A reinvenção da zona portuária do Rio de Janeiro: estigmatização territorial, ressignificação simbólica e repovoamento planejado no projeto Porto Maravilha

Reinventing Rio de Janeiro's Old Port District: Territorial Stigmatization, Symbolic Resignification, and Planned Repopulation in Porto Maravilha Project

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Desde 2009, a antiga zona portuária vem passando por um intenso processo de transformação que atende às expectativas de lucratividade de investidores do setor imobiliário. No entanto, para que essa revalorização fundiária se efetive, faz-se necessária uma revalorização simbólica da área. Acreditamos que um dos principais objetivos do projeto Porto Maravilha é inverter as percepções existentes sobre a zona portuária, afastando as representações existentes – um espaço abandonado, decadente, perigoso – para transformá-la numa nova vitrine e porta de entrada da cidade do Rio de Janeiro. Isso tem sido feito a partir da substituição da população negra e pobre, reconhecida por seu forte ativismo e ricas práticas culturais, por uma população branca, cosmopolita e elitista. Para desenvolver nosso argumento, mobilizamos três conceitos: estigmatização territorial, ressignificação simbólica e repovoamento planejado. Ao final do texto, concluímos com uma discussão sobre as maneiras pelas quais a população local está lançando mão para resistir à invisibilização, ao silenciamento e ao apagamento simbólico dos quais são vítimas. Demonstramos que no âmbito do projeto Porto Maravilha, a cultura é mobilizada como instrumento de gentrificação, mas também uma ferramenta de resistência.

Palavras Chave: Porto Maravilha; Rio de Janeiro; Estigmatização territorial; Ressignificação simbólica; Repovoamento planejado.

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Since 2009, Rio de Janeiro's old port area has undergone an intense transformation process driven by the needs and expectations of real estate interests. In this large-scale urban redevelopment project, known as Porto Maravilha, land revaluation relies upon the symbolic revaluation of the area, long marked by a negative territorial stigma. One of the main objectives of Porto Maravilha is to reverse existing perceptions of the port area, moving away from current representations as an abandoned, decadent, dangerous space, towards a more positive image as the new gateway to the city of Rio de Janeiro. This is acheived by replacing the poor and black population, recognized for its strong activism and rich cultural practices, by a white, cosmopolitan and elitist population. Our analysis rests upon the three notions of territorial stigmatization, symbolic resignification and planned repopulation and demonstrates some of the strategies used by project proponents to radically transform the symbolic, material and social make-up of the area in order to promote its revaluation. We conclude with a discussion of the modes of resistance developed by local population groups to denounce the invisibility, silencing and symbolic erasure they have suffered, showing, in the process, that in Porto Maravilha, culture serves both as an instrument of gentrification and as a tool of resistance.

Keywords: Porto Maravilha; Rio de Janeiro; Territorial Stigmatisation; Symbolic Resignification; Planned Repopulation.

INTRODUCTION

This paper takes a critical look at Porto Maravilha, Rio de Janeiro's port revitalization project launched in 2009 as part of the city's Olympic mega-projects. As the largest public-private-partnership in Brazilian history, this project seeks to turn a vast, devalued post-industrial sector into a world-class, upscale mixed-use entertainment district, through the construction of cultural facilities, the development of tourist attractions and the stimulation of real estate activity (Monteiro and Andrade, 2012; Sanchez and Broudehoux, 2013). Once a dynamic commercial and industrial neighborhood, the area experienced a decline in its traditional activities during the second half of 20th century. Its low-income residential character was accentuated by the conversion of properties and vacant sites into tenements and informal housing settlements. The largely Afro-Brazilian, working class communities who have long inhabited the port are now threatened by revitalization efforts that seek to exploit the area's close proximity to downtown and to draw upon the valuation potential of the local built environment to attract high paying investors and residents.

From our point of view, Porto Maravilha is first and foremost a real estate project, whose fate and success heavily relies upon the symbolic resignification of the area. Important public investments aim to radically transform the image of the Port district in order to lure private investors, who are expected to actualize and complete the project's vision by redeveloping the area. We sustain that the main goal of Porto Maravilha is to completely invert perceptions of the port area from a backstage, space of relegation and shame, to a front stage showcase for the city. This is being done by replacing the area's historically black, poor, working class population, known for its strong activism and rich cultural practices by a white, cosmopolitan, elitist population, and its consumerist, individualist and world class vision of culture. Drawing from Wacquant (2007), we posit that this "territorial de-stigmatization", accomplished through a process of radical cultural reconfiguration, is essential to the real estate valuation of the sector, and key to the economic success of Porto Maravilha.

The paper begins with a discussion of the notion of territorial stigmatization, followed by a historical survey of Rio de Janeiro's port district as an area marked by a deep territorial stigma. The bulk of the article analyses diverse de-stigmatization strategies used by Porto Maravilha promoters in order to facilitate real estate valuation in the sector. These strategies include attempt to resignify the port area's land uses, built environment and social landscape through various initiatives that are both exclusionary and highly segregationist. The paper concludes with a discussion of some of the ways in which local populations groups are resisting their symbolic erasure, invisibilization and silencing, thereby demonstrating that in Porto Maravilha, culture will be both an instrument of gentrification and a tool of resistance.

