration due to the mega sports events in Rio de Janeiro?
- (ii) Would it be possible to talk about legacy deriving from the mega sports events?
- (iii) Were there compensatory public policies related to these events? What kind of social and spatial repercussions has emerged from these policies?
- (iv) Has the Bus Transportation System brought advantages to the city dwellers?
- (v) To what extent the implementation of the mega sports event has contributed to demonstrations?
- (vi) How and to what extent have these demonstrations affected the Brazilian political context?

These questions were to a group of social and political actors involved (pro or against) with the games. The majority are linked to left-wing political parties and social movements against the Olympic project. Moreover, we also got in touch with the public sector staff – especially from the Rio de Janeiro local administration who were involved with the Rio 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympics implementation process. This procedure aimed to check some plausible institutional views of understanding and sustaining the 2016 Olympic city project.

Regarding social movements, the research group prioritized professional associations such as the Brazilian Architects Institute, IAB, the National Federation of (Brazilian) Architects, FNA, and the Brazilian Geographers Association, AGB.

However, there was a peculiarity related to the representatives of the social movements interviewed during the research process. Some of them acted in these social movements and professional associations. Thus, their information reflected, in fact, the view of two different types of social affiliation. Some would argue that this could be a problem; however, in our opinion, it has only reinforced most of the conclusions that the research has reached.

Finally, concerning the articles, essays, and reports linked to the mega sports events, it is essential to point out that it was crucial to check other critical and trustworthy sources that could provide reliable counterpart data. Thus, considering that the hegemonic media is predominantly supported by the political coalitions interested in the Rio de Janeiro Olympic project, the research paid attention to the so-called alternative media, especially those against the games. This procedure allowed us to compare different mega sports events' different views and perceptions and their impacts on Rio de Janeiro.

These aspects suggest the importance of this city in the context of what we could call the peripheral capitalist urban world and the significance of studying it. Moreover, as the social tension increased concerning the initiatives carried out to remodel the city, the case of Rio de Janeiro city also indicated this city as an actual example of how these kinds of mega-events have nowadays impacted parts of important metropolitan regions of the peripheral capitalism.

Thus, the research argued: (i) Would it be possible to say that these initiatives have brought the city's so-called legacy, especially when linked to urban transportation and mobility? (ii) Does the amount of money spent to implement (or remodel) urban means of transportation and mobility required by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, FIFA, and the International Olympic Committee, IOC, have improved large parcels of low-income city dwellers? (iii) Have the initiatives carried out by the central, state, and local government levels linked to sports mega-events improved the quality of urban mobility of parcels of low-income city dwellers?

According to the findings, the answer is, unfortunately, it depends. Most of these impacts were social and spatial selective as they have affected different social and spatial fabrics and the Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan Region.<sup>8</sup>

The article's primary concern is to check and evaluate to what extent the new urban transportation linked to the mega sports events that Rio de Janeiro hosted have (or not) improved the whole system. The main concern here is to verify whether (or not) the low-income people who live in the peripheral zones of the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan region were included in the process.

Methodologically speaking, the outlines here presented are based on a series of interviews taken with representatives of social movements, politicians, and public sector staff who were involved – in one way or another – with the implementation process of the Rio 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympics.

Besides this introduction and the conclusions, this paper has three sections: the first discusses some of the main methodological steps taken to fulfill the research objectives. The second gives a brief overview of some of the essential aspects of the "Rio de Janeiro Olympic Project." Finally, the last one shows some of the most important findings of the research.

## Rio de Janeiro City and the Olympic Project

In hindsight, the 2016 Olympic project dates back to the nineties, especially after Mr. Cesar Maia took office as mayor of Rio de Janeiro, one of the most important Brazilian metropolises, in 1993. Since then, the city and the ways of dealing with urban management have considerably changed, followed by urban deregulation, small-scale urban renewal interventions, large-scale urban projects, and finally, the implementation of the so-called "Rio Olympic Age."