TERRITORIAL STIGMATIZATION IN THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Goffman (1963) defines the social stigma as an attribute, behavior or reputation which is socially discrediting in a particular way: it causes an individual to be classified as undesirable and to be rejected as abnormal. For him, stigmatized people are individuals who do not have full social acceptance and are constantly striving to adjust their social identities to fit dominant social norms. As part of his research on urban marginality, Loïc Wacquant (2008) would later spatialize the notion of social stigma and transpose it at the territorial level. Borrowing from both Goffman's social stigma and from Bourdieu's notion of 'symbolic power' (2001), Wacquant describes territorial stigma as being made of elements of social discredit and injurious forms of actions that

are fastened onto place through collective representation. He demonstrates how territorial stigma, which takes the form of spatial taint, territorial blemish, or place defamation, is much more than a simple topography of disrepute, but has come to be equated with social disintegration. In this sense, someone's place of residence could be construed as a "defect" that disqualifies and deprives its inhabitants of full acceptance by others (Wacquant, 2007). Territorial stigmatization can thus have concrete impacts upon residents of disparaged districts and lead to their relegation, expulsion or symbolic exclusion from society. It can even become racialized to the point of eliciting form of revulsion that can lead to punitive corrective measures (Wacquant, 2007).

Understanding stigma as a social construct allows to shed light upon the politics of place images construction and to explain what motivates initiatives that seek to influence or control such representation. In the production of urban space, different conceptualizations of the city compete and are the object of contention. Symbolic representations of places that attribute certain characteristics to urban sectors can become hegemonic in the collective imagination. In this sense, territorial representations cannot be separated from the power relations that structure and rule this territory. Territorial stigma is one of the resources that can be mobilized by hegemonic actors in their attempt to control the production of space. Place defamation can offer the foundation and ideological justification for powerful groups in their decisions to leverage their vision of the city. For Wacquant (2007), once a place is labeled as problematic, located outside the norm, this deviant territory becomes intolerable for normative society and fixing it becomes imperative. It thus becomes easy for authorities to justify the implementation of special measures regarding its use, design and regulation.

Interventions in the built environment represent privileged mechanisms to achieve the normalization of territories discursively constructed as problematic. The literature suggests that one of the main remedies used by both public authorities and private developers alike in their efforts to "correct" deviant territories is their incorporation into the real estate market (Swyngedouw et al., 2002; Weber, 2002). However, just as territorial stigmatization legitimizes urban interventions, it can also act as a barrier against transformative urban projects. Negative territorial representations can repel investors and represent an impediment to urban development. Yet, these representations are not immutable. They can be transformed through narrative strategies, image construction practices and symbolic revaluation, for example through strategic city marketing campaigns that positively alter perception and facilitate social acceptability.

The case of Brazil's downtown areas represents a perfect illustration of the importance of symbolic place images in land valuation processes. After decades of state neglect and divestment by private capital, the recent revaluation of downtown districts has relied upon the diffusion of a discourse that evokes the need to reverse alleged cases of urban "degradation". The need to overcome what has been labeled an "urban crisis" has become an imperative in government programs from parties across the political spectrum, presented as an essential responsibility of public administrations. In this context, multiple plans, programs and projects have been drafted and proposed by municipal authorities, state administrations and federal committees to reverse this so-called crisis (Monteiro, 2015), which has itself been denounced in by Brazilian critics as a discursive strategy widely used to justify neoliberal urban transformations (Arantes, 2001).

Rio de Janeiro's Old Port Area: The Historical Construction of a Territorial Stigma

Historically, early port activities in Rio de Janeiro took place along the Guanabara Bay near the current city center, with the bulk of activities centering on Praça XV (former Largo do Paço), the symbolic heart of the city. In the 17th century, a mining boom in the Brazilian hinterland required a great influx of manual workers, turning Rio into a great slave port. Until the mid-1770s, slaves were docked near Praça XV at the Praia do Peixe (Fish beach), but this unsavory trade was gradually transferred to a less conspicuous locale, with the construction of the Valongo Wharf, further down the bay. The transfer of port activities was accelerated in 1808, with the arrival of the Portuguese royal family, escaping the Napoleonic wars, who settled at Praça XV in what became the Imperial Palace. The same year, Brazil opened its port to England, which prompted an intensification of port activities, as well as commercial trade, especially in coffee. At the time, to avoid offending the imperial court, the slave market, located on Direita Street (today' Primeiro de Março Street) near the Palace, was also transferred to the Valongo area (Pinheiro and Rabha, 2004; Souty, 2013; Cardoso et al., 1987).

While the construction of warehouses and trading counters dynamized the local economy, the transfer of the slave market to the area contributed to the consolidation of its function as a repository of "unclean" activities in the city. It is estimated that between 1770 and 1843, around 900 000 African slaves landed on the wharf, where they were fattened, sold and exchanged in nearby warehouses. The port area thus became the site of one the busiest slave trades in the world, making Rio the largest black city in the Americas. The port area was also the site of the city's main prison, the *Cadeia do Aljube* (located from 1731 to 1856 on Aljube Street, today's Acre Street), which contributed to the sordid and dangerous image of the sector (Chalhoub, 1996).

After the end of the slave trade in 1888, the area remained the center of port activities and their related businesses such as gambling and prostitution. During the 19th century, the development of the three neighborhoods of Gamboa, Santo Cristo and Saúde was directly related to port activities. The area came to be densely occupied by commercial ventures, industrial plants, warehouses, shipyards and mills, making the city one of the largest commercial depots of Latin America. The port also had an important residential population of mainly poor and black low-wage earners, whose limited mobility required proximity to the city center, where daily work was to be found (Abreu, 2006). Throughout its history, the port's average income, education and employment levels were substantially lower than in the rest of the city. This socioeconomic profile was reflected in the large number of tenements located in the port's many parishes.

Due to a severe rental housing shortage near the city center, the port also served as a proletarian housing repository, where people lived in overcrowded tenements, hostels, and inns. In the first decades of the Republic in the late 1800s, these tenements became the target of a number of municipal ordinances aimed at their eradication, legitimated by a discourse that condemned their "unhealthy" and "promiscuous" appearance (Benchimol, 1992). In the wake of those brutal evictions, many dwellers fled to the slopes of a nearby hill located at the heart of the port area, originally named Morro da Favella, giving birth to what is now considered Brazil's first *favela* or squatter settlement, Morro da Providência (Valladares, 2000). Within the wider port area, Providência favela would itself come to be ostracized as a space of alterity, perceived as the embodiment of marginality and social deviance, and was stigmatized for its failure to integrate into dominant society. Local elites saw the favela as a public nuisance, a visual blight and a materialization of moral degenerescence.

At the turn of the 20th century, a series of Haussmann-inspired hygienist reforms and sanitizing campaign that were carried out by prefect Pereira Passos further transformed the city center and port area. Narrow streets were replaced by wide avenues for motor vehicles. Most tenements were destroyed, and their poor, black population expelled in what was justified as a need to protect more deserving central city residents against the propagation of disease and epidemics, the risk of violence and crime, and the threat of racial contamination (Chalhoub, 1996). Ironically, the destruction of the tenements, coupled with an influx of migrant labor working on the vast public works, contributed to Providência's expansion.

In the second half of the twentieth century, especially in the 1960s, the port area entered a period of decline resulting from the combined action of a host of factors. The loss, in 1960, of Rio de Janeiro's status as Brazil's national capital and the transfer of government functions to Brasilia deeply affected local economic activity, leaving vacant a number of federal buildings near the port. The ascent of São Paulo as Brazil's economic and financial center, a trend that started in the 1930s and gradually gained momentum, also negatively impacted Rio's downtown. In the 1970s, de-industrialization curtailed economic activity in the port, while containerization required the transfer of industrial port functions to modern facilities, further downstream on the Guanabara Bay. In the 1980s, the development of Miami-style car suburbs in Rio de Janeiro's west zone accelerated the exodus of the middle class and the depopulation of the port district, opening the door to the illegal occupation of many abandoned buildings. Over the years, lack of public investment and municipal abandonment further exacerbated economic decline, urban degradation and the rise of marginality and violence. When Porto Maravilha was launched in 2009, the port area boasted one of the highest concentrations of squatting and homelessness in Rio de Janeiro.

For much of its long history, Rio de Janeiro's old port has held a particular status in the urban landscape, as a territory on the margin, which was never fully part of the formal city. It always served as a utilitarian space, a backstage service area attending to the needs of the city center while conveniently keeping activities of a potentially offensive nature out of sight. Its strategic location, "at once near and far from downtown" (Pinheiro and Rabha, 2004) meant that banned or disreputable economic activities, which were nonetheless necessary to the full reproduction of capital, could be carried out at a safe distance from elite neighborhoods.

Rio's port area encompassed an area long known as *Pequena África* (Little Africa), where urban life was dominated by free and enslaved Africans, who occupied the city streets and public squares working as free laborers, vending, running errands and socializing. Local elites and authorities were weary of these dangerous classes, which they both feared and depended upon for the development of the slave-based capitalist economy as well as for their daily comfort. Ironically, some of the richest contributions to Brazilian culture came from the port's black population. Many of the symbols of Brazilianness that now form part of the Brazilian imaginary around the world were born in the port district, and are products of its Afro-Brazilian heritage. Rio de Janeiro's port is known as the birthplace of both samba and capoeira. It is also the cradle of the first *ranchos*, which would later give birth to the city's famous carnival. And it was in Providência that Rio's first samba school was created, and would revolutionize the carnival parade.

Yet, for much of its history, Rio de Janeiro's port district was described as a dangerous, unsanitary, and prohibited place, tolerated as a necessary evil. In his typology of urban spaces, Tamaldge Wright (1997) distinguishes between *pleasure spaces*—spaces of entertainment and relaxation, associated with middle class uses—and *refuse spaces*, spaces of neglect, violence, and abandonment, often taken over by marginal population groups. Rio's port area could therefore be

characterized as a *refuse space* a space of otherness, alterity, and marginality, where the city's excluded could be readily exploited while being kept invisible.

Rio's Port can also be seen as symptomatic of the city's schizophrenic split personality, marked by the co-existence of two conflicting urban identities: the utopian White City idealized by the ruling European elite, and the heterotopian Black City, consistently repressed as shameful, illegitimate and provisional. Throughout the history of Rio de Janeiro, intense moments of image construction have striven to realize the utopian image of this advanced, White City, by erasing its poor, Black, uncivilized and primitive component. From the hygienist campaigns of the early 20th century, to the modernization programs of the 1940s, to the post-modern suburbanization of the 1970s, authorities sought to repress the city's African identity and to impose imported urban models and values. Today, this Black City continues to be perceived as rebellious, marginal, and antithetical to the official formal, civilized, legal, White City, with its individualist and capitalist values and continues to be avoided by the carioca elite and middle classes (Souty, 2014). Centuries of dominant discourse, political actions, negative media narratives and neglect thus resulted in the stigmatization of the port area and its inhabitant, as a place of violence, insecurity, precarity and environmental degradation.

Porto Maravilha: De-stigmatization Through Semantic Resignification and Symbolic Erasure

As Rio de Janeiro was selected to host the world's top sporting mega-events, namely the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games, the launching of Porto Maravilha was seized as an opportunity to transform the port area from a refuse space into a pleasure space for the entertainment of a globalized elite. The project can thus be construed as yet another attempt, in a long list of historical initiatives to shake off what remains of Little Africa and to realize the dream of the exclusive White City. But since the economic success of Porto Maravilha relies upon real estate valuation, and on capturing the potential plus value that could result from the existing rent gap, it was essential for project proponents to defuse the negative representations of the port. The success of this vast redevelopment project became highly contingent upon the reversal of the stigma that had long afflicted this area. In order to convert this neglected space into desirable assets for capitalist accumulation and to attract to middle class residents and other target users, deeply ingrained, negative representations first had to be neutralized.