Concerning mega sports events, the 2007 Pan-American games – also known in Rio de Janeiro as "the Olympic of the Americas" – the city administration showed that Rio was prepared to host this kind of initiative. Despite some critics, the host of the 2007 Pan-American games inspired and oriented the Olympic project's implementation, especially when linked to some sporting facilities' spatial location.

The creation of institutional innovations linked, and the ways of dealing with the production and management of urban space had also changed. Thus, new kinds of institutional innovations were created, mainly directly connected to implementing the facilities linked to the games. The central issue to be pointed out is their fugacious and quasi-institutional character. In other words, "fast track" procedures were adopted during the games' implementation process, determining rules almost independently of the general regulations despite the city administration's indications. Such innovations validate what Stavrides (2016) pointed out as a "legal suspension of the law," especially to guarantee the IOC's accomplishment and the FIFA requirements.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro was created in 1974, during the Brazilian Military governments (1964-1985), after the merge of Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara states. At first, 14 municipalities made up the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro: Rio de Janeiro, Duque de Caxias, Itaboraí, Itaguaí, Magé, Mangaratiba, Maricá, Nilópolis, Niterói, Nova Iguaçu, Paracambi, Petrópolis, São Gonçalo e São João de Meriti. Today it includes 21 municipalities: Rio de Janeiro, Belfort Roxo, Cachoeira de Macacu, Duque de Caxias, Guapimirim, Itaboraí, Itaguaí, Japeri, Magé, Maricá, Mesquita, Nilópolis, Niterói, Nova Iguaçu, Paracambi, Queimados, Rio Bonito, Seropédica, São Gonçalo, São João de Meriti e Tanguá. It has 6.7 million km<sup>2</sup>, and 12,2 million inhabitants. It is also responsible of about 64% of Rio de Janeiro state's GDP. Available at: < <https://www.modelarametropole.com.br/rmrj/> > (Access: Mar 25th, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> "In addressing the process of preparing the most recent Brazilian mega-events, Vainer (2011), also based on Agamben (2004), would conceive the term 'City of Exception' to refer to 'forms of illegality and exception that appear everywhere and multiply due to the new emergency: the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics' (Vainer 2016, p. 40)". In: Oliveira, F. Leal de; Vainer, Carlos B.; Mascarenhas, G.; Bienenstein, G. and Braathen, E. Mega-events, legacies and impacts: notes on 2016 Rio

Another aspect that must also be highlighted is the marketing strategies adopted before and during the games, mainly those aimed to convince Brazilians that Brazil would finally achieve a world status among select group countries hosting sports mega-events.

Thus, taken as a “window of opportunities,” the hegemonic media broadcasted the games as initiatives that could launch a massive modernization process, including more jobs, urban renovation, and improvements in their transportation system.

Needless to say that the combination of solid marketing and intense broadcasting of this view helped to convince the hearts and minds of a considerable number of city dwellers of different social classes that mega sports events were an opportunity that should not be lost. Thus, notions such as legacy, development, and progress sustained the initiative of shaping the so-called new city.

However, as the facilities' implementation linked to the games began to affect many places and people, things began to change as an increasing number of social and political actors against the games emerged in the scenario.

In this context, Rio de Janeiro had particular importance as it hosted some soccer matches, including the final game of the FIFA 2018 World Cup and the ending ceremony of the 2016 Olympics. It then became a kind of the epitome of the recent Brazilian experience of hosting mega sports events. In other words, it had encompassed challenges, dilemmas, and constraints that make it a good case study to be studied.

### Notes on Rio de Janeiro city historical urban and political process

At the beginning of the 20th Century, the leading Brazilian cities have undergone essential transformations. Many of them took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's capital city. Most of these initiatives were held by the state and powerfully impacted the housing's low-income working class.<sup>10</sup> Beyond public hygiene, the attempt to distance the poor people, blacks, and beggars from the downtown area was also one of this procedure's main objectives. It was a question of adapting the city to the new elite and the demands of the industrial economy, corresponding to an exclusionary urban modernization process (Bienenstein, 2001; Maricato, 1997).