Although territorial de-stigmatization is first and foremost a symbolic process, it relies upon very concrete alterations and transformations of the local social and material landscapes. De-stigmatization strategies generally consist in cleansing the land of traces of previous sources of territorial stigma, a process of physical erasure and semantic resignification that acts at three distinct levels. It first affects existing land uses, with the expulsion of old, obsolete or undesirable functions and their replacement by new, more attractive ones, based on contemporary standard and expectations. It also alters the man-made environment through the destruction, renovation or adaptive reuse of derelict structures associated with previous functions, and the construction of a new, more up to date material landscape. De-stigmatization strategies finally acts upon the human environment, through the expulsion of stigmatized population groups and their replacement by what Harvey euphemistically calls "people of the right sort" (Harvey, 1990, p.92) In all cases, this resignification process is accomplished through the joined actions of rhetorical strategies, especially in terms of city marketing, public policy and direct actions. The particular mechanisms of this urban cleansing process are discussed in more details in what

follows, organized according to these three levels of intervention and illustrated by the example of Porto Maravilha.

DE-STIGMATIZATION OF USES

To guarantee a capital return for investors through the production of space, new land uses must follow a revalorization logic. In order to boost the real estate activity and to unlock land values Rio de Janeiro's civic authorities have implemented a series of policies and practices that favor what Brazilians call "noble uses", which include upscale housing for middle and higher classes, luxury office space, cultural institutions and high-end shopping and dining facilities. Measures and incentives include the relaxation of zoning regulations, the implementation of infrastructure, tax breaks for investors, urban marketing strategies (Sanchez and Broudehoux, 2013).

Existing popular uses of public spaces such as informal commerce, which are not compatible with this revalorization logic, and are discouraged by in the project, have thus been the object of a criminalization process that bans such practices from newly renovated squares and sidewalks, even if they represent an important source of revenue for many low-income families. Porto Maravilha valorizes new, more upscale and formalized vending practices, such as the gourmet food-trucks, which have recently appeared at Mauá Square. Local residents who also want partake in tourism development and profit from the ongoing tourism boom face lengthy bureaucratic procedures and costly permits to be allowed to sell their own local gastronomy on the streets of the port district. The new public spaces that have been created as part of Porto Maravilha, including the brand new Olympic Boulevard, have failed to accommodate the needs of long-term port residents in terms of economic activities. Informal vending is prohibited in these spaces which are actively guarded against violators.

Traditional industries that have thrived in the port area for years are also feeling the pressure to vacate the area. This is the case of many small-scale recycling centers located in the port for over five decades but whose "dirty" activities are now found to be incompatible with the Port's new function. Over the last few years, many other traditional businesses, including small restaurants, independent stores and artisan shops have also left the area. However, some places of commerce and local enterprises have been selected by the promoters of Porto Maravilha to act as showcases of the area's rich cultural vitality. These include for example, restaurants comprised in the *Polo Gastronômico do Porto*, a culinary circuit of traditional gastronomy which is supported by the consortium and given visibility in their promotional material and tourism brochures as part of the area's official attractions.

Culture is also vastly used as a positive resignification strategy, with policies favoring non-stop cultural programing on Mauá Square and the construction of several spectacular venues that specialize in "culturtaiment". Porto Maravilha's cultural strategy reveals the project's deep bias for a vision of culture that exudes contemporary dynamism, creativity and avant-garde and is oriented towards an idealized, marketable future rather than a polemical past. It conforms to a carefully crafted scenario that seeks to attract young creative professionals, nightlife consumers, cruise ship tourists, investors and upscale residents. This scenario includes three main components: The promotion of cultural activities; Investment in large cultural anchor institutions; and Incentives for "yuccies" (Young Urban Creatives).

Porto Maravilha's cultural strategy attempts to stimulate the area's cultural buoyancy by organizing festivals, cultural activities and diverse forms of entertainment. Many of such events

feature existing cultural practices, which are consensually co-opted to increase the port's tourism appeal. They also involve various exclusive events, such as Fashion Rio, which are geared the leisure class and seek to give the area a cosmopolitan flair. Many of these activities take place at Mauá Square, on the Olympic Boulevard or in the many warehouses located along the bayfront. A second aspect of Porto Maravilha's cultural strategy relies upon the widening of the area's cultural offering, with what is clearly an elitist vision of formal, high culture with a global outlook. Apart from Rio's Art Museum (MAR), and AquaRio, Latin America's largest urban aquarium, these projects also include the brand-new Museum of Tomorrow (*Museu do Amanhã*). As its name indicates, this project is more interested in the global future, with a consensual environmentalist focus, than in the more sensitive and litigious local past.

A third aspect of Porto Maravilha's cultural strategy involves diverse form of incentives to encourage young urban creative (yuccies) and other members of the "creative class" to set up their business in the port district, thereby enhancing the attractivity of the sector by boosting its bohemian index, economic dynamism and gregarious character (Florida, 2003). Since its inception, Porto Maravilha has shown a strong, favorable prejudice for digital and creative industries over more traditional cultural practices. For example, Porto Maravilha created the *Distrito Criativo do Porto,* an economic pole meant to attract new creative industries to the port area and to valorize its infrastructure investments. Porto Maravilha has also given generous subsidies to help finance the renovation of buildings for industries like GOMA (a co-working "fablab" that includes 30 creative economy enterprises), in the hope of bringing more young professionals to the area.