Moreover, other initiatives were carried out in different city areas during the sixties, especially those near the upper-middle-class neighborhood. Thus, 12 slums were evicted and displaced to peripheral settlements far from where they originally located. At the same time was created the Companhia de Habitação do Estado da Guanabara, COHAB.<sup>11</sup> It was responsible for designing three housing projects in the peripheral zone of Rio de Janeiro city: Vila Kennedy, Vila Aliança, and Vila Esperança located about 30 to 40 kilometers from their original location.

In terms of urban transportation, infrastructure, and workplaces' distance, the precariousness has had significant adverse effects on families' lives transferred there. These sets consisted of single-family houses, totaling 7,720 units designed to house about 38 thousand people (Valladares, 1978, p. 24, apud Bienenstein, 2001). It shows how far was the urban policy from the housing projects at that

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de Janeiro Olympics. Available at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/SX7VQ8ZJQPCJE28P2JJC/full?target=10.1080/19463138.2019.1650748>> (Access: Aug 8th, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> The urban remodeling carried out by mayor Pereira Passos (1902-1906) removed parcels of the working class from Rio's downtown. Moreover, historically speaking, the new industrial areas surrounding the metropolis also contributed to explaining the Rio de Janeiro urban historical process.

<sup>11</sup> Until 1975, there were two states in the region: the Guanabara state, the city capital state, and the former state of Rio de Janeiro, in which Niterói was the capital city. Thus, in 1975 the militaries guiding the country decided to join the two states in just one, turning Guanabara city into the new state of Rio de Janeiro.

time, as the main reason was to remove poverty from valued areas of the city. Moreover, it also shows how this alternative increased the promotion of the speculative land market, not to mention the waste of public resources invested in the excessive extension of infrastructure networks.

Having said that, and regarding this paper's main objectives, it is necessary to detach two more issues linked to Rio de Janeiro's urban and metropolitan process's history. The implementation of the metropolitan railway system in 1858 (privatized in 1998) and the Brasil Avenue (in 1946).

The metropolitan railway system (Supervia)<sup>12</sup> is another important initiative that promoted easy access to suburban areas.<sup>13</sup> It was initiated in the 19th Century and expanded during the 20th Century. It also connects Rio de Janeiro to two other important Brazilian states: São Paulo and Minas Gerais.

Inaugurated in 1946, Brasil Avenue provided a crucial road entrance to Rio de Janeiro, at that time, the capital city of Brazil. It links Rio de Janeiro to São Paulo state capital through the Presidente Dutra highway.<sup>14</sup> Symbolic speaking, it can be related to the country's birth of the automotive industry. Along with its 58,5 kilometers, many low-income classes were relocated due to an intense process of freeing valuable areas near the seaside of Rio de Janeiro, where middle and upper-middle-class began to live to real estate developers during the sixties through forced evictions.

The combination of urban public policies aimed at removing poor populations, and the implementation of transportation facilities (roads and railways), in conjunction with the increasing complexity of the Rio de Janeiro urban-metropolitan process, brought a growing number of challenges. Among them are not only the overloading of the primary means of transportation and circulation (Supervia line, Avenida Brasil, and President Dutra highway), especially in the hush hours, and especially the linkages among the various neighborhoods that emerged during the process.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, improvements in urban transportation and mobility became one crucial issue to upgrade these aspects in the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan region. To be more specific, this means promoting an upgrade of the transportation system towards the downtown of Rio de Janeiro city and upgrading and rationalizing the connections between the Avenida Brasil (as well as its prolongation, the President Dutra highway) and the Supervia line.

However, after Rio de Janeiro was chosen to host the 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympics, both the state government and the local administration carried out initiatives only driven to free land to implement urban facilities linked to the games instead of facing these problems. These initiatives have deepened even more the mentioned above existing urban-metropolitan problems.

The most important interventions are the extension of the subway line number 4, which connects the heart of the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games, located in Barra da Tijuca neighborhood, and the Bus Rapid Transportation system, BRT. Therefore, they are crucial elements to analyze (see illustration n. 1).