Critics denounce Porto Maravilha's instrumentalization of culture and the concomitant exploitation of the consensual power of cultural production as a strategy used to give a benevolent face to a speculative and exclusionist project (Sanchez and Broudehoux, 2013). However, in its quest to turn the area into an attractive, risk-free investment, Porto Maravilha is promoting a vision of culture that has little to do with local reality and history. While making passing references to the area's status as the cradle of samba music, other chapters of local history, which could bring attention to controversial issues like slavery, exploitation and social inequality, are downplayed. Porto Maravilha's cultural promotion relies on diverse forms of cultural recuperation, where local living culture is selectively presented in a consensual, "quaintified" and folkloric form, so as to give a unique flavor to the Port while deflecting uncomfortable political issues. Examples include initial plans to transform Morro da Providência, a hill where disgruntled unpaid soldiers, escaped slaves and evicted tenement dwellers settled more than 100 years ago and survived various waves of evictions, into a picturesque, sanitized, make-believe colonial village.

Furthermore, it was only after the discovery of several artifacts dating back to the slave trade during excavation work at the site of the Valongo wharf that Porto Maravilha reluctantly agreed to make part of the ruins visible and to install a few interpretative panels. Project leaders summarily evacuated the polemical issue of the area's African past by creating an African heritage walk, which identifies, with a few basic plaques and without much detail, a number of sites linked to the port's black history. Porto Maravilha's historical simplifications, cultural folklorization and dismissal of Afro-Brazilian heritage have been denounced as attempts to disqualify the struggles of the area's contemporary black and poor population against gentrification, so as to facilitate their expulsion while erasing all historical traces of their existence. It can also be seen as a mechanism of symbolic erasure and historical amnesia that seeks to neutralize the area's contentious past.

DE-STIGMATIZATION OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Territorial de-stigmatization also involves a radical transformation of the area's physical landscape, with major infrastructure projects aiming to make the area safer and more attractive. In Porto Maravilha, multiple interventions ranged from investments in architecture, historical preservation, urban design, road resurfacing, street lighting and mobility systems. In the process, many of the port's derelict, abandoned industrial and office buildings, often occupied by squatters, were demolished, to make way for the construction of brand new office and residential towers along the waterfront. These modern, glass and steel buildings are erecting a new, modern façade for the city, concealing views of the port from the bay so that passengers on the many cruise ships that dock along the shore are spared the sight of Providência. Among the key objectives of Porto Maravilha is to multiply the number of tourists arriving from the sea with the costly expansion of docking facilities.

The re-signification of the port's physical landscape also includes the construction of spectacular architectural landmarks. Among the project's key visual icons is the spectacular Museum of Tomorrow, a stunning white skeletal structure advancing on the Guanabara Bay designed by world-famous architect Santiago Calatrava. Mauá Square was also entirely remade with sleek urban design and turned into a gigantic urban square, bordered by the bay, the Museum of Tomorrow, the MAR museum, and the 1940s *A Noite* art deco tower, soon to be renovated.

The architectural revalorization of the sector also includes the renovation of a number of key historical buildings and sites of cultural significance, including the Church of Nossa Senhora da Prainha, the Suspended Gardens of the Valongo, the José Bonifácio Cultural Center, and the Cais da Imperatriz Square, with the recently excavated ruins of the Valongo Wharf. Many recent historic preservation efforts, which primarily highlight elements of the landscape closely associated with European roots and Catholicism, and present people of Portuguese and Spanish descent as the area's legitimate residents, have been denounced as promoting the whitening of Rio's Port area. Under such Eurocentric interpretation, the African past is minimized and its Afro-Brazilian legacies depoliticized, sanitized and easily repackaged for touristic consumption.

The demolition of the Perimetral elevated highway also allowed the opening of a new waterfront promenade, the *Orla Conde*, carefully designed with upscale material, glorified views of the bay and newly restored facades of historical buildings long hidden by the structure. The dismantling of the Perimetral also allowed the construction of the Olympic Boulevard, west of Mauá Square, lined with the renovated warehouses used for hosting shows, events and a theater company. The boulevard also features the world's largest mural, called *Ethnicity* painted in 2016 for the Rio de Janeiro Olympics by renowned Brazilian street artist Eduardo Kobra. The Olympic boulevard connects with the recently renovated Imperatriz Square, where portions of the recently uncovered Valongo Wharf are visible. Further in Gamboa, Harmonia Square is also undergoing a facelift, and the grand 19th century casern on its western side is slated to be converted into a shopping mall, as part of the transformation of the *Moinho Fluminense* grain mill into a mega commercial complex. This 1 billion R$ project will include the construction of a corporate tower, with offices, a hotel, a medical center, residential apartments and a one thousand-spaces parking garage. The shopping mall alone will spread over 15 thousand square meters, with over 120 shops and a multiplex cinema.

The renovation of the port district further includes the implementation of new modes of transportation implemented to facilitate mobility within the sector, especially the construction of a light rail line looping around the district to link the urban airport to the regional bus terminal. A

cable car connecting the *Cidade do Samba,* where carnival costumes and floats are made, and *Central do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro main train station, with a stopover at Providência favela, was also built. If for tourists and visitors, moving around the port area has been made much easier, local residents, especially those who do not own a car, complain that public transportation connecting the area to the city center and the elite South Zone has actually diminished, with the rerouting of several bus routes away from the port. They also find the price of using the brand new light rail rebarbative, while its layout does not serve their transportation needs. As a result, the use of this brand-new infrastructure is limited to business people and tourists.

Despite all the effort made by project sponsors to change public perception of the port area, the return of middle class residents to the district has yet to materialize. Porto Maravilha's de-stigmatization policies are gradually bringing people back to the district on weekends, but it has not been enough to convince them to settle in the area on a permanent basis. At the time of writing in November 2016, not a single residential project had been realized. Furthermore, the rare few residential projects that had been announced by real estate developers were canceled or were put on hold. As a result, for the time being, the port area redevelopment appears to be no more than a mere extension of the city's central business district with a vast tourism and entertainment appeal, a far cry from the new mixed use district that had been announced.[3]

The dearth of investments in residential projects can be explained by a series of factors. The current economic crises certainly played a part in limiting what still appears as a risky venture. In moments of crises such as the one Brazil has been experiencing since 2015, entrepreneurs are more cautious and less inclined to take risks, and would rather direct their investment towards safer projects. Rio de Janeiro's West Zone, especially around Barra da Tijuca where the majority of Olympic investments were made, remains the area favored by real estate investors. A developer we interviewed in 2016 notes that:

> The real estate market is not interested in residential developments in the port. Middle-class families don't want to go live there, they don't want to invest in an area associated with poverty, full of squatters and vacant buildings. There is plenty of good business to be made by investing in other parts of the city, where there remains a lot of land to build upon. Maybe one day, when they improve the area's image and there are no more vacant lots to develop elsewhere, it may become interesting to invest in housing in Porto Maravilha.[4]

Lingering territorial stigmatization is thus clearly an important factor that explains the lack of investments in the residential market in Rio's port district. The last, great challenge that Porto Maravilha sponsors are confronted with thus appears to be the social de-stigmatization of the sector. They must find creative ways to convince the middle classes to take up residence in the area. This may be a lengthy process, and clearly depends upon the continued displacement of whatever few lower income residents may be left.

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[3] One sole large-scale residential project, the Porto Vida condominium, was initiated in the perimeter of the project. The 1,333 apartments building was meant to house referees, journalists and employees of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, which would be sold privately after the event. In 2014, construction work on Porto Vida was stopped after the City decided that Olympic workers should be housed closer to the Olympic park, in the city's West Zone. Construction work on the project was still paralyzed at the time of writing, and there are speculations that part of Porto Vida will be converted for commercial use.

[4] Interview made in March 2014.

SOCIAL DE-STIGMATIZATION

The resignification of Rio de Janeiro's port district therefore also relies upon a radical transformation of the socio-economic make up of its population. Porto Maravilha talks of raising the current population of 30 000 to 100 000 with several fiscal incentives and the construction of new, upscale residential units to attract upper middle class and elite residents. This social de-stigmatization strategy rests upon a series of discourses that attempt to reframe the planned gentrification of the area and the replacement of its working class social fabric by a middle class-oriented consumer culture as something necessary, desirable and positive. The project's official rhetoric talks of re-vitalization, re-habilitation, and re-development, depicting the area as lacking vitality and needing to be brought back to life. This revitalization discourse disqualifies the current socio-spatial landscape and denies the existence of its living population. By claiming that the port must be rescued and reclaimed, official rhetoric similarly suggests that the area had been unrightfully invaded, and now must be reconquered by more deserving users, restored to a more desirable status and given a more acceptable function.

Official discourse also talks of social integration as one of the promises of the project, with multiple calls to "social mixing", a policy strategy widely used in the context of urban regeneration. Social mixing has been defined as a deliberate attempt to increase the socio-economic or ethnic diversity of an urban area, especially in the European and North American contexts (van Eijk, 2013). The idea behind this social integration policy is that bringing different social classes to cohabitate in a same area can create conditions for low-income populations to break from the cycle of poverty. While social mixing has been used worldwide as an efficient tool to fight social exclusion, in the case of Porto Maravilha, appeals to social mixing appear to be a perversion of reality and to be purely and insidiously rhetorical, used as a way to legitimate the radical transformation of the area's socio-economic makeup and to warrant the area's valuation.

THE REPOPULATION DISCOURSE

Another discourse vastly used in the implementation of Porto Maravilha confirms this vision. A key instrument in the professed revitalization of Rio de Janeiro's port district rests upon the mobilization of so-called "repopulation" policies. In official Porto Maravilha documents as well as in public propaganda, project sponsors have made repetitive calls for the need to repopulate the area, following city leaders, whom, since the 1990s, have been talking about the need to repopulate Rio's downtown. Underlying this discourse is the notion that the degradation, decline and loss of vitality of central city districts is the direct result of middle class flight during the second half of the twentieth century. As in other Brazilian cities, Rio's downtown suffered a demographic decline after the 1950s, with low-income population groups gradually becoming its sole inhabitants. In spite of a clear lack of interest for downtown living among Brazilian elites and young professionals, revitalization efforts initiated since the end of the 20th century have aimed to stimulate a back to the city movement, hoping that the arrival of a new, higher income population group would help establish a new dynamic and facilitate real estate valuation (Monteiro, 2015). The intent was not to attract just any kind of new residents but specifically focused on members of the middle class and upper middle class.

The notion of repopulation is highly controversial and has been perceived as a desire to expel and displace existing population groups, or at least to dilute the current socio-economic makeup of the port area in order to attract new residents and to promote land valuation. Calls for repopulation suggest that once inhabited, the port district is now devoid of residents. Such blatant dismissal of

the area's current inhabitants can be construed as an admission, on the part of Porto Maravilha proponents, that the port's long-established population represents an impediment to the de-stigmatization of the district. It can also be perceived as a thin veiled attack on the Afro-Brazilian community, which has historically lived in the area.