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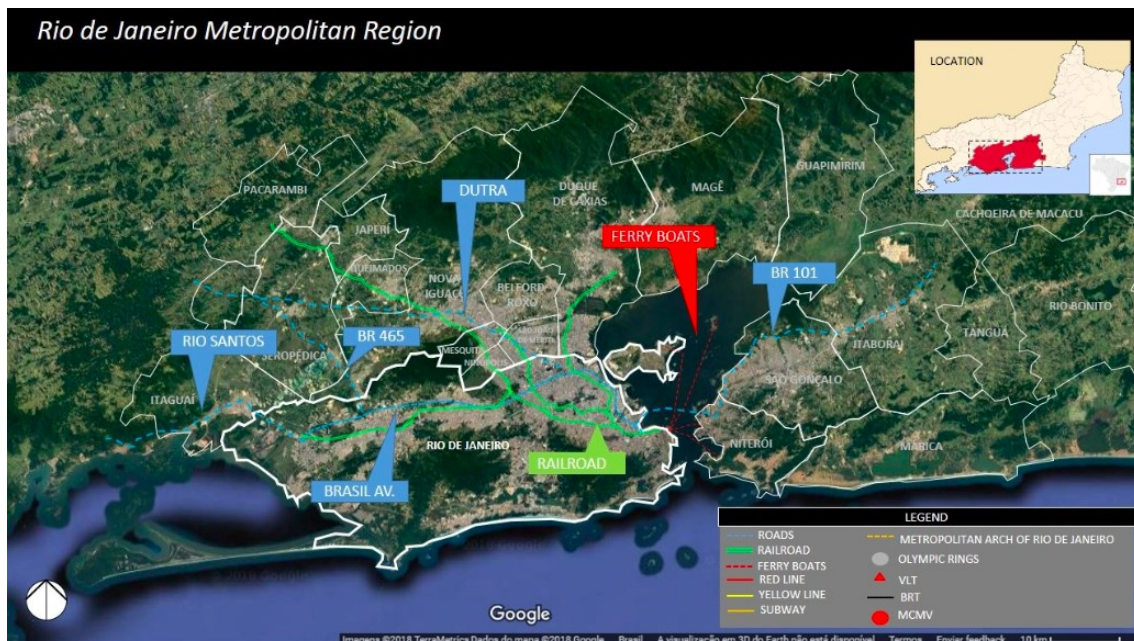
<sup>12</sup> Vulgarly known as "Central do Brasil," was privatized in 1998 and renamed "*Supervia*."

<sup>13</sup> According to Brazilian geographers (Oliveira et al., 2010 and Fernandes, 2011), there was an "ideological kidnapping of the term suburban" as it has been used in a negative connotation. In contrast to how it is usually understood in other parts of the world, mostly in the US and Europe, in Brazil, it is linked to degraded areas where there is a lack of urban infrastructure and services, as well as where low-income people leave. Available at: <<http://www.revistahcsm.coc.fiocruz.br/suburbios-150-anos-de-historia-carioca/>> Access Oct. 10th, 2019]

<sup>14</sup> Privatized in 1997. Available at: <<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/1997/2/06/cotidiano/48.html>> Access Sept. 3rd, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> The illustration n<sup>o</sup>. 1 indicates the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan means of transportation and circulation before the 2014 FIFA World Cup as well as the 2016 Olympics.

Illustration 1 – “Traditional” means (and infrastructure) of transportation



### "Traditional" Means (and infrastructure) of Transportation

Source: Google Earth-Modified by the author

### Main findings

Since the nineties, Rio de Janeiro has been a role model to other Brazilian cities as it has experienced new issues regarding urban agenda. Then, despite the different political orientations, Rio de Janeiro city successive administrations have pursued strategies to launch it in a supposed world urban market. Hence, large-scale cultural projects, urban renovation projects, sporting mega-events, and urban deregulation are the primary tools for achieving this goal. Thus, it would not be an error to state that the 2007 Pan-American Games, 2014 FIFA World Cup, and 2016 Olympics are firmly connected, delineating, and articulating crucial elements that impacted the recent metropolis' trajectory (Vainer, 2011).

Under this rationale, a steady and substantial political coalition was built, involving the public (central, state, and local) and the private sectors, especially real estate capital. As a result, some arrangements of private-public partnerships established new possibilities of urban surplus-value extraction. Thus, through the mega sports events, the Rio de Janeiro Olympic city turned out to be a kind of an “updated post-modern growth machine.” (Moloch, 1976).

Besides the already mentioned initiatives carried out by the coalition involving the three Brazilian government levels and the private sector, the hegemonic media started to run a massive campaign so that the city would not waste the opportunity linked to the games' impetus. Consequently, the discourse related to the legacy became what the city should seek, regardless of the social and spatial consequences.

Despite the discourse that stressed the improvement of the metropolitan region mobility through a new transportation modal, the BRT effectively happened to release new urban frontiers to real estate capital. Furthermore, as the new modal affected the old one operated by ordinary buses

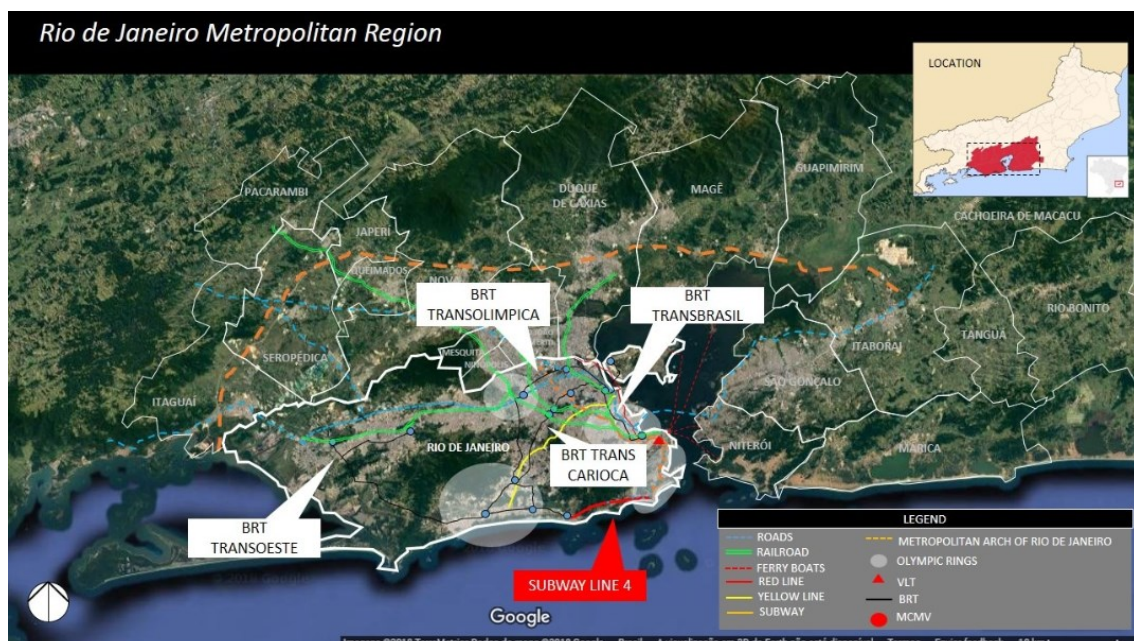


through different lines that, in turn, were “rationalized,” its capacity has immediately become exceeded, turning the trips made in overcrowded right after its inauguration.

Besides that, the lack of transportation connections among the increasing number of areas located along Brasil Avenue and the Supervia railway that have emerged over the years represents a crucial problem that has not been faced. Thus, the initiatives analyzed in this article have deepened the urban-metropolitan mentioned above, as they did not fulfill the mentioned deficiency. The case of the subway line 4 is even worse, as its implementation has significantly facilitated the mobility during the games connecting other areas of Rio de Janeiro city to its heart, the Barra da Tijuca neighborhood. However, on the other hand, the most improvement was to value the land around the Olympic village (See illustration n. 2). It is no coincidence that one of the most notable winners of the games was a real estate developer who owns an enormous amount of free land there, mostly in the hands of just one developer, as it is shown below.