For over two decades, policy makers have brandished social mixing and repopulation as solutions for the revitalization of the port. More than simple rhetoric, these two notions are now inscribed in official policy, and have been incorporated in various plans, legislations and programs. For example, the repopulation imperative has justified the creation, in the late 1990s, of a housing program specifically designed to encourage new residents to settle in the city enter. Called *Novas Alternativas* (New Alternatives), the municipal program aimed to convince real estate investors that the rehabilitation of old buildings in the city center could be profitable as the middle-class was ready to return to live in the area. However, the program was not successful and only a few residential units were built. Other proofs of the state's desire to repopulate the Port with middle and high-income classes are found in a set of municipal policies, including two laws adopted in 2014, which grant a series of municipal tax breaks to new residents settling in the area.

One could claim that the strategic transformation of the socio-economic make-up of the port area will be achieved through two simultaneous processes of depopulation and repopulation. In other terms, the effective repopulation of the port area first requires its depopulation, with the departure of a great proportion of its original residents. Recent state investment in the port district, with the upgrading of infrastructure, major improvements in the urban design of public spaces and the provision of new cultural amenities, has already begun to affect the socio-economic makeup of the area. Over the last decade, sectors like the scenic Conceição Hill have already been undergoing a classic form of gentrification (Glass, 1964) with the gradual arrival of artists, intellectuals, foreign nationals and wealthier cariocas buying up property on this picturesque hill adjoining the city center. Many of its 19th and early 20th century houses have been renovated and turned into commercial ventures like tourist residences, art studios or restaurants. Down in Gamboa, Porto Maravilha state investments have prompted a more rapid and "strategic" form of gentrification (Arantes, 2001), often called *expulsão branca*, where local population groups are expelled by market pressure.

While official numbers are contested, it could be said that a little less than half of the port area's 30 000 residents are homeowners, the remaining being tenants. Since rents have already begun to rise, it is clear that without radical state action like rent control or rent allocation (very unlikely in the current Brazilian political climate), a great proportion of tenants will have to leave within the coming years. Most of the squatter communities who occupied vacant buildings were evicted in the early years of Porto Maravilha, their structures demolished to free up the land for real estate projects. One can predict that the majority of renters will be expelled from the area by rising rents. A proportion of homeowners may also want to partake in the Porto Maravilha bonanza and to cash in on the increased value of their property. They can thus be assumed to willfully leave the area to go live elsewhere. Some, especially small business owners, are expected to stay in order to benefit from the economic development of the area. But rises in land values, the replacement of traditional commerce by more upscale boutiques and the disappearance of small industries will make it difficult for most low-income residents to remain. This means that, even with conservative estimates, more than half, or close to 60% of the current population of the area should be gone once the project is well underway.

SOCIAL DE-STIGMATIZATION THROUGH DILUTION

The strategic social de-stigmatization of the port area does not only include efforts to displace the present poor, black, working class population, but it also aims to reduce the concentration of low-income residents who currently prevails in the sector with the influx of more upscale residents. Implicit in this repopulation strategy is the idea of *dilution*, where those who cannot be removed by the combined action of direct expulsion or gentrification (*expulsão branca*) will be turned into a minority, drowned into a sea of wealthy new comers. How else could one interpret the city's repeated calls to social mixing when actual municipal policies appear to support a radical replacement of a population groups by another? In spite of Mayor Eduardo Paes's emphatic declaration that the new port district would not be a "rich people ghetto", current policies for the area, which make no provision for social housing that could retain local residents or attract new working class families, are actually promoting such an exclusive vision.

The absence of low-income housing provision as part of Porto Maravilha thus appears to be part of a strategy designed to discourage current inhabitants from remaining in the area and to limit the influx of working class families. In 2015, as a response to mounting criticism about Porto Maravilha's disregard for social housing needs, CDURP, the consortium responsible for the management of the project, went through the motion of hosting a series of three "public consultation" audiences for the development of a housing plan.[5] However, the process was denounced as little more than political theatre and derided by critics as a charade of consultation and a travesty of a debate. Many port district residents who attended the meetings claimed to have been (falsely) promiced free housing in return for their participation. People also felt intimidated to speak their own minds by heavy-built dockers dressed in t-shirts with the slogan "I support CDURP" who caused disturbances whenever audience members asked critical questions.

At the time of writing in November 2016, nothing had come out of these consultations, in spite of the promise made by Mayor Eduardo Paes in July 2016, just before the Olympics, to build 10,000 social housing units in the area. The most pessimistic experts claim that there is not enough public land left in the Port area to build such a quantity of affordable housing units.[6] Given the "Olympic state of catastrophe" declared a month before the hosting of the 2016 Olympics, and which still prevailed at the time of writing, neither the state nor the city have the available funds for this kind of investment in social housing.

CONCLUSION: RESISTANCE STRATEGIES AND THE SYMBOLIC WAR FOR RESIGNIFICATION

The symbolic, material and human landscapes of Rio de Janeiro's port are rapidly transforming, in ways that support the new globalized and cosmopolitan vision of Porto Maravilha sponsors. The cohabitation of this new reality with the long-established everyday practices of the port's resident population has given rise to surprising contrasts. Businessmen and tourists rub shoulders at Mauá

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[5] The elaboration of the Porto Maravilha Social Interest Housing Plan resulted from a request from the agency financing Porto Maravilha that CDURP presents clear guidelines for the implementation of social housing within the project perimeter (Normative Instruction 33, 12/17/2014).

[6] About 75% of Porto Maravilha's area is made of land previously owned by the public (at the municipal, state and mainly federal levels) which was transferred to a real estate investment fund. Housing advocates argue that if there had been a real intention to build low-income housing, a portion of that land would have been kept in the hands of public authorities.

Square's gourmet foodtruck while kids from the favela ride skateboard on the square's shiny new pavement. On Sacadura Cabral Street, many old shophouses have been converted into bars and nightclubs, attracting a young, white, middle class clientele hardly ever seen in the area less than a decade ago. The beats of electronic music that escape from these nightclubs mixes with the more traditional rhythm of samba circles playing outdoors, in nearby São Francisco da Prainha Square and at Pedra do Sal. Late into the night, Uber cars clog up the streets, dropping off or picking up club goers. They drive pass street vendors selling water and beer, whose presence attests to the area's rising popularity as an entertainment destination. During the day, low car traffic allows young black kids to improvise a game of football on the street. In nearby alleys, residents hang clothes to dry in the windows of a ruined tenement building, while a few meters away, a woman empties a bag of aluminum cans collected the night before on the ground floor of an old shop house used as a small recycling center. Around a parked old Chevrolet Opala, a group of men set up an improvised mechanics shop on the broad sidewalk, while thinly clad German travelers make their way back to their cruise ships.

The seemingly peaceful and consensual integration of Rio's port area as part of the formal city, and its transformation from a hidden *refuse space* into a front stage space of spectacular consumption and brought out of the shadow into the spotlight, does not mean that the process was passively accepted by those excluded from this vision. Different forms of resistance are challenging the symbolic erasure of part of local history and cultural identity, allowing people to reclaim their right to exist, and to be seen and heard as full members of society. For Lefebvre, the right to the city is actualized in the appropriation and occupation of urban spaces. Don Mitchell (2003) for his part, talks of the right to be seen, the simple right to be present and visible in public space, as a fundamental right that allows the most economically deprived to exist as citizens and to participate in society. In the face of exclusionary and segregationist policies, to be visible in the city's public spaces becomes a political act of resistance.

In recent years, diverse grassroots cultural groups have devised embodied and territorialized strategies to resist their invisibilization, cultural erasure and silencing. They are reclaiming their right to representation by using the city's public space for diverse cultural practices that will help keep alive the area's rich heritage. Capoeira practitioners have been using the ruins of the Valongo Wharf, to promote the practice of this important symbol of slave resistance. Other practices, including *jongo* dancing groups and Carnival "*blocos*" are also using this key historical site to make a political statement. Rather than encouraging the museumification of local cultural practices and their transformation into tourist attractions and spectacle, they are encouraging their continuation as culturally relevant embodied practices by members of the local community, for their own benefit. These acts of resistance also perpetuate the port's rich tradition of solidarity and activism, inherited from numerous black rebellions and struggles against repetitive urban reforms and hygienist interventions. After all, the port area is also known as the cradle of Brazilian unionism, with the constitution of the dockworkers union in the early 1900s.

An important grassroots initiative that constitutes a site of resistance against historical amnesia and silencing is the *Instituto dos Pretos Novos* (IPN), known as the "cemetery of the new blacks", site of a shallow African burial ground for slaves who died before they could be sold. Discovered in 1996 by a local homeowner during excavation work, the site was turned, with limited state investment, into a memorial, a heritage museum, and a research and cultural center. In a city where so little has been done to promote black history and commemorate the slave past, the IPN stands as a important political site giving a voice to those long forgotten or willfully ignored by official history.

Another important marker of Afro-Brazilian identity used as a site of resistance is Pedra do Sal, a large granite rock where samba players historically gathered after a long day's work. It has long been an important node for the manifestation of Afro-Brazilian culture, especially religious practices of *candomblé*, and remains an essential site to celebrate the survival of African traditions. But this particular case reveals the fine line that separates the perpetuation of "authentic" cultural practices and their commodification as part of the urban spectacle, as seen in the growing popularization of the *rodas de samba* at Pedra do Sal, which are now attended by growing number of tourists and *zona sul* students and intellectuals and figure as "must-do" attractions in several international guidebooks.

Pedra do Sal itself is the object of an ownership struggle from a community of descendants of escaped slaves (*quilombo*) and a central figure in an ongoing demand for recognition as part of World Heritage by UNESCO, which also includes the Valongo Wharf and the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos*. In the coming years, we will see if the process of recognition by UNESCO could bring potential symbolic gains for those excluded from the urban vision promoted by Porto Maravilha and eventually be used strategically as an instrument of resistance to exert pressure upon decision makers to limit the project's negative impacts upon local culture.

The future should also bring the unfolding of a symbolic battle over the resignification of Rio de Janeiro's port area. On the one hand, the city will continue using a strategic rebranding approach to evacuate an uncomfortable past, and to disqualify existing residents, perceived as a public nuisance and a threat to real estate valuation. On the other hand, local residents, especially afro-descendants will be gaining in visibility and legitimacy, especially given UNESCO's planned recognition, to be made public in 2017. Research will continue to investigate how this battle plays out over the 30 years that constitute the project's horizon. It will be interesting to see if the city gradually incorporates elements of local history in the symbolic construction of the area, in ways that go beyond superficial and ornamental folklorization and that embrace and celebrate both the painful past and living heritage of this area of the city.

Time will tell if, under pressure from social movements, activists and local community, researchers and UNESCO, CDURP will alter its vision to adopt as more inclusive vision for the port area. The recognition, valuation, and preservation of the African presence in the port, as a more socially inclusive way to re-signify this territory and de-stigmatize its image, would not only represent an admission of the contribution of people of African descent to the social, cultural and environmental development of Brazil and their undeniable role in shaping the western world but also act as a testimony to the triumph of democracy and hope. It would help turn the port district into a place of tolerance, inclusion and multicultural cohabitation, much closer to the image that Brazil has striven to build over the last few decades with campaigns such as "*Um país de todos*" (2003-2006) or "*País rico é país sem pobreza*" (2007-2015).

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