The medal winners of the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games will not be known for another 12 months, but there is already a clear frontrunner in the race for Olympic gold. Brazilian property tycoon Carlos Carvalho is not famous as Usain Bolt, Mo Farah, or Serena Willams. In fact, few have heard his name even in his home country, but this sprightly 91-year-old businessman is on course to profit from the mega-event like no other individual in the history of the Games.<sup>16</sup>

Illustration 2 - The New Olympic “transportation facilities”



### The New Olympic "Transportation Facilities"

Source: Google Earth-Modified by the author

Before getting into the other aspect revealed by the research, it is crucial to point out some issues related to how the federal housing policies recently adopted in Brazil have impacted the

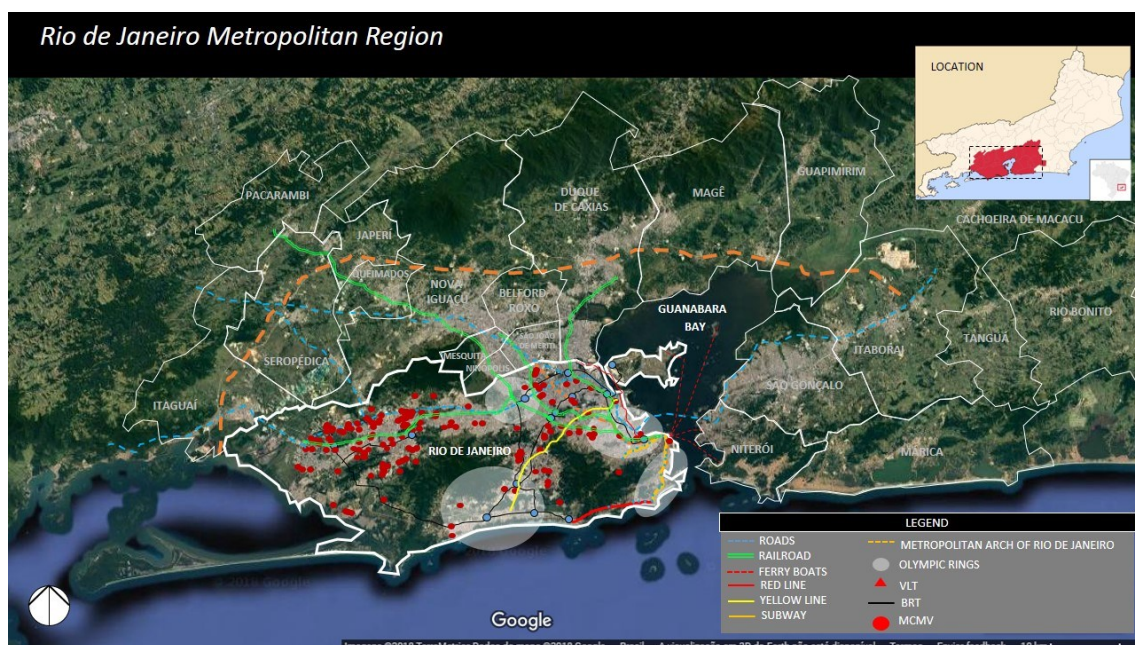
<sup>16</sup> Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2015/aug/04/rio-olympic-games-2016-property-developer-carlos-carvalho-barra>> Access: Oct 8th, 2019.

implementation process of the games; the “Minha Casa Minha Vida” Program.<sup>17</sup> Generally speaking, it subsidizes affordable housing to the low-income working class.

As the land cost usually has a significant influence on the houses' final price, according to experts, it caused a considerable peripheralization of the Brazilian metropolises after a decade. In addition, it created poor neighborhoods vulnerable to organized crime.<sup>18</sup>

Combining this program with the initiatives linked to implementing the games in Rio de Janeiro turned the urban-metropolitan process even more complicated. The MCMV program has facilitated the forced evictions and has deepened the ongoing and problematic peripheralization of the metropolis. (See illustration n. 3)

**Illustration 3** - Spatial distribution of the "Minha Casa Minha Vida" housing program



Source: Google Earth-Modified by the author

The red spots indicate where the “Minha Casa Minha Vida (MCMV)” program housing projects were implemented, mainly during the metropolis games. It is not difficult to see that few are near (or inside) the Olympic rings (in white on the illustration n. 3). Furthermore, most of the red spots also represent where the people who were forced to evict took up their residences. It is not difficult to see that few are near (or inside) the Olympic rings (in white on the illustration n. 3). Most of them are the result of the forced evictions in Rio de Janeiro city.<sup>19</sup> It is difficult to dispute that these evictions have

<sup>17</sup> This program must be understood as an industrial policy created by the central government to face the 2008 economic crisis. It was launched in March 2009, during the second term of President Lula da Silva. It has successfully integrated the building sector with housing demands.

<sup>18</sup> João Fellet. “Minha Casa, Minha Vida piorou cidades e alimentou especulação imobiliária, diz ex-secretária do governo Lula”. Available at: <<https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-44205520>> Access: Oct. 9th, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> There are cases that the new settlements are located 40 km or farther from the original one.

some connections to the requirements of FIFA and COI to implement some of the facilities needed to host mega-events in the city.

Thus, this example indicates how the combination of public policies carried out by different government levels (central, state, and local) has played an important role in the combined implementation of the games in Rio de Janeiro.

Regarding transportation and urban and metropolitan mobility, it is also difficult to deny that in comparison to the genuine demands of the metropolis, the improvements done in such item has not fulfilled their primary objectives due to the aspects shown in what follows.

Instead of improving the connections among the surrounding neighborhoods that have emerged over the years in Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area, the facilities have predominantly freed land. Furthermore, they did not enhance the linkages among the above-mentioned metropolitan neighborhoods. The new line 4 has indeed contributed to improving the profits of real estate capital.

## Conclusion

Have the investments linked to metropolitan transportation and mobility, such as the Bus Rapid Transportation system, BRTs, and the new subway line (number 4), effectively improved the quality of life of the city dwellers? According to what was collected during the interviews, the answer is, unfortunately, not!

There was a convergence among the interviewed supporting this conclusion. Instead of solving the existing infrastructure problems, the new transportation and mobility facilities (BRTs and subway Line 4) deepened it as these facilities have not solved most of the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan region's leading transportation and mobility problems.

The most relevant change in the local administration described by almost all interviewed was the implementation of "fast track" fugacious procedures and quasi-institutional innovations, which, in turn, has confirmed what Stavrides (2016) pointed out as a "legal suspension of the law," due to the COI and the FIFA requirements.

The adoption of these innovations and procedures turned the implementation of the new transportation and mobility infrastructure concerning the games into a violent process, especially against the people (mostly low-income working-class) who lived (or worked) in the areas (working sites) where they were built or renovated.

About the so-called "legacy" resulting from the mega sports events' implementation, it is essential to highlight that all the interviewed stated that it is more appropriate to talk about "impacts."

This convergence and the real impacts, especially over the low-income working class and needy people, constitute the phenomenal expressions that sustain the approach that conceives the term "impact" more appropriate than "legacy."

Despite the intense marketing campaign broadcasted to promote the games and the opportunities for the city and the citizens, notably regarding urban transportation and mobility, it is difficult to dispute that there were any compensatory public policies related to the mega-events in Rio de Janeiro. Much on the contrary! The central government housing program "Minha Casa Minha Vida" sustained and ideologically fulfilled many of the forced evictions in Rio de Janeiro during the games' implementation under the justification of promoting affordable housing to poor evicted people. Furthermore, most forced evictions did not follow the legal procedures, dislocating the evicted to places far from their workplaces, worsening their already precarious living conditions.

As one of the most important transportation infrastructures linked to the mega sports events in Rio de Janeiro, has the Bus Rapid Transportation system, BRT, brought advantages to the city

dwellers? Or, in other words, has it improved the urban-metropolitan circulation? According to those interviewed, the answer is also no.

To understand why the interviewed responded this way, it is necessary to know what Rio de Janeiro urban administration managed the old system. Under the justification to rationalize it, the city administration reduced the number of lines, hampering the access to downtown and other areas of the metropolis of an important number of people living in peripheral settlements. This initiative turned the BRT buses overcrowded and, consequently, uncomfortable to travel. Thus, instead of improving the whole metropolitan system, the BRT has brought problems for those dependent on it. Today, besides being overcrowded, the BRT system lacked proper maintenance, and some of the stations are being destroyed.

The mega sports events have undoubtedly impacted Brazilian society. Since the choice of Brazil, many organized social actors had questioned why a country full of inequalities could host these kinds of events. Furthermore, in 2013 the central government - former president Dilma Roussef, impeached in 2016 - began to face a massive wave of demonstrations - known as "2013 June Journeys" - that stated loud and clear that "we want FIFA standards` public hospitals and schools!". It meant that the public services, usually precarious in Brazil, should have the same quality as the soccer stadiums built all over the country to host the 2014 World Cup.

These demonstrations were connected to the price of urban bus tickets and escalated to the mega-events. Then, the class conciliation process run by the successive administrations of the PT party began to crumble. Subsequently, the right-wing immediately took over the political process, blaming the PT party for the country's problems at that time. On top of that, the so-called "car wash" operation turned the situation even worse for Dilma Roussef's administration ending up in the 2016 political coup.

On October 2nd, 2009, when Rio de Janeiro city was announced as the host of the 2016 Olympic Games, together with other Brazilian authorities and sports celebrities, former President Lula declared that "the time has come" for Brazil.<sup>20</sup> However, in 2018, a few years after, Lula was arrested due to the "car wash" operation. Briefly speaking, mega sports events became a critical element in the late Brazilian political process. Besides other consequences, the country is now facing a new-neoliberal pact (aiming a huge privatizing circle) and facilitating the right-wing to take power, dismantling what had been built since its return to democracy.

Has the "mega sports events era" ended in Rio de Janeiro? According to some of the city councilors, yes. It seems that the new frontier to be explored about further urban-metropolitan development is pointing out to the Vargens' region, as shown in the illustrations (see illustrations n. 4 and 5).

However, on the other hand, the present mayor of Rio de Janeiro city (far-right wing) is trying to approve a new formula one racing circuit in one of the last fragments of the Atlantic Forest in the city!<sup>21</sup> Thus, it seems that initiatives towards large-scale urban projects related to the sport are still here. Social actors have alerted that, in reality, this initiative is a way to undercover the intention to free more land to real estate capital. Under what circumstances and how this process will be developed is a challenge to future research.

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<sup>20</sup> Available at: <<http://globoesporte.globo.com/Esportes/Noticias/Olimpiadas/0,,MUL1327272-17698,00-RIO+TRANSFORMA+O+SONHO+OLIMPICO+EM+REALIDADE+E+CONQUISTA+OS+JOGOS+DE.html>> Access in: Oct. 7th, 2020.

<sup>21</sup> The *Camboatá* Forest, located in the west zone of Rio de Janeiro city. Available at: <<https://www.sosma.org.br/noticias/floresta-nao-e-lugar-de-autodromo/>> Access: Sept. 9th, 2020.

Illustrations 4 and 5



Source: Google Earth-Modified by the author

Furthermore, compared to the estimated cost of line 4, approximately R\$10.000.000.000,00 (US\$1.808.318.264,01),<sup>22</sup> most interviewers said it would be better to invest in the modernization of the already existent transportation and mobility infrastructure of the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan region. It is important to remember that other costs (the BRT lines and the whole system's maintenance costs as an example) are not included in this remark.

These aspects reinforce the choice of adopting the theoretical approach that considers the term "impact" more appropriate than "legacy" regarding mega sports events in Rio de Janeiro.

Finally, after the far-right political parties have taken office in Rio de Janeiro and the Brazilian central government, enormous challenges are posed to Brazilian society. Among them is the one posed to Brazilian researchers who, besides confronting the anti-science views currently in place in the country, are willing to reveal the urban-metropolitan process in a peripheral country like Brazil.

<sup>22</sup> Based on the tax rate of US\$ Dollar in Brazil on September 11th, 2020. Available at: <<https://www.melhorcambio.com/dolar-hoje>> Access: Sept. 11th, 20.

